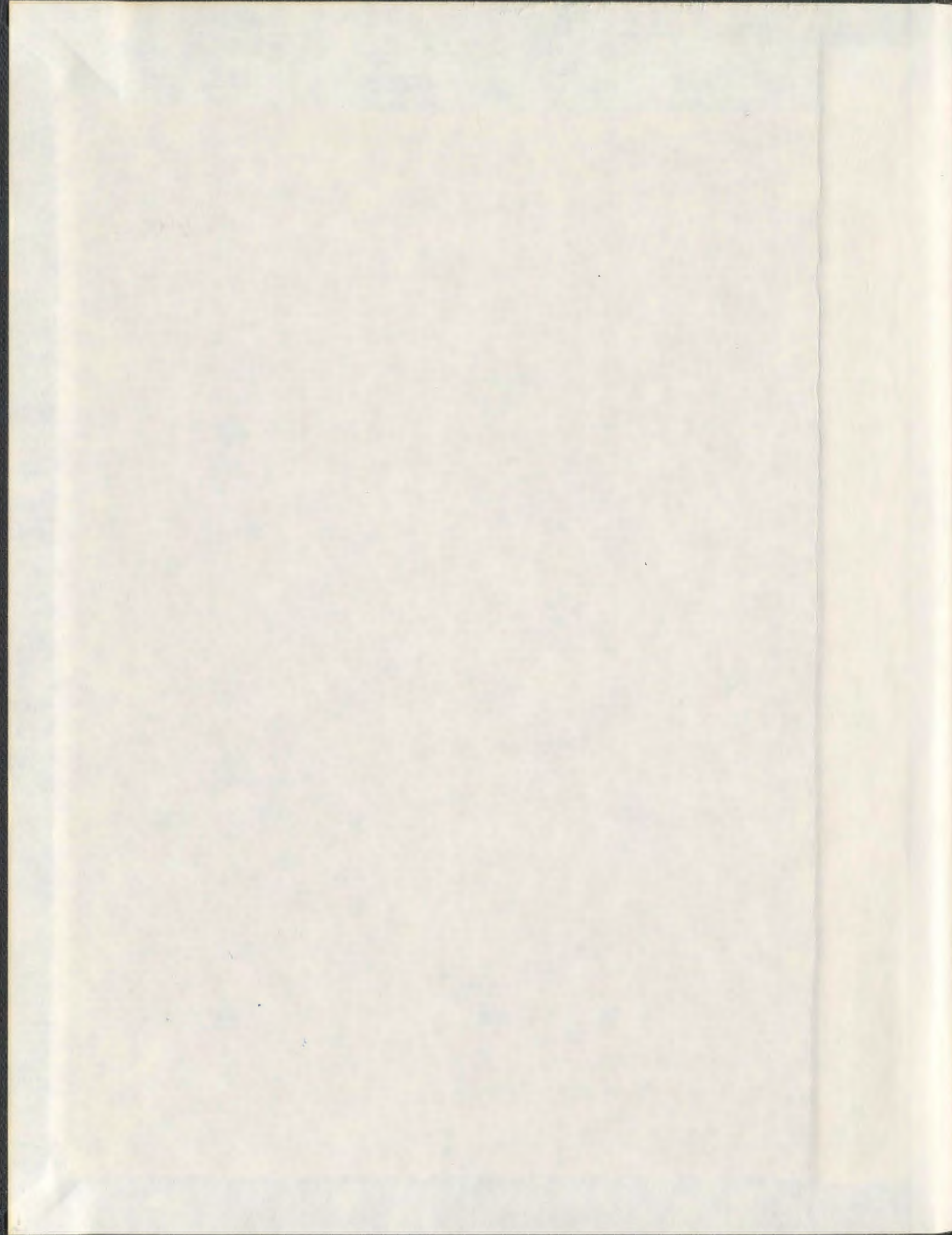


A PEOPLE REACHING FOR ECSTASY:  
THE GROWTH OF METHODISM IN  
NEWFOUNDLAND, 1774-1874

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**by**

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**A thesis submitted to the  
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## **Abstract**

The thesis reappraises the growth of Methodism in Newfoundland finding that it was a populist movement energized by the religious dynamic of a quest for spiritual ecstasy. This is in contrast to an historiography that has presented a top-down history of Methodism as a moral rescue by clergy of a degenerated populace encased in isolation and a cruel environment. That historiography has fixed upon the administrative formation of the Newfoundland District in 1815 and the consequent increase in clergy as the turning point in its history.

Instead, Methodism was a lay spiritual movement of a people searching for ecstasy. It spread as a dynamic personal religion, facilitated by the migratory nature of its population. The most prominent characteristic of the residents was not isolation, but mobility, expediting the spread of Methodism as a religion of experience. Transhumance included both dual residency and further family movement to the northeast coast and Labrador for the summer fishery. There was also the vocational mobility of fishing voyages along the southeast coast and sealing voyages on the northeast coast. It was this lay zeal and mobility which were the primary means for the spread of Methodism in Newfoundland, not the organizational efforts of British missionaries.

Populist Methodism in the bays of Newfoundland, continually energized through revivals, was in sharp contrast with the extremely hierarchical 19<sup>th</sup>-century versions of Anglicanism and Catholicism - Tractarianism and ultramontanistism - emanating from St. John's. Methodism presented a vision of man, not in contrast to the cruel land, but in contrast to clerical mediation, through its proclamation of direct access to God. The vernacular religious impulse was trusted to such a degree that deference to clergy gave way to popular freedom and self-assurance. In this way Methodism, which grew to over a quarter of the population, gave a third dimension to Newfoundland society, the capability and acceptability of the vernacular.

## Acknowledgments

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Early in the fall of last year, a fisherman [at Black Island] engaged Robert R., a zealous member of our Society, residing in Twillingate, to mend his herring nets. In the bargain Robert agreed to be allowed to read the word of God in the family, and to pray morning and evening, during his stay. Being acquainted with Mr. Wesley's *Works*, and having a well-tryed experience in vital godliness, Robert's exposition of the Scripture and prayer were with power. A few of the neighbours expressed a wish to be permitted to come in at the hour of evening prayer; and on one occasion the eldest daughter of Robert's employer cried aloud for mercy.... The next night another sister and the father joined in strong cries for mercy; nor did they cry long before the two sisters rejoiced in the knowledge of the remission of sins through faith in the blood of Christ. This 'new thing' caused much talk among the islanders, and employed Robert night and day in discussing and defending. And as net-mending is a very quiet business, performed by the fire-side, he had no occasion, like the net-menders of Galilee, to forsake his nets to preach the Gospel.... At length 'tidings of these things' reached the ears of a family residing on the opposite side of the island.... They were the children of pious parents, once resident in Harbour Grace.... Twenty years ago the necessity of the times had compelled them to leave their father's family altar, and seek a living so far north as Green Bay.... They prepared to cross the island, and were quickly at the house where Robert and his young converts were mending their nets, and singing at their work.... A general inquiry was now made throughout the island after eternal things, and the work of the Lord prospered.<sup>1</sup>

Much study of religion in Newfoundland has been focused on the extent it has aided or hindered politics. The perception is that political history is paramount in the study of Newfoundland culture, and religion is important only to the degree that it aids that study. This thesis claims that religion, far more than politics, is constitutive of that culture. Historians have treated their audience to the play-by-play maneuvers of a political elite feuding in St. John's, enlisting bishops and clergy to their extent of involvement, and presented it as Newfoundland history. To the extent they have done so they have forgotten the people who make up that history. Religion, far more than politics,

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<sup>1</sup> *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1852, 206. "Extract of a letter from the Rev. John Brewster, dated Twillingate, Green Bay, October 30, 1851."

was integral to the life of the people in the bays, harbours, and coves. St. John's and its political infighting was generally removed from the concerns of daily life. In the novel *Skipper George Netman*, the people in "Caplin Bight" remembered 1861 not as the year that Bishops Feild and Mullock clashed in a battle of religion and politics, which has been endlessly documented as making "history," but as the year "the siles [seals] came in the thousands all along the shore," no doubt regarded as a special providence, a great blessing from God.<sup>2</sup>

Methodism began as an 18<sup>th</sup>-century spiritual movement within the Church of England. John Wesley desired to reform the Church through calling people to conversion and to a lifetime of holiness. The movement differed from other Nonconformists in that it emphasized an even more experiential view of salvation, and sanctification, it provided for discipleship and discipline through the formation of classes connected organizationally within a societies, and it continued to have an attachment to the Church of England, though the relationship became attenuated over time.

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<sup>2</sup>George Bond, *Skipper George Netman, A Story of Out-port Methodism in Newfoundland* (London: T. Woolmer, 1887), 64. First published in "Skipper George Netman of Caplin Bight: A Story of Outport Methodism," *Canadian Methodist Magazine*, January to June, XXI, 1885, 164-176, 269-273, 336-340, 431-436, 518-525; July to December, XXII, 1885, 63-67, 259-263, 365-367, 445-448, 542-547. For the 1861 feud, see D.W. Prowse, *History of Newfoundland From The English, Colonial, and Foreign Records* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1895), 488-490; Gertrude E. Gunn, *The Political History of Newfoundland 1832-1864* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), 157-175; John P. Greene, "The Influence of Religion in the Politics of Newfoundland, 1850-1861," (MA thesis, Memorial University, 1970), 121-146; Frederick Jones, "Bishops in Politics: Roman Catholic v Protestant in Newfoundland 1860-2," *Canadian Historical Review* LV, 4 (December 1974): 408-421; Patrick O'Flaherty, *Lost Country: The Rise and Fall of Newfoundland, 1843-1933* (St. John's: Long Beach Press, 2005), 89-92.

This thesis is a study of the people who constituted the Methodist movement in Newfoundland. It is a lay bay study.<sup>3</sup> It claims that the popular experience of revival, not clerical leadership or institutional organization, was the dynamic for the expansion of Methodism, to such a degree that it became a third force in Newfoundland society, a third dimension to its culture.<sup>4</sup> It does not claim that Methodist polity and missionaries were irrelevant, but that they were secondary, and only at times, a hindrance.<sup>5</sup>

The people of Newfoundland were principally fishing families. Thomas Nemec, in a study of Trepassey, noted that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were at least three economic distinctions among fishermen, the most significant being that of owner of a schooner. In addition, the owners of "skiffs" were more prosperous than the smaller punt and dory fishermen. Skiffs had crews of seven men and were large enough to permit the use of cod seines. As a result of the differing means of production, fishermen were not only in the lower class, but also in the middle class and the upper class with priests, merchants and

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<sup>3</sup>The focus is on the popular expansion of Methodism in the various bays of Newfoundland.

<sup>4</sup>For a focus on Methodism as "experience," see E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Markham, ON: Penguin Books, 1968), 402, 917-918, and David Hempton, *The Religion of the People: Methodism and popular religion c.1750-1900* (London: Routledge, 1996), 3-5.

<sup>5</sup>The primary contribution of missionaries was their preaching, to the extent that they were gifted. They also gave attention to Methodist polity. Richard B. Roy, "A Reappraisal of Wesleyan Methodist Mission in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century, as Viewed through the Ministry of the Rev. John Smithies (1802-1872)," (PhD thesis, Edith Cowan University, 2006), 39.

public officials.<sup>6</sup> At Harbour Breton, D.A. Macdonald found a similar threefold class structure based on vessel size and fishing gear with “the richest fishermen” among the upper class. The middle class was distinguished by “ownership of a schooner, tenure of a minor government office, petty trading, a skilled manual trade or command of a vessel.”<sup>7</sup> In addition to the cod fishery, on the south coast the bait trade in herring with French and American bank-fishing vessels “sponsored the construction of hundreds of schooners in the district and led to the growth of a class of prosperous fishermen who were independent of supplying merchants.”<sup>8</sup> Such boat building involved a large number of tradesmen or artisans. The northeast coast had a similar social stratification among fishermen, with the ownership of a schooner being a critical distinction whether one was engaged in sealing or the Labrador fishery.<sup>9</sup> “Every harbour of any size had vessels going

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<sup>6</sup> Thomas Nemec, “Trepassey, 1840-1900: An Ethnohistorical Reconstruction of Anglo-Irish Outport Society,” *Newfoundland Quarterly* LXX, 1 (June 1973), 20.

<sup>7</sup>D.A. Macdonald, “Social History in a Newfoundland Outport: Harbour Breton, 1850-1900,” in James E. Candow and Carol Corbin, eds. *How Deep is the Ocean? : Historical Essays on Canada's Atlantic Fishery* (Sydney, N.S.: University College of Cape Breton Press, 1977), 98.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 92, 99-104. See also, David Bradley, “Smugglers, Schemers, Scoundrels and Sleeveens: An Analysis of Merchant-Client Relations at Bonavista, Newfoundland, 1875-1895” (MA thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1994), 112-113, 170-171.

<sup>9</sup>Shannon Ryan, *The Ice Hunters: A History of Newfoundland Sealing to 1914* (St. John's: Breakwater Books Limited, 1994), 136.

out,” before the seal fishery was taken over by steamers out of St. John’s.<sup>10</sup> There was also a number in larger communities who were not directly engaged in fishing. David Bradley noted that in Bonavista in 1874 there were “three clergymen/ministers, one doctor, nine farmers, twenty-nine mechanics/handicrafts people, twenty-two merchants and traders, twenty-five people engaged in lumbering, and nine lobster factory workers.”<sup>11</sup> Methodists came from all three classes, whether they were merchants such as James Saint and J.J. Rogerson at Bonavista and St. John’s, Mrs. Thomas Duder at Fogo, merchant clerks such as Charles Apsey and Philip Henry Gosse at Carbonear, captains of vessels such as Edward White, the fisherman Samuel Wheller at Twillingate, or tradesmen such as William Harding, a blacksmith at Burin.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>George J. Bond, *Skipper George Netman*, 12. The novel is taken substantially as history. Some would quibble whether some of its details are “facts.” For instance, a writer to the *Twillingate Sun* asked, “Is it a true story or a novel?” having questions about “its correctness in detail.” For example, he objected, “now no brig ever went out from Twillingate to the ice,” as Bond had stated in the novel. *Twillingate Sun*, November 3, 1888. For a discussion of history and more recent Newfoundland novels, see Stuart Pierson’s reflections on John Steffler’s *The Afterlife of George Cartwright* and Wayne Johnston’s *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* in Stan Dragland, ed., *Hard-Headed and Big-Hearted Writing Newfoundland: Stuart Pierson* (St. John’s: Pennywell Books, 2006), 136-152, 216-218, 227-245.

<sup>11</sup>David Bradley, “Smugglers, Schemers, Scoundrels and Sleeveens,” 74. Bradley noted that the 1874 census omitted teachers and government employees, of which there were several at Bonavista.

<sup>12</sup>Charles Lench, *The Story of Methodism in Bonavista* ([n.p.], 1919), 58; *Methodist Monthly Greeting*, November, 1907, 4; January, 1903, 10; Ronald Rompkey, “Philip Henry Gosse’s account of his years in Newfoundland, 1827-1835,” *Newfoundland Studies* 6, 2 (Fall 1990), 243-244; *Methodist Monthly Greeting*, November, 1896, 170; November 1899, 12; “William Harding Diary, 1793-1877,” Archives and Manuscripts Division, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University, Coll-39.

The time frame of the study is 1774-1874. Coughlan and his converts in Conception Bay have already received skillful scholarly attention, and it is not my intention to rework the Coughlan period.<sup>13</sup> Instead, the study begins in 1774, the year of John Hoskins' arrival in Newfoundland and examines the consequent blossoming of a lay Methodism in Old Perlican and Lower Island Cove. The presence of this robust popular spirituality - the heart of the movement - to the north deflates the commonly held notion that Methodism languished until 1815, the year in which Newfoundland Methodists became administered as a District of the English Wesleyan Methodist Church, erroneously portrayed as a turning point in the movement.<sup>14</sup> By 1874 tensions within the movement such as the search for and expression of spiritual ecstasy, leadership of women, and the drinking of alcohol were resolved as Methodism identified itself with the prevailing Victorian cultural values of respectability, decorum, and material progress. In

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<sup>13</sup>Hans Rollmann, "Laurence Coughlan and the Origins of Methodism in Newfoundland," in Charles H. H. Scobie and John Webster Grant, *The Contribution of Methodism to Atlantic Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 53-76. S. Dawn Barrett, "Revivalism and the Origins of Newfoundland Methodism: 1766-1774" (MA thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1993). Mary Angela Robinson, "Eighteenth-Century Newfoundland Methodism as a Revitalization Movement" (MA thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1996).

<sup>14</sup>Jacob Parsons, "The Origin and Growth of Newfoundland Methodism 1765-1855" (MA thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1964), 35-50; Arthur E. Kewley, "The First Fifty Years of Methodism in Newfoundland 1765-1815. Was it Authentic Wesleyanism?," *The Bulletin* 26 1977. *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society* XIX, 1-2 (March-June 1977), 7; John Webster Grant, "Methodist Origins in Atlantic Canada," in Charles H.H. Scobie and John Webster Grant, eds., *The Contribution of Methodism to Atlantic Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 36; Neill Semple, *The Lord's Dominion The History of Canadian Methodism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 28-30.

that year Methodism had grown to such an extent that it was established as an institution within Newfoundland society. The church was given its own educational system, on an equal footing with the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church, and was upgraded from a District to a Conference, one of the six making up the Methodist Church of Canada. It ceased being a counter-cultural movement and instead focused on maintaining the status quo in a society in which it held such a large vested interest.

The historiography of Newfoundland Methodism, with its emphasis on the 1815 administrative creation of the Newfoundland District and the increase in clergy sent by the Wesleyan Methodist Conference is misdirected. So is the emphasis on the failure of Methodism in the Carbonear-Harbour Grace area at that time, since a healthy, popular revival of Methodism was taking place to the north at such places as Island Cove, Old Perlican, and Bonavista. It was the extensive revival of 1829-1832 that brought Methodism in Conception Bay to a healthy state, and not the administrative structure and the clergy who had been there by then for over a decade. Similarly, revivals played a large role in Fortune Bay and Notre Dame Bay, and continued to do so in the primary centres of Methodism.

The historiography's emphasis on isolation and its concomitant, degeneration, is also misdirected. It was mobility, and not isolation, which characterized 19<sup>th</sup>-century Newfoundland society. Due to continual regrouping while pursuing a migratory fishery on both the south and northeast coasts, and winter transhumance for wood production, people seasonally communicated with neighbours from other settlements, and even from

other bays.<sup>15</sup> In addition, people resettled on the northeast coast toward the north and to the westward on the south coast. As a result, the primary means of the expansion of Methodism was the migratory habits of the people. Seasonal fishermen from Grand Bank extended Methodism to “the western shore.” And seasonal fishermen and migratory families brought Methodism from Conception Bay and Bonavista northward to Notre Dame Bay. It was the zeal and fervour of the people through revivals, a vernacular piety, which provided the energy and motivation for the expansion of Methodism. Missionaries arrived when there was a sufficient number of Methodists in an area to warrant their presence.

Because Methodism was “a dynamic personal religion” of experience, people were motivated to communicate the possibility of joy and ecstasy to their neighbours.<sup>16</sup>

Whether on decks of vessels, on flakes, or in homes or chapels, people believed that their

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<sup>15</sup>The anthropologist, Philip E.L. Smith suggests that “the average outport Newfoundlander may well have been, in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the most mobile European in North America.” “In Winter Quarters,” *Newfoundland Studies* 3,1 (Spring, 1987), 5; “Transhumant Europeans Overseas: The Newfoundland Case,” *Current Anthropology* 28, 2 (April 1987): 241-250; “Transhumance among European settlers in Atlantic Canada,” *The Geographical Journal* 161, 1 (March 1995): 79-86. See also Peter Pope, *Fish into wine: The Newfoundland Plantation in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 248-254.

<sup>16</sup>Semple, *The Lord's Dominion The History of Canadian Methodism*, 53. On “ecstasy,” see Ralph W. Hood Jr., “Theories of Ecstasy” in Michael McClymond, ed., *Encyclopedia of Revivals in America*, Vol. 1 (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2007), 150. “When ecstatic states are sought and supported by practices linking someone to a sense of the sacred or transcendent, and supported by social groups that form part of a faith tradition, ecstatic states serve to revitalize and affirm the central states and values of the faith tradition. Outside of such supports, experiences of ecstasy can become isolated ‘highs’ whose pleasure is episodic and without sustained fruits.”

words and feelings were able to communicate to others the blessing of God. They did not have to wait for a clergyman. This vernacular Methodism gave people great confidence in their ability to communicate with God and to communicate God to others. As a result Methodism added a third dimension to Newfoundland religion and culture, at a time when Tractarianism and ultramontaniam were tilting Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism in a hierarchical, clergy-centred direction. Against such sacerdotal versions of Christianity, Methodists stood out even more as a voluntary association of people who, regardless of gender or rank, believed they were called to lend their passion and voice to call others to repentance and joy. Fishermen, women, even children were empowered to speak, and given status according to their spirituality, which superseded status according to social rank and material goods. The religious impulses of the common man was trusted to such a high degree that it was given credence above the religion of the literate class, whether clergyman or magistrate. The arbiter of truth was not erudition but experience, "Tis all true. I feel it. Yes, blessed be God, I feel it."<sup>17</sup>

Dialectical tensions within Methodism are also examined. The clergy-led administration often pursued their own ends and those of the Wesleyan Methodist Committee in London. The administrative agenda was often out of step with, or counter to, the interests of the people as they communicated their religion of the heart to each other along the coast. The clergy were also in the vanguard of an impetus towards

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<sup>17</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 28, 1846-1848, Samuel W. Sprague, Burin, December 14, 1846.

respectability, which looked askance at the emotive demonstrations of vernacular Methodism, and successfully subdued it in the larger centres by the 1870s. They were successful, too, in quashing a rising public ministry of women in preaching and other leadership roles. As the chapel-building phase of Methodism reached its full stride, clergy and laymen controlled the various boards and women assumed the role of idealized domestic spiritual nurturers and engaged in voluntary activities.

There was also tension within Methodism over state funding of denominational education. While Methodists first saw this as detrimental - their small numbers would prevent them from having their own schools in many communities - as they increased, the prospect became more popular. Instead of having their children subjected to the Church of England catechism, they could have state-funded Methodist teachers, who could also serve as lay preachers, in schools which could also be used as chapels.

The question of the uniqueness of Newfoundland Methodism prevails in the literature. It is maintained here that while its theology was in harmony with Methodism elsewhere, its message and appeal were nuanced by the Newfoundland context. The open-ended quest for a livelihood in fishing and sealing, not to speak of the constant dangers, heightened an acute awareness of providence, and possibly increased receptivity to the Methodist message. In addition, merchant credit as the prevailing means of exchange in Newfoundland society prevented the normal Methodist means of raising money. The Church of England as the only Protestant alternative was another feature of Newfoundland society, and, as a result, Methodism retained some of its traditions for a

longer time than elsewhere.

In keeping with the predominance of region in Newfoundland society and history, an inquiry has been made into the development of Methodism in five bays - Conception, Bonavista, Notre Dame, Placentia, and Fortune - and the larger centres within them. While there have been many claims about Newfoundland Methodism in its historiography, they have to withstand a study of the actual growth and extension of Methodism along the northeast and south coasts of Newfoundland. It is these studies of the regions and circuits, therefore, which provide the evidence for the basic argument of the thesis, namely that Methodism in Newfoundland was a dynamic movement of a people reaching for ecstasy, and aided in its extension by their migratory habits. In time, however, the allure of respectability became dominant and the people, then aspiring to status and middle class propriety, began to eschew the religious fervour that had generated the movement in the first place. Church historians have focused on hierarchy, organization, administration and theology, and have not sought to uncover the potentially embarrassing past of a people's religion of enthusiasm upon which the whole structure had been founded. Academic historians, following their lead, have focused on the institutional structure and bureaucracy and have largely left uncovered a robust popular movement of the religion of experience which constituted over a quarter of the population, a dynamic cultural force in Newfoundland society.

## Chapter Two:

## Historiography and Methodology

In the early 1990s Michael Gauvreau claimed that “the new social history” was guilty of “marginalizing the religious experience ... failing to recognize its creative role in shaping cultural traditions, social forms, and political ideologies.”<sup>1</sup> This was a valid criticism, and the first section of this chapter emphasizes the importance of the study of popular religion in social history. Secondly, it is argued that although Methodism in Newfoundland has been studied by a number of scholars, possibly more than for any other denomination, much of that historiography has been misdirected. It is based on an outdated interpretation of Newfoundland society, that of A.H. McLintock, and on an erroneous concept of what constituted normative Methodism.<sup>2</sup> The Maritime provinces have been taken as the primary reference for comparative purposes because of their proximity, and because the two regions were supplied by Wesleyan Methodist missionaries from Britain and became part of the Eastern British America Methodist Conference in 1855. The historiography of Methodist involvement in education and politics is also noted. Lastly, ways that a social history of religion has been attempted elsewhere are considered, which are profitable for a study of Methodism in

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<sup>1</sup>Michael Gauvreau, “Beyond the Half-Way House: Evangelicalism and the Shaping of English Canadian Culture,” *Acadiensis* XX, 2 (Spring 1991), 158.

