

# Coercive agency: Lovedale Missionary Institution under principals Arthur Wilkie and RHW Shepherd

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## Abstract

Idris Shah's concept of "coercive agency" provides an apposite model for the study of mission institutions as "total institutions", which produced paradoxical results of conformity in some learners, while in other learners the result was resistance to mission education. My earlier research examined the problem of power relations at Lovedale Missionary Institution during the period of 1840 to 1930 under William Govan (1841–1869), James Stewart (1870–1905) and James Henderson (1906–1930). This study continues this theme and focuses on a diplomatic form of "coercive agency" exercised under Arthur Wilkie (1932–1942) and a brutalised form under R.H.W. Shepherd (1942–1955) until mission schools were taken over as a result of the *Bantu Education Act* (1953).

**Keywords** Coercive agency, Lovedale Missionary Institution, Lovedale Press, R.H.W. Shepherd, Arthur Wilkie

## Introduction

Lovedale Missionary Institution had its origins in the nineteenth-century missionary enterprise, which itself had been influenced by the eighteenth-century evangelical awakening. It has also been linked with imperial history; however, Stanley (1990:84) cautions against too facile a link between the missionary movement and "developments in British colonial policy or overseas investment" which rather "reflected a mix of secular and theological influences". In the South African context, by the beginning of the twentieth century, the English-speaking population, who were largely influenced by "secular individualism" (De Gruchy and De Gruchy 2005:34), were in firm control of industry, finance, the civil service and education. This remained the case until 1948 when the accession of the National Party to power heralded the demise of mission education and the introduction of an alternative form of control over the educational process. The mission education ethos can be described as hegemonic, demonstrating "the capability of a dominant group to exercise power over the subjected or subaltern group without the need of overt use of force [...] it presupposes the tacit assent given by the subaltern group to this exercise of power" (Westhelle 2010:38).

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While coercion or control is an integral part of any educational process, this is easier to give effect to in a limited context such as a total institution (Duncan 2003:55–57). By indicating the role of “social milieu” (Shah 1968:198) and the existence of a restricted worldview such as that provided by the missionary educational institution, Shah (p. 197–199) gives expression to this type of context. Shah’s (p. 198–199) central contention is that:

The individual and groupings of people, have to learn that they cannot reform society in reality, or deal with others as reasonable people, unless the individual has learned to locate and allow for the various patterns of coercive institutions, formal and also informal, which rule him. No matter what his reason says, he will always relapse into obedience to the coercive agency while its pattern is within him.

Shah’s concept of “coercive agency” has already proved (Duncan 2003) to be an appropriate tool in the examination of power and resistance in mission education, especially at Lovedale Missionary Institution during the principalship of James Henderson (1906–1930):

From its inception, the mission at Lovedale was closely associated with colonial society and its coercive policy was related to freeing its students and adherents from the imagined strictures of traditional society through the imposition of the norms of western society as Good News thus hindering their authentic human development. Colonial oppression led to internalisation of the ideology of the oppressor with whom the missionaries were often identified. Resistance became a consequence of as well as a reaction to coercive agency (Duncan 2003:355–356).

However, by 1930, Henderson “had been in decline for some years, indicating that new initiative was required” (White 1987:13). Therefore, he began the search for a successor who would “maintain a sense of continuity and stability within the institution”. This person would become a vice-principal. A memorandum was prepared to this effect (Cory<sup>1</sup> MS 14,743). The new appointee would then be able to learn the Lovedale ideals and follow Henderson’s educational philosophy, that is, through coercive agency (Henderson to Forgan, Foreign Mission Committee [FMC], 9 April 1930, Cory MS 14,742), which had been pioneered by Henderson’s predecessor, James Stewart, and extended by Henderson himself (Henderson to Loram, 25 March 1930, Cory MS): “As a personality he ought to have forcefulness, the natural qualities that confer leadership, and, very necessarily, capacity for teamwork”. This person “would make all the organisation of the institution centre in the mind of Jesus Christ, and be directed to the inbringing of His Kingdom” (Cory MS 14,743). Such a person would certainly provide continuity in the process of coercive agency. However, before these plans could be implemented, Henderson died suddenly on

<sup>1</sup> Grahamstown, Rhodes University, Cory Library for Historical Research.

18 July 1930, and this prepared the way for the appointment of Arthur Wilkie as principal of Lovedale Institution.

### **Lovedale under Arthur Wilkie**

Arthur W. Wilkie was born on 9 November 1875 in Cheshire, England, of Scottish parentage. Educated in England, he later studied at the University of Glasgow, where he took his M.A. and B.D. degrees (Shepherd 1971:97). The United Free Church of Scotland appointed him a missionary to Calabar, Nigeria, and district missionary and secretary of the mission. In 1917, the United Free Church of Scotland took responsibility for mission work in Ghana and Togo on the withdrawal of German and Swiss missionaries at the request of the British government (Shepherd 1971:97). Wilkie was appointed leader of the mission at Accra. During this time, he promoted younger missionaries to share in the work. Wilkie exercised skilful diplomacy in a sensitive political and ecclesiastical situation that required conciliation in issues of race relations; this led to him becoming a Commander of the Order of the British Empire at the instigation of the British government and having the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity conferred on him by the University of Glasgow.

Wilkie's educational interests are clear from his involvement in a number of educational commissions and at Achimota College, and his visits, like Henderson, to the famous Hampton and Tuskegee institutions in the United States. Wilkie also developed as a missionary statesman through attending and participating in international missionary conferences at Edinburgh (1910), Lake Mohonk (1921), Jerusalem (1928) and Le Zoute (1926), where he delivered a paper entitled "The education of the African peoples" (White 1987:18). Here, the concept of education envisioned was the "elevation of the tone and character of the community" (p. 41). Wilkie adopted the view that there is "a definite determination to bring the whole life of the school into relation with the community in which it was established" (p. 42). This facilitated the education of girls. With regard to the role of religion in education, Wilkie believed that there was a "need for giving the African an education which is based upon religion", and which in all its parts is infused "as being integral to the missionary causes" (p. 44).