<sup>2</sup>A.H. McLintock, *The Establishment of Constitutional Government in Newfoundland, 1783-1832: A Study of Retarded Colonisation* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1941).

Newfoundland. Through such study the emphasis on institutional and political Methodist history can be redressed, and an attempt can be initiated to study the people who made up the movement.

## 2.1 Social History and the Study of Religion

The study of religion entered the 1970s debate concerning the importance of regional and national identities in the study of Canadian history. Goldwin French observed that not even 18<sup>th</sup>-century Nova Scotia, let alone religion in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Nova Scotia, was seen as important by “the tradition of Canadian history as the fur trade in search of a country or the centrality of the emergence of Ontario.” He hoped, however, that through “detailed studies” of religion “in particular localities,” much insight could be gained into “our social heritage.”<sup>3</sup> Philip Buckner reflected back on that era in his essay, “‘Limited Identities’ Revisited: Regionalism and Nationalism in Canadian History.” He took exception to the “limited identity” category of Ramsay Cook’s 1967 reference to “regional, ethnic and class identities.” Instead, a region has multiple identities, and one might add layers of identity, because of its “inter-connectedness” with wider influences, such as the economic, political, and, I would add, religious.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>G.S. French, “Religion and Society in Late Eighteenth Century Nova Scotia,” *Acadiensis* IV, 2 (Spring 1975), 102, 110. Terrence Murphy renewed the call for religious social history in 1985. See his “The Religious History of Atlantic Canada: The State of the Art,” *Acadiensis* XV, 1 (Autumn 1985), 175.

<sup>4</sup>P.A. Buckner, “‘Limited Identities’ Revisited: Regionalism and Nationalism in Canadian History,” *Acadiensis* XXX, 1 (Autumn 2000), 4, 12.

Michael Gauvreau did not think that religious history should be classed as a limited identity. Rather, it “supplies a vantage point from which the historian can begin to consider and integrate issues of gender, class, ethnicity and region - all of which involve religious dimensions.” It is not the only vantage point, of course, but it is one “by which the ‘limited identities’ of the ‘new social history’ can be synthesized into a broader pattern of cultural meaning.”<sup>5</sup> In view of the pervasive presence of religion in the past in Canadian society, its relative absence in Canadian scholarship was somewhat of a puzzle. Carl Berger noted that when historians turned to social history, they focused on “material conditions and class structure” and not on the influence of religion.<sup>6</sup> Mark McGowan also agreed that English Canadian historians had been “undoubtedly reductionist” in their treatment of religion and did not recognize it as “a vital force in the Canadian social fabric.”<sup>7</sup> There were notable exceptions, however. For example, Susan Mann showed the victory of nationalism over ultramontanist in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Quebec in *The Dream of the Nation*. Mann concluded that it was the dream of religion rather than the dream of empire

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<sup>5</sup>Gauvreau, “Beyond the Half-Way House: Evangelicalism and the Shaping of English Canadian Culture,” 177.

<sup>6</sup>Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 293.

<sup>7</sup>Mark G. McGowan, “Coming Out of the Cloister: Some Reflections on Developments in the Study of Religion in Canada, 1980-1990,” *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 1-2 (Spring-Fall 1990), 182.

which provided the impetus of a New France.<sup>8</sup> The lack of prominence of religion may have resulted from the fact that many historians studying labour and women's history had not been in church since childhood and were out of sympathy with it.

A convincing Canadian demonstration of the relationship of religion to culture is William Westfall's study of the cultures of Anglican order and Methodist experience in Upper Canada in his *Two Worlds The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ontario*. He maintained that both held a concept of the sacred which historians had to appreciate in order to understand Canada's past. Instead, they had largely followed a positivist approach and had given themselves to a "land and staple products" interpretation of Canadian history. Religion, in effect, was a servant to a "political and economic" master.<sup>9</sup> Instead, Westfall saw contrasting Anglican and Methodist visions as formative influences in Canadian history and culture. The Anglican bishop John Strachan advocated a society based on Church establishment order and hierarchy, a church and state patterned after England. He lost out to the Methodists, led by American preachers and ideology, who became the Protestant majority and with their religion of the experience of God through feelings and emotion, held out for popular power in the form of religious and political freedom.<sup>10</sup> In this way Westfall argued that an accurate perspective on social history is

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<sup>8</sup>Susan Mann, *The Dream of the Nation: A Social and Intellectual History of Quebec* (Toronto: Gage Publishing Limited, 1983).

<sup>9</sup>William Westfall, *Two Worlds The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 17-18.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 37-49.

not a matter of seeing “the impact of religion upon social development,” but rather of seeing “the role society played within religion.”<sup>11</sup>

An American example is Nathan Hatch’s 1994 article, “The Puzzle of American Methodism.” The puzzle was that although Methodism had grown phenomenally in the United States, it had been hardly studied, in contrast to the huge output on Puritanism. From 1776 to 1850 Methodists had increased from 3 percent to 34 percent of all church members of all denominations. Methodism was a popular religion characterized by “dreams and visions, ecstasy, unrestrained emotional release, preaching by blacks, by women, by anyone who felt the call,” and as such offered much more insight than Puritan studies into religion in America.<sup>12</sup> He had previously developed this theme in his groundbreaking 1989 book, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, in which he saw Methodism as a popular revolt against the New England Protestant elites. Methodists, Baptists and others “associated virtue with ordinary people and exalted the vernacular in word, print and song.” In this way they were “championing the interests of common people against professional expertise and elite institutions.”<sup>13</sup> American

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<sup>11</sup>William Westfall, “Order and Experience: Patterns of Religious Metaphor in Early Nineteenth Century Upper Canada,” in Mark G. McGowan and David B. Marshall, eds., *Prophets, Priests, and Prodigals, Readings in Canadian Religious History, 1608 to Present* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1992), 95.

<sup>12</sup>Nathan O. Hatch, “The Puzzle of American Methodism,” *Church History* 63, 2 (June 1994), 178-179.

<sup>13</sup>Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 5.

Methodists under Francis Asbury, travelled in a direction opposite to the British Methodists under the leadership of John Wesley and, later, Jabez Bunting. Wesley and Bunting considered camp meetings “highly improper.” But American Methodists had long abandoned

the once-radical field preaching that Wesley and Whitefield had instituted, shifting attention from conspicuous preaching performances to congregational participation. Those who led the meetings ... encouraged uncensored testimonials by persons without respect to age, gender, or race; the public sharing of private ecstasy; overt physical display and emotional release; loud and spontaneous response to preaching; and the use of folk music that would have chilled the marrow of Charles Wesley.<sup>14</sup>

As a popular religion Methodism was a revolt against elitist theological systems, “tyranny over personal religious experience,” and “clerical pretension and quest for control.”<sup>15</sup> Instead of spirituality being vested in literacy, theological study and classical education, it was vested in common preachers who often without an ability to read “became renowned for their ability to infuse ordinary existence with profound spiritual meaning.” Nowhere was this more so than with the Black Methodists. Hatch drew attention to Genovese’s finding that popular religion became “the major rallying point” for Black identity and dignity.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 50.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 171.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 112-113. Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974).

## 2.2

## Newfoundland Methodist Historiography

The social history of Newfoundland Methodism has been written almost exclusively in terms of moral rescue - the role of Methodism in saving a people from degeneration. It was A.H. McLintock who offered moral uplift as the contribution of Methodism in *The Establishment of Constitutional Government in Newfoundland, 1783-1832: A Study of Retarded Colonisation*, and who set the parameters of the Methodist apologetic discourse by relating that moral degeneration to geographic isolation:

The distribution of the people among such small and scattered outposts had, naturally, far-reaching consequences upon the island's political and social life. On account of their extreme isolation and loneliness, the inhabitants were driven in on themselves. In the north the severity of the winters produced an ice-bound coast for months at a time. Thus communication by sea became impracticable, and ... each tiny community was cut off from contact with the outside world. Towards the south, although the climate was not so severe, winter conditions brought an enforced isolation leading to grave social evils, which from the earliest of times had become a matter of notoriety. So self-contained and isolated were the fishing villages that inter-marriage had in many places united the various families into one general relationship, and this, together with chronic disease and an ill-regulated diet, had produced the gradual degeneration of a splendid stock. 'The generality are a barbarous, perfidious, cruel people,' was the verdict of the day.... One or two Roman Catholic priests, and, later, a few Methodist missionaries who worked mainly in the isolated outposts, comprised a tiny band of self-sacrificing workers who endeavoured ... to raise the social standards of the people. During the long winter months when the cessation of the fisheries produced and enforced idleness, appalling scenes of misery and degradation existed unchecked. Drunkenness was the prevailing vice ... the squalor and poverty of the inhabitants was inexpressible.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>McLintock, *The Establishment of Constitutional Government in Newfoundland*, 14-15. In contrast to this perspective, W. Gordon Handcock spoke of the "social transforming medium" of the annual English migratory fishery. "The West Country Migrations to Newfoundland," *Bulletin of Canadian Studies* V, 1 (April 1981), 5-6. We can see how Greenspond, for example, "kept in touch with the outside world" in Thomas R. Millman, "Life in Newfoundland, 1841-1859, and in Prince Edward Island, 1859-1884,

It was this thesis of isolation as the determining factor shaping Newfoundland people and culture, which informed his account of delayed political development, leading up to “the gift of representative government” in 1832. Thus, in his view, “the fifty-year period after 1783 is the most important in the island’s history.”<sup>18</sup> McLintock’s theme of isolation and degeneracy pervades much of the writing of Newfoundland Methodist history. In this interpretation, the emphasis is not on the spiritual dimension of Methodist religion in everyday life, but on the delayed flowering of Methodist organization and its social benefits through what one could call in McLintock’s terms, ‘the gift of administration.’<sup>19</sup> In both, there is no popular focus, but instead, an emphasis on the perceived benefits of an administrative structure to an allegedly depraved populace.

McLintock was not, of course, the originator of the “retarded colonization” theory. Keith Matthews traced its influence from its beginning with John Reeves, and its refinement by Agnes M. Field, in his article, “Historical Fence Building.”<sup>20</sup> Although

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as described in the Journals of Robert W. Dyer,” *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society* XIV, 2 (June 1972), 35-36.

<sup>18</sup>McLintock, *The Establishment of Constitutional Government in Newfoundland*, xi.

<sup>19</sup>Neill Semple attempts a balance between the need for organization within Methodism while at the same time acknowledging that it was “pre-eminently ... a dynamic personal religion ... a living relationship to God independent of ecclesiastical intermediaries.” Neill Semple, *The Lord’s Dominion The History of Canadian Methodism*, 53.

<sup>20</sup>Keith Matthews, “Historical Fence Building: A critique of the Historiography of Newfoundland,” *Newfoundland Quarterly*, LXXIV, 1 (Spring 1978), 21-23. This essay is second only to that of Reeves, *History of the Government of the Island of Newfoundland*

Matthews discussed McLintock in the essay, he did not draw attention to the “degeneracy” aspect of the theory.

Where did McLintock acquire his severe view of the Newfoundland populace? He did most of his research from 1936 to 1938, and it seems that he was heavily influenced by the 1933 *Newfoundland Royal Commission Report*. The Amulree Report determined that “long periods of enforced isolation have given rise to intermarriage, chronic disease ... and gradual degeneration.”<sup>21</sup> This degeneration was also moral, for circumstances had “sapped ... moral courage,” and caused “a blunting of the moral sense.” It was a deterioration of character caused by an environmental determinism. The only ray of hope was that it was not genetic, but determined by circumstances, that is, the circumstances of living in Newfoundland. When John Hope Simpson, a former Commissioner, reviewed McLintock’s book, he praised it for dealing “objectively with an

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(London: J. Sewell, 1793), in its influence on Newfoundland historiography.

<sup>21</sup>*Newfoundland Royal Commission 1933 Report* (London: 1933), 73, 78, 81. The actual quotation from George Cubit’s “Observations on the island of Newfoundland,” is: It will strike the observer of these facts that the different settlements the island, must from the difficulties of intercourse, be nearly insulated. So in fact it is. The inhabitants often live and die in the spot where they were born. One peculiarity is observable. Marriages and intermarriages have often united the different families of a harbour into a kind of general relationship. Even in some larger communities this will be much the case, that the removal of all the branches of three or four families would nearly depopulate the place.

SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 47, [George Cubit], “Observations on the island of Newfoundland,” March 1819; File 25, George Cubit to George Marsden, St. John’s, May 21, 1818.

important period of Newfoundland history.”<sup>22</sup> Whatever the merits of the Amulree Report in reporting on Newfoundland in the 1930s, transposing its conclusions to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century has led to a misdirected approach to Newfoundland Methodism.

The Amulree Report had a vested interest in finding degeneracy in Newfoundland. The British government was about to deprive a people of democracy and set up a Commission of Government. A form of dictatorship was thought preferable to allowing Newfoundland to default. In order to defend this autocratic manoeuvre an appeal to the financial difficulties of the 1930s was not deemed sufficient. A more radical diagnosis, the failure of the people themselves, had to be advanced as a justification for an action that in normal conditions would be regarded as inexcusable. Thus propping up the interpretative framework of Newfoundland Methodism are a couple of slender shores with a precarious toehold in the narrow ledge of the Royal Commission’s 1930s view of Newfoundland as a degenerate society. It is ironic that this 1930s discourse of degeneracy was chosen by the Royal Commission to describe a society which had by that time been supposedly rescued by a Methodism which had been renovating it for over 150 years.

Therefore, the historiography of Newfoundland Methodism is misdirected in following the McLintock thesis of Methodism’s moral rescue of the people from degeneration due to isolation. The sources he used had a vested interest in asserting the degeneration of the populace which makes their accuracy suspect, as do other sources.

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<sup>22</sup>John Hope Simpson, review of *The Establishment of Constitutional Government in Newfoundland, 1783-1832: A Study of Retarded Colonisation*, by A.H. McLintock, in *International Affairs Review Supplement* XIX, 5 (June 1941), 272.

Secondly, it was not isolation but mobility and communication which marked the lives of the inhabitants. Thirdly, while McLintock stated that Methodist missionaries worked toward the moral uplift of the people, he did not make this the defining justification for Methodism as was asserted by later scholars of Newfoundland Methodism. In contrast to that historiography the present thesis asserts that people became Methodist because of its offer of spirituality. To study Methodism in Newfoundland it is required to focus not on the missionaries and their transmission of an ethical standard, but on the people's thirst for a religion in which relationship with God was characterized by rapture and ecstasy.<sup>23</sup> In this popular movement missionaries often played only an incidental part.

In 1964 Jacob Parsons produced the first scholarly work on Methodism in Newfoundland with his MA thesis, "The Origin and Growth of Newfoundland Methodism 1765-1855."<sup>24</sup> He described its origins with Laurence Coughlan at Harbour Grace and did not omit the important work of John Hoskins at Old Perlican. He traced the administrative development of the movement, giving much significance to its becoming a District of British Wesleyan Methodism in 1815, and a District of Eastern

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<sup>23</sup>Rudolf Otto observed that the feeling of "mysterium tremendum" "may burst in sudden eruption up from the depths of the soul with spasms and convulsions, or lead to the strangest excitements, to intoxicating frenzy, to transport, and to ecstasy." Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. by John W. Harvey (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 12-13.

<sup>24</sup>Parsons, "The Origin and Growth of Newfoundland Methodism 1765-1855."

British America in 1855.<sup>25</sup> He considered that Methodism developed slowly in Newfoundland and cited a lack of organization as the main cause.<sup>26</sup> The second Methodist missionary John Remmington, in 1804, was the first “of a succession of devoted men who were concerned more with the organization and welfare of the Methodists than with outward piety and enthusiasm,” but they were not successful in creating a Methodist organization. “It was not until 1815, fifty years after its beginning, that Newfoundland Methodism had any form of local administration.”<sup>27</sup>

Parsons determined that it was a primary goal of Methodism “to raise the moral and social standards of the inhabitants” and concluded that the movement “contributed substantially” toward this end.<sup>28</sup> He relied on McLintock, who had highlighted social improvement as the contribution of Methodism, but who had provided no examples of

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<sup>25</sup>‘Wesleyan Methodist’ refers to that part of the Methodist movement which remained under the administration of John Wesley’s successors in Britain. It does not refer to those who severed ties with them, for example, the Primitive Methodists, or to those administered from elsewhere, for example, the American Methodist Episcopalians.

<sup>26</sup>Parsons, “The Origin and Growth of Newfoundland Methodism 1765-1855,” 35-50.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 50, 146. But Thomas Coke, appointed the superintendent of missions for the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, estimated that Remmington’s abilities were “extremely weak.” John Rylands Library, PLP 28.12.22, Coke to John Remmington, a letter not sent, September 7, 1804.

<sup>28</sup>Parsons, “The Origin and Growth of Newfoundland Methodism 1765-1855,” v, 145.

immoral communities which were infused with morality through Methodism.<sup>29</sup> In 1964, of course, McIntock and the Amulree Report were two of the very few histories available. Ralph Lounsbury's *The British Fishery at Newfoundland 1634-1763* was also at hand. Although he spoke of the island being "isolated" and the society being "primitive," Lounsbury did not claim that the people were of a degraded character.<sup>30</sup>

Thus McIntock significantly influenced Methodist historiography from the start. He understood Newfoundland society to be in a state of degeneracy and attributed that condition to isolation accompanied by "regulations retarding colonization."<sup>31</sup> So also Parsons set the direction of Methodist historiography in Newfoundland by citing McIntock and featuring a need for moral improvement which Methodism filled, and portraying what might be called a "retarded Methodism," characterized by a lack of developed administrative structure. These are not dominating themes in Parson's thesis, however. He concentrated on "tracing the development of the movement chronologically" with a fair attention to historical context, and he enlisted for the first time an impressive array of primary documents to do so.<sup>32</sup> For example, he drew upon the

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 7. See McIntock, *The Establishment of Constitutional Government in Newfoundland*, 14-15.

<sup>30</sup>Ralph Greenlee Lounsbury, *The British Fishery at Newfoundland 1634-1763* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934), 309.

<sup>31</sup>McIntock, *The Establishment of Constitutional Government in Newfoundland*, 15, 91.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., v.

Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society records, Newfoundland District records, missionary accounts, and Wesleyan Methodist publications.

H.A. Batstone, three years later, made the impact of isolation and social improvement the primary focus of his Master of Sacred Theology thesis, "Methodism in Newfoundland: A Study of its Social Impact" from 1815 to 1925. The Newfoundland to which Methodist missionaries came, he said, was a place of "evildoers and vagabonds."<sup>33</sup> Similarly, he quoted as normative the description of Newfoundland society by the Methodist missionary, William Wilson:

Oppression, violence, swearing, debauchery, profanity, licentiousness, and every crime that can degrade human nature, sink civilized man to a savage, or even reduce him below the brute, was practised without a check.<sup>34</sup>

Wilson wrote this description of Newfoundland society to show the great need for a missionary at the time of Laurence Coughlan's arrival. Batstone did not question Wilson or McLintock, but likewise accepted that the people of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Newfoundland had "a

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<sup>33</sup>H.A. Batstone, "Methodism in Newfoundland: A Study of its Social Impact" (Master of Sacred Theology thesis, McGill University, 1967), 95. Here he quoted McLintock, *The Establishment of Constitutional Government in Newfoundland*, 9. In contrast, Nina Jane Goudie in a study of "The Supreme Court on Circuit: Northern District, Newfoundland, 1826-33," found that the travelling court "addressed on average 246 [cases] a year, of which 239 were civil actions, most of them by far for debt." Christopher English, ed., *Essays in the History of Canadian Law*, Vol. IX (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 115-143.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 17. From William Wilson, *Newfoundland and Its Missionaries* (Cambridge, Mass: 1866), 138. Patrick O'Flaherty noted that "it was sometimes in the interest of the missionary to exaggerate ... he may ... have his eye on the effect his letter will create in London." Patrick O'Flaherty, *The Rock Observed* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 19-20.

lowered moral fibre." In addition to isolation as a cause, Batstone added other factors such as "flirting with death in daily labour," and "an occupation that was involved primarily in the destruction of life," which required "a certain degree of sadism."<sup>35</sup> Thus he described settlers in even more extreme terms than McLintock, ignoring the evidence of such writers as Lewis Amadeus Anspach, who went to Harbour Grace in 1803:

If the character of the natives of Newfoundland, in general, agrees with that of those of Conception Bay, which he (the author) had greater opportunities to appreciate during a residence of upwards of ten years among them, no where can a race be found more remarkable for indefatigable industry, for contempt of danger, for steadiness of temper and of conduct, sincerity and constancy of attachment, and a strong sense of religious duty.<sup>36</sup>

One could contrast this description of Conception Bay with another missionary's portrayal of Portland, Dorset, as a moral slough in the 1790s: "cockfighting, drunkenness, lewdness, and immorality of every species, with dreadful profaneness, were openly practiced."<sup>37</sup>

For Batstone, Methodism rescued Newfoundland society from the moral abyss through its emphasis on education, temperance, observance of the Lord's Day and through

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<sup>35</sup>Batstone, "Methodism in Newfoundland: A Study of its Social Impact," 92, 100, 105, 108.

<sup>36</sup> Lewis Amadeus Anspach, *A History of the Island of Newfoundland* (London: Printed for the Author, and sold by T. and J. Allman, 1819), 477-478. Frederick Jones and G. M. Story described Anspach's chapter, "Of Character and Manners," 448-485, as "nothing less than a pioneering essay on the social history of the region." *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. VI (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 10. O'Flaherty characterized Anspach as "a man not easy to impress or accustomed to bestow praise without good reason." *The Rock Observed*, 62.

<sup>37</sup>*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1833, "Memoir of the Rev. George Smith," 6.

the “the church as a social institution in the community.” Methodism was “a bulwark against the evil and degradation that isolation brings” and gave “a vision of man, not in relation to nature or the cruel land in which he lived, but in terms of God.”<sup>38</sup> Thus Batstone attempted to relate the appeal and value of Methodism in Newfoundland to its ethical uplift, but provided no evidence of a degraded state from which the people were deemed to be rescued. He was right, however, to say that Methodism gave people “a vision ... in terms of God.” The concept of an experiential relationship with God made Methodism attractive, and its moral implications were secondary.

Naboth Winsor’s thesis on Methodism between 1855 and 1884 was a break from this conceptual framework.<sup>39</sup> He stated that one must endeavour to “understand the environment in which the Methodist Church in Newfoundland was working,” a theme he took up with Methodist involvement in education. He also explored the strained relations with the Church of England, particularly during the episcopate of Edward Feild, which resulted in Feild describing Methodism as “an unreal church.”<sup>40</sup> Winsor did not trace the source of the friction with Bishop Feild to his Tractarianism, however.

Winsor’s main contribution is his list of reasons for the success of Methodism in Newfoundland. Highlighting a lack of Church of England clergymen as the first, he

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<sup>38</sup>Batstone, “Methodism in Newfoundland: A Study of its Social Impact,” 44, 153, 148.

<sup>39</sup>Naboth Winsor, “Methodism in Newfoundland 1855-1884” (MA thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1970).

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., iv, 77-91, 112-125.

concluded that people “would have welcomed gladly ministers of any Protestant Communion.” Other helpful factors were the internal migration, especially along the northeast coast; the economic suitability and benefit of Methodist classes to outport society; and the hope which Methodism gave during times of economic depression. He concluded that one of Methodism’s main contributions to Newfoundland society was its enlistment of ordinary people for service in the ministry as local preachers, and also as “exhorters, class leaders, and prayer leaders.”<sup>41</sup> He did not pursue these factors, but they stand up to historical scrutiny.

However, the theme of “isolation” soon returned. A year after Winsor’s thesis, Arthur E. Kewley partially revived the McLintock thesis with a lecture on “The Influence of Isolation on the Theology of Methodism in Newfoundland, 1874-1924.”<sup>42</sup> Because outports were so removed from civilization as a result of both “natural and chosen” factors, by 1874 Methodism was composed of “strongly built bastions of isolation.” Kewley dropped the degeneration aspect of the theory, and instead focused on the impact of isolation, thus addressing the question of the distinctiveness of Newfoundland Methodism. He concluded that some of the effects of isolation were the prioritizing of conduct over theology, emotion over reason, the domination of the laity, and the

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 129-170, 176.

<sup>42</sup>Arthur E. Kewley, “The Influence of Isolation on the Theology of Methodism in Newfoundland 1874-1924.” Lecture to the Canadian Society of Church History, May 1971. A copy of this paper is at Centre for Newfoundland Studies. Kewley studied at Victoria College, Toronto.

preference for the 'after meeting.' Methodism in Newfoundland began "under the leadership of a strange character, Lawrence Coughlan" and continued on with its "ingrown ideas and practices" until its "first real breakthrough" came in 1874 when Newfoundland Methodism came under "the wider connection and supervision" of the Methodist Church of Canada.<sup>43</sup>

It is difficult to find a prevalence of isolation in the historical record. The people of Burin or Oderin, for example, did not consider they were isolated in 1817, the year of the arrival of the first Methodist missionary, John Lewis. Vessels routinely arrived from Poole, Waterford, Cadiz, schooners from Halifax and Boston. Mary Brushett said to her husband after he had finished the term of his indenture, (I paraphrase) "why do you want to go back to England this fall just because you're done with William Cook. Sure, you can go back to England any fall you want, if you don't like it here."<sup>44</sup> People travelled all over Placentia Bay, St. Mary's Bay and Fortune Bay. In the winter they moved to a second home in inner Placentia Bay or at Mortier or to what they called "the western shore." They renewed acquaintances and friendships each fall with those who seasonally moved there from elsewhere. The marked feature of their lives was mobility, not isolation. Neither was Newfoundland itself isolated since "the Atlantic was not an impenetrable barrier to communication but a conduit that transmitted people, news, ideas,

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 1, 5-8.

<sup>44</sup>"William Harding Diary, 1793-1877." Unpaginated.

and money back and forth between Britain and British North America.”<sup>45</sup> George M. Story drew attention to the deficiency of the “isolation” thesis of Newfoundland and Labrador history and quoted W.A. Stearns who visited Labrador in the 1870s to find that the walls of his domicile were papered with such ““newspapers, pamphlets, and magazines”” as the ““*Montreal Witness, Christian World, Apples of Gold, Well Spring, American Messenger, British Messenger, the Nation, the Boston Journal, the Springfield Republican, the National Quarterly Review, Harper's Weekly, the Dominion Monthly, and twenty-six other papers.*””<sup>46</sup> Grant Head and Gordon Handcock have researched transatlantic population linkages.<sup>47</sup>

Kewley continued in a similar vein in 1976, with another lecture to the Church History Society, this time asking whether Methodism in Newfoundland was even

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<sup>45</sup>Richard W. Vaudry, “Evangelical Anglicans and the Atlantic World: Politics, Ideology, and the British North American Connection,” in G.A. Rawlyk, ed., *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 156. Richard W. Vaudry, *Anglicans and the Atlantic World: High Churchmen, Evangelicals, and the Quebec Connection* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 6. See the Atlantic communication of religious news and ideas in Calvin Hollett, “Resistance to Bishop Edward Feild in Newfoundland, 1845-1857,” (MA thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2002, chapters 5 and 6.

<sup>46</sup>George Story, ““A tune beyond us as we are’: Reflections on Newfoundland Community Song and Ballad,” in Melvin Baker, Helen Peters, Shannon Ryan, eds., *George Story, People of the Landwash, Essays on Newfoundland and Labrador* (St. John's: Harry Cuff Publications, 1997), 177.

<sup>47</sup>C. Grant Head, *Eighteenth Century Newfoundland* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976). W. Gordon Handcock, ‘*Soe longe as there comes noe women*’: *Origins of English Settlement in Newfoundland* (St. John's: Breakwater Books, 1989).

“authentic Wesleyanism” at all.<sup>48</sup> He clearly thought it was not:

Methodism, as found in Newfoundland, was unique in its beliefs, operation, and discipline. It was unrelated, except in name, to John Wesley or to any of the other Methodist bodies. It was misconceived, misinterpreted, misunderstood, mismanaged, and misacclaimed.<sup>49</sup>

He argued that during the period 1765-1815, Methodism was characterized by isolation, emotionalism and individualism, and it therefore declined.<sup>50</sup> He particularly focused on Coughlan as the cause of both the lack of authenticity, and the decline during these first 50 years, claiming that there was:

a deficiency resulting from Lawrence Coughlan’s pale reproduction of the teachings, practice, and discipline of John Wesley. His failure to understand the Church as an organized structure, relying more on emotional response ... made disintegration almost inevitable.<sup>51</sup>

Kewley had changed his mind about the timing of Methodism’s rescue by administration, however. It was no longer the 1874 supervision by the Methodist Church of Canada, but the 1815 “regulations and requirements” of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference of England 60 years earlier, which established Methodism in Newfoundland after its

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<sup>48</sup>Arthur E. Kewley, “The First Fifty Years of Methodism in Newfoundland 1765-1815. Was it Authentic Wesleyanism?,” a paper presented to the Canadian Methodist Society, Victoria University, June 28, 1976. Published in *The Bulletin* 26 1977. *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society* XIX, 1-2 (March-June 1977). For a rebuttal, see Cyril R. Chaulk, “John Wesley and Newfoundland Methodism” (M Div. thesis, Atlantic School of Theology, 1980), 2.

<sup>49</sup>Kewley, “The First Fifty Years of Methodism in Newfoundland 1765-1815,” 7.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 17.

unsound and shaky start.<sup>52</sup> John Webster Grant agreed with Kewley that it was the “organization” at the time, which brought about “the real expansion of Methodism” in Newfoundland.<sup>53</sup>

While Kewley is accurate in his portrayal of traits of Newfoundland Methodism, these are certainly not unique, but common in varying degrees to Methodism elsewhere in its pre-respectability phase. They were not related to isolation, and it can be argued that the administrative reorganization of 1815 did not rescue Methodism in Newfoundland. Indeed, the conclusion that it had nearly expired is based on a misinterpretation resulting from a concentration on the Carbonear-Blackhead area of Conception Bay, the primary area of Coughlan’s ministry. In fact, Newfoundland Methodism had been continually “rescued” to the north by revivals.

Another major deficiency in Kewley’s discussion was his approach, which contrasted an aspect of Coughlan’s theology with that of John Wesley. The former preached “the terror of hell” to call people to repentance, while the latter preached “holiness” in terms of love for God and for “all mankind.” Since Wesley wrote extensively for half a century, it is easy to find whatever emphasis one wants in his work. In any event, such an exercise has little relevance to the first 50 years of Methodism in Newfoundland or in England. In Kewley’s view, the Methodism of the former was

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 22. The shift to 1815 as an important historiographical marker may have been due to its emphasis in Parson’s thesis.

<sup>53</sup>Grant, “Methodist Origins in Atlantic Canada,” 36.

characterized by “oratorical preaching with the threat of Hell, religious entertainment with the help of singing and emotional antics, and the sensational exposure of moral sins,” while the Methodism of the latter was delineated by love for others and “a rigid rule of conduct.”<sup>54</sup> There is no attempt to get beyond selected theological texts of Wesley to describe English Methodism in any of its historical versions, to see whether emotion, for example, was as absent in England as it was present in Newfoundland.

James Obelkevich in his study of rural South Lindsey from 1825 to 1875, found that emotion was not absent in English Methodism. By 1825 Wesleyan Methodism had a long history, but there was still “no lack of exuberance, conversions, and other phenomena of ‘religion of the heart.’”<sup>55</sup> The Primitive Methodists, who broke away from the Wesleyans in 1812, featured religious experience even more. Obelkevich summed up the emphasis on feeling in the testimony of a woman who “did not wish to skim on the outside of religion but to dive into the full ocean of his love.” It is true that as the century wore on the emphasis on ‘heart’ religion waned. Methodist services became less “noisy” and “expressive,” and by 1900 there was a decline of enthusiasm and zeal in all branches of Methodism.<sup>56</sup>

Cyril Chaulk was not impressed by Kewley’s views on the divergence between

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<sup>54</sup>Kewley, “The First Fifty Years of Methodism in Newfoundland 1765-1815,” 24,17.

<sup>55</sup>James Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society: South Lindsey 1825-1875* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 184.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, 145, 327.

Newfoundland and Wesleyan Methodism. In his Master of Divinity thesis, "John Wesley and Newfoundland Methodism" he addressed two questions:

What was the substance of the theological, sacramental, and organizational revival developed and practiced by John Wesley? To what extent did Newfoundland Methodism reflect this tradition?<sup>57</sup>

The major part of the thesis discussed the first question, but he did offer some valuable insights on the second. For instance, he noted that John Hoskins in Old Perlican and Lower Island Cove was in continual communication with Wesley, who approved of his ministry. He said to Wesley in 1770, "I read the Church prayers, and some of your Sermons and sung your Hymns." He emphasized such doctrines as repentance, remission and holiness. In addition, most of the Methodist missionaries in Newfoundland came directly from England, and probationers were examined using Wesley's *Standard Sermons* as late as 1885.<sup>58</sup> As for Coughlan's lasting effect in Harbour Grace, Chaulk pointed out that there were exceptional circumstances such as a ratio of nine to one between mobile men-servants and planters, and a large decrease in the population in the area during the American Revolution.<sup>59</sup> In addition, when the Anglican clergyman James

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<sup>57</sup>Chaulk, "John Wesley and Newfoundland Methodism," 3.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 119, 144-147.

<sup>59</sup>Later, a number of Methodist families moved to St. John's and made possible the building of a chapel there in 1815. D.W. Prowse, *A History of Newfoundland*, 2<sup>nd</sup>. ed. (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1896), 617, quoted in J.S.S. Armour, "Religious Dissent in St. John's 1775-1815," (MA thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1988), 172. David G. Pitt, *Windows of Agates A Short History of the Founding and Early Years of Gower Street Methodist (now United) Church in St. John's Newfoundland* (St. John's: Gower Street United Church, 1966), 6, 20.

Balfour came to Harbour Grace in 1775, many returned to the Church of England due to Governor Edwards' decrees affirming Balfour's exclusive powers over marriage, baptism, burial and chapels. In contrast, the Methodist missionary, John McGeary, was a weak leader.<sup>60</sup> Chaulk thus attempted to examine the historical situation in Conception Bay to find reasons for the decline in Methodism. A weakness in his approach, however, is that apart from consulting available censuses and a few other records, he confined himself to secondary sources.

Hans Rollmann also examined whether Coughlan and Wesley were asymmetrical in their understanding of Methodism in "Laurence Coughlan and the Origins of Methodism in Newfoundland."<sup>61</sup> He pointed out that Wesley faulted Coughlan in two areas, namely his Calvinist theological views, as John Hoskins had noted, and his "emotional misunderstanding of holiness."<sup>62</sup> Wesley was particularly sensitive to both because of his dispute over these matters with the lay preacher, Thomas Maxfield, a leader of London Methodists, in the 1760s.<sup>63</sup> Thus Rollmann agreed with Kewley that Coughlan was not propagating Methodism exactly as articulated by John Wesley. He did

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<sup>60</sup>Chaulk, "John Wesley and Newfoundland Methodism," 123-124.

<sup>61</sup>Rollmann, "Laurence Coughlan and the Origins of Methodism in Newfoundland," 53-76.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 56. Armour noted an ongoing relationship between Methodists and Calvinist Congregationalists not only in St. Johns, but also in Conception Bay, and even in Twillingate. "Religious Dissent in St. John's 1775-1815," 109, 162, 165.

<sup>63</sup>Rollmann, "Laurence Coughlan and the Origins of Methodism in Newfoundland," 54.

not go so far as to say, however, that Coughlan's Methodism was "a pale reproduction" of that of Wesley. Rollmann also examined the revival under Coughlan's preaching and concluded that it was religious in nature providing "moral, emotional, and aesthetic rewards resulting from a life of holiness." Coughlan's religious movement was a threat to the merchants and the established order, however. His Methodist classes "established a communal identity inaccessible to those in power and outside the realm of traditional mechanisms for achieving social control."<sup>64</sup>

S. Dawn Barrett, under the supervision of Hans Rollmann, did further study on Coughlan and his converts in Conception Bay.<sup>65</sup> She considered that Kewley was "insightful" in his recognition of theological dissonance between Coughlan and Wesley, but she rejected Kewley's isolation theory. "The inhabitants were ... influenced by religious ideas current in Europe and America, and by revivalism that was endemic to both continents."<sup>66</sup> Yet she agreed with Batstone and his concept of a "cruel land" speaking of "the harsh reality of life in a remote land where might meant right and conflict was rampant."<sup>67</sup> More importantly, Barrett's thesis is the most laudable attempt

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 66-68. Cf. also Patrick O'Flaherty, "Laurence Coughlan," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. IV (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), "The antagonism which Coughlan aroused in the merchants contrasts strikingly with the affection and loyalty he inspired in the ordinary people who joined his movement," 176.

<sup>65</sup>Barrett, "Revivalism and the Origins of Newfoundland Methodism: 1766-1774."

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 4-5, 9.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 15. Compare Anspach: "It has also been observed that the character of a population is essentially influenced by the nature of the 'country'. Where the land is

in the whole Methodist historiography of Newfoundland to reach the actual Methodism of ordinary people instead of focusing on religious leaders and elites. She was able to do this by studying the 36 letters of parishioners that Coughlan included in his *An Account of the Work of God in Newfoundland, North America*.<sup>68</sup> As she stated,

Coughlan's little book reflects the religious and social milieu of the community from which it sprang. The forms of oral expression encapsulated in the letters were created out of the need of real men and women to express a religious experience that had transformed their lives. They reveal a vibrant faith. They also reveal the struggles encountered by a small but determined group of converts who sought self-determination.<sup>69</sup>

She used the letters of the converts to shed some light on the possible difference between Coughlan and Wesley with the understanding that collectively they reflect the theological emphasis of their pastor. Barrett pointed out that Wesley wrote to Coughlan in 1768 telling him that holiness did not consist in "a flow of joy" as Coughlan had said, but in "love of God and our neighbour."<sup>70</sup> Neither is holiness or perfection a chief feature of the conversion letters included in Coughlan's *Account of the Work of God*. She concluded

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barren, and the necessities of life are not acquired without toil and labour, little leisure is left for the indulgence of vicious pastimes, and the course of life is generally moral and regular. This is likewise true of the native inhabitants of Newfoundland." *A History of the Island of Newfoundland*, 463.

<sup>68</sup>Laurence Coughlan, *An Account of the Work of God in Newfoundland, North America* (London: W. Gilbert, 1776).

<sup>69</sup>Barrett, "Revivalism and the Origins of Newfoundland Methodism: 1766-1774," 1-2.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, 118, 136.

that "Coughlan misunderstood the doctrine of holiness" as Wesley taught it.<sup>71</sup>

This is overstating a difference between the two leaders. Wesley wrote to Coughlan at the height of his disagreement with Thomas Maxfield. Wesley had placed Maxfield in charge of the London societies and was upset about the experiential extremes he was permitting among the Methodist enthusiasts. It was in the midst of this conflict that Wesley called enthusiasm "the daughter of pride" and contrasted it with the ethical fruit of the Spirit such as gentleness and goodness.<sup>72</sup> One must also not overlook a change in Wesley's views on the matter. He described his own conversion in 1738 in terms of his heart being "strangely warmed," which while admittedly not the language of an extreme ecstatic experience, was still an experiential, rather than an ethical description of conversion. Although Wesley rarely admitted changing his views, as Bruce Hindmarsh

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 120, 144. Perfection or "entire sanctification," also called the blessing of "perfect love," was often instantaneous, like conversion before it. It did not mean the person had arrived to a state of "absolute perfection" but rather to a condition where a person's being was taken up with obeying the commandment to love God and neighbour with all one's heart, soul and mind. The doctrine was in outright contrast to many Calvinists who claimed that converts would battle with evil in their inner person until death. It was also in stark contrast to the prayer of confession in the weekly, and often daily, Church of England service, where Methodists in Newfoundland often found themselves, "We have offended against thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done. And we have done those things which we ought not to have done. And there is no health in us ... miserable offenders." See T. Watson Smith, *History of the Methodist Church ... of Eastern British America*, Vol. I (Halifax: Methodist Book Room, 1877), 30-31; Rupert Davies and Gordon Rupp, eds., *A History of the Methodist Church in Britain* (London: Epworth Press, 1965), 167-174; John T. McNeill, ed., *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 Vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960) 2: 602-607; *The Book of Common Prayer* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1840), "The Order for Morning Prayer," 3.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 147-149.

noted, there is evidence in Wesley's *Journal* of a revisionist approach to his past experiences.<sup>73</sup> It is also evident that the theme of the conversion narratives of his brother Charles and many others at the beginning of the Wesleyan movement in the 1740s is one of "inexpressible joy."<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, Wesley in the hymnbook he designed for the weekly use of Methodists so emphasized joy that it was the largest section by far, his "For Believers rejoicing" being 68 pages. His second longest section for believers was hardly unemotional, his "For Believers groaning for full redemption" being 52 pages.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, John Knox in his classic study of *Enthusiasm* found that although biographers treat Wesley's followers reaching for ecstasy "as a passing affair" of the 1740s and his particular regard for such events "as a fault of his earlier manner" which he soon left behind, yet according to his journal, Wesley continued to be taken up with repentance and ecstatic experiences at his meetings and saw them not as flaws but as evidences of the work of God.<sup>76</sup> Therefore, one must proceed with caution in stressing a large difference between the Methodism of Coughlan and the Methodism of Wesley. Barrett herself pointed out that Mary Stretton, whom Coughlan left in charge of the

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<sup>73</sup>D. Bruce Hindmarsh, "'My chains fell off, my heart was free': Early Methodist Conversion Narrative in England," *Church History* 68, 4 (December 1999), 915.

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*, 926.

<sup>75</sup>John Wesley, *A Collection of Hymns for the use of the people called Methodists* (London: J. Paramore, 1780), 185-252, 322-373.

<sup>76</sup>Ronald A. Knox, *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion with Special Reference to the XVII and XVIII Centuries* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), 528-531.

women's groups in Conception Bay, paid "careful attention" to Wesley's sermons and aspired to a concept of holiness "more closely aligned with that of normative Wesleyanism."<sup>77</sup>

In fact, revivals and ecstasy were characteristic of "normative Wesleyanism." They were so much a part of the essence the movement, with or without Wesley's affirmation at any given time, that Methodism was known as the religion of experience. Certainly, the revivals of Coughlan were not unique in Methodism. Wesley was not able to align Methodism in England with his personal and changing views. His control over Methodism in North America was even weaker. Regardless, reaching for ecstasy was a common characteristic of Methodism on both sides of the Atlantic, albeit in time dampened by the procession toward respectability. As Richard Carwardine found in his classic study of revivalism in Britain and America, "Methodism was wholeheartedly a revival movement; it had been born of a revival; its churches grew through revivals; its ministers preached revival; its success was talked of in terms of revival."<sup>78</sup>

In the same year, William G. McLoughlin's published *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607-1977*, underlining the

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<sup>77</sup>Barrett, "Revivalism and the Origins of Newfoundland Methodism: 1766-1774," 144.

<sup>78</sup>Richard Carwardine, *Trans-Atlantic Revivalism, Popular Evangelicalism in Britain and America, 1790-1865* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1978), 10.

importance of religious revivals in culture.<sup>79</sup> Building on the work of the anthropologist, Anthony F. C. Wallace, McLoughlin claimed that religious revivals and awakenings were not “brief outbursts of mass emotionalism ... but profound cultural transformations.” They occurred in times of “cultural distortion” when the legitimacy of the foundations of society were called into question and resulted in a restatement of social values and aspirations. Thus instead of religion with its accompanying emotion being ‘backward’ or ‘neurotic,’ it served to facilitate “constructive personal and social action” in a culture undergoing stress, and enabled it to survive.<sup>80</sup> As a Newfoundland illustration, Mary Angela Robinson in her MA thesis applied McLoughlin’s theoretical framework and found that, although there was a breakdown in Methodist leadership in late eighteenth-century Conception Bay, yet “Newfoundland Methodism provided the people ... with an alternative world view which held a promise for change ... from the tradition of servitude and deprivation” which prevailed in that society.<sup>81</sup>

There was considerable emotion not just with Methodists, but with evangelical Nonconformity in general. David Bebbington concluded there were four main features to

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<sup>79</sup>William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform. An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607-1977* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 2, 8. On McLoughlin and on revivals, see Walter H. Conser Jr., “McLoughlin, William G. (1922-1992),” and Michael J. McClymond, “Revivals and Revivalism,” in McClymond, ed., *Encyclopedia of Revivals in America*, Vol. 1, 260-262, 366-370.

<sup>81</sup>Robinson, “Eighteenth-Century Newfoundland Methodism as a Revitalization Movement,” 43.

evangelical religion - conversion consisting of repentance and turning to faith which was often accompanied by "acute psychological troubles before the moment of release," which was characterized by joy or rapture. A second was activism, a large part of which was seeking others to be converted. There was also a focus on the Bible and on the cross. "By his sacrificial death, Evangelicals believed, Christ has saved them from sin and, ultimately, from hell. The cross was therefore the fulcrum of their theological system."<sup>82</sup>

The inaccuracy of singling out emotion as a unique characteristic of Newfoundland Methodism is clear from the Methodist experience in Nova Scotia and Upper Canada. S.D. Clark in his formative study, *Church and Sect in Canada*, identified Methodism as "essentially a frontier heritage."<sup>83</sup> His term 'frontier' is not geographically specific, but rather refers to any situation where there is social disintegration.<sup>84</sup> The concept is an adaptation of the premise of Max Weber "that man is at his most religious in situations in which the powerlessness, contingency, and material insecurity of human existence are most acutely apparent."<sup>85</sup> It is the emergent religious movement or sect that thrives in such a situation, and is characterized by spontaneity and emotion. In time the

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<sup>82</sup>David Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity* (Dorchester: The Dorset Press, 1992), 3-5.

<sup>83</sup>S.D. Clark, *Church and Sect in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1948), 146.

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>85</sup>Alan D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England* (London: Longman Group Limited, 1976), 186.

sect becomes a church developing an affinity for order and accommodation to the community in a mature society.

In Nova Scotia (which then included New Brunswick) it was the Newlight sect under Henry Alline (1776-1784) which gained dominance, but not in Halifax.<sup>86</sup> It became prominent only in those areas where pre-Revolution New Englanders, and later, Loyalists settled:

The break of the New Englanders from their homeland, and the weakening of class and village loyalties within the Nova Scotian communities, tended to a feeling of social detachment.... The Newlight movement cut through the traditional political and cultural patterns of group life to organize the population in terms of a hierarchy of religious piety. Man's relationship to God rather than to his fellowmen came to constitute the measure of social worth... Thus the social effect of Newlight teaching, on the one hand, was one of extreme individualization ... while, on the other hand, it was one of social unification ... In the intense emotional experience of conversion the individual gained a new consciousness of his own worth and of his relationship to his fellowmen.<sup>87</sup>

Similarly, revivals broke out among Yorkshire Methodists in Cumberland County stirred by Newlight preachers, but leadership arose from within, in the person of William Black.<sup>88</sup> It was the American Methodists who provided itinerants at the beginning of the movement, and, like Alline, they "employed a highly emotional appeal." In 1800, however, the Nova Scotian Methodists turned to the English Wesleyans for preachers - a move which Clark saw as detrimental. They were helped by Wesleyan Methodists to

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<sup>86</sup>J.M. Bumsted, "Henry Alline," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. IV, 17.

<sup>87</sup>Clark, *Church and Sect in Canada*, 38.

<sup>88</sup>G.S. French, "William Black," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. VI, 62-63.

become 'respectable,' but at the cost of their evangelical zeal, and lost control to an overseas agency. Then too, the "deferential attitudes to the Church of England ... characteristic of the outlook of the Wesleyan missionaries" arrested their development towards being a church and prolonged their time as an evangelical society.<sup>89</sup> This was in contrast to Upper Canada, where until 1832 the population was mainly of American origin and was served by American Methodist Episcopal preachers and was "by far the most successful of the religious movements" up to that time.<sup>90</sup> Clark stressed that "the strength of the appeal" of the Methodist preachers in the frontier society of Upper Canada was "that it was directed towards the emotions and feelings."<sup>91</sup>

Goldwin French built on Clark's work, adding texture and nuance in his *Parsons and Politics: The role of the Wesleyan Methodists in Upper Canada and the Maritimes from 1780 to 1855*. He noted that the Methodist Episcopal Church in America by 1784 had "quietly jettisoned the liturgical and formal side of the Wesleyan tradition" as irrelevant to their needs on the frontier. Instead, its preachers preached for conversion with "vivid emotional appeals." Similarly, its doctrine of holiness was transformed, with "its ethical demands being replaced in a considerable part by the second blessing, another

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<sup>89</sup>Clark, *Church and Sect in Canada*, 185, 218, 237, 258.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 160-161.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., 150. Maybe, John Webster Grant would agree that not only Newfoundland Methodism and Maritime Methodism, but also Upper Canada Methodism was "out of step with Wesley." The difficulty is finding a "pure" Wesley Wesleyanism as a historical entity. Grant, "Methodist Origins in Atlantic Canada," 45.

visitation of the Holy Spirit, whose emotional consequences were similar to those of conversion." It is this Methodism which American preachers proclaimed in the Maritimes and Upper Canada. Its success was of such a magnitude in Upper Canada that it became "the characteristic creed of the common man."<sup>92</sup>

Turning to the Wesleyan Conference created problems for the Maritime Methodists. A number of the English missionaries were educated to some degree and had "even some pretensions to scholarship." They tended to lead a "respectable" lifestyle. However, "theirs was not exactly the kind of Methodism to which the people of these provinces had previously been exposed." Instead, the missionaries reflected "the growing moderation of English Methodism" which was out of step with North America. Matthew Richey, for example, stated in 1847 that he once thought that Methodist and enthusiast were coterminous, but that he had changed his mind to think that "a Methodist can be more unlike nothing than an enthusiast."<sup>93</sup> French concluded that Methodism in the Maritimes, while not a failure, had nowhere the success it had in Upper Canada because of the unsuitability of English Wesleyanism:

They did not realize ... that Newlight attitudes survived because they accorded most neatly with the religious background or present condition of many people. Similarly, they were not really alert to the fact that although in Nova Scotia the policy of assimilation to English practice was superficially attractive, it ran counter to the inner logic of that province's growth ... They were unknowingly

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<sup>92</sup>Goldwin French, *Parsons and Politics: The role of the Wesleyan Methodists in Upper Canada and the Maritimes from 1780 to 1855* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1962), 21, 48.