Following Henderson's death, Wilkie was appointed Lovedale's principal and took up this office in April 1932. He paid tribute to his predecessor as one who "maintained so highly the deeply rooted traditions and ideals adapting them to changing conditions and inspired so many with his vision of still greater possibilities" (LMI 1932:2). Wilkie brought to the task considerable experience of mission administration, handling racial problems and diplomacy. These would all be needed in great supply during the next ten years. His appointment was seen as "a means of ushering in a

period of conciliation in the history of Lovedale” (White 1987:20). This is interesting because it might be asked what needed to be conciliated. Obviously, not all had been well under Henderson’s tenure (see Duncan 2003:299–348) though it has to be noted that similar problems afflicted all mission institutions. Certainly, Wilkie was “anxious to break down the rigid formality which existed at the Institution” (White 1987:21).

From the outset, Wilkie demonstrated that Lovedale was a “total institution” (Duncan 2003:81–97). He described the units that made up Lovedale in the following way (LMI 1932:1):

They are all closely inter-related and knit together by one central dominating purpose. Lovedale was built up by those who had the vision of a community where students from all parts of southern Africa could come together, and within it learn the Christian way of life with its infinite possibilities and varieties of service.

### **Wilkie’s educational philosophy**

At this time, Lovedale’s philosophy of education was based on the premise that a “full public system of control is better suited to a land where there is a strong ethical and religious life” (Shepherd 1940:457). For Wilkie, “there can only be failure if the whole life of the Institution is not Christian through and through, and permeated with a Christian atmosphere” (LMI 1939:56). Control is more easily exercised where there is some kind of value system in place. It aimed at “Fullness of life for all” as “It seeks to reach the whole personality to help in the growth of a full integrated life” with the basic necessities of religion, literacy and leisure (Shepherd 1940:458). Wilkie believed that “education, if it is to have any enduring value must touch the whole of life, and prepare for the whole of life” (LMI 1938:5), but the black child is to be educated “for a subordinate society” (Shepherd 1940:467). Yet, at the same time, Lovedale in contradictory manner rejected this view: “we reaffirm our belief that a system of education which accepted any form of subordination in its *aims* would be unworthy of the energy and devotion which it has [...] evoked” (*South African Outlook* 1936:200). The 1936 Report on Native Education promoted an aim that was somewhat similar to that purveyed at Lovedale: “the only definite urge behind Native Education today comes from the civilising agency of Christian missions and from enlightened administrators” (Shepherd 1940:462–463). Thus, mission educators were viewed by the government as their agents in “civilising barbarians” (De Kock 1996). Lovedale supported the views expressed by C.T. Loram (1917), *inter alia*, “that it is to the moral, social and economic interest of Europeans to educate him, and we dare not face the consequences of failing to do so” (cf. Shepherd 1971:105). This was coercive in the sense that

Europeans needed black people for their own self-interest and so they had to be co-opted into service.

### **Teaching in the vernacular**

One issue that was a recurring source of debate in education was the role of teaching in the vernacular. Wilkie adopted the view that (White 1987:44):

If education is the wakening up of a way of life, it follows inevitably that the medium of instruction must be the vernacular. The soul of a people is enshrined in their language and it is futile to expect to awaken the life of the soul of any child through a medium other than the mother tongue. Yet this is perhaps the most common mistake even in mission schools, and then one hears comments upon the slowness of the African child to acquire knowledge, the dullness of their minds and their painful lack of imagination.

Wilkie went beyond any of his predecessors by favouring vernacular teaching for the entire educational process. This, however, was considered “too extreme” (p. 46) because the purpose of education was to enable its beneficiaries to function in society at large and this was impossible without a command of English. English was also considered a means of uniting “the disparate groups of Africans” (p. 47). This would require the publication of books in the vernacular and Lovedale Press would play a significant role here, as it was considered “a useful tool in the education of Africans” (p. 47). Certainly, Lovedale was ideally suited to implement these ideas and thus further the purpose of coercive agency.

### **Industrial education**

Wilkie’s philosophy of education was not inimical to the value of industrial education and led to a debate on whether it was preparation for “‘European’ trades or African handicrafts” (White 1987:51), for the latter was less threatening to the settler community, who saw their jobs potentially being placed at risk. D.A. Hunter adopted the view that the purpose of vocational training was “to create an African industry which would then produce goods for an African market” (p. 51). There was nothing here of education as the development of potential to its limits, just a small window of opportunity within a restricted market. Yet, there was another view, which was that the “missionary purpose [...] was to train the African in skills that would equip him to enter a European-oriented world [...]. To be lifted to the level of western civilisation [...]. It was therefore necessary for this traditional village structure to be broken down” (p. 53). Inevitably, these two views led to “a difference of opinion at Lovedale” (p. 53). Yet, the ulterior motive was expressed by Shepherd (1971:107–108): “Rather was it in the training of a pastoral and warlike people emerging from barbarism to the disciplined routine of regular work, and to lead them to higher and more disciplined

standards of living [...] as means to open the mind and develop the character by discipline and industry” (cf. Duncan 2003:188–198, 262–290).

Consequently, vocational training was kept under constant review through the establishment of an Outdoor Work Committee in 1923 and the Lovedale Governing Council Committee in 1932. This led to a streamlining of the work by closing the wagon-making unit in 1930, the shoe-making department in 1932, and combining the carpentry and building departments in 1933. The problem that emerged was that the majority of skilled black people lived in native reserves. Combined with the industrial colour bar, this militated against the employment of skilled labourers. Shepherd (1971:108) correctly assessed the situation: “Such changes in their mode of life could not occur without inflicting injury on the character of the people”. Lovedale’s view of industrial education was that it contributed to “leading the African to a higher and more civilised standard of living” (p. 108) by creating new desires for hitherto unnecessary products that needed new occupations and this would inevitably “alter their standard and mode of living” (p. 108). This in turn would benefit the European population predominantly and the black people marginally. This was a high point of coercive agency.