<sup>93</sup>*Ibid.*, 60.

presenting Methodism in a form that was likely to appeal principally to those who were moderately prosperous, to those for whom the imperial tie still meant something, and to those, such as the Irish, who felt most at home with preachers from the old land.<sup>94</sup>

Similarly, George Rawlyk saw the Methodist quest for order and respectability as the primary reason for their being replaced by the Baptists as the major evangelical denomination in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick by the 1830s.<sup>95</sup> Rawlyk had already presented a convincing thesis explaining the lack of appeal of British Methodism to the Newlight Americans in Nova Scotia. The pre-revolutionary New Englanders who had replaced the Acadians went through considerable disorientation as a result of 1776. Feeling detached from the British in Halifax and their relatives and friends at home, they were open to the preaching of Henry Alline, who proclaimed that they were the new 'city on a hill.' Nova Scotia had replaced New England "as a saving remnant while New England abrogated her mission to lead the Protestant cause."<sup>96</sup>

The main similarity between Newfoundland and Nova Scotian Methodism, then, was the link to English Wesleyanism. Methodism in larger centres in Newfoundland had something in common with Methodism in some centres in Nova Scotia, such as Halifax, in that it was in competition with the Church of England which ministered to a population

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid., 63.

<sup>95</sup>G.A. Rawlyk, *The Canada Fire: Radical Evangelicalism in British North America, 1775-1812* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 19.

<sup>96</sup>Gordon Stewart and George Rawlyk, *A People Highly Favoured The Nova Scotia Yankees and the American Revolution* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1972), 172.

aspiring to Britishness. The Methodists in Newfoundland had an overall advantage in that generally they were the only evangelical denominational option in the colony, unlike in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, where Newlights and later, Baptists were a vibrant evangelical alternative.<sup>97</sup> With a paucity of Wesleyan missionaries, Methodism in Newfoundland, led by lay preachers, advanced as a popular religion.

Methodism contributed to the growth of the Salvation Army in the 1880s by its move away from popular religion toward respectability. Jefferson Dunton concluded that it was “the methods employed,” viewed by Methodist leaders “as vulgar,” which gave the Salvation Army much of its success.<sup>98</sup> Similarly, R.G. Moyles spoke of its appeal to Methodists who remembered the enthusiasm of years gone by.<sup>99</sup> He quoted Otto Tucker: “Dissatisfied Methodists often wondered what had happened to the old-time religion; its

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<sup>97</sup>In Saint John, for example, Methodists had an identity problem with two groups, namely, Free Will Baptists, and evangelical Anglicans who viewed them “as an extension of their own tradition” rather than as a church. T.W. Acheson, “Methodism and the Problem of Methodist Identity in Nineteenth-Century New Brunswick,” and Grant, “Methodist Origins in Atlantic Canada,” in Charles H.H. Scobie and John Webster Grant, eds., *The Contribution of Methodism to Atlantic Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992), 113, 37. For the demise of evangelical Anglicanism in Newfoundland, see Calvin Hollett, “Evangelicals vs. Tractarians: Resistance to Bishop Feild at Harbour Buffett, Placentia Bay, 1849-1854,” *Newfoundland Studies* 18, 2 (Fall 2002): 245-278.

<sup>98</sup>Jefferson D. Dunton, “The Origins and Growth of the Salvation Army in Newfoundland 1865-1901,” (MA thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1996), 68.

<sup>99</sup>R.G. Moyles, *The Salvation Army in Newfoundland Its History and Essence* (The Salvation Army Canada and Bermuda, 1997), 42.

ministers were clearly beginning to play down the spontaneity and emotional fervor."<sup>100</sup>

Maybe they would have asked the same question about Newfoundland Methodist scholarship, for there appears to be an extreme reluctance to study Methodism on its own terms as a form of popular religion. A not insignificant amount of academic study has a condescending attitude toward the Methodism of the past, as if contrasted with the respectability of the religion of the present and its supposed likeness to that of John Wesley. Other work has overly stressed the "degeneration" of Newfoundland society and, without any actual analysis of the religion of the people, has focused on the social uplift role of Methodism. Barrett made a refreshing change with her study of Coughlan's converts. Because they were so fondly attached to Coughlan, a study of him also, and other Methodist leaders in Newfoundland is not misdirected in understanding popular religion in the coves, harbours, and bays that make up the island.

Richard Roy, in a recent doctoral thesis on Methodism as seen through the ministry of John Smithies in Newfoundland (1827-1837) and Australia (1839-1857), concluded that experience was an essential component of the Methodist concept of

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<sup>100</sup>Otto Tucker, "Fire a Volley! Salvation Army Beginnings in Newfoundland," *The Newfoundland Quarterly* 85, 3 (Winter 1990), 9, quoted in Moyles, *The Salvation Army in Newfoundland Its History and Essence*, 43. See also R.G. Moyles, *The Blood and Fire in Canada A History of the Salvation Army in the Dominion 1882-1976* (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates Ltd., 1977), 82-84. For Methodism's influence on Pentecostalism, see Burton Keith Janes, "Floods upon the Dry Ground: A History of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland, 1910-1939," (MA thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1991), 15-16, 72-75.

holiness.<sup>101</sup> Just as the spirituality of Wesley himself, so Wesleyan Methodism mission was “motivated, sustained, and benchmarked by religious experience.”<sup>102</sup> Thus he unwittingly demonstrates that the emphasis on emotion in Newfoundland Methodism was not a unique phenomenon.

Sandra Beardsall, in her doctoral thesis on the subject, diagnosed Methodism in Newfoundland by enlisting Northrop Frye’s four narrative categories of literature - romantic, tragic, comic, and ironic or satiric, as applied to religion by James Hopewell to become charismatic, canonic, gnostic, and empiric. In this framework Methodist conversion from the Church of England involved choosing the charismatic over the canonic world-view, the romantic over the tragic, a personal encounter with God versus a surrender to the will of God. Frye’s tragic category involved “a world of shock and horror ... cannibalism, mutilation and torture.” The Church of England world-view of Newfoundlanders was a tragic one, a culture of surrender, submission, obedience and sacrifice in a hostile environment of merchant exploitation, poverty, impersonal sea, shipwrecks, “annihilation of the Beothuks” and “the grim bloodiness of the annual baby seal hunt.” It was a culture characterized by cruelty to animals, sadism, the macabre, horror, and degeneracy, but did have “moments” of happiness. Thus Beardsall’s interpretation continues the apologetic of Newfoundland Methodism as a moral rescue

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<sup>101</sup>Roy, “A Reappraisal of Wesleyan Methodist Mission in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century.” See, especially, “Religious experience: the supreme passion,” 179-228.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 228.

from a culture of degeneracy. The Methodist, or romantic world-view, with its experience of God through conversion brought empowerment, while still pessimistic about the reality of life in Newfoundland. One can at least agree with her that Methodism brought the believer “from mundane existence to heavenly ecstasy.”<sup>103</sup>

It is not reassuring that Beardsall seems to have chosen this theoretical framework with a degree of abandon. She compared it to barrelling through a snowdrift on the southern Labrador, “A quick prayer, a firm grip on the wheel, and an assertive application of the accelerator provide the best hope for emerging clear on the other side.”<sup>104</sup> Having chosen the framework, the temptation has been to find instances in the historical record, mostly from O’Flaherty’s *Rock Observed*, to attach to it. They hang suspended much like fish, which have been gut, split and salted, are hung by the tail on a line to dry. The focus is on how orderly the fish are hung. The coherency of the theoretical framework has become paramount, and not the historical context of the examples chosen.

To prove the thesis Sandra Beardsall continued the “cruel land” and degeneracy discourse. In her defence she did not set out to write a history of Methodism but simply used “a strong historical component” to focus “upon the actual worship life of actual people” in the 1990s.<sup>105</sup> She focused on present ‘practices’ from a pastoral theology

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<sup>103</sup>Sandra Beardsall, “Methodist Religious Practices in Outport Newfoundland” (Th. D. thesis, Victoria University and University of Toronto, 1996), 30-35, 58-63, 85-86.

<sup>104</sup>*Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>105</sup>*Ibid.*, 10.

perspective by mining references from historical primary sources to show their congruency with present practices. Yet she claimed to be interpreting historical Methodism in Newfoundland in order to explain its present practices, so that interpretation needs to be held up to historical scrutiny. Her main source supporting her appropriation of Batstone's "cruel land" premise was Patrick O'Flaherty's examination of "the literary responses" to Newfoundland and its people in *The Rock Observed*. Instead of focusing on the St. John's elite and politics, O'Flaherty set out to glean from these literary sources "the real history, that of the common people."<sup>106</sup> However, in not critiquing O'Flaherty, but simply using him in support of Batstone's premise, Beardsall became more removed from the Newfoundland and the people she was attempting to describe. O'Flaherty's book is not an examination of the views of the common man, but of literate views of the common man.

Furthermore, the book is O'Flaherty's perspective of that body of writing - a formative reflection that is weighted by the world-view of Thomas Hardy. It is not only the continual referencing of Hardy.<sup>107</sup> It is more the insistence that nature and life in Newfoundland is fickle, relentless, cruel, ruthless, and tragic, much like Hardy's Wessex in winter - as a "corpse outleant."<sup>108</sup> Writers in *The Rock Observed* not responding

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<sup>106</sup>O'Flaherty, *The Rock Observed*, 68.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., 17, 93, 99, 100, 121, 187.

<sup>108</sup>John Wain, *Selected Shorter Poems of Thomas Hardy* (London: MacMillan, 1966), 20.

negatively to the Newfoundland environment were cast as having succumbed to “romantic sentiment.” Since a life devoid of God and spiritual relationship was not true for many of the common people, whether Roman Catholic, Anglican, or Methodist, such a Hardy lens obscures more than it portrays of the life and pulse of the people of Newfoundland. Beardsall overlooked both in using O’Flaherty as a confirmation that the people’s view of the place was that of Batstone’s “cruel land.” Thus Beardsall in her dependence on the volume has twice-removed herself from what she was attempting to describe - the world-view of the people who became Newfoundland Methodists.

Beardsall quoted Batstone’s statements concerning the “degeneration” of the people being caused by an environment so harsh that it required even “a certain degree of sadism” to adjust to it. Her enlisting George Cartwright, however, was a poor illustration of such a trait in Newfoundlanders, particularly because of its inaccuracy. According to Beardsall, Cartwright “writes proudly in 1778 of shooting out both eyes of a bear cub for sport.” In fact the bear cub was rushing toward him and he shot it for protection, surely not an indication of “sadism.”<sup>109</sup> He did shoot the first bear for sport, but O’Flaherty pointed out that this was the only instance in the whole journal he “indulged in unnecessary killing,” an observation which Beardsall neglected to mention.<sup>110</sup> But more significantly, Cartwright’s shooting a bear cub for sport was a reflection of his English

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<sup>109</sup>George Cartwright, *A Journal of Transactions and Events, during a Residence of nearly Sixteen Years on the Coast of Labrador* (Newark: Allin and Ridge, 1792), 342.

<sup>110</sup>O’Flaherty, *The Rock Observed*, 36.

culture, much as an English gentleman hunted foxes, rather than an attitude he acquired from an environmental determinism in Newfoundland. The same cultural transfer may possibly be the case regarding the individual that Philip Tocque saw drowning a dog. After all, it was Philip Tocque, born and raised in Newfoundland, who had the more delicate sensibilities. Maybe he too was observing a recent English arrival.<sup>111</sup> Neither does Beardsall point out that O'Flaherty concluded decidedly that the people were not "brutalized" by their environment and quoted the Methodist missionaries Laurence Coughlan and William Thoresby, to show that this was so. The people were, instead "in some ways superior to Europeans" and were characterized by "warmth and generosity."<sup>112</sup> One cannot agree, therefore, with Beardsall in her conclusion that she had "established the eighteenth-century world view as predominantly tragic."<sup>113</sup> Furthermore, it is the 19<sup>th</sup>-century, and not the 18<sup>th</sup>, which is the Methodism century in Newfoundland.

In the written record there is a varied reaction from wonder and awe to aversion to the land. When Bishop Spencer sailed about the Newfoundland coast, after arriving from Bermuda, he was taken with a "romantic glen" on the western shore of Placentia Bay.<sup>114</sup> Bishop Feild, a man hardly given to romance, was taken with the "clear and sweet" water

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<sup>111</sup>Beardsall, "Methodist Religious Practices in Outport Newfoundland," 61-62.

<sup>112</sup>O'Flaherty, *The Rock Observed*, 25-26, 30.

<sup>113</sup>Beardsall, "Methodist Religious Practices in Outport Newfoundland," 63.

<sup>114</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A194 "Bishop Spencer's Visit, Placentia Bay, 1843," July 3.

of White Bay and enchanted with “the picturesque beauty of the lofty and precipitous hills” surrounding him. He found that Little Coney Arm was a “scene as lovely as could be desired” and the mountains of Southern Arm “surpass in grandeur the banks of the Wye.”<sup>115</sup> The cultivated Jacob George Mountain said he had “seldom seen a more picturesque spot” than Rencontre, with the exception of Rencontre East.<sup>116</sup> James Lumsden waxed on about Trinity harbour saying that it offers “one of the finest views imaginable” and also about the “quiet scenic beauty” of the surrounding country with its mountains, lakes, streams, and forest.<sup>117</sup> Charles Lench singled out Musgravetown “of all the lovely spots in Terra Nova.”<sup>118</sup> Philip Henry Gosse asked his brother William to paint some view of Newfoundland to remember it after his departure, choosing “the very lovely one from Pack’s firm in Carbonear and the same from Elson’s flagstaff.”<sup>119</sup>

The response of fishermen and their families to the landscape and sea of Newfoundland is more difficult to determine. They may not have had the “barrenness and desolation” motif which writers have recited, seemingly on cue. In spring the seals were

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<sup>115</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A217, Extract from Bishop Feild’s Journal, 1859, White Bay.

<sup>116</sup>*Lives of Missionaries: North America* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, n.d.), “Memoir of the Reverend Jacob George Mountain,” 227.

<sup>117</sup>James Lumsden, *The Skipper Parson on the Bays and Barrens of Newfoundland* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1906), 154, 156.

<sup>118</sup>Lench, *The Story of Methodism in Bonavista*, 177.

<sup>119</sup>Quoted in Ann Thwaite, *Glimpses of the Wonderful* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002), 58.

profuse on the ice, sometimes coming so close to shore that all in the community could reap a copious harvest. In summer and fall they would have experienced the cod coming to land, often in abundance. Even more so, the herring, squid, and during their long term cycle, mackerel, would appear in remarkable profusion. The beaches would be teeming with caplin in such oversupply as would defy imagination. The hills would be rich in fruit such as partridge berries, blueberries, and bake-apples, delicacies sought after back in England.<sup>120</sup> In winter they would have access to a ready supply of wood of a manageable size for a variety of uses, whether timbers, plank or stemheads for boats, boards and studs for houses, not to speak of birch hoops and brooms, oars and thole pins, slides and handbars, firewood, and posts and pickets for fencing, and killicks. Moreover all would be unenclosed, freely available to the common man who could roam and harvest where he would, and all freely acquired without money. There was also possibly a romance associated with going to the woods to live in tilts in winter, similar to people visiting their cabins or cottages. James England after a visit in which he enjoyed a hearty meal, song and prayer said he “felt a desire to make my abode in such a quiet retreat for a season.”<sup>121</sup> James Lumsden noted that “very respectable families” practiced the custom.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup>Letter of Richard Newman, Twillingate, to Thomas Colbourne, May 26, 1817; December 9, 1817; December 13, 1818; December 6, 1819; December 11, 1820; September 9, 1828; December 1, 7, 1829; October 5, 1830.  
<[www.genweb.ca/nfdata/hist/2/newman.htm](http://www.genweb.ca/nfdata/hist/2/newman.htm)>.

<sup>121</sup>UC Archive WY 500, “A Journal kept by James England, Wesleyan Missionary Newfoundland, 1837-1841,” February 22, 1839.

<sup>122</sup>Lumsden, *The Skipper Parson*, 72.

In *Skipper George Netman*, the people do not reflect on their surroundings in an aesthetic fashion. In a rare instance of such reflection Caplin Bight was viewed from a hill on a moonlit night in winter not as “barren and desolate” but full of “splendour.” Moreover, “the stillness of the glorious night seemed full of the presence of the unseen God, and its very silence spake of him.”<sup>123</sup> How one sees nature, whether full of God’s presence, or full of “the corpse-cold moon” depends on what one brings to it.<sup>124</sup> In *The New Priest in Conception Bay* fishermen and their families rarely comment on the environment. While on a rescue operation in winter, Skipper George Barbury did say that the men “couldn’t get into Broad Cove, for the slob an’ cakes of ice. The shore looked tarrible cruel!”<sup>125</sup> However it is the narrator, clergymen, merchant or other literate non-fishermen who comment on the environment and in such a way to embed it skillfully into the story. In the novel the land is presented sometimes as “barren and desolate” and but more often with a soft and sensitive touch.<sup>126</sup> In 1858 also, Grey published his *Sketches of Newfoundland and Labrador* which show a sensitivity to a softer grace in the Newfoundland landscape. He writes of a people at home in the Newfoundland environment:

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<sup>123</sup>Bond, *Skipper George Netman*, 10, 36.

<sup>124</sup>Wain, *Selected Shorter Poems of Thomas Hardy*, 69, “In the Moonlight.”

<sup>125</sup>[Robert Traill Spence Lowell], *The New Priest in Conception Bay*, Vol. 1 (Boston: Phillips, Sampson and Company, 1858), 86.

<sup>126</sup>*Ibid.*, 9, 16, 25, 72-73, 76, 80, 165-166, 283, 303; Vol. 2, 10, 20, 24, 64, 97, 139, 200, 247, 275, 290, 304, 314, 323.

Up and down these calm channels, in and out among the wooded islets, the women and children of the place pull their boats, with as much ease and unconcern, as they take a walk down a lane in England.<sup>127</sup>

In *Five Months in Labrador and Newfoundland, during the Summer of 1838*, specifically, to the west coast of the island, Ephraim Tucker found Bonne Bay “strikingly grand and beautiful” with “a profusion of shrubbery, intermixed with the spruce, fir and yew trees.” They boasted of their hunting and fishing exploits, but wanted to move to “a better country,” the United States with its “rich and fertile soil” which he told them about. Tucker stated that being in the area only a few weeks all he could do was “give my impressions of scenes that passed under my observation.”<sup>128</sup> While the “impressions” of writers are sometimes that they are awestruck with Newfoundland and at other times feel disgust, there is little evidence that the populace, over a quarter of whom became Methodists, viewed Newfoundland as a “cruel land.”

One is therefore reluctant to adopt Beardsall’s application to the people of 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century Newfoundland of Northrop Frye’s and James Hopewell’s theoretical framework of narrative writing. It has not been satisfactorily proven that the people’s response to Newfoundland was tragic and, whatever the response was, that it was due to the environment and not due to the cultural values transferred across the Atlantic. The rickety flake of piecemeal historical reference is not able to bear the weight of the

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<sup>127</sup>[William Grey], *Sketches of Newfoundland and Labrador* (Ipswich: Anastatic Press, [1858?]), Plate X, Starve Harbour (Herring Neck).

<sup>128</sup>Ephraim W. Tucker, *Five Months in Labrador and Newfoundland, during the Summer of 1838* (Concord: I.S. Boyd and W. White, 1839), 29-32, 62.

preponderant interpretative theory which itself is built on the argument that Newfoundland Methodism is unique because of a unique environment, particularly causing isolation and degeneration. Newfoundland Methodism was not a unique phenomenon in its characteristic traits of lay leadership and ministry, and personal quest for an ecstatic union with God through revival.

## 2.3

## Education and Politics

The historiography of Methodist involvement in politics relates primarily to Methodist concern over education. John Greene in his perceptive MA thesis, clarified how Liberal Roman Catholics needed Protestant support to win responsible government and courted the Methodists to do so. The Methodists, with their heightened apprehension over educational matters, eagerly accepted.<sup>129</sup> Greene showed how the Methodist portion of the population, in the Burin district, for example, was critically important to the Liberal cause.<sup>130</sup> The Liberals were also helped enormously by the Methodist editor of the *Morning Courier* who “became the advocate and champion of Wesleyan rights while expostulating demands for Responsible Government.”<sup>131</sup> Greene contributed to this

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<sup>129</sup>Greene, “The Influence of Religion in the Politics of Newfoundland, 1850-1861.”

<sup>130</sup>*Ibid.*, 98-101.

<sup>131</sup>*Ibid.*, 59-60. See also Elizabeth A. Wells, “Joseph Woods,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. X (Toronto: University of Toronto press, 1972), 716. Maudie Whelan, “The Newspaper Press in Nineteenth-Century Newfoundland: Politics, Religion, and Personal Journalism,” (Ph. D. thesis, Memorial University, 2002), 33.

discussion in more detail in his recent book, *Between Damnation and Starvation, Priests and Merchants in Newfoundland Politics, 1745-1855*.<sup>132</sup> Jerry Bannister has questioned Greene's view of the role of sectarianism in education and politics, faulting Greene for "the entire notion that sectarian politics is necessarily a failure for which blame can or should be allocated." Instead, it should be seen as a successful "means to distribute and negotiate power in a sharply divided society."<sup>133</sup>

The Methodists were dismayed by the possible subdivision of the Protestant education grant, for they did not have the resources to support their own schools. The pressure to divide the grant came from the Church of England bishop, Edward Feild.<sup>134</sup> Frederick Jones, in his doctoral study of the bishop, showed that the impetus behind Feild's desire for "schools ... under the direction of the Clergy and other members of the Church only" was his Tractarianism, which alienated both Methodists and evangelical

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<sup>132</sup>John P. Greene, *Between Damnation and Starvation, Priests and Merchants in Newfoundland Politics, 1745-1855* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 197-268.

<sup>133</sup>Jerry Bannister, review of *Between Damnation and Starvation, Priests and Merchants in Newfoundland Politics, 1745-1855*, by John P. Greene, in *Newfoundland Studies* 18, 1 (Spring 2002), 119-120.

<sup>134</sup>Frederick Jones, "Bishop Feild, A Study in Politics and Religion in Nineteenth-Century Newfoundland" (Ph. D. thesis, Cambridge University, 1971), 153-161, 170-190. See also his "Religion, Education and Politics in Newfoundland, 1836-1875," *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society* XII, 4 (December 1970); Elinor Senior, "Edward Feild," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. X, 279; and Edward James Lear, "Edward Feild (1801-1876) Ecclesiastic Educator: His Influence on the Development of Denominational Education in Newfoundland" (M. Ed. thesis, Bishop's University, 1986).

Anglicans.<sup>135</sup> Tractarianism was a movement within the Church of England which was in part an assertion of ecclesiastical authority in its own affairs, reacting strongly to any government initiative that it regarded as state interference in religion. It was also a renewal of a conviction that the church was “a divine institution” and looked to the apostolic succession as the basis for that authority.<sup>136</sup> In raising the authority of the church, it also raised the authority of its priests and bishops, who ministered within a setting of Gothic architecture, raised altars, lighted candles and other high-church decor.<sup>137</sup> Church of England schools were regarded as indispensable. Methodists and evangelical

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<sup>135</sup>Jones, “Bishop Feild, A Study in Politics and Religion in Nineteenth-Century Newfoundland,” 121,108-133; Frederick Jones, “The Church in Nineteenth-Century Newfoundland,” *Bulletin of Canadian Studies* V, 1 (April 1981), 30-32; Calvin Hollett, “Bishop Edward Feild: A Wedge in Newfoundland Society,” *Newfoundland Quarterly* 98, 3 (2006): 34-40. For Tractarians, ‘the Church’ referred to only the Church of England.

<sup>136</sup>Nigel Yates, *The Oxford Movement and Anglican Ritualism* (London: The Historical Association, 1984), 22-23.

<sup>137</sup>Through architecture, William Grey may have had more impact on Newfoundland religion than Gilbert Scott, who designed Feild’s cathedral. Throughout Newfoundland “by 1855 some 27 churches had been built according to the neo-Gothic style.... based on Grey’s own work.” Patricia J. Leader, “The Hon. Reverend William Grey, M.A.” (Master of Theological Studies thesis, Queen’s College, St. John’s, 1998), 182-183. Shane O’Dea and Peter Coffman, “William Grey: ‘Missionary’ of Gothic in Newfoundland,” *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* 32,1 (2007): 39-48. Peter Coffman, “St. John’s Anglican Cathedral and the Beginnings of Ecclesiological Gothic in Newfoundland,” *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* 31,1 (2006): 3-22. See also, Alan Gregg Finley “Habits of Reverence and Awe: Bishop John Medley and the Promise of Ecclesiology,” *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society* XXXV, 1 (April 1993) and Christopher F. Headon, “Developments in Canadian Anglican Worship in Eastern and Central Canada 1840-1868,” *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society* XVII, 2 (June 1975).

Anglicans came together in a common cause against Tractarianism, particularly in the press.<sup>138</sup> A pamphlet by the evangelical Anglican, Thomas E. Collett, published by Joseph Woods, protesting Tractarianism, included charges of rebaptism of children previously baptized by Methodists.<sup>139</sup> Woods, the Methodist editor of the *Courier*, was thus a significant theological and political threat to the Church of England hierarchy.

Fighting Bishop Feild and his allies was not the first time that Methodists had become embroiled politically over education issues. Phillip McCann has shown they were involved in the changes to the 1836 Education Act.<sup>140</sup> There was dissatisfaction with not having the Bible in schools. Protestant agitation over the matter through school boards in Conception, Trinity and Bonavista bays, areas of sizeable Methodist populations, resulted in the Protestant - Roman Catholic division of the education grant in 1843.<sup>141</sup> Thus McCann claimed that Bishop Michael Anthony Fleming was handed a

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<sup>138</sup>Whelan, "The Newspaper Press in Nineteenth-Century Newfoundland," 92-98.

<sup>139</sup>Hollett, "Resistance to Bishop Edward Feild in Newfoundland, 1845-1857, Harbour Buffett: A Case Study," 176-178.

<sup>140</sup>Phillip McCann, "The Politics of Denominational Education in the Nineteenth Century in Newfoundland," in William A. McKim, ed., *The Vexed Question: Denominational Education in a Secular Age* (St. John's: Breakwater Books, 1988), 30-59.

<sup>141</sup>McCann, "The Politics of Denominational Education," 31-36. The Bible question became an issue in Prince Edward Island in the next decade, but was resolved in 1860 without resorting to denominationalism. Ian Ross Robertson, "The Bible Question in Prince Edward Island from 1856 to 1860," *Acadiensis* V, 2 (Spring 1976), 22.

denominational school system against his wishes.<sup>142</sup> Raymond J. Lahey, however, believed that Fleming did not like the 1843 Education Act because "Roman Catholic character ... was not ensured by the legislation, nor was the superintendence of the bishop recognised."<sup>143</sup>

John FitzGerald, in his Ph. D. thesis on Bishop Fleming, "Conflict and Culture in Irish-Newfoundland Roman Catholicism, 1829-1850," stated that Fleming had considerable interest in having a Catholic education system controlled by the bishop.<sup>144</sup> Fleming was influenced by the ultramontanist philosophy prevailing in the Catholic Church - an all-encompassing world view which looked to Rome, instead of to France and the Enlightenment, in all matters, whether religious, moral, political, educational or intellectual.<sup>145</sup> Roman Catholicism under Bishop Fleming was the primary competition for Newfoundland Methodists before the strengthening of the Church of England effort under bishops Aubrey Spencer (1839-1843) and Edward Feild (1844-1876). Many potential Methodist converts were instead converted to a reinvigorated Catholicism, for

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<sup>142</sup>Phillip McCann, "The 'No Popery' Crusade and the Newfoundland School System, 1836-1843," *S.C.H.E.C. Etudes d'histoire religieuse* 58 (1991), 95.

<sup>143</sup>Raymond J. Lahey, "Michael Anthony Fleming," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. VII (Toronto: University of Toronto press, 1988), 292-300.

<sup>144</sup>John Edward FitzGerald, "Conflict and Culture in Irish-Newfoundland Roman Catholicism, 1829-1850" (Ph. D. thesis, University of Ottawa, 1997), 136.

<sup>145</sup>*Ibid.*, 90-94.

example, at Merasheen in Placentia Bay.<sup>146</sup>

Goldwin French has shown that in the Maritimes, Methodists similarly became involved in politics, in their case, with Anglicans who attempted to control higher education.<sup>147</sup> In founding Sackville Academy (Mount Allison, 1862) they had to seek funding from the legislatures of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.<sup>148</sup> The Methodists were supported in this effort by the Presbyterians who, Anne Wood argues, exerted a greater influence than the Baptists, against the Anglican monopoly of higher education at King's College at Windsor.<sup>149</sup> The Methodists also fought politically against the Roman Catholic initiative for denominational schools.<sup>150</sup> Again, the Presbyterians helped them to arrive at "free and compulsory state schooling" in Nova Scotia with the 1865 Education Act.<sup>151</sup> Thomas Lewis Connolly, the second Roman Catholic Archbishop of Halifax, was

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<sup>146</sup>Ibid., 202.

<sup>147</sup>Goldwin French, "Methodism and Education in the Atlantic Provinces, 1800-1874," in Charles H.H. Scobie and John Webster Grant, eds., *The Contribution of Methodism to Atlantic Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992). See also, Judith Fingard, *The Anglican Design in Loyalist Nova Scotia 1783-1816* (London: SPCK, 1972), 152-158.

<sup>148</sup>Ibid., 154.

<sup>149</sup>Anne B. Wood, "The Significance of Evangelical Presbyterian Politics in the Construction of State Schooling: A Case Study of the Pictou District, 1817-1866," *Acadiensis* XX, 2 (Spring 1991), 62-85.

<sup>150</sup>French, "Methodism and Education in the Atlantic Provinces," 159.

<sup>151</sup>Wood, "The Significance of Evangelical Presbyterian Politics in the Construction of State Schooling," 85.

able to incorporate Catholic schools as denominational schools into the system.<sup>152</sup>

## 2.4

## Methodology

Mark McGowan made a plea for a social history approach to religion and gave some direction in his 1990 article, "Coming Out of the Cloister: Some Reflections on Developments in the Study of Religion in Canada, 1980-1990." He observed that religious history in Canada had been rather "cloistered" with an overwhelming emphasis on church leadership and institutional development, instead of on congregations. He succinctly summarized this scholarship as "the tendency to see religion as church and church as its clergy and leadership." In contrast, he advocated a social history of the people and suggested three categories: religion and society, religion and culture, and symbolic universes and practices. The first would include the relationship of religion to such categories as gender, labour and class. Religion and culture would examine the relationship between religion and the "values, assumptions, commitments ... of a people." The third category would examine a variety of sources such as symbols, letters, journals and reports to determine "how devotions are integrated into the life of the laity, and how ordinary persons interpret reality through the prism of religion," and their "resistance to

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<sup>152</sup>Fay Tromblay, "Thomas Louis Connolly: An Archbishop's Role in Politics," in Terrence Murphy and Cyril J. Byrne, eds., *Religion and Identity The Experience of Irish and Scottish Catholics in Atlantic Canada* (St. John's: Jesperson Press, 1987), 114-127.

ecclesiastical authority.”<sup>153</sup> It is primarily the latter two categories that I pursue in the study of the growth of Methodism in Newfoundland.

A major hurdle in writing social history is the scarcity of records. Various attempts have been made to overcome this deficiency which have relevance to this study. George Rawlyk studied the “letters, diaries, and autobiographies” of five revivalist preachers in Atlantic Canada - Henry Alline, William Black, David George, Freeborn Garrettson and Harris Harding.<sup>154</sup> He argued that one could gain insight into the popular religion of the era because the few historical records of ordinary people that are still extant show that their evangelicalism was “virtually identical” with that of the leaders.<sup>155</sup> He had access to more than a hundred letters, spiritual songs and autobiographical songs of Nova Scotian Newlight believers. Yet one that he calls on, Nancy Lawrence DeWolff, whose father was a Harvard graduate, seems hardly rank-and-file.<sup>156</sup>

In another approach, Stephen Marini studied hymn collections in the United States to find out what ordinary people actually sang, and in this way derived their religious values in “Hymnody as History: Early Evangelical Hymns and the Recovery of American

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<sup>153</sup>Mark G. McGowan, “Coming Out of the Cloister: Some Reflections on Developments in the Study of Religion in Canada, 1980-1990,” *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 1-2 (Spring-Fall 1990), 182-185. David Hempton made a similar plea for North Atlantic Methodism in particular in *The Religion of the People*, 2, 26-28.

<sup>154</sup>Rawlyk, *The Canada Fire*.

<sup>155</sup>*Ibid.*, xvii.

<sup>156</sup>*Ibid.*, 77, 86.

Popular Religion.” He focused on hymnody because it

may be considered as a medium of evangelical religious culture, a complex symbolic form comprised of poems and music, physical acts and psychological effects, texts and techniques, group gesture that expresses virtually the entire range of religious meanings available to participants in evangelical religion.<sup>157</sup>

He studied 86 hymn collections published before 1860 and arrived at a list of 71 of the more popular hymns which in most cases were transdenominational. He was surprised by the hymns which were on the list, and by those which were not. Marini concluded that these results can correct distortions which historians may have about which values and beliefs were held dear by rank-and-file evangelicals.<sup>158</sup>

A. Gregory Schneider consulted the biographical and obituary sections of newspapers for his article, “The Ritual of Happy Dying among Early American Methodists.” He found a “social religion” among Methodists based on “inclusion and exclusion” in contrast to the society of “deference and dominance” around them. The centre of the new community was the experience of God, “The *sine qua non* of social religion was the creation of a community of religious feeling, an atmosphere of spiritual intimacy.” It was within this social context that the ritual of happy dying took place.<sup>159</sup>

Deborah Valenze, on the other hand, used a variety of sources to study Methodist

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<sup>157</sup>Stephen Marini, “Hymnody as History: Early Evangelical Hymns and the Recovery of American Popular Religion,” *Church History* 71, 2 (June 2002), 279.

<sup>158</sup>Ibid., 278-284.

<sup>159</sup>A. Gregory Schneider, “The Ritual of Happy Dying among Early American Methodists,” *Church History* 56, 3 (September 1987), 350-351.

women preachers of rural 'cottage religion' in *Prophetic Sons And Daughters, Female Preaching and Popular Religion in Industrial England*. Eschewing the writings of urban middle class women such as Hannah More and Susannah Wesley, she overcame the scarcity of working-class sources by studying obituaries and memoirs for data on birth, childhood, occupation and place of residence and combined the results with information in "spiritual writings, denominational and local histories. She found that in the midst of change due to the continual transformation of industrialization in rural areas, women preachers by helping "define new household arrangements, gender roles, and reproductive behaviour ... fashioned a unique domestic ideology grounded in working class experience" which contrasted with Victorian values.<sup>160</sup>

Missionary accounts are a primary source for understanding the everyday life of Methodists. However, as Susan Neylan found in studying Tsimshian Methodism in British Columbia, there was a tendency for missionary writers to give too much credit to themselves by portraying themselves "as some sort of nexus around which all Christian activity revolved" in order to justify their presence and assure continued financial support. Moreover, the propensity continued "in the subsequent historiography about missionaries." Despite this clerical bias in the record, however, she found "the rule rather

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<sup>160</sup>Deborah M. Valenze, *Prophetic Sons And Daughters, Female Preaching and Popular Religion in Industrial England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 6, 10, 47.

than the exception" was that Native self-proselytizing preceded the missionary's arrival.<sup>161</sup> In examining the Newfoundland Methodist record the writer has found a similar clerical predisposition to place themselves in the forefront of a movement in print which does not stand up to questioning. There is a similar assumption in the historiography which is inaccurate, that is, the notion that it was missionaries and administrators who rescued Methodism in Newfoundland in 1815.<sup>162</sup> Owen Chadwick gave a more insightful judgement of the dynamics of Methodism in stating that while "coherent order was indispensable" among circuits, "yet the strength and expansive power of these societies rested upon a charismatic spirit" which issued forth in lay "personal witness and fervour, love feasts and watch-nights."<sup>163</sup> At Bonavista in 1855, for instance, there was "a very great revival of religion," initiated not by the preaching of a missionary but by that of "a respectable fisherman."<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>161</sup>Susan Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing: Nineteenth-century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (Montreal/Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 114.

<sup>162</sup>Kewley, "The First Fifty Years of Methodism in Newfoundland 1765-1815," 20-23.

<sup>163</sup>Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, Part I, 1829-1859 (London: SCM Press Ltd. 1966), 375. Love feasts were gatherings of intimate fellowship of hymns and testimony during which people ate bread and water. Wesley borrowed the near-sacramental practice, along with watch-nights, from the Moravians. Chaulk, "John Wesley and Newfoundland Methodism," 103; Davies and Rupp, *A History of the Methodist Church in Britain*, 52, 219, 272-273.

<sup>164</sup>*The Wesleyan Notices Newspaper* (London: The Wesleyan Mission-House), No. 99, March 29, 1855, 63.

A key concept for approaching this study is “interrelationship” instead of polarity. The study of Methodism is best approached not as an entity unto itself, but in relationship to the structures, events, ideas and realities which made up its environment. Peter Burke noted that “the traditional opposition between events and structures is being replaced by their interrelationship, and a few historians are experimenting with narrative forms of analysis or analytical forms of narrative.” The new history emphasizes interrelationship, rather than isolation as a theme in historical writing, between events and structures, high and low, micro and macro. The task as Burke sees it is to write a narrative “thick enough to deal not only with the sequence of events and the conscious intentions of the actors in these events, but also with structures - institutions, modes of thought, and so on - whether these structures act as a brake on events or as an accelerator.”<sup>165</sup> Micronarrative, once regarded as “the miserable chronicle of an obscure village” may instead rise to reveal values of society, class barriers and institutional structures.<sup>166</sup> In *Whigs and Hunters*, for example, E. P. Thompson’s study of the laws of the elite is fundamental to an understanding of what is happening in the everyday life of ‘the Blacks’. Everyday life, which was “once dismissed as trivial” by historians, is now widely viewed as “the centre to which everything else must be related.”<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>165</sup>Peter Burke, “Overture: the New History, its Past and its Future,” in Peter Burke, ed., *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1991), 19.

<sup>166</sup>Ibid., Peter Burke, “History of Events and the Revival of Narrative,” 241.

<sup>167</sup>Ibid., Burke, “Overture: the New History, its Past and its Future,” 11.

In conclusion, there has been an overbearing emphasis on the determining influences of 'isolation' and 'the land' (and sea) in Newfoundland Methodist historiography. This is misguided. William Westfall has given a more promising approach in stating:

When the categories of culture lose their meaning, the culture must search for new ways of explaining the world; but the materials for explaining the world exist only in the culture itself.<sup>168</sup>

The English and Irish who came to Newfoundland brought their cultures to their new environment and it is more productive to examine the adaptations of their attitudes, values, ideas, habits and lifestyles in response to changes and challenges resulting from that new environment. This has been done to some degree for a few religious leaders in Newfoundland, such as Fleming, Feild and Coughlan, but it is quite rare for the people at large. Armour and Barrett have noted the connection between the dissenters of Poole and those of St. John's and Conception Bay.<sup>169</sup> It is known that a major portion of Newfoundland's population came from England and Ireland in a thirty-year period up to the end of the Napoleonic wars, so it is reasonable to conclude that their adapted cultures became predominant in Newfoundland.<sup>170</sup> The influence of England and Ireland did not end with immigration, of course. It is this Atlantic world and the fact of the British

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<sup>168</sup>Westfall, *Two Worlds The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ontario*, 16.

<sup>169</sup>Armour, "Religious Dissent in St. John's 1775-1815," ii, 41, 113. Barrett, "Revivalism and the Origins of Newfoundland Methodism: 1766-1774," 221-223.

<sup>170</sup>Handcock, "The West Country Migrations to Newfoundland," 9.

Empire, with the sea as a means of communication, instead of a barrier, which has to be remembered in the study of religious social history in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Newfoundland.<sup>171</sup> The ultramontanist of Bishop Fleming and the Tractarianism of Bishop Feild had a profound cultural impact not only on their constituents, but also on their competitors, the Methodists. Methodists thrived where the Anglican Church presence was weak, but an invigoration of the Anglican effort in the 19<sup>th</sup> century gave the Methodists less of an edge.<sup>172</sup> Moreover, the romantic Tractarianism of Bishop Feild became a mounting challenge to the religion of experience of Methodism. Grey's fine Gothic churches, adapted to Newfoundland climate and resources, were being built everywhere.<sup>173</sup> Yet Methodism continued to grow while facing this challenge.

An inordinate emphasis has been placed on the importance of administration and organization. While these are important, there has been a tendency to overlook Methodism as a vernacular religion in Newfoundland. Often missionaries simply made

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<sup>171</sup>See for example, Phillip A. Buckner, "Was there a British Empire? *The Oxford History of the British Empire* from a Canadian Perspective" *Acadiensis* XXXII, 1 (Autumn 2002), 110-128; Richard Vaudry, "Evangelical Anglicans and the Atlantic World: Politics, Ideology, and the British North American Connection" in G.A. Rawlyk, ed., *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 154-170; and Richard W. Vaudry, *Anglicans and the Atlantic World* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003).

<sup>172</sup>On 'the north shore' of Conception Bay Coughlan was able to gain Catholic converts in a similar fashion. Rollmann, "Laurence Coughlan and the Origins of Methodism in Newfoundland," 161.

<sup>173</sup>William Grey, "The Ecclesiology of Newfoundland," *The Ecclesiologist* XIV (June 1853): 159-161.

an institutional record of a popular religion that long had been cultivated before their arrival. These and other studies show that the contrasts construed by Arthur Kewley, in an attempt to show the uniqueness of Newfoundland Methodism, are not valid distinctions.

This thesis examines Methodism in a North Atlantic world instead of in isolation. Building on the work of Barrett, Robinson, and Rollmann, it focuses on the people who made up the movement and who appear to have carried it, much as in England where Chadwick concluded that "local laymen carried the burden and responsibility."<sup>174</sup> As such it contributes to the social history of outport Newfoundland. Formerly, religion was often enlisted for understanding Newfoundland history only in so far as it was regarded as an accelerator or constraint in relation to perceived primary categories - politics and economics. These have been treated with an essentialism to which religion has been viewed as quite secondary. What is needed is a new perspective on the records available focusing on the people to understand their concept of the sacred and how they integrated it into everyday life. It is the sacred which is often left out of scholarly history of religion. Yet, "the people involved regarded their religious experiences as valuable in their own right."<sup>175</sup> Barrett has made a beginning with her study of the conversion letters of Coughlan's converts, but as virtually nothing has been written about 19<sup>th</sup>-century

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<sup>174</sup>Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, Part I, 373.

<sup>175</sup>George A. Rawlyk, *Wrapped up in God: A Study of Several Canadian Revivals and Revivalists* (Burlington, Ontario: Welch Publishing Company Inc., 1988), vii.

Methodism as a popular religion in Newfoundland in such centres as Grand Bank, Burin, Bonavista, Greenspond and Twillingate, much needs to be done.

Similarly, in the area of social history religion has not been given the prominence of gender, race, and class. To the extent that it has been enlisted, it has been perceived to have a negative influence on these "limited identities." This inquiry into Newfoundland Methodism is premised on the understanding that such application of religion is imbalanced. Much testimony bears witness that religion was a primary reality, even in later outport Newfoundland.<sup>176</sup> The study of religion in outport culture is therefore essential to an understanding of Newfoundland history. This is not to say that there were no gradations of class or other associational patterns, demonstrated even when people attended church. The religious experience, however, transcended church, whether membership or attendance, and reached to the fishing grounds, stages and homes - in short, permeated the outport culture of the people - a culture in which politics was only intermittently a factor. This culture was multi-layered and fissured and far from the uniformity postulated, for instance, in the submission to merchant capitalism portrayed by Gerald Sider.<sup>177</sup> It was religion, and not economics or politics, which informed this

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<sup>176</sup>Peter Neary, ed. *White Tie and Decorations: Sir John and Lady Hope Simpson in Newfoundland, 1934-1936* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 63. George Allan England, *Vikings of the Ice* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1924), 73-6. Wilfred T. Grenfell, *A Labrador Doctor* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1919), 182.

<sup>177</sup>Gerald M. Sider, *Culture and class in anthropology and history: A Newfoundland illustration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

multilayered and fissured culture of continually “contested meanings.”<sup>178</sup> This was especially so with Methodists who associated on the voluntary principle. Outport cultural appropriation, therefore, is far more complex than a simple snakes-and-ladders division of the dominant and the dominated, and culture is far more than a relief valve for actors in the purview of the outport merchant. Fisher families who identified with the Methodist religious experience were not lacking in confidence as they pursued an emotive religion which competed with the elitism of high church theology and its paraphernalia. As Hans Rollmann remarked of the converts in Conception Bay - they now met their “precarious outport existence ... with fellow believers, illuminated by ultimate meanings, and grounded in ontological certainty.”<sup>179</sup> It was their Methodism, and not merchant credit, which was their prior relationship and which lays claim to essentialism. In the 19<sup>th</sup>-century frontier environment of a weak state structure and a relatively absent institutional religious presence, in which the missionary visited points in his circuit often only once a year, it was the people who shaped their religious experience, and were shaped by it. It is the demotic Methodism of the bays, in contrast to the middle class Methodism of St. John’s which is under study. The focus is on popular culture in the outports instead of on

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<sup>178</sup>Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, “Modalities of Social Authority: Suggesting an Interface for Religious and Social History,” *Histoire Sociale / Social History* XXXVI, 71 (May 2003), 18.

<sup>179</sup>Rollmann, “Laurence Coughlan and the Origins of Methodism in Newfoundland,” 67.

those who were “among the most prominent citizens of St. John’s.”<sup>180</sup> Of course, St. John’s in its 19<sup>th</sup>-century ascendancy figures to the degree that it modified outport culture, religious and otherwise, for instance, economically, through its rise to dominance with the cessation of English merchant houses in the bays, and its take-over of the seal fishery.

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<sup>180</sup>George Story, *George Street United Church, 1873-1973* (St. John's: George Street United Church, 1973), 23.

### Chapter Three: Methodism and Newfoundland Religion in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

This chapter focuses on the changing relationship of Methodism to the Church of England. The relationship began as a competitive one, as Methodists and evangelical Anglicans vied for English immigrants and their descendants, a contest in which the Church of England made gains under Bishop Aubrey Spencer with the help of the Newfoundland School Society. Bishop Feild, however, brought a new version of Anglicanism, Tractarianism, in pronounced contrast to the evangelicalism of his predecessor and many of the church adherents. The nature of the contest also changed from Protestant rivalry to combat as a vernacular Methodism of experience challenged a sacerdotal and sacramental Anglicanism.

It was as upholders of Protestantism that Methodist missionaries made their appeal in print to the public. At the beginning, this discourse was cast as meeting the spiritual needs and arresting the moral decline of a Protestant population without church or clergy, and preventing proselytization by Roman Catholic priests. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries there were indeed few Protestant clergy in Newfoundland, generally no more than six in total, and at times none at all. In 1809, for instance, the Church of England and the Methodists had three clergy each.<sup>1</sup> But from 1799 to 1804 there was only one Methodist missionary, James Bulpit at Carbonear, and at Twillingate from 1799 to 1802,

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<sup>1</sup>*A Sermon Preached Before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts at their Anniversary Meeting ... February 17, 1809* (London: S. Brooke, 1809), 22-23; *Methodist Magazine*, 1809, 399.

one Congregationalist missionary, while the Church of England generally had four. It was the Methodists who took the lead, doubling their roster to six, and nearly doubling it again with eleven in 1817. Meanwhile the Church of England lagged behind with only five clergymen, and one of them, T.A. Grantham, vacated Burin after only a few months.<sup>2</sup>

The increase in Methodist missionaries was a result of the formation in 1813 of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, an arm of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference of Britain.<sup>3</sup> Methodists had already been sending missionaries overseas, and the organization of the missionary society was a formalization of the process. The London Missionary Society, which sent John Hillyard to Twillingate in 1799, was formed by the Congregationalists nearly two decades earlier, in 1795.<sup>4</sup> The evangelical Anglican Church Missionary Society was formed in 1799. These were voluntary associations which arose out of the Evangelical Revival in Britain, and though each was sponsored by a particular denomination, they had a wider ecumenical appeal.<sup>5</sup>

At a meeting of the newly-formed Newfoundland Methodist Missionary Society at

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<sup>2</sup>*Methodist Magazine*, 1815, 354; 1817, 358; *A Sermon Preached Before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts at their Anniversary Meeting ... February 21, 1817* (London: S. Brooke, 1817), 32-33.

<sup>3</sup>G.G. Findlay and W.W. Holdsworth, eds., *The History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society*, Vol. 1 (London: The Epworth Press, 1921), 274.

<sup>4</sup>Richard Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society, 1795-1895*, Vol. II (London: Henry Frowde, 1899), 726.

<sup>5</sup>Susan Thorne, "Religion and empire at home," in Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose, *At Home With the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 151.