Related to this was the outcome of the Native Economic Commission (NEC), 1930–1932, which held implications for education. Shepherd (1971:101) claimed that while colonialism had changed the environment of black people, it had not prepared them for this new situation. The Commission argued that European-based education had concentrated on the academic (NEC, cited by Shepherd 1940:396), but Lovedale argued that a basic minimum of formal education was necessary before introducing “simple hygiene, elementary agricultural methods” (Shepherd 1971:101). The NEC insisted on a balance between academic and practical learning.

The achievement of this balance was related to manual labour, which was a long-term issue (Duncan 2003:193, 206, 278, 288–289). Wilkie was of the opinion that it “served no basic purpose and merely fuelled grievances against the Lovedale authorities” (White 1987:50; cf. Jabavu 1920:58). This is not surprising considering Wilkie’s conciliatory temperament but abolishing it might have relieved pressure on the authorities and produced a more quiescent student body. However, it was maintained that manual labour was important “partly for their health, partly for their sustenance, and partly also that they might afterwards be able to instruct their countrymen in better methods of field-work” (Shepherd 1940:424). No thought was given to the implications of this judgment regarding the reasons people had become warlike (as the result of settler incursions during the nineteenth century) or who judged what constituted civilised standards of living.

## The organisation of space

The place of the organisation of space has already been discussed as a source of coercive agency at Lovedale through dispossession (which fostered dependence) and the permanence of the buildings erected aligned with the concept of private property as an aspect of civilisation and Westernisation, and was used in the development of character and discipline (Duncan 2003:124–128, 166–171). By Wilkie’s time, the historical situation could be described as follows (Shepherd 1940:480):

From a humble beginning there has been a gradual evolution to a major contribution to African life. As the work has progressed, early quarters have been outmoded and out grown. New premises have been demanded, and sometimes requirements have been met only by makeshift accretions, since vision and progress have often outstripped the funds that could be gathered.

The situation was as follows (Shepherd 1940:503):

There is a central educational block, with lofty classrooms on two floors, an assembly hall, and a tower, whose stone severity is relieved by a clock and a set of Westminster chimes [...]. The buildings are not arranged in any regular plan, and although this has its inconvenience it adds to the interest and picturesqueness of the institution.

A visitor commented that there “was a university feeling about the place, even in its buildings” (Murray 1929:114). Wilkie was responsible for the erection of the Practising School, Girls’ Dormitory Block, High School, Lovedale Press buildings and staff houses. By comparison, a former student in rather hagiographical mode commented in a letter in praise of Lovedale following the 1946 disturbance (cited by Shepherd 1971:133): “Take away Lovedale buildings, take away its first class provision academically, take away these things if you care to, there will still remain the secret of the place – the one thing needful – I refer to the spirit of the Institution. [...] Face to face with life we cannot be indifferent to the influence of Lovedale.

This was certainly not written by one who had experienced the oppressive atmosphere of the Institution. However, it did testify to a fundamental factor in the process of character formation that was an almost tangible presence in the Institution, which was integral to it being a “total institution” (Duncan 2003:55–57, 81–83, 87–97, 354–356).

Significant achievements during Wilkie’s term of office include the development of the Institution’s administration and the founding of the Lovedale Bible School, High School and Lovedale Press.

## Discipline

It is interesting to note how much of Wilkie’s journal (Wilkie, Cory MS 9044) is devoted to matters of discipline. Often, the verdict reached is quite unreasonable: “no excuse can be entertained when lateness was due to train

connections” (Wilkie, 7 July 1933, Cory MS 9044). Regarding the admission of day pupils to the Training School, the general principle was enunciated that “discipline and the life of the Institution is an integral part of the training of teachers” (Wilkie, 1 December 1933, Cory MS 9044). Discipline and punishment for cheating was used as an example to others. This consisted of no marks being awarded, a letter being sent to parents, one week of manual labour imposed and a public announcement made (Wilkie, 30 October 1933, Cory MS 9044). There were even “Rules for Dancing”, where attendance required the approval and presence of the Boarding Master or Lady Superintendent: “During School Session it is better not to countenance it”. Otherwise, it was considered “a breach of discipline” (Wilkie, 22 March 1934, Cory MS 9044). Breach of discipline could result in immediate dismissal as with the case of two male students out of their dormitory until 4.30am with Fort Hare servant girls (Wilkie, 27 April 1934, Cory MS 9044).

Control of students was blatantly exercised with regard to the election of the Students’ Representative Council (SRC) in 1938. Wilkie (21 February 1938, Cory MS 9044) wrote: “Unrecorded was a useful discussion on the veto on students elected to the SRC. Agreed that even if no reference is made to a veto in the constitution this cannot abrogate the right in special cases. This should be of such rare occurrence that it may never be exercised”. This is clearly a matter of exercising control and demonstrates a serious lack of trust in students’ ability to elect “suitable” colleagues to represent them. It misses the whole point of having an SRC.

During Wilkie’s absence from Lovedale for a large part of 1937, R.H.W. Shepherd was responsible for discipline. An indication of what was to come during his term as principal was evident in his attempt to censor a questionnaire prepared by a Psychology lecturer from the University of the Witwatersrand concerning native delinquency. For example, “Is it right or wrong to visit women’s rooms at night?” It is difficult to understand the problem unless Shepherd fears that Lovedale’s moral teaching has a negative effect on students. He wrote (Wilkie, 16 July 1937, Cory MS 9044) “Other questions, dealing intimately with social matters were likely, I thought, to have an unfortunate effect on the minds of Native people. [...] Of course, I emphasised that we were most anxious to assist in scientific investigation and accepted fully the *bona fide* nature of the enquiry”. Yet, out of 178 questions, fifty-six had to be omitted!