Harbour Grace in 1816, with John Gosse as chairman, it was the thousands of Protestants in Fortune Bay and Placentia Bay “without a minister or preacher of any denomination,” and those north of Bonavista, who constituted a substantial part of the appeal for an increase in missionary effort.<sup>6</sup> Thus when John Lewis reached Oderin in Placentia Bay in the summer of 1817 he reported that there had not been a Protestant minister in the bay for the past sixteen years. Although an Anglican clergyman had been there recently, he had departed before Lewis’ arrival.<sup>7</sup> While Methodist missionaries saw themselves as lone voices preaching for conversion to evangelical Christianity, they also appealed to evidence of moral reform as a result of their preaching, particularly when conversion was absent.<sup>8</sup> John Lewis, for instance, reported a great need for both in Placentia Bay, finding at Burin “no religion, no morality, not even a form of godliness. The Sabbath is profaned by all: drunkenness is a prevailing evil; and others of as deep a dye I could mention.”<sup>9</sup> The list showed Lewis’ priority of objectives. “Form of godliness,” for instance church attendance, though least, was the door to a higher morality which in turn led to the prize,

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<sup>6</sup>*Methodist Magazine*, 1816, 181, 469-470, Samson Busy to Buckley, Carbonear, January 16, 1816.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 1817, 432, John Lewis to G. Marsden, Burin, Placentia Bay, July 7, 1817.

<sup>8</sup>“To say that a man is ‘converted’ means ... that religious ideas, previously peripheral in his consciousness, now take central place, and that religious aims form the habitual centre of his energy.” William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, (Centenary Edition, London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 155.

<sup>9</sup>*Methodist Magazine*, 1817, 432, John Lewis to G. Marsden, Burin, Placentia Bay, July 7, 1817.

“religion.” Hence, revivals, sought or celebrated, were generally called “revivals of religion.” While Lewis was able to report a few conversions, neither he nor his immediate successors were able to report any revivals. William Ellis found nearly a decade later that all had not been lost since there had been much improvement in “sanctification of the Sabbath.”<sup>10</sup>

The Methodists found that their most important adversary was not the Roman Catholic Church, but the Church of England, whose clergy became alarmed by the growing numbers of Methodist missionaries. Anglican clergy therefore stressed the Church of England establishment, and portrayed Methodism as an intruder. An example of this larger battle was the fight over the right to perform the marriage ceremony. David Rowland, the Church of England minister at St. John’s, leaned on the first wintering governor, Francis Pickmore, to summon George Cubit to Government House to inform him that he and other Methodist preachers and Dissenters were forbidden to officiate at marriages in Newfoundland.<sup>11</sup> This is surprising, since Rowland was an evangelical and had been a friend of William Hyde, the Congregationalist minister until the summer of 1816.<sup>12</sup> Yet Hyde was not a friend of the Methodists who he thought snubbed

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<sup>10</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 19, 1824-1825, William Ellis, Burin, November 29, 1825.

<sup>11</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 20, George Cubit to Committee, St. John’s, October 26, 1816.

<sup>12</sup>SOAS, LMS, America, Box 1, William Hyde to George Burder, St. John’s, January 12, 1816; Richard Vicars to George Burder, St. John’s, September 30, 1816.

Congregationalists because of their Calvinism, and were aggressively taking over Newfoundland. He was upset by the Methodist missionary, Sampson Busby, who seemed to be attempting in 1813 to separate Methodists from other evangelicals in St. John's. Methodists had begun an Auxiliary Missionary Society as a rival to that of the Congregationalists, and planned a chapel.<sup>13</sup>

In the summer of 1816, Hyde was replaced by James Sabine who was a friend of the Methodists.<sup>14</sup> When George Cubit unwittingly officiated at a marriage of a couple at the garrison who presented themselves under false names, shortly after Hyde's departure, Rowland took advantage of the opportunity to attack the right of Methodists and Dissenters to conduct marriage ceremonies in Newfoundland.<sup>15</sup> He saw the Methodists as interfering with his vision of a colonial society based on Church Establishment, of order and hierarchy, of church and state patterned after England. Thus, for Methodist missionaries to officiate at marriage was to usurp the "the rights and privileges" of the

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., William Hyde to George Burder, St. John's, June 25, 1813; October 28, 1814; June 9, 1815; December 11, 1815; January 12, 1816; April 26, 1816. William Hyde to Joseph Hardcastle, St. John's, October 4, 1815.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., James Sabine to George Burder, St. John's, July 31, 1817.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., Richard Vicars to George Burder, St. John's, December 21, 1817. See Trudi Johnson, "'A Matter of Custom and Convenience': Marriage Law in Nineteenth-Century Newfoundland," *Newfoundland Studies* 19, 2 (Fall 2003); Raymond J. Lahey, "Religion and Politics in Newfoundland: The Antecedents of the General Election of 1832," 10-18. Lecture to Newfoundland Historical Society, March 1979.

Church of England.<sup>16</sup> This clerical turf war, focused on the Church of England's exclusive right to marry, was far removed from the needs and interests of the people who preferred marriage by clergy, but were not particular as to denomination. The custom of the country, if no clergy were available, was to have a literate neighbour read the marriage service from the *Book of Common Prayer*. George Coster later complained that in many instances, instead of travelling great distances the people "agree to dispense with it and take each other's words."<sup>17</sup>

In the 1820s Methodism faced another obstacle, a passionate alternate version of evangelical Christianity in the form of the Newfoundland School Society. Samuel Codner, the Society's founder in 1823, was an evangelical Devonshire merchant at Petty Harbour whose focus was free education for the poor.<sup>18</sup> The education provided was within an evangelical context, for the Society saw itself as promoting "those blessed truths which alone are able to make men wise to salvation, through faith in Jesus

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<sup>16</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A190, David Rowland, St. John's, November 30, 1816; January 29, 1817. There was also an issue of money, marriage being a ceremony that brought in extra income. A190, Lewis Amadeus Anspach to Doctor Morice, September 3, 1812.

<sup>17</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A192, George Coster to Hamilton, Bonavista, December 22, 1826.

<sup>18</sup>See H.A. Seegmiller, "The Colonial and Continental Church Society in Eastern Canada," (Doctor of Divinity thesis, General Synod of Nova Scotia, 1966), 21-24, 31; *The Codner Centenary, or the Performance of a Vow: A Short Review of the Rise and Progress of the Colonial and Continental Church Society 1823-1923* (n.p., 1924). Frederick Rowe, *A History of Education in Newfoundland* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1952), 38-39.

Christ.”<sup>19</sup> It was also according to principles “as received and taught by the Church of England.”<sup>20</sup> Philip McCann asked: “Why did members of the Evangelical wing of the Church of England play the leading role in the activities of the society?”<sup>21</sup> They did it because of the fervency of their faith, since their “fundamental aim was conversion rather than education.”<sup>22</sup> They were an Anglican force to be reckoned with. During the heyday of the Society’s work, 1832-1857, the literacy rate in Newfoundland increased from 35 to 57 percent of the population.<sup>23</sup> Although similar in evangelical theology, the Methodists had a tenuous relationship with the Newfoundland School Society, and came to see it as a threat to their influence and expansion.

At the beginning, Methodist relations with the society were amicable. When Ninian Barr heard of its formation he wrote optimistically that it had “room to do much

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<sup>19</sup>PANL MG 595 P-15 *Proceedings of the Church of England Society for Newfoundland and the Colonies, 1848-1849* (London: George Barclay, 1849), 1.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, *Proceedings of the Newfoundland and British North American Society for Educating the Poor, 1840-1841* (London: Moyes and Barclay, 1841), 1.

<sup>21</sup>Phillip McCann, “The Newfoundland School Society 1823-55: missionary enterprise or cultural imperialism?,” in J. A. Mangan, ed., *‘Benefits Bestowed’?: Education and British Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 95.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 105. David Alexander found that the area with the highest literacy rate (70%) was the Eastern Avalon which included St. John’s and Ferryland districts. The second highest (57%) was the northeast coast - Conception Bay to Twillingate district. See David Alexander, “Literacy and Economic Development in Nineteenth-Century Newfoundland” in Eric W. Sager, Lewis R. Fischer, and Stewart O. Pierson, *David G. Alexander: Atlantic Canada and Confederation, Essays in Canadian Political Economy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), Table 6, 127.

good in this country” and would “be a great blessing to this land.”<sup>24</sup> The Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Committee in London subscribed £20 annually to the society with the understanding that children of Methodist parents would be permitted to attend its schools, though attending their own “places of worship.” It encouraged Methodists in Newfoundland who had access only to Sunday schools, to send their children to NSS day schools.<sup>25</sup> However there was soon a strain in the relationship. The problem lay in the NSS insistence that children who attended their day schools, had to attend their Sunday schools as well.<sup>26</sup> Methodist parents followed this requirement rather than risk their children being denied admittance to the day school, but at Sunday school the children were instructed in Church of England principles. Thus at Trinity, for example, the

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<sup>24</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 19, 1824-1825, Ninian Barr, Journal, October 29, 1823.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., Reel 33, “Minutes of the Missions Committee,” London, July 1814-July 1851, Vol 1-6 (extracts), July 24, 1823; March 3, 1824. In the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Methodist schools day schools were the exception. For example, John Hoskins began a school in Old Perlican in 1784. Mrs. James Bulpit, Richard Taylor and his wife, and Mrs. James Busby had schools intermittently in Carbonear from 1807 to 1816. John Walsh and his wife had a school “for two hours three days a week” at Blackhead in 1818. Mrs. W. Kelson “with two three young females” had a school “on Sundays and Thursdays” at Trinity in 1821.” *Arminian Magazine*, 1785, “An Account of Mr. John Hoskins in a Letter to the Rev. John Wesley,” 26; *Methodist Magazine*, 1806, James Bulpit, to Thomas Coke, Carbonear, June 12, 1805, 378; 1813, John Gosse to the Rev. Mr. Highfield, Carbonear, Newfoundland, Dec. 21, 1812, 319; 1816, Abridged edition, William Ellis, Sampson Busby, John Lewis, and Thomas Hickson, to the Missionary Committee, St. John’s, Newfoundland, June 21, 1816, 438; 1820, John Walsh, Blackhead, October 20, 1819, 238; *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1822, James Hickson, Trinity, January 10, 1822, 270.

<sup>26</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS, Reel 24, 1835-1837, John Pickavant, Chairman, to Secretary of WMMS, June 2, 1836.

missionary saw a Methodist day school as a necessary alternative to that of the Newfoundland School Society.<sup>27</sup>

The NSS society created a divided house within the Church of England, however, being seen by some of its clergy as being "rather too enthusiastic" in its evangelicalism.<sup>28</sup> This, and its autonomy as an independent society, caused problems in clergy-led parishes. While John Chapman at Twillingate was able to cooperate with the society's teachers, Archdeacon George Coster at Bonavista saw them as a threat to his authority and his first reaction was to keep a safe distance.<sup>29</sup> The society's teachers were quite popular in his Bonavista parish, however, so he had to tread a fine line lest he show his antipathy toward them and drive their supporters to the Methodists.<sup>30</sup> William Bullock also had an uneasy relationship with them at Trinity. He, too, did not want to lose his Sunday-school

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., Reel 27, 1842-1845, James Norris, Trinity, January 11, 1844.

<sup>28</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A192, John Chapman to Anthony Hamilton, Secretary, Twillingate, December 15, 1827; December 6, 1829.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., John Chapman to A.M. Campbell, Secretary, Twillingate, December 7, 1835.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., Archdeacon George Coster to Hamilton, St. John's, August 27, 1824; George Coster to Richard Lendon, Cloisters, Westminster. Bonavista, November 9, 1826. "A copy of the letter sent to Mr. Parker, Secretary to the Society PCK." On Coster, see Hans Rollmann, "The Colonial Episcopate of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland Missions," in *Frontiers Then and Now: The Canadian Anglican Episcopate 1787-1987* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1989), 29-30; D. Murray Young, "George Coster," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. VIII (Toronto: University of Toronto press, 1985), 171-174.

students to them.<sup>31</sup>

Similarly, Archdeacon Edward Wix, who succeeded Coster, did not trust the teachers of the Newfoundland School Society because he had no authority over them, a matter of particular concern because they were “strongly tinctured with the liberal notion of that portion of the Church which associates and assimilates most with the dissenting interest.” Indeed, they engaged in extemporary preaching to expound Scripture and held prayer meetings on Sunday evenings after the resident minister had already held two services. Their loan libraries were made up of books by “fanatical teachers.” He could not therefore recommend them as lay readers and advised that any applications for clerical orders from them be received “with absolute suspicion.”<sup>32</sup> They had no more connection with the Church of England than a Wesleyan or any other Nonconformist society. Wix was particularly exercised about Methodist influence in the Church of England through the Newfoundland School Society. He drew attention to three of the society’s teachers in Conception Bay, who were Methodist probationers or preachers.<sup>33</sup> But elsewhere, Wix wrote that he did not visit Grand Bank and Burin because there were “very worthy

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<sup>31</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A193, William Bullock to Archdeacon of NL, Trinity, October 25, 1833.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., Edward Wix to Archdeacon Hamilton, St. John’s, December 28, 1830; September 13, 1831; August 8, 1831.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., Edward Wix to Archdeacon Hamilton, St. John’s, September 12, 1832.

Wesleyan Missionaries" there.<sup>34</sup> Thus Wix's opinion of Methodists in his private correspondence is at variance with his complimentary portrayal in his published writing appealing to Protestants at large.<sup>35</sup> Wix was on the frontier where he had only a marginal influence and, as a result, his connections and allegiances to other Protestants were mixed. In his published writing he also appeared to be friends with the teachers of the Newfoundland School Society, praising the society for "doing much for the scriptural education of the youth of the island."<sup>36</sup> He was, in fact, friends with individuals connected with both societies, for instance, Thomas Collett who was a member of the Newfoundland School Society in Petty Harbour before moving to Placentia Bay, where he continued as a supporter of the society and of the Church of England, but was also a friend to the Methodists.<sup>37</sup>

Some Anglicans may have perceived the Newfoundland School Society as being partial to the Methodists, but Richard Knight, the Methodist missionary at Carbonear,

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<sup>34</sup>Edward Wix, *Six Months of a Newfoundland Missionary's Journal from February to August, 1835* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1836), 62.

<sup>35</sup>John Pickavant, Chairman of the Newfoundland District, called him "a bitter enemy to Methodism" in 1834. SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 5, 1833/34 - 1837/38, File 207, John Pickavant, Brigus, July 14, 1834.

<sup>36</sup>Edward Wix, *Six Months of a Newfoundland Missionary's Journal*, 39.

<sup>37</sup>SPG MG 598 A168 Collett to Wix, May 13, 1836; Edward Wix, *Six Months of a Newfoundland Missionary's Journal*, 40; Collett last subscribed to the Newfoundland School Society in Petty Harbour in 1833. MG 595 P-59 *Proceedings of the Newfoundland and British North American Society for Educating the Poor, Eleventh Year, 1833-1834* (London: Compton and Ritchie, 1834), 33.

writing under the pseudonym "Candidus," charged that Newfoundland School Society teachers were casting aspersions on Methodist missionaries in their reports.<sup>38</sup> John Pickavant, chairman of the District Meeting, considered the society's teachers to be "so bigoted and sectarian in their practisings that we cannot with confidence encourage them to come upon the ground which we occupy," and complained of losing Sunday schools to them.<sup>39</sup>

The Newfoundland School Society could be useful to the Church of England, as was demonstrated in Brigus where the Methodists held sway until the society arrived. The merchant, Charles Cozens, and his family operated a Methodist Sunday school until the arrival of the first Methodist missionary, Thomas Hickson, in 1819, who found it to be "the best in the island."<sup>40</sup> It was Cozens who requested a missionary.<sup>41</sup> Possibly even more significant for the cause of Methodism in Brigus was the lay ministry of teacher and preacher, John Percey. He is somewhat of an enigma since, as Charles Lench noted, he was not mentioned in any of the Wesleyan Methodist records, nor in the histories of

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<sup>38</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, January 9, 1833.

<sup>39</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 24, 1835-1837, John Pickavant, Chairman to Secretary of WMM, June 2, 1836.

<sup>40</sup>*Methodist Magazine*, 1820, 236-237.

<sup>41</sup>*Wesleyan*, "The Deputation to Newfoundland," August 30, 1855.

Wilson and Smith.<sup>42</sup> His ministry is an example of an enormous lay contribution to Methodism which never appeared in the official record. In addition, Brigus provides another example of Methodist missionaries arriving in an area to build upon a foundation already laid by others, rather than being the founders themselves. Still, it was largely a nominal Methodism. For the first years missionaries reported that though the people came to services, they had few conversions.<sup>43</sup> As in Carbonear, although the congregations were large, and some were pious, there were few members in society, that is, following the Methodist discipline of attending class meetings.<sup>44</sup> As he did later when he was stationed at Carbonear, John Haigh surmised that it was absence from the means of grace while pursuing the seal and cod fisheries that caused the lack of "spiritual attainments" among the Methodists of Brigus. In addition, Haigh speculated that sealing itself, "the scenes of cruelty and blood," prevented a Methodist spirituality from

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<sup>42</sup>Charles Lench, *A Souvenir of the Brigus Methodist Jubilee of the Opening of the Church, 1875-1925* (n.p., 1925), 4-5. Wilson, *Newfoundland and Its Missionaries*. Smith, *History of the Methodist Church ... of Eastern British America*, Vol. I.

<sup>43</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 2, 1819/20-1823/25, File 52, Thomas Hickson to Joseph Taylor, Brigus, December 28, 1820. PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 18, 1822-1823, John Haigh, Brigus, July 10, 1822.

<sup>44</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 18, 1822-1823, John Haigh, Brigus, January 10, 1823. Methodist class meetings were held weekly for Christian fellowship, united prayer, sympathetic instruction, and helpful counsel "under the pastoral oversight of a duly appointed and recognized leader." *Methodist Monthly Greeting*, April, 1901, 3, "Forty Years Ago" No. 11, John Waterhouse, Manchester. See also, Naboth Winsor, *Hearts Strangely Warmed: A History of Methodism in Newfoundland 1765-1925*, Vol. 1, 1765-1824 (Gander, B.S.C. Printers (1982) Limited, 1982), 11.

flourishing in the town, for it caused “a tendency to lessen the tone of moral feeling.”<sup>45</sup>

Because Brigus Methodism was largely nominal, and not a religion of experience and passion, it was open to Church of England initiatives. John Burt from Harbour Grace made such an overture in 1823 with some success.<sup>46</sup> Thus Bishop Inglis overstated the religious leanings of the town in 1827 when he concluded that it was “altogether in the hands of the Methodists.”<sup>47</sup> Charles Blackman from Port de Grave did not resign himself to Inglis’s verdict, but visited Brigus to tap its latent Anglicanism while William Ellis, its Methodist missionary, was temporarily at Trinity. Blackman had more success than Burt before him, for Ellis wrote that he had succeeded in making “a division among this peaceful people. Indeed there has not been one of the respectable inhabitants left us.”<sup>48</sup>

Methodism at Brigus received a double setback in 1832. Charles Cozens went bankrupt leaving hundreds without provisions.<sup>49</sup> The *Wesleyan* reported later that he was

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<sup>45</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 18, 1822-1823, John Haigh, Brigus, June 10, 1823.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., John Haigh, Brigus, December 29, 1823.

<sup>47</sup>*A Sermon Preached Before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts ... together with The Report of the Society for the Year 1827* (London: C. and J. Rivington, 1828), Bishop John Inglis, Journal, June 10, 11, 1827, 68-69.

<sup>48</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A192, Charles Blackman to A. Hamilton, Port de Grave, December 18, 1827; SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 3, 1823/25-1828/29, File 144, William Ellis, Brigus, June 12, 1828.

<sup>49</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 4, 1828/29-1833/34, File 182, Richard Knight, Carbonear, December 27, 1832. *Public Ledger*, June 7, 1833. See also, “The Empire of Charles Cozens” in John Northway Leamon, *Brigus: Past Glory, Present Splendour* (St. John’s: Harry Cuff Publications, 1998), 372-379.

brought to ruin by malice.<sup>50</sup> The clergyman, J.M. Martin, acknowledged his Methodist influence and called him a “persecutor” of Anglicans.<sup>51</sup> More significantly in 1832, the Newfoundland School Society sent a teacher there at the request of Anglican residents who had already built a school in anticipation.<sup>52</sup> It was the normal procedure for the teacher to serve also as lay reader and hold services in the school, an immensely more significant presence in the community for the Church of England than an occasional visit from a clergyman. The Newfoundland School Society maintained a presence for a decade until the first resident clergyman was appointed in 1842.<sup>53</sup> The Methodist missionary, Ingham Sutcliffe reckoned that the NSS significantly damaged the cause of Methodism in Brigus.<sup>54</sup>

Methodist concerns about the Newfoundland School Society reached a new height with the arrival in 1840 of the first Bishop of Newfoundland. Unlike Archdeacons Coster and Wix, the evangelical Aubrey George Spencer was quite positive toward the society and hired its teachers as clergy and lay readers as a primary part of his strategy to increase

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<sup>50</sup>*Wesleyan*, “The Deputation to Newfoundland,” August 30, 1855.

<sup>51</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A196, J.M. Martin, Brigus, April 3, 1846.

<sup>52</sup>Guildhall Library, *Proceedings of Newfoundland and British North American Society for Educating the Poor, 1832-1833* (London: William Clowes, 1833), 7-8.

<sup>53</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A196, J.M. Martin, Brigus, April 3, 1846.

<sup>54</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 27, 1842-1845, Ingham Sutcliffe, St. John’s, November 20, 1843.

the influence of the Church of England.<sup>55</sup> Given the few clergy, appointing lay readers in the outports had long been seen as an Anglican means to thwart the extension of Methodism. This strategy was noted as early as 1827 by Archdeacon Coster.<sup>56</sup> There had been a spontaneous assumption of the role of lay reader by various individuals. For example, John Leigh, Ecclesiastical Commissary (bishop's deputy) wrote in 1822 that Abraham Ackerman by the time of his death had read the Anglican service for "upwards of forty years" at Bonavista.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, John Hardy, formerly of Poole, read prayers and a sermon for nearly 40 years at Richard's Harbour, a settlement between Facheux Bay and Hare Bay on the south coast.<sup>58</sup> When Lewis Amadeus Anspach visited the settlements of Conception Bay in 1802 he found "some well disposed person" in a number of them who was in the habit of reading the service "at his own, or some neighbour's house."<sup>59</sup> In

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<sup>55</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A194, Bishop Spencer, Trinity Harbour, July 2, 1840; Bishop Spencer to Campbell, St. John's, November 7, 1840; Spencer to Ernest Hawkins, St. John's, November 18, 1840; Spencer to Hawkins, St. John's, July 23, 1841; Bishop Aubrey Spencer to A.M. Campbell, St. John's, April 26, 1841; A192, Charles Blackman to Bishop of Nova Scotia, St. John's, January 17, 1839; A193, Archdeacon Wix to Archdeacon Hamilton, St. John's, August 8, 1831; A192, George Coster to Richard Lendon, Cloisters, Westminster. Bonavista, November 9, 1826. "A copy of the letter sent to Mr. Parker, Secretary to the Society PCK."

<sup>56</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A192, George Coster, Bonavista, July 21, 1827.

<sup>57</sup> *A Sermon Preached Before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts ... together with The Report of the Society for the Year 1822* (London: G. Woodfall, 1823), Report of John Leigh, Ecclesiastical Commissary, 58.

<sup>58</sup>Edward Wix, *Six Months of a Newfoundland Missionary's Journal*, 123.

<sup>59</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A190, Lewis Amadeus Anspach to Rev. Dr. Morice, SPG, St. John's, October 28, 1802.

1821, following a request of John Leigh, the appointment of lay readers in the outposts became more systematic with a resolution of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) that where possible, schoolmasters be appointed and serve also as lay readers.<sup>60</sup> They were to read from the service of the Church of England, “and no other,” and to read a sermon prescribed by the SPG or the minister of the district. This measure would also preclude any inclination to preach extemporaneously like the Methodists.<sup>61</sup> By June 1831 there were ten lay readers in Trinity Bay alone.<sup>62</sup> Yet Charles Blackman was not at ease with this arrangement in instances where a Methodist missionary was in the immediate area. He considered that “a common fisherman” would not read the service to the people “in a manner calculated to impress them with an Idea of its excellence” and thus would not be able to compete with a Methodist missionary whom the people erroneously thought

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<sup>60</sup>The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel was founded in 1701 to plant the Church of England in the British colonies. *The Spiritual Expansion of Empire* (London: The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, 1900), iii. On SPG schools, see Gay J. (Peddle) White, “A History of S.P.G.-Supported Schools in Newfoundland: 1701-1827,” (M.A. thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2001).