Even on the point of his departure from Lovedale, Wilkie innovated in his principal’s report for this year by including a section on discipline in which he stated (LMI 1941:6):

It was perhaps inevitable that some should be affected by the spirit of unrest prevailing throughout a country in a period of war, and a small minority



gave cause for anxiety. [...] A small nucleus, however, which had been giving trouble previously infected others, and to our great regret it has been necessary to forbid many of these to return to Lovedale.

Before leaving this topic, it is necessary to demonstrate that disciplinary problems were endemic to institutions for black students. On 19 November 1940, Wilkie (Cory MS 9044) referred to a “report on the causes of mass disturbances in Native Institutions” along with “a drastic proposal that anyone taking part in mass riots or mass defiance of authority, would in future be debarred by the Department [of Education] from admission forever to any ‘Boarding Institution’” and “to recommend that it would debar a student from entering any institution or school (ie. including Day Schools) ‘for a period of two years’”. Coercive agency was alive and well throughout the residential educational context.

Wilkie retired at the conclusion of Lovedale’s centenary celebrations. By the end of his term as principal, White (1987:23) comments, “the climate at Lovedale was hardening and had Wilkie remained it is doubtful whether he would have been able to avoid the looming conflicts” despite the fact that he “sought a diplomatic settlement to conflict and so during his period at Lovedale there was relative calm” (White 1987:221).

## Lovedale under RHW Shepherd

Robert Henry Wishart Shepherd was born, one of twins, into a humble, God-fearing family at Mylnfield, Invergowrie, on 25 May 1888. His father was a stern disciplinarian (Oosthuizen 1970:11). By sheer hard work, he gained university entrance and studied at the universities of St. Andrews and Edinburgh and gained his M.A. degree at the latter in 1915. He proceeded to New College, Edinburgh, where he graduated in Divinity with distinction. This was followed by a period of service with the Scottish Church’s Hut in the military camp at Invergordon, prior to beginning service with the Foreign Mission Committee of the United Free Church of Scotland. Perhaps it was need, combined with his humble beginnings, that led him to espouse a strict Protestant work ethic that served him well throughout his life.

Shepherd was married to Mary Shearer Goodfellow and served in two parishes during 1918 while waiting for steamer passages to South Africa, where he had been appointed to serve at Main Mission in Tembuland. At Main, Shepherd engaged in evangelistic work and supervised primary schools (Shepherd 1971:121). Small of stature, he was given the nicknames *Mdengentonga* meaning a powerful person despite shortness, and *Inkomo iyahlaba*, the ox prods, indicating his tendency to be overbearing (Shepherd 1971:122). A later assessment of his character would describe him as abrasive, arrogant, respected, an excellent preacher and academic and a prolific writer and “expert” on South Africa matters (White 1987:24).

He early attained positions of leadership through being appointed first secretary to the Mission Council and then Senior Clerk of the General Assembly of the recently formed (1923) Bantu Presbyterian Church of South Africa. It was at Main that he began his literary career with the publication of two books.

Shepherd moved to Lovedale in 1926 as chaplain and director of publications and acted as principal of the institution for a period prior to Wilkie's arrival. He was appointed editor of the *South African Outlook*, Lovedale's famous missionary journal, and Director of Lovedale Press in 1932. In November 1941, Shepherd was appointed to succeed Wilkie as principal of Lovedale.

### **Shepherd's guiding principles**

Shepherd's educational philosophy stood firmly "in the mainstream of the Lovedale tradition" (Shepherd 1971:121–149; White 1987:26; cf. Oosthuizen 1970:126–152). He (Shepherd 1971:123) immediately declared the main aim of Lovedale: "Only regeneration of the spirit of man will ensure such things. A truly Christian order would mean that the wounds of mankind would not be healed lightly". Here he was referring to Lovedale's traditional policy of advocating reform in the social and economic contexts. But, above all, "there can be only failure if the whole life of the Institution is not Christian through and through and permeated with a religious atmosphere" (Shepherd 1971:124; White 1987:29). The teaching of religion and character formation as coercive agency was all-pervasive in the curriculum (Shepherd 1971:124):

We teach it all day long. We teach it in arithmetic by accuracy. We teach it in language by learning to say what we mean. We teach it in geography by breadth of mind. We teach it in handicraft by thoroughness. We teach it in astronomy by reverence. We teach it in the playground by fair-play. We teach it by kindness to animals, by courtesy to servants, by good manners to one another, and by truthfulness in all things.

Speaking at the centenary celebrations at Lovedale, Shepherd referred to "the currents of lives [...] changed" (LMI 1941:10). Here we have a description of the process of conversion in the Lovedale mode: "Thus Lovedale from the first stood for what the blatant creeds of today ignore – for God, for making God known, for God's Kingdom and the ingathering of men into it" (LMI 1941:11). Shepherd reaffirmed his commitment to continuity at Lovedale: "we would reaffirm that this has been Lovedale's confession of faith throughout all its history [...] and this will be its faith in the years that are to be" (LMI 1942:4). This is demonstrated "in the careers and characters of those who bear its impress" (LMI 1942:5). This indicates a continuation of Henderson's "moulding" process (Duncan 2003:228).