<sup>61</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A190, John Leigh to Anthony Hamilton, Harbour Grace, January 15, 1821. *A Sermon Preached Before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts ... together with The Report of the Society for the Year 1821* (London: S. Brooke, 1822), Report of John Leigh, Ecclesiastical Commissary, 55-56. Similarly, Bishop Feild gave the injunction to lay readers: “You shall not preach, or interpret; but only ... read...” Robert Dyer’s Diary, Greenspond, 1841-1859, June 12, 1853. Draft manuscript copy in preparation for publishing by Linda White; original at the Anglican General Synod Archives, Toronto.

<sup>62</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A192, William Bullock to James Markland, Treasurer, SPG, Trinity, June 29, 1831.

was "a regular preacher."<sup>63</sup> The Newfoundland School Society became a source of clergy and its teachers as lay readers provided a huge increase in the supply of regular church services and evangelical preaching in direct competition to the Methodists.

By the early 1840s the Church of England had, remarkably, succeeded in making itself, and not the Methodists, the leader of a Protestant cause that had expressed such dismay in the 1830s over what they deemed to be Roman Catholic ascendancy. There had been a Roman Catholic sweep of the Assembly in both 1836 and 1837 in the recently granted representative government.<sup>64</sup> In addition to the Catholic-dominated Assembly at St. John's there was also a perception, with some foundation, of an aggressive and more abundantly supplied Catholic priesthood proselytizing in the harbours and bays on the south coast. For example, when Bishop Fleming visited Merasheen in Placentia Bay in 1835 he noted in his journal that of the 86 people he confirmed on the occasion, twenty-six were former Protestants. Not only that, but three more were converted on the spot during his visit.<sup>65</sup>

With considerable alarm the Methodists determined to arrest this development. The executive of the Auxiliary Missionary Society to the WMMS, chaired by Robert Job,

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid., Charles Blackman to A. Hamilton, St. John's, September 16, 1822.

<sup>64</sup>Gertrude E. Gunn, *The Political History of Newfoundland 1832-1864*, 33-42; Appendix B, Members of the House of Assembly, Tables II and III, 194-195. Yet the Protestants still retained control of the actual government, that is, the executive council.

<sup>65</sup>M.F. Howley, *Ecclesiastical History of Newfoundland* (Boston: Doyle and Whittle, Publishers, 1888), 323.

a Congregationalist, agreed in 1837 that “visiting” missionaries had to be acquired and sent to the frontier of the island.<sup>66</sup> Itinerant missionaries understood that they were to be resident pastors at stations for one to three years, while making an excursion around a circuit once a year in the fall. Their ministry was similar to that of the Anglican clergy, except the latter remained at their stations for longer terms. In contrast, the visiting missionary was to spend most of his time travelling about in a circuit or region without taking up residence in any community. He was “to be located nowhere, but constantly ... visiting.”<sup>67</sup> In response to a suggestion from the London Committee that such missionaries would be good for Newfoundland, Thomas Angwin spoke with a degree of alarmism as to why they were necessary:

The state of the country is most wretched. It is ruled by a Mob.... Romanism is rampant. Could you furnish us with more Missionaries ... It is to be feared that unless something be soon done, this land will become exclusively Catholic. The plan proposed by the Committee to employ visiting Missionaries is a good one.... It is generally believed that unless something be done, the days of Protestantism are nearly ended.<sup>68</sup>

Similarly, in his official letter to the Committee John Pickavant, the chairman of the District, spoke of taking action against the prevailing “dominant spirit of Popery” and against their “proselyting disposition they are exercising in the more distant and scattered

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<sup>66</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, John Pickavant, Chairman, Official District letter to Secretaries, May 29, 1837.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., Reel 24, 1835-1837, Thomas Angwin, Port de Grave, December 21, 1836.

parts of the island where Protestant Ministers have been seldom able to visit.” He requested two visiting missionaries for the north of Newfoundland and one missionary for the south, possibly at Hermitage Bay. Robert Job suggested asking the Newmans in London for £50 towards the expense.<sup>69</sup> Pickavant repeated the request for visiting missionaries the next year, leaving no doubt the reason for its urgency: “Irish Catholic priests are increasing apace, and the House of Assembly is now composed of an overwhelming majority of Papists.”<sup>70</sup>

It seemed that the Methodists would lead the Protestant cause, for at this critical juncture the Church of England suffered an internal convulsion, which promised to derail their new momentum. The archdeacon and leader for nearly a decade, Edward Wix, had accumulated massive debt, and then was caught “with a common prostitute.” He immediately made “a sudden and secret departure” from Newfoundland on a schooner sailing to Cork.<sup>71</sup> This moral failure on the part of the highest leadership of the church sent a shockwave throughout the populace. The clergy feared what might ensue since the whole Church of England “in every part of the island” was now “suffering under a

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid., Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, John Pickavant, Chairman, Official District letter to Secretaries, May 29, 1837. See also, SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 6, 1837/38-1841/42, File 251, William Faulkner, Blackhead, January 5, 1837.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., Reel 25, 1838-1840, John Pickavant, Carbonear, September 12, 1838; November 21, 1838.

<sup>71</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A191, J.Burt, Oswald J. Howell, T.F.H. Bridge to Bishop of Nova Scotia, St. John's, November 1, 1838; A193, Thomas F.H. Bridge to A.M. Campbell, Secretary, SPG, St. John's, October 26, 1838.

grievous stigma.”<sup>72</sup> Would the Methodists capitalize on the derision of the populace? What about the assumption of the concomitance of religion and morals? The archdeacon had just published a book highlighting the lack of morals as one of the reasons for an urgent need for missionaries.<sup>73</sup> In some of the places he visited there were instances of playing cards and working on the Sabbath, drinking to excess, selling fish to the French, adultery, and profanity. The answer to this moral destitution was to have more missionaries who could provide “an established religion with a church and a spiritual pastor.”<sup>74</sup> However, in none of the immoral situations he decried had the people engaged in the archdeacon’s specialty, prostitution.

The premise that education, respectability and religion were associated with high morals could also have been questioned in Wix’s appeal to “his Royal Highness Prince William Henry” and his donation of silver plate to the church at Placentia in 1787.<sup>75</sup> This association of the Church of England with royalty through the prince’s stay and donation at Placentia was repeated with wonder and amazement throughout the clerical

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid., A191, J. Burt, Oswald J. Howell, T.F.H. Bridge to Bishop of Nova Scotia, St. John’s, November 1, 1838; A193, Thomas F.H. Bridge to A.M. Campbell, Secretary, SPG, St. John’s, October 26, 1838.

<sup>73</sup>Wix, *Six Months of a Newfoundland Missionary’s Journal*, 36, 81, 120-122, 156, 169-174.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 172-173, 257.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 33. Thomas R. Millman and A.R. Kelly, *Atlantic Canada to 1900: A History of the Anglican Church* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1983), 20.

correspondence.<sup>76</sup> Actually, the prince, later William IV, the pinnacle of the elite, had a rather besmirched reputation in Newfoundland as a dissolute womanizer and brawler, for whom neither education, respectability, nor religion had resulted in the moral uplift which the missionaries promised.<sup>77</sup>

The Wix debacle handed the Methodists a remarkable opportunity to take the lead in missions. However, the Methodists could not claim the moral high ground since a quarter of their missionary force had to be investigated on charges of sexual immorality. At the 1833 District Meeting three missionaries were charged with "imprudencies." Charles Bates, missionary at Hant's Harbour, a married man, was suspended until the Committee could rule on the charges against him. The missionaries did not think that "any criminal intercourse between him and his servant girl" had taken place but that he had "acted a very imprudent and sinful part in having twice kissed her and rubbed her face with his hand." He admitted to the latter.<sup>78</sup> Richard Shepherd, missionary at Western Bay had "taken improper liberties with a married female" and was immediately

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<sup>76</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A195, George B. Cowan to Bishop Spencer, Burin, May 16, 1842; A194, Bishop Spencer's Visit to Placentia Bay in 1843, July 13, 1843; A195, Bishop Edward Feild, Great Placentia, November 25, 1845; A222 Quarterly Report of W.K. White, Harbour Buffett, September 30, 1854.

<sup>77</sup>M.F. Howley, *Ecclesiastical History of Newfoundland*, 195. Raymond J. Lahey, *James Louis O'Donel in Newfoundland 1784-1807: The Establishment of the Roman Catholic Church* (St. John's: Newfoundland Historical Society, 1984), 13. Hans Rollmann, *Prince William Henry in Newfoundland*,  
<<http://www.mun.ca/rels/ang/texts/pwh.htm>>.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*, Box 5, 1833/34 - 1837/38, File 202, Charles Bates to Secretaries of Committee, Hant's Harbour, January 29, 1833.

sent back to England. As for William Wilson, missionary at Blackhead, the District

Meeting concluded:

Several charges of imprudence being preferred against Brother Wilson and which have been so oft repeated and against the frequent admonitions of the board, and prejudicing the minds of our people against him by which he has closed up his way into most of our respectable circuits in this Island, that we do most earnestly recommend his removal to England, or at least from this Island.”<sup>79</sup>

What is more, the Chairman of the meeting guiding these deliberations, John Pickavant, had rumours of drunkenness swirling around him. Several witnesses later testified to having seen him inebriate.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, in 1839, relations had so worsened with another missionary, John Snowball, because of the latter “making statements in every direction contrary to fact” regarding both Pickavant and the District, that Pickavant considered formally charging him.<sup>81</sup> The premise that morals were associated with religion and education was in serious doubt.

With Wix absconding with his reputation and title in tatters there was a vacuum of authority in the Church of England. The clergymen who remained quickly began to vie for the position of archdeacon. Charles Blackman left his charge at Port de Grave and set himself up in Wix’s place, and lacking only the title, requested it. Frederick Carrington,

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<sup>79</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, January 9, 1833; May 18, 1833.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., Reel 27, 1842-1845, John Snowball to Rev. Robert Adler, D.D., Blackhead, July 7, 1843; SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 8, 1846/48-1849/51, File 380, George Ellidge, Port de Grave, November 10, 1847.

<sup>81</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 25, 1838-1840, John Pickavant to Robert Adler, Carbonear, December 24, 1839.

having failed to get it previously, said he wanted it. John Burt expressed disgust that others had so quickly sought the position after the Wix's departure, and then proceeded to "commend" himself for it.<sup>82</sup> All were passed over, however, and the evangelical Aubrey George Spencer, Archdeacon of Bermuda, was appointed bishop, and the archdeaconry left vacant for the time being. Spencer's appointment, in addition to meeting an internal crisis in Newfoundland, was part of a larger initiative to enlarge the authority and presence of the Church of England in British North America. The formation of Newfoundland and Bermuda into a diocese coincided with that of Upper Canada, where Archdeacon John Strachan was appointed as a bishop. This arrangement allowed the bishops of Nova Scotia and Montreal to concentrate on their smaller charges, and for the first time, allowed an opportunity for a bishop to more narrowly focus on "the frightful condition of Newfoundland." To help him in this capacity he could call an additional four clergy with the offer of £200 annually and would continue to receive the archdeacon's grant, though vacant, for missionary purposes.<sup>83</sup> This was considerably more financial backing than that provided by the Newfoundland Auxiliary Wesleyan Missionary Society, which in 1839 affirmed a new resolve for a "more regular and efficient accomplishment" of their goal by funding an increase in the number of Wesleyan missionaries in areas

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<sup>82</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A192, Charles Blackman to A.M. Campbell, St. John's, November 7, 1838; A190, Frederick Carrington, St. John's, October 29, 1829; Carrington, St. John's, October 24, 1838; A191, John Burt to Rev. A.M. Campbell, Harbour Grace, January 11, 1839.

<sup>83</sup>*Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. Report for the Year, 1839* (London: Printed for the Society, 1839), 28-30, 36.

“scarcely ever visited by the Missionaries of any Protestant denomination.”<sup>84</sup>

Since Bishop Aubrey Spencer did not view the Newfoundland School Society as a threat, but enlisted it as a prime vehicle for the strengthening and expansion of his church, the Methodists had to contend with an undivided Church of England that had quickly increased in personnel. They were clearly losing ground in their attempt to lead the Protestant cause. By 1843 the Methodists, with only thirteen missionaries, had to compete with 26 Church of England clergy.<sup>85</sup> What is more, while the Methodists looked elsewhere for them, the Church of England now had a seminary to produce missionaries and a bishop to ordain them.<sup>86</sup>

However, when Spencer’s successor, the Tractarian Bishop Edward Feild, arrived in 1844, he estranged himself from the Newfoundland School Society.<sup>87</sup> He was not sympathetic to its evangelical theology, yet he needed it in his contest with the Methodists. Still, he saw the society as standing “in the way of the Church,” because

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<sup>84</sup>UC Archive, WY 100, Box 1, 1829-1873, 1839-1843 Newfoundland Auxiliary Wesleyan Missionary Society, Meeting of November 15, 1839.

<sup>85</sup>*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1843, 766. *Report of the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts For the Year 1843* (London: Printed for the Society, 1843), xxxiv.

<sup>86</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A194, Charge of Bishop Spencer, 1841.

<sup>87</sup>An account of an evening spent with Feild in St. John’s shows how endeared he was to the Tractarian movement: “The evening was passed at the Bishop’s, when the conversation was about Oxford, and Keble, English personages and Christian art. A few poems were read from Keble’s *Christian Year*, and commented on by the Bishop, who is a personal friend and admirer of the poet.” Louis L. Noble, *After Icebergs with a Painter* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1861), 74.

“being neither Church nor Dissent,” it received a grant from the government as a Church of England agency that was not under his authority as bishop. This meant it had a degree of autonomy within the denomination, a circumstance not faced by the Methodists.<sup>88</sup> Because of its theological leaning he could give the society “no support,” though he agreed it had been of “immense value.”<sup>89</sup>

In fact, Tractarianism had come to Newfoundland before the arrival of Bishop Feild. It was in 1842, in the context of recent servants coming to Newman and Company on the south coast and recent arrivals to the Newfoundland School Society, that John S. Peach discerned the coming of “Puseyism.” He was the first Methodist missionary to do so. He noted:

The Bishop of Newfoundland has the [disposal] of the young men that are sent out by that society and as soon as they reach these shores, he sends them forth with the authority to hold divine service and in many instances lays his hand on their head and they are sent forth as the Successors of the Apostles with the cry of the Church, the Church, the true Church are we. I am very much afraid that two thirds of the clergy in Newfoundland are in real principle Puseyites.<sup>90</sup>

Thus began Methodism’s century-long battle with Tractarianism. Peach also likely became alarmed with Tractarianism through reading about it in the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, which he said he had just received. The 1842 edition had over 30 items

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<sup>88</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A195, Bishop Feild to Ernest Hawkins, St. John’s, June 10, 1845.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., Bishop Feild to Ernest Hawkins, Bermuda, March 19, 1846.

<sup>90</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 27, John S. Peach, Hermitage Cove, September 30, 1842.

relating to "Puseyism."<sup>91</sup> It is difficult to determine to what extent Tractarianism was prevalent in the Newfoundland population in the early 1840s. While immigration had declined, the south coast was still receiving immigrants from England in the capacity of "youngsters," and some of these had a Tractarian tendency.<sup>92</sup>

The Tractarian or Oxford Movement, led by John Keble, E. B. Pusey and John Henry Newman, began in 1833 with a sermon preached by Keble entitled "National Apostasy."<sup>93</sup> Keble was alarmed that the government had determined to suppress ten Irish bishoprics "without the Church's consent."<sup>94</sup> In his view, the Church of England lacked momentum and was subservient to the state. This had to change. "What the Oxford Movement did more than anything else ... was to restore among the clergy and some lay members of the Church of England a confidence in the church as a divine institution, capable of independent action, of reforming its own abuses, defining its own theology and

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<sup>91</sup> *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1842, 1073. Articles against apostolic succession had also appeared in the new publication, the *Wesleyan*, March 14, July 1, 1838; February 11, 1839.

<sup>92</sup> W. Gordon Handcock, "English Migration to Newfoundland," 34-36, in John J. Mannion, ed., *The Peopling of Newfoundland: Essays in Historical Geography* (St. John's: Memorial University, 1977).

<sup>93</sup> The following on Tractarianism is from the writer's MA thesis, Hollett, "Resistance to Bishop Edward Feild in Newfoundland, 1845-1857, Harbour Buffett: A Case Study," 35-38.

<sup>94</sup> James C. Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought From the Enlightenment to Vatican II* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971), 117.

organizing its own liturgy.<sup>95</sup> The name "Tractarianism" derived from the publication of a series of pamphlets entitled *Tracts for the Times*. The first tract, written by Newman, underscored the authority of clergy by highlighting its foundational doctrine - apostolic succession.<sup>96</sup> This theological emphasis in time acquired a physical setting of Gothic architecture, raised altars, lighted candles and other high church ornamentation. These changes caused anger and disgust on the one hand, and joy and elation on the other. It was a time of keen estrangement and ardent loyalty, both of which could be ignited by a single candle. But as Nigel Yates pointed out:

The debate over minute questions of ritual and vesture strikes the modern mind as unbelievably trivial, and in a sense it was. But the issues that divided the church and public opinion were symbolic of a greater division over matters of strong religious principle. Those who were prepared to go to prison rather than give up the use of vestments or incense felt themselves to be defending much more than mere matters of ceremonial.<sup>97</sup>

Owen Chadwick saw the movement as a romantic reaction to the Age of Reason, a movement of the heart.<sup>98</sup> Instead of the prevailing empiricism of scientific positivism, Tractarianism delighted in transcendence and mystery.<sup>99</sup> Much of that mystery was

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<sup>95</sup>Yates, *The Oxford Movement and Anglican Ritualism*, 22-23.

<sup>96</sup>Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought*, 118.

<sup>97</sup>Yates, *The Oxford Movement and Anglican Ritualism*, 32.

<sup>98</sup>Owen Chadwick, *The Mind of the Oxford Movement* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960), 11.

<sup>99</sup>Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought*, 117. Rudolf Otto observed that "mysterium tremendum" may also be felt "in the fixed and ordered solemnities of rites and liturgies, and ... in the atmosphere that clings to old religious monuments and

anchored in a romantic notion of the medieval past.<sup>100</sup> The old High Churchmanship of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was an unfeeling religion of duty, a 'high and dry' religion.<sup>101</sup> It was the religion of the rationalist William Paley, not of E.B. Pusey. The Tractarian difference from the old High Church was "not so much a difference of doctrine ... It was primarily a difference of Atmosphere."<sup>102</sup> Among the evangelicals, however, it created an atmosphere not just of incense and smoke, but of fire. Its espousal of such doctrines as baptismal regeneration and the real presence at the Eucharist were bellows that turned the evangelical fire white hot.<sup>103</sup>

The Tractarians were not impressed since they "considered Evangelical preaching irreverent for it exposed the most sacred mysteries to the indifference and mockery of the crowd."<sup>104</sup> The Tractarian clergy were more priests officiating over rites, than preachers

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buildings, to temples and to churches." He thought that in the West "the Gothic appears as the most numinous of all types of art." Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, 12, 67.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., 123.

<sup>101</sup>Chadwick, *The Mind of the Oxford Movement*, 26

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 28.

<sup>103</sup>Baptismal Regeneration meant that at the baptismal rite of the infant and not at later conversion, a person was born again and made part of Christ's church. 'Real Presence' meant that Christ's body and blood were actually present in the elements at the Holy Communion service. Evangelicals, on the other hand, saw the elements as symbols of Christ's death. Whatever was taking place spiritually was taking place in the individuals present and not in the elements.

<sup>104</sup>Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought*, 125.

of the gospel. The altar replaced the pulpit as the primary vehicle of spirituality.<sup>105</sup> For evangelical Anglicans, spirituality was neither ceremonial nor sacramental. They focused on receiving salvation by asking forgiveness for their sins through the blood of Jesus shed on the cross. Preaching this message was paramount. Their theological vocabulary was the standard Protestant nomenclature that Rev. Johnstone Vicars later used to describe his preaching at St. Thomas's in St. John's – "justification, righteousness, sanctification and redemption."<sup>106</sup> Peter Toon described the movement:

An Evangelical Anglican has a strong attachment to the Protestantism of the national Church with its Articles of Religion and Prayer Book. He believes that the Bible is authoritative in matters of faith and conduct and is to be read individually and in the home as well as in church. He emphasizes the doctrine of justification by faith but with good works and a specific (holy) life-style as the proof of true faith. He claims to enjoy a personal relationship with God through Christ, the origins of which are usually traced not to sacramental grace but to conversion experience. And he sees the primary task of the Church in terms of evangelism or missions and so emphasises preaching at home and abroad.<sup>107</sup>

While Tractarianism became full blown in Newfoundland upon the arrival in 1844 of Bishop Feild, Methodism had already begun to feel the brunt of a heightened emphasis on one of its main tenets, apostolic succession, during the episcopacy of Aubrey Spencer. That Bishop Spencer was evangelical is clear from his sermons, yet apostolic succession

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<sup>105</sup>Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, 2 Vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 468-470.

<sup>106</sup>*The Public Ledger*, September 6, 1853.

<sup>107</sup>Quoted in Vaudry, "Evangelical Anglicans and the Atlantic World," 158-159.

served him well in his new capacity to ordain clergy.<sup>108</sup> It may not have been so much the bishop who had been in Bermuda for over fifteen years, as those under him who had recently arrived from England who accented this tendency.

The Church of England was hampered in fighting Methodism, for example in Notre Dame Bay, because of a decline in the relative importance of preaching compared to the new prominence of sacramentalism and sacerdotalism. It is not a coincidence that one of Feild's first acts was to move aside the pulpit at St. Thomas's because it "occupied the centre of the church, obscuring the altar," thereby demonstrating to visiting clergy "the proper arrangements" for churches.<sup>109</sup> Of course, the elevation of the sacrament enhanced the elevation of the clergy and their bishop.<sup>110</sup> However, this elevation did not seem to take hold in Notre Dame Bay to any great degree. Feild did not see fit to attempt to force a change in the internal arrangements of St. Peter's Church at Twillingate, the first church he consecrated in Newfoundland, as he did in St. John's.<sup>111</sup> Unlike at

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<sup>108</sup>Aubrey G. Spencer, *Sermons on Various Subjects* (London: C. & J. Rivington, 1827), 244-245, 331. See also his *The Bishop of Kingston, Jamaica* [Spencer, A.G.], *A Brief Account of the Church of England, Its Faith and Worship as shown by the Book of Common Prayer* (London: Hatchard and Co., 1867), 62.

<sup>109</sup>Quoted in H. W. Tucker, *Memoir of the Life and Episcopate of Edward Feild* (London: W. Wells Gardner, 1877), 34-35.

<sup>110</sup>In contrast he ordered lay readers, "You shall not enter within the communion rails, or ascend the Pulpit." Robert Dyer's Diary, Greenspond, 1841-1859, February 17-20, 1855.

<sup>111</sup>*Report of the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts For the Year 1845* (London: Printed for the Society, 1845), xlviii-xlix; Letter of Bishop Feild to the Rev. Canon Seymour, Twillingate, November 14, 1868, printed in

Channel on the south coast, neither was the high pulpit later “tumbled down,” nor the galleries taken out by any of his clergymen.<sup>112</sup> When Bishop Feild gave his first “Charge” to the clergy gathered in St. John’s the focus was ceremonial and sacramental. All attention was fixed on the internal arrangements of the chancel with the altar in the centre, and not obscured by the pulpit which was an “indecent” for it put “the Holy Table into the shade.” Remarkably Feild wrote that it was not his intention thereby “to depreciate the ordinance of Preaching.” The clergymen were no longer primarily preachers of the gospel but officiating priests of the sacraments, who were to wear the surplice, face the east, and follow exactly the order of service. All Holy Days they were to “declare” as solemn. If people did not like what they heard, clergymen were “not to be deterred ... by the thinness of our Congregations.”<sup>113</sup> A similar line was taken by his fellow Tractarian Bishop at Fredericton, New Brunswick, who in his 1848 “Charge” cautioned his clergy against the “undue stress” which people placed on preaching because of “the corrupt heart

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Tucker, *Memoir of the Life and Episcopate of Edward Feild*, 233-236. While Feild said he could not change the church because of “its construction, still more its situation in the churchyard,” it is possible that evangelical Anglicans in Twillingate would not allow it.

<sup>112</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A227, W.W. Le Gallais, Channel, February 18, 1861. St. Peter’s remains so today.