### Shepherd at Lovedale Press

A primary means of coercive agency adopted by Shepherd was exercised through his work as Director of Lovedale Press (Duncan 2003:338–346). According to Jafta (1971:6) “the literary development of the Xhosa cannot be separated from the missionary endeavour”. Further, she links this to influencing “the Xhosa to accept an international way of life that would be acceptable in the international world” (Jafta 1971:14). Coercive agency, therefore, was operative at Lovedale from an early period. A major vehicle of the missionary ideology was *South African Outlook*, which attained international recognition over the years. Many black authors were contributors. However, they “were well aware of their status [...] and as personalities they formed a kind of collective consciousness which was to orchestrate the strategy and tactics of black ideological responses to white rule for more than two generations” (Switzer and Switzer 1979:4). And this was a form of “subversive subservience”, which had a greater effect than even its authors expected, for “converts to Christianity invariably called into question the legitimacy of all schemes of foreign domination” (Sanneh 1987:332). During the twentieth century, a group of Xhosa writers emerged. However, tension grew between them and the missionaries owing to the printing of manuscripts being “virtually dependent on the goodwill of those missionaries who controlled the mission press. There is evidence that Lovedale effectively manipulated its control over the production of Xhosa manuscripts until its monopoly was broken by the state in the 1950s” (Switzer 1993:122; cf. Peires 1981:176; Jafta 1971:15; Shepherd 1945:19, 28, 38, 53, 56, 85, 90). It was clear from this that the missionaries were unwilling to publish anything that “did not conform to their own notion of what was good for the community for whose education they felt responsible” (Gerard 1981:181, cited by Maluleke 1995:26).

A blatant example of editorial interference comes from Shepherd’s time as Director of Lovedale Press. Sol Plaatje completed his manuscript of his work *Mudhi* in 1917. However, it was not published until 1930 after Lovedale (that is, Shepherd) had “emasculated it” (Gray 1979:178). Plaatje ([1930] 1978:22) himself carefully and perhaps not too subtly refers to Shepherd’s role as “helping to correct the proofs” for publication. We can only be grateful that the original manuscript enables us to analyse the processes at work in “editing” the works of black South Africans to suit the particular ideological perspective enshrined in white Western civilisation (Opland 1997:308). While the missionaries are to be commended for publishing works that might otherwise never have seen the light of day, it is also surprising that in addition to their strict editorial control they appear to have “misplaced” a substantial number of important manuscripts. The fact is that the disappearance of these documents “deposited in the hands of canny

Scots missionaries is an inexplicably strange but regular occurrence” (Duncan 2003:342).

### **Lovedale riots**

Lovedale survived the vagaries of the Second World War, but not without having to pay a cost. Perhaps the most significant post-war event that demonstrates the harsh resolution of Shepherd was the violent riot that occurred on 7 August 1945. The causes are not immediately clear, although Shepherd (1971:128) notes that many who returned to complete their education following the war “found the discipline of school irksome”. The problem was not peculiar to Lovedale, however, nor was it a new issue, “as some fifteen to twenty [outbreaks] have occurred at Native Institutions in the last two or so years” (Executive of Governing Council, 20 August 1946, Cory MS 16,453; cf. LMI 1946:70; Shepherd to Editor, *UMthunywa*, 5 October 1946, Cory MS 16453 [I]iii; Kros 1992:1; Duncan 2003:331–334; Bolnick 1990:2), and those who commented failed to sense the mood of the recalcitrant students with a plea to “let such matters be tackled in true African fashion, with courtesy, with dignity and with the lawfulness of constitutional ways” (comment in *South African Outlook* in Shepherd 1971:128). The outcome was that following the arrival of police, multiple arrests and a court case, 152 students were convicted, 75 who joined a march to Alice and a number of girls found guilty of incitement were expelled, in addition to a number of cases that were investigated by the Discipline Committee of the Lovedale Senate, which was dominated by Shepherd whose approach is described as “draconian”, “merciless” and characterised by “a vindictiveness which did not seem commensurate with the offence” (Kros 1992:2).

Following the outbreak, which involved food, arson, refusal to attend classes and general disobedience, classic forms of resistance and non-cooperation which were “subversive of good order and discipline” (Commission of Inquiry cited by LMI 1946:55), Shepherd established a Commission of Inquiry. There is enough here to understand the nature and effects of coercive agency, not only at Lovedale but throughout the mission education system. The findings absolved Lovedale of blame for the disturbances (Oosthuizen 1970:54). However, more than one of the “enforcers” of discipline (staff members) who had recently returned from war service had “introduced a set of rules to ensure the observance of ‘simple elementary and gentlemanly manners’” (LMI 1946:55). Non-cooperation came from both students and staff.

It was clear to the commission that this was not an isolated incident but was premeditated and planned. Kros (1992:7) has judged that this was:

propelled by Shepherd’s apparently paranoid determination to repress any signs of insolence. He had victimised the Form V class the year before,

preventing all but one of the matriculants from being accepted by the University of Fort Hare. At the close of 1945, seventeen students in the Form V class had been found guilty of “objectionable conduct” and the decision had been made not to allow them to return if they failed their senior certificate examinations.

This arose out of the class having formed “The Board”, which “represented an alternative source of authority and an explicit rejection of the SRC and prefect structures” (Kros 1992:8) established by Shepherd who considered this “evidence of the students’ subversive intentions” (Kros 1992:7).

The commission concluded that among the general causes were “food, organisation and control, the prefect system, the students’ representative council, the finance of the Institution, discipline, the political background and the economic and social disabilities of the African people, political propaganda from within and without the Institution, etc. etc.” (Shepherd 1971:129; cf. LMI 1946:53–78). Yet, there was evidence of deficiencies in the diet, which could have been remedied, as well as a lack of supervision (LMI 1946:60–61). The prefect system and the SRC provided further sources of grievances (LMI 1946:64–65). A valid explanation of changing circumstances that had not been taken account of is offered by a witness in the report of the commission of inquiry (LMI 1946:68):

The modern African boy is given access to the newspaper press and is born in an environment of complaint by the African against the colour bar. They identify the European staff in the institution as part of the Government machinery, and so when they go home we find that they are unhappy with the school authorities whereas in our time we worshipped the school authorities. It illustrates a very great change in the outlook of the modern African student.

And again, regarding the imposition of Pass Laws and the colour bar: “These complaints are made by parents and their children hear them all and they read the Press too. [...] The immature mind is unable to differentiate in these matters between friend and foe” (LMI 1946:70).