<sup>113</sup>Edward Feild, *Order and Uniformity in the Public Services of The Church According to the Use of the United Church of England and Ireland: The Substance of a Charge Delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Newfoundland* (St. John’s: John W. McCoubrey, [1844]). E-text furnished by Dr. Hans Rollmann; typed by Ms. Heather Russell. <[www.mun.ca/rels/ang/texts/ang4.html](http://www.mun.ca/rels/ang/texts/ang4.html)>.

of man ... which exalts or pleases itself.”<sup>114</sup>

There was a flat rejection of the Tractarian brand of Anglicanism among many in Notre Dame Bay. For Methodists, extemporaneous preaching by missionary, man or woman, was regarded as speaking forth a message directly from the very Spirit of God. It was this which provided the energy and zeal for all their speaking and preaching, whether “common fishermen” or missionaries. In the various meetings, whether prayer meeting, class meeting, or Sunday service, Methodists believed they were not just meeting each other, but meeting God through his Spirit. There were typical signs of the Spirit’s presence, reported by John Snowball, for instance, at a meeting at Carbonear in 1849:

During the prayers of the brethren and myself, the heavenly influence began to descend - sighs and groans were heard - but whilst brother Apsey was wrestling with God in earnest and fervent supplication, the Spirit of God came upon us as a rushing wind, and the house was filled with the divine presence. Some left the meeting, but the greater part of the congregation continued on their knees ‘groaning the sinner’s plea, God be merciful to me.’ Several penitents obtained the pardoning love of God, and a few backsliders were restored.<sup>115</sup>

During meetings over the next month or so there were over 200 conversions - a “blessed revival of religion.”<sup>116</sup> Such an event was never called a revival of Methodism, but of religion. So, too, the primary aspect of the annual circuit report was denoted “the work of

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<sup>114</sup>[John Medley], *A Charge delivered at his Primary Visitation held in Christ Church Cathedral, Fredericton, August 24, 1847 by John, Bishop of Fredericton* (London: Joseph Masters, 1848), 14.

<sup>115</sup>*Wesleyan*, September 22, 1849, “Revival of Religion at Carbonear” by John Snowball.

<sup>116</sup>*Ibid.*

God,” for with Methodism, “religion” was not primarily an ethical exercise, and certainly not Church of England “forms” of religiosity, but “a work of God.”<sup>117</sup> While Methodists often observed Anglican “forms,” they were seen as useless without the essence of religion, which was the power of God.<sup>118</sup> So also nominal Methodists observed only the form of religion, and were devoid of its power.<sup>119</sup> Moreover, the power of God was manifested through the feelings in response to the pardoning love of God, a religion of the heart or of experience.<sup>120</sup> Thus William Bullock preached against the Methodists charging them with “forming their principles from their feelings.”<sup>121</sup> It was this feeling or passion, however, especially when multiplied in revival, which produced the energy for the lay permeation of Methodism in Notre Dame Bay.

In contrast to the transcendence, mystery, and distance of Tractarianism, Methodism offered immediacy, fellowship, and celebration. The two, being polar

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<sup>117</sup>See, for instance, Coughlan, *An Account of the Work of God in Newfoundland, North America*.

<sup>118</sup>For example, PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 18, 1822-1823, James Hickson, Trinity Harbour, December 28, 1822; Reel 27, 1842-1845, S.W. Sprague, Burin, November 5, 1845; John S. Peach, Trinity, November 29, 1845.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid., Reel 19, 1824-1825, John Boyd, Journal, Trinity, March 1, 1824.

<sup>120</sup>For example, PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 25, 1838-1840, George Apsey, Ship Cove, Labrador, September 16, 1839; Reel 28, 1846-1848, S.W. Sprague, Burin, December 14, 1846; Reel 29, 1849-1852, John Brewster, Burin, March 9, 1850; Reel 30, 1852-1853, John Brewster, Green Bay, May 10, 1853.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid., Reel 18, 1822-1823, James Hickson, Trinity Harbour, December 28, 1822. See also PANL MG 598 SPG A222, Ernest A. Sall, Bonavista, December 31, 1854; A228, Thomas Boone, Twillingate, December 31, 1860.

opposites, repelled each other, causing a final division among those who saw the Church of England as their present or ancestral heritage. Methodists, in reaction, came to a position where they no longer saw themselves in a dialogic relationship with the Church of England, but with a self-identity as "other." John Waterhouse's vignette of mid-century missionary meetings at Blackhead portrayed well the spiritual immanence, love, and joy which was the appeal of Methodism:

These were times when the ladies of the Mission House spared neither expense, skill, nor labour in providing ... a worthy banquet. And they were times when the hearts of the brethren overflowed; when old memories were revived; when anecdote and repartee, and songs of praise to God, were the order of the day... the ideal Christian brotherhood was an actual living entity.... small companies of men and women came trooping over the hills from Adam's Cove, and others from the direction of Mulley's Cove. On they came, in scores and hundreds. What an exciting time! How the power, and the joy, and the glory of the Spirit of Christ streamed and flooded, and swept all around.... The old church was packed! Extra beams and props were placed under the galleries. It was a sight for angels.

Presently, the beloved and gifted pastor, Rev. Elias Brettle, stepped to the front, and announce the popular Missionary hymn, 'Jesus shall reign where'er the sun.' Brother James Thistle, of Mulley's Cove, supported by our 'village blacksmith,' acted as precentor. Talk about lifting the roof; if heartiness and volume of sound could have done it, it would have been done. The whole congregation sang. And when the pastor led us to the 'Throne of Grace' ... Brother Brettle knew how to pray. His memory was stored with Bible truth, and with rare power and beauty he wove the inspired words into his supplications. There were not wanting many hearty responses. Yes, I remember the fervid 'Alleluia' of uncle Billy Nofle! And the fervent 'Amen' of uncle Peter Hudson. There were giants in those days. How I should enjoy listening to the voices of these good men once more.<sup>122</sup>

In conclusion, while Methodist missionaries often referred to Roman Catholicism

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<sup>122</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, May, 1902, 13, "Forty Years Ago, No. 22," by Rev. John Waterhouse, Manchester, April, 1902.

as the great threat to English Protestants in Newfoundland, it was Protestant Anglicans which provided the large majority of Methodist converts and the Church of England with which they engaged in most of their battles. The Church of England itself was a divided house with the clergy at odds with the Newfoundland School Society lay ministry, except during the time of Bishop Aubrey Spencer. Both the bishop and the school society were evangelical in theology, but this did not make for peace with the Methodists, as it did not with the Congregationalists earlier. While the Methodists acquired a greater number of missionaries at the beginning of the century, this early advantage was lost with the recruitment and direction of Spencer, and after him, Bishop Edward Feild. The latter brought a chill to relationships between Anglicans and Methodists. While there had been a competition before his arrival, and a difference regarding experiential Christianity, his Tractarianism put an end to the possibility of a rapport between the two. His tenure also handed to the Methodists an identity as a distinct Protestant alternative to the Anglo-Catholic Church of England, and one in which it was the people who professed their religion of the heart to what they regarded as a clergy-oriented ritualistic Christianity.

## Chapter Four: Dialectical Tensions within Methodism

E.P. Thompson attempted to analyze and interpret “the many tensions at the heart of Methodism” in order to understand the movement.<sup>1</sup> In a recent book, David Hempton adopted this conceptual framework, agreeing that the movement “appeared to thrive on the energy unleashed by dialectical friction.” Thus he arranged his chapters according to its tensions or “dialectics,” with each, in his view, having “an independent claim to reveal something profound about the heart of Methodism.”<sup>2</sup>

There were several forms of dialectical friction within Methodism as it grew as a popular movement in Newfoundland. Administration by the clergy was often an encumbrance to the vernacular movement as it expanded along the coasts. Another tension was an impetus under the leadership of the clergy away from the emotive religiosity of enthusiasm toward respectability. A third tension attended the subdivision of the Protestant grant for education. There was also a tension between the vast and energetic leadership of women in ministry and the official exclusion of that ministry by the clergy. Lastly, a strain grew within Methodism over the use of alcohol, which influenced its changing view of mission.

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<sup>1</sup>E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 430. See also, 43-44, 58, 437.

<sup>2</sup>David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 7-10.

## 4.1

## Administration

In a letter from Adam's Cove, December 20, 1814, William Ellis described two narrow escapes at sea and gave an overview of the Methodist stations in Newfoundland. At the close of the letter, seemingly as an afterthought, he suggested to the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Committee that since Newfoundland had little communication with the rest of British America, "perhaps it would be best to form it into a separate district" of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference of Britain.<sup>3</sup> In this way the Methodist movement would be administered from London through an annual District Meeting of the missionaries on the island, all of whom would be answerable to its Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Committee.

This was done. However, instead of this organization being a great gift to Methodism in Newfoundland, beginning in 1815, as some historians have asserted, it was in many respects a hindrance to its expansion.<sup>4</sup> The District Meeting was made up solely of missionaries, as stipulated by the regulations of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference in London.<sup>5</sup> Whatever the aspirations of the members, varying over time, this was a

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<sup>3</sup>*Methodist Magazine*, 1815, 160.

<sup>4</sup>Parsons, "The Origin and Growth of Newfoundland Methodism 1765-1855;" Kewley, "The First Fifty Years of Methodism in Newfoundland 1765-1815;" Grant, "Methodist Origins in Atlantic Canada," 36; Semple, *The Lord's Dominion The History of Canadian Methodism*, 28-30.

<sup>5</sup>Lay representation was not allowed until 1874 with the formation of the Newfoundland Conference. *Provincial Wesleyan*, August 22, 1874, "Minutes of Newfoundland Conference."

professional body that by its nature often looked after its own interests, rather than the mission field it served. For instance, missionaries vied with each other to serve in Conception Bay and St. John's, instead of stepping out to help expand the work along the south and northeast coasts. Circuits on the Avalon Peninsula were seen as a reward for years of service, while novices and subordinates were sent to frontier areas where experience and knowledge of the country would have been an important asset.<sup>6</sup>

Secondly, the District Meeting was severely limited in its ability to serve the cause of Methodism since it did not include the talent and vision of its lay members, who were the actual catalyst for growth, expanding the work with zeal, energy and dedication, through class meetings, services, and revivals. The people had no voice, yet it was they who carried the mission, just as they carried the missionary, rowing him from place to place, while often he, without such expertise, or because of his status, simply sat in the boat without putting an arm to an oar.<sup>7</sup> It was the people who knew the local situation and

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<sup>6</sup>For example, Fortune Bay was seen as a frontier region. In the first two decades of it being designated a circuit, 1816, Richard Knight, John Oliver, Simeon Noall, George Ellidge, Richard Shepherd, Thomas Angwin, and Ingham Sutcliffe were sent there as novices. See circuit appointment lists in the *Methodist Magazine*, 1816-1836.

<sup>7</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 18, 1822-1823, James Hickson, Trinity Harbour, December 28, 1822; Reel 22, 1831-1833, John Smithies, Burin, November 19, 1832; Reel 26, 1841-1842, John S. Addy, Trinity, November 9, 1841; Reel 27, 1842-1845, James England Burin, October 31, 1843; Reel 30, 1852-1853, Edmund Botterell, St. John's, August 24, 1853. On the south coast it was often women who did the rowing, "William Marshall, Diary, 1839-1842," July 31, August 2, October 7, 1839; April 16, August 20, 1840; February 7, 1842, Archives and Manuscripts Division, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University, MF-238. "John S. Peach Diaries, 1841-1855," June 28, 1842, Archives and Manuscripts Division, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University, MF-086.

provided the energy. This was particularly the case with novice missionaries, a common phenomenon given their turnover, and with disgruntled missionaries who did not want to be in Newfoundland, and who were possibly lacking in zeal and energy as a result.

By establishing the District Meeting, the Committee had set up an English enclave, an elite society that excluded local lay membership, and impeded the natural growth of Methodism by its reluctance to allow local lay preachers to rise in the ranks to become missionaries. The Meeting should have encouraged native-born people of talent and zeal to become missionaries. This was particularly the case when a shortage of missionaries from England, not a shortage of funds, prevented the formation of new missions and circuits. It was not until 1838, over twenty years after the Wesleyan Methodists set up their administration in Newfoundland, that two native preachers were recommended by the District Meeting. Even then, the Committee turned down Josias Brown who had been in charge of the Old Perlican and Hant's Harbour circuit and had proven himself "diligent and zealous and faithful." Moreover, there was still no Methodist missionary north of Bonavista.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the Committee rejected Philip Tocque.<sup>9</sup> He later wrote:

It is well known that many natives were immeasurably superior to the preachers who were sent from England, in point of general intelligence. It is a well known fact also that most of the Methodist preachers sent from England to

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<sup>8</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 25, 1838-1840, William Faulkner, St. John's, December 11, 1838.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., Philip Tocque to Secretaries of the WMMS, St. John's, January 11, 1840.

Newfoundland, were raw young men without experience or education.<sup>10</sup>

This agrees with the assessment of Owen Chadwick on Methodist preachers in general that

The preachers' doctrine of the ministry was higher than the people's doctrine of the ministry. The people had this feeling because so little but a black coat set ministers apart. Many of the preachers had little education, less than their leading laymen. They were not separated from their flocks by their vows of celibacy, nor by the bishop's hands, nor by their knowledge of divinity, nor by literary education, nor by social convention, nor by exclusive right to the pulpit. They were respected only in their religious character.<sup>11</sup>

The same applies largely to the Church of England clergy who came to Newfoundland.

The SPG had appealed to the educated for missionaries by writing to bishops and headmasters to no avail, so Bishop Feild sought them among "the lower orders."<sup>12</sup> In 1848, though there were exceptions, such as the highly-educated J.G. Mountain and William Grey, Feild's main success was in recruiting "three Scripture Readers, two schoolmasters, two trainee schoolmasters, a chemist, a brewer's clerk, and a post office worker."<sup>13</sup>

The District Meeting was itself the barrier on other occasions. A prime example is

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<sup>10</sup>Philip Tocque, *Newfoundland, As it Was and As It Is in 1877* (Toronto: John B. Magurn, 1878), 84, quoted in Marjorie M. Doyle, *Newfoundlander in Exile, The Life and Times of Philip Tocque (1814-1899)* (Halifax: John Doull Books, 1997), 21.

<sup>11</sup>Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, Part I, 376.

<sup>12</sup>Jones, "Bishop Feild, A Study in Politics and Religion in Nineteenth-Century Newfoundland," 84-85.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 85-86.

the case Thomas Fox, who came to Newfoundland in 1832 and was a successful local preacher and school teacher for thirteen years at Cupids in the Brigus circuit.<sup>14</sup> At the end of his term, the Methodist society there boasted 100 members compared to 70 at Brigus, where the missionary was stationed, and at Brigus the missionary did not have to teach. The members at Cupids were converted and living in holiness for they were “walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>15</sup> Fox then served as “a salaried local preacher,” a missionary except in name, at Old Perlican, and then at Grand Bank, where in 1849 he participated in one of the greatest revivals of Methodism in Newfoundland.<sup>16</sup> Still, the District Meeting would not recommend him to the Conference Committee for ordination. Fox applied year after year. Some missionaries recommended him, but “others have been opposed.”<sup>17</sup> In refusing to recommend Fox to the London Committee they were demonstrating themselves to be an elite British overseas fraternity which refused entry from Newfoundland, even to those not native-born. Some saw this Methodist missionary prejudice against local talent to be even more extreme than in the society at large. “A Methodist” later wrote to the *Public Ledger* protesting against the

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<sup>14</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 30, 1852-1853, Thomas Fox to Secretaries of Wesleyan Missionary Society, St. John's, May 25, 1853.

<sup>15</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 7, 1841/42-1846/48, File 343, William Faulkner, Brigus, January 30, 1844.

<sup>16</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 29, 1849-1852, John Brewster, Burin, April 13, 1849.

<sup>17</sup>UC Archive, WY 500, “Journal of Thomas Fox, 1851-1877,” January 27, 1854; end of year, 1855.

District Committee for not fostering, or even allowing, native missionaries to join their circle, while native preachers were nurtured by Methodist missionaries even in lands that had been foreign to the gospel. Newfoundland which had produced many lawyers, legislators and writers: why not preachers? He concluded that "no small amount of blame is to be attached to the Ministers" of the District Meeting.<sup>18</sup>

The missionaries finally recommended Fox for ordination in 1853, after over twenty years of a ministry which was far more successful than that of many of themselves. Fox wrote to the committee informing them of his calling and work but they rejected his application.<sup>19</sup> After 15 years of requesting ordination, the obduracy of the Methodist bureaucracy in Newfoundland and London took its toll on a man serving on the front lines of ministry. He wrote in his journal, "I do feel this" and "I am frequently oppressed on account of it."<sup>20</sup>

The administration also impeded Methodism by the timing of the District Meeting,

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<sup>18</sup>*Public Ledger*, January 17, 1860, Letter to editor from "A Methodist" on "Methodism in Newfoundland." A writer replied to the *Courier* that the lack was not the missionaries' fault and cited no training facility as one of the reasons. *Courier*, January 28, 1860. However, many of the missionaries received their training by reading prescribed theological works as they ministered in Newfoundland and elsewhere. For the assertion of native rights, largely in St. John's, see Patrick O'Flaherty, "The Newfoundland Natives Society," in Cyril F. Poole and Robert H. Cuff, eds., *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, Vol. 4 (St. John's: Harry Cuff Publications Limited, 1993), 21-27.

<sup>19</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 34, September 1814-December 1867, Minutes of the Missions Committee, London. Outgoing Letters - extracts, John Beecham to Edmund Botterell, Superintendent and Chairman of the Newfoundland District, March 21, 1854.

<sup>20</sup>"Journal of Thomas Fox, 1851-1877," January 27, 31, 1854.

which was always held in St. John's or Conception Bay in the middle of May. This was a prime time of the year for ministry; it was the interlude between the winter transhumance and the beginning of the fishery when people were in their settlements. Over and over again, missionaries lamented the absence of people who had gone to winter tilts or the summer fishery.<sup>21</sup> But just as they returned in May to prepare for the fishery, the missionary himself departed for a month or more, to meet with his fellow missionaries to talk about mission, abandoning a prime opportunity to carry it out. At times the absence was even longer. In 1840 William Marshall left Hermitage for St. John's on April 22 and did not return until July 15.<sup>22</sup> The missionaries benefitted from the fellowship, and St. John's and Conception Bay settlements from missionary meetings, but the rest of the island was deprived of ministry as a result. But, even in Conception Bay, the departure for the meetings could be inopportune. John Haigh, for instance, had to leave Carbonear for St. John's in the midst of the greatest revival in the circuit since the time of William Black.<sup>23</sup>

Attendance at the District Meeting was mandatory. For non-compliance to this

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<sup>21</sup>For example, PANL MG 597 WMMS, Reel 18, 1822-1823, William Wilson, Grand Bank, November 18, 1823; Reel 19, 1824-1825, Brigus, Richard Knight, July 18, 1824; Reel 23, 1832-1835, William Faulkner, Burin, January 10, 1834; December 1, 1834; Reel 24, 1835-1837, George Ellidge, Carbonear, June 23, 1836; Reel 31, 1854-1867, Botterell, St. John's, January 26, 1854.

<sup>22</sup>"William Marshall, Diary, 1839-1842," April 22-July 15, 1840.

<sup>23</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 4, 1828/29-1833/34, File 174, John Haigh, Carbonear, May 15, 1830.

and other rules, the chairman hounded John Brewster, one of the most creative, well-suited, and understanding missionaries to set foot in Newfoundland. Brewster seized the moment and obtained a missionary for Sound Island, which the people had been requesting for decades, by finding and hiring “a pious brother” he met at a prayer meeting in St. John’s, promising to be a surety for his salary.<sup>24</sup> He also mobilized the parents, teachers and students of Argyle Street Sabbath School, Halifax, to raise funds to send books to the children of Placentia Bay.<sup>25</sup> He had a rare interest and ability to communicate in print the vernacular Methodism of Newfoundland fishermen, especially their conversion, lay ministry, and spiritual passion.<sup>26</sup> But he was absent from the District Meeting two years in a row, and on one of these occasions he visited Halifax and married a Methodist merchant’s daughter, Emma Billing, without the chairman’s leave.<sup>27</sup>

The incoming chairman, Edmund Botterell, however, realized that John Brewster was exceptional in his suitability to Newfoundland, and “he can easily accommodate

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<sup>24</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 29, 1849-1852, John Brewster, Burin, March 9, 1850.

<sup>25</sup>*Wesleyan*, March 16, 1850, “Sabbath School” Letter from J. Brewster, Burin, Newfoundland, to the Wesley Sabbath School Children, Halifax.”

<sup>26</sup>For example, see the *Wesleyan*, John Brewster, “Notices of Newfoundland,” Nos. 10-14, November 17, 1849-December 8, 1849.

<sup>27</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 29, 1849-1852, Richard Williams, Chairman, and William Faulkner, Secretary, Re. John Brewster, St. John’s, July 3, 1850; John Brewster, St. John’s, June 3, 1850.

himself to the habits and house of the outport people.”<sup>28</sup> However, Botterell then falsely accused Brewster of writing to the *Public Ledger* under the pseudonym “Judy,” lampooning Botterell’s and John S. Addy’s part in the marriage ceremony of a daughter of Nicholas Stabb. He notified Brewster that at the next District Meeting he would charge him with “unbrotherly .. anti-ministerial ... un-Christian conduct.”<sup>29</sup> He followed through with his threat, but realized later that he had acted hastily. Maybe he was overeager that no offense be given to the Stabbs whom he deemed to be “the most respectable and influential Wesleyans in Newfoundland.”<sup>30</sup> Brewster’s wife and child were already in Nova Scotia, and Brewster followed them without the permission of the chairman.<sup>31</sup> Botterell’s false accusation helped him make the decision, causing Newfoundland to lose one of its better missionaries.

In the 1850s when Bishop Feild was expanding the Church of England mission along the south coast, and John S. Peach was begging for a Methodist missionary for the same area, the London Committee was unable or unwilling to send a missionary to

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., Edmund Botterell, St. John’s, December 18, 1850.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., Reel 31, 1854-1867, Edmund Botterell to Rev Osborne, St. John’s, August 3, 1854; *Courier*, January 11, 1854; *Public Ledger*, January 13, February 3, June 9, 1854.

<sup>30</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 31, 1854-1867, Edmund Botterell to Osborne, St. John’s, August 3, September 6, 1854; John Brewster, Island Cove, October 12, 1854.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., Edmund Botterell to Osborne, St. John’s, November 4, 1854.

Newfoundland.<sup>32</sup> The Committee was preoccupied with the process of transferring the Newfoundland District to the Conference of Eastern British America and, to further this end, had actually reduced the grant to Newfoundland. As a result, the chairman had to refuse a missionary from New Brunswick.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the local District Committee, given its unwillingness to recommend native talent for probation as missionaries, contributed to the shortage. The period was characterized as being “not one of marked general progress.”<sup>34</sup>

Meanwhile, Bishop Feild, with authority to ordain recruits at Queen’s College in St. John’s, which accepted native talent, was strategically well-situated to take advantage of Methodist clerical deficiencies. He also was able to tap into a new cadre of missionaries inspired by Tractarianism. These men had a new view of Anglicanism, a new resolve, and determination to endure whatever came their way as they served the Church of England. From their letters and reports it is evident that they rivaled their Methodist counterparts in their vision and devotion. While most Anglican clergy were committed to staying indefinitely, most of the Methodist missionaries came for a term expecting to move on. Thus in the early 1850s Thomas Angwin, James England, James Norris, Edmund Botterell, Thomas Smith, and S.W. Sprague - nearly half the roster - did

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., John S. Peach to Secretaries, Grand Bank, December 10, 1855.

<sup>33</sup>UC Archive, WY 100, Box 1, 1829-1873, “District Journal 1851-1858,” 1854 District Meeting, St. John’s, May 17, 1854.

<sup>34</sup>T. Watson Smith, *History of the Methodist Church ... of Eastern British America*, Vol. II (Halifax: S. F. Huestis, 1890), 362.

not want to be in Newfoundland. John Brewster left without permission. Most of them wanted to move on to the Maritime provinces, perceiving that region to be more prosperous, and to provide more opportunities for education and careers for their children.<sup>35</sup>

Despite many of the missionaries having their hearts and hopes fixed elsewhere there were two massive revivals of the Blackhead-Western Bay and Bonavista circuits, in both of which the membership nearly doubled.<sup>36</sup> These revivals were the most important events for the Methodists in 1854-1855, considerably more than the administrative union of the District with Eastern British America and also more than the achievement of responsible government in 1855. Thomas Smith, a reluctant missionary to Newfoundland, and to Bonavista in particular, wrote an account of the revival there, its theme being "the transport of joy" of the converts, and sent it to the *Methodist Magazine* for publication.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, at the Blackhead circuit, John S. Addy reported "such power

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<sup>35</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 29, 1849-1852, Thomas Angwin, Blackhead, April 5, 1852; Reel 30, 1852-1853, James England to Rev. E. Hoole, Bonavista, January 31, 1853; J. Norris, Blackhead, June 6, 1853; E. Botterell to Rev. E. Osborne, St. John's, June 13, 1853; W.E. Shenstone, Brigus, September 12, 1853; Reel 31, 1854-1867, Thomas Smith, Port de Grave, May 29, 1854; S.W. Sprague, Harbour Grace, February 13, 1855; Reel 35, 1823-1855, 1855 Minutes of Newfoundland District Meetings, Carbonear, May 16, 1855.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, 1854, 1855.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., Reel 30, 1852-1853, Thomas Smith, Port de Grave, November 22, 1852; April 9, April 13, December 5, 1853; Reel 31, 1854-1867, Thomas Smith, Port de Grave, April 24, 1854; Thomas Smith to the Committee, Bonavista, January 25, 1855; *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, Vol. II, 1855, 653-656.

upon the people” that hundreds of fishermen and their families were “truly connected to God.”<sup>38</sup> Yet, it does not appear