The report also refers to the “exploitation of immature minds incapable of correct judgment” (LMI 1946:74). Correct judgment always appears to mean compliance with missionary views. Perhaps the immature minds were able to discern what the missionaries could not, that they were a part of the system and complicit in it simply by being Europeans who participated in and benefited from that system, even if unwillingly and/or unwittingly. The commission’s report uncritically refers to “thoughtless identification of the European staff with the system responsible for these grievances [which] had led to unhappy relations with the European teachers” and black students (p. 70). There was an acknowledgment that times were changing as “[...] today we are witnessing rapid and far reaching changes in African social ideas and habits of life” (p. 75), not to mention the wider context. The report stated:

“in a recent survey of Native Administration in British Tropical Africa, Lord Hailey has aptly said that ‘the outstanding impression of Africa must be one of rapid change, and of great changes impending’” (p. 75). All of this signifies the demise of coercive agency as it had been traditionally understood: “the riot was largely a rebellion against authority” (p. 69).

On two occasions, at least, Dr Kerr Principal of the South African Native College, Fort Hare, counselled Shepherd to exercise caution in the matter of refusing readmission to excluded students, based on Dr Henderson’s approach to riots during his tenure as Principal of Lovedale. On 27 January 1947, he wrote (Kerr to Shepherd, 17 December 1946, Cory MS 16453):

by his policy of re-admitting all but the proven ringleaders he [Henderson] showed a just sense of the strains that immature youths are subjected to when disorder breaks loose, and a regard, which I think is of the essence of the missionary purpose, for the salvaging of as many individuals as possible. The test of the success or otherwise of that policy of leniency is not whether other Institutions experienced disturbances afterwards, but whether those individual students re-admitted after 1920 did, in fact, by their subsequent careers, justify his policy.

This was supported by Hutton and Cook (to Shepherd, 27 August 1946, Cory MS 16453 [E]), the Institution’s legal advisers, who commented on the matter of expulsion:

In effect the Senate is, by its resolution, convicting and punishing each of these individual students without affording them the privilege of being heard in their defence. To our mind this is contrary to the most elementary principles of Justice and it is a policy that would not be endorsed by any Court of Law. [...] We again repeat that you are not dealing with the students as a body but with each individual student, and whether the conduct of such individual student warrants his exclusion.

Shepherd was deaf to such wise counsel. Clearly, nothing had been learned from the records and experience of the 1920 disturbance.

An unsympathetic critic of Shepherd named Special Correspondent (1946) supports Kerr’s implied judgment of Shepherd by referring to Lovedale’s “‘Concentration camp’ conditions” and to the principal as “The Glorified Boy Scout” in a situation in which “Students are continually humiliated by unnecessary orders, ‘take your hands out of your pockets variety’”. This critic asks the pertinent question, “If the Principal was ignorant of the dissatisfaction, why was Lovedale so strictly policed at the end of last year?” (1944). There had been a history of deteriorating relations between Shepherd and students and even some staff members to the extent that there had been a call for Shepherd to resign as the Chair of the Lovedale Literary Society (White 1987:106) and to “Kill Dr Shepherd”

(White 1987:105) in a situation in which Lovedale (that is, Shepherd) was described as a “source of oppression, tyranny [...] dictatorship”! Shepherd (to Semple, 23 April 1945, Cory MS 14,714a) himself had admitted that, “There is, I think, one or two signs of restlessness this year but nothing to be concerned about”. Yet, he contradicted himself in his account of what happened (Cory MS 16,453) by claiming that the “rioting took the staff entirely by surprise as there had been no indication of dissatisfaction amongst the students”. This raises the question regarding the extent to which Shepherd read the signs of the times in post-war Lovedale. Perhaps he was captive to a romantic image of the Institution that no longer existed, if it ever did.

One of the significant issues was the principle of where the final authority for the control of Lovedale lay. This led to a dispute between the Governing Council, who resided outside the campus and favoured maximum readmission, and the Senate, which resided on campus and favoured maximum expulsion (White 1987:136–139).

The Executive Committee of the United Cape African Teachers’ Association (Cory MS 16,453 I[iii]) issued a statement in which they referred to the real cause of the disturbance – “relations, not only between the staff and students but also between the prefects and the rest of the students, are such as have never been known to exist in any institution”. They correctly discerned the core of coercive agency at work (Cory MS 16,453 I[iii]):

If the much-vaunted Christian principles for which Lovedale stands mean the callous and deliberate wrecking of promising careers, with no concern for the dire consequences to the people affected and for the injured feelings of the Africans in their unquenchable thirst for higher education, then can such periodical outbursts of a sorely-grieved people be wondered at?

This relates to Shepherd’s unwillingness or inability to forgive. This can be attributed to his personality (cf. Bolnick 1990, see below) shaped by an adverse childhood. His version of Christianity was rigid and indifferent. He admitted, “I personally don’t want a God who is only full of forgiveness, gentleness, tolerance. I want a moral Governor on the throne of the universe” (Shepherd to Hobart Houghton, 14 February 1945, Cory MS PR3682). Shepherd’s inflexibility went further than exclusion of students from Lovedale but extended to his influence in denying them hope of access to any further education (Kros 1992:17). A particular case serves to illustrate Shepherd’s unbending attitude.

### The case of Potlako Leballo

Potlako Leballo from Lesotho enrolled at Lovedale in 1946 having already studied there in 1940 prior to enlisting for military service. He was twenty-six years old. Apart from furthering his aspiration to access mission

education, “the major conduit through which some Africans could pass from a fracturing pre-capitalist social organisation to the promised land of white urban ‘civilisation’” (Bolnick 1990:11), Leballo, who had a “highly developed sense of self-aggrandisement” (Bolnick 1990:11), falsely acquired an allowance for the support of dependents from the Directorate of Demobilisation in addition to the study grant he had been awarded by the Governor General’s War Fund. Leballo’s involvement in the disturbance placed both his future career prospects and his immediate financial support at risk. He was one of a substantial number of students who were expelled owing to his alleged involvement in the riots. The evidence against Leballo was largely circumstantial (Bolnick 1990:12 ff.). A subsidiary factor may have been that there was a growing feeling that education in Sotho and Tswana should be withdrawn owing to the cost involved for the relatively low numbers enrolled for tuition in these languages. Certainly, his wartime experiences influenced his thinking and actions in the post-war period especially with regard to racial segregation, where resistance had moved from cooperation to confrontation. The Lovedale riots may be viewed in this light. But account also needs to be taken of the wider context of post-war deprivation that affected mission institutions, particularly in the Eastern Cape (Bolnick 1990:15–16).

Following his expulsion from Lovedale, Leballo’s subsistence allowance was suspended in late September 1946. Shepherd referred his application to have the allowance reinstated to the Secretary for Education with the comment: “Although not arrested, we have reason to believe that he was deeply implicated in the disturbance and is suspected of being one of the chief ringleaders” (Shepherd to Secretary for Education, 2 October 1946, Cory MS 16453 A[2]). No evidence was produced just unspecified “reason to believe”. It was only a week later that Shepherd communicated with Leballo, which gave no clear indication of his fate although students who were to return had been informed of this (Shepherd to Leballo, 9 October 1946, Cory MS 16453 A[2]). Acknowledging his financial loss, he wrote again to Shepherd (Leballo to Shepherd, 19 October 1946, Cory MS 16453 A[2]) pleading his own innocence, implicating some of his student colleagues and promising never again to succumb to the temptation to revolt: “But from now on I swear that I shall never be defeated by evil spirits and temptations”. Shepherd ignored the letter. Leballo wrote again and tried to implicate two teachers, Messrs. Makalima and Mathlare (Leballo to Shepherd, 5 November 1946, Cory MS 16453 A[2]). Shepherd investigated this claim and found it to be untrue (Shepherd to Leballo, 7 November 1946, Cory MS 16453 A[3]). Leballo’s next tactic was to try to manipulate the evidence in his own favour (Leballo to Shepherd, 13 November 1946, Cory MS 16453 A[3]). Bolnick (1990:20) offers a significant interpretation: “This kind of circumstantial counter argument



might have received a sympathetic hearing from an impartial inquiry, but from Shepherd and his disciplinary committee it was rejected out of hand, thereby re-affirming the arbitrary and authoritarian manner in which the Lovedale authorities handled the crisis". It was only on 2 December 1946 that Shepherd eventually informed Leballo of his fate, that he would not write his examinations and not be readmitted to Lovedale (Cory MS 16453 A[5]).

Leballo wrote his final letter to Shepherd on 18 December 1946 (Cory MS 16453 A[5]) in which he made a form of confession and pled for mercy. Having received no reply, Leballo wrote to the Chief Inspector of Schools in an attempt to solicit his support. The letter was referred to Shepherd, who used it to alienate Leballo further. Bolnick (1990:27), while by no means condoning the immature Leballo, has this to say of his opponent: "Nor does the philanthropic missionary, educationist and editor, Shepherd, cut a convincing figure as a moral and upstanding defender of justice". The case of Leballo demonstrates how, in the face of contrary advice, Shepherd was an inflexible and uncompromising agent of coercive agency and here we may agree with Rawls (1971:141) that "to each according to his threat advantage is not a principle of justice".

The incidence of acts of resistance raises the question of whether student resistance was not simply to replace one form of coercive agency with another. It certainly went beyond civil disobedience in its recourse to violent action (Rawls 1971:364, 366–367). In its attempt by the majority (the relatively powerless students) to address the minority (the powerful Lovedale authorities) it involved political action but also failed to meet the requirements of definition as civil disobedience though it was rooted in "the principles of justice which regulate the constitution and social institutions generally" (p. 365). Rather, here we are considering militant obstructive action as an attempt to address significant problems experienced at Lovedale. The militant operates against a system perceived to be unjust "to force a movement in the desired direction" (p. 367). Leballo and his fellow combatants conform to the definition of militant, as there is an attempt "to evade the penalty, since he is not prepared to accept the legal consequences of his violation of the law" (p. 367) as defined by the Lovedale authorities. Otherwise, they would have "to express a recognition of the legitimacy of the constitution to which he is opposed" and this "represents a more profound opposition to the legal order" (p. 367) and that they did so only grudgingly when they had exhausted the alternatives.

### **The advent of Bantu education**

After the Nationalist Party came to power in 1948, significant changes occurred in the implementation of the policy of grand apartheid. One response was the formation of a campaign in "defiance of unjust laws" by

the African National Congress and the Indian National Congress. Shepherd's (LMI 1952:5; cf. 1971:136) assessment of the course of events appears incredible in the light of the context for one who had such a close contact with black youth:

It also seemed most unfortunate that a city like Port Elizabeth and an area such as the Eastern Province, where in both the treatment of African people had been kinder than on most parts of the country, should have been chosen to be the main storm centres of the defiance movement [... which] did immense harm to the African cause.

However, Shepherd appears to have been unaware of the subversive resistant element in the mission education he and his predecessors had promoted (Duncan 2003:304 ff.). His view was that it was in mission schools that "Christian virtues could operate and shine more clearly – honour to the individual, kindness between man and man, fairness, justice, self-control, the community spirit" (Shepherd 1971:136). How well did Shepherd actually know black people when he lists the individual prior to the interests of the community? Further, he decried involvement in politics and at the same time claimed that the "building up of our students in Christian character and knowledge is our paramount business" (LMI 1952:6). Some would argue that, hopefully, character would lead to engagement in political life and cannot be separated from it! The above discussion gives the lie to Boucher's (1987:707) assessment: "He continually emphasised a sympathetic approach to the aspirations of Blacks, but because he believed political responsibility was the result of a process rather than instant control without political maturity, he was sometimes deliberately misinterpreted in left-wing political and clerical circles".

The victory of the Nationalist Party in 1948 was disastrous for mission education. Shepherd's ill-considered comment in his annual report for 1951 (LMI 1951:5) would, hopefully, later give him cause for reflection: "Fortunately – and this is a fact not always grasped in overseas countries – South African administration is generally much more kindly than its legislation would indicate". In 1952, parliament received the Eiselen Commission's report on Native Education, which aimed to separate the education of black people from that of Europeans and others. This involved removing education from missions and church bodies and was clearly integral to the promotion of the policy of apartheid that determined that the education of black people could not be separated from their total life. This led to the establishment of a separate division of Bantu Affairs under the Department of Native Affairs. An important element of the changes was to be the extension of teaching through the medium of vernacular languages: "This should be done in such a way that the Bantu child will be able to find his way in European communities, to follow oral or written instructions; and to carry on a conversation with Europeans about his work and other subjects of common interest" (Native Education Commission, cited by Shepherd 1971:139). This was extremely patronising and insulting in a

context in which young black people were taught to be able communicators, for example, through the debating society, which conducted its business in English.

Church bodies were unanimous in their rejection of these proposals. The Lovedale Governing Council advocated consultation with all those who would be affected by these changes. Their pleas were ignored. The debate on the proposed *Bantu Education Act* included a charge that the mission institutions had contributed to the destruction of African culture and life, that they had sought to produce English-speaking clones and that they were in the vanguard of British imperialism. The Act was passed in 1953. The churches faced a difficult choice regarding surrendering education to the government or soldiering on with vastly reduced subsidies. The general conclusion reached by most churches was to lease their buildings to the Department of Education and retain control of their hostels so they could maintain some degree of Christian influence over their students. The Church of Scotland, owners of the Lovedale property, decided on a recommendation of the Governing Council, to transfer the schools and hostels to the government but to retain ownership of the buildings. At Lovedale, the changes took place from the beginning of 1956, meaning that one coercive ideology was replaced by another. White (1987:210) commented that Verwoerd's policy "was destined to create a rift in the land which was to grow deeper and deeper and which would lead to continual disturbances in African education. Lovedale, for instance, was to suffer major disturbances every second year after the introduction of the *Bantu Education Act*". Shepherd retired at the end of 1955.

## Conclusion

We may agree with White's (1987:219) assessment that missionary thinking was not static at Lovedale, as educational policy did change, "But whilst there was change there was also continuity as the missionary ideal always received priority". This was the essence of coercive agency at Lovedale – "the missionary ideal always received priority".

Wilkie sought a diplomatic settlement to conflict and so during his period at Lovedale there was considerable calm as the result of his "gentler and more reflective attitude" (Kros 1992:10). Shepherd, on the other hand, had an aggressive personality and was not afraid of conflict. "Thus his principalship was bound to be more turbulent" (White 1987:221). Oosthuizen (1970:128) agreed: "With its specific Christian orientation Lovedale's educational programme was not solely determined by the needs, interests and characteristics of its students, but also with the objective world of values which their teachers put before them. No one did it more effectively than their Chaplain from 1927–1941, and their Principal from 1942–1955".

But it was Wilkie who was the architect of the educational policy that Shepherd inherited, developed and promoted, despite Wilkie's repugnance towards recent legislation:

I sometimes wonder now on reflection whether I really made sufficient allowance for the deep injury which they felt done to their people by the whole trend of that legislation. I could set over the fact that administratively there have been spectacular advances in the last few years. But it must be terribly hard for even the best of them to take a "balanced view" when by the law of the land they are deprived of one privilege after another and in economic matters not even recognised as employees – just things (Wilkie to Shepherd, 1946, Cory MS 16453[D]).

Wilkie did not challenge the *status quo* he encountered at Lovedale, but he did promote it during his tenure.

A comment made by the late Kalu (2005:25) with regard to the secessions that resulted from the mission churches of the late nineteenth century to form Ethiopian-type churches is entirely apposite in this regard and provides a fitting conclusion to this article: "individuals trained in the missionary enclaves [...] rejected the degradation in the regime". This represents the transition from a colonial to an emergent postcolonial paradigm where "resistance is exercised and is often taken by the dominant group to be mere subservience, but is in fact an indication of the resilience of the people. It is a transitional tactical move in which hegemony still prevails but resistance takes the form of camouflage, mimicry, or dissembling" (Westhelle 2010:39).

The findings in this article are consistent with my earlier findings relating to the mission history of Lovedale Missionary Institution from 1841 to 1930. One example is the pervasive influence of the conversion motif that "infused the entire curriculum of the institution" (Duncan 2003:375) and was basic to the dominant culture promoted by the missionaries rather than in reality to Christ. Regarding the resistance motif, the disputes arising ostensibly out of food problems were recurrent as can be seen from the incidents that occurred after the Second World War, especially at Lovedale in 1946. "It was in these instances that Lovedale students learned to adapt what they had learned, with a view to making them conformists, and employ it in order that they could attempt to re-order the society in which they lived" (Duncan 2003:375).

As with issues related to censorship, educated black persons who expressed views that contradicted received missionary wisdom, as in the submission of material for publication at Lovedale Press, were rejected, and this led, in turn, to "the repudiation of oppression and marginalisation by black people who saw little to trust in their missionary mentors" (Duncan 2003:376).

While coercive agency was responsible for inhibiting creative development, producing clones and promoting Christianity as the only civilisation by discounting centuries of authentic social and cultural expression [

that served the indigenous population well for so long, it also had its positive aspects in that it raised up generations of critical thinkers and activists. Du Plessis (1911:365) offers a positive assessment of mission education in this regard: “in certain directions it has done for the native what no other institution has done, or even attempted. It has awakened hopes and kindled ambitions in the soul of the native, many of which must necessarily die out, but some of which will come to fruition”.

The ambivalent results of coercive agency do not negate its usefulness as a tool to reinterpret mission history for the manner in which culture was challenged, assimilated and rejected reveals its value as a theological source, such was the impact it made on missionaries, whatever their particular response to it (Duncan 2003:381). The same is true of the learners at Lovedale Missionary Institution.

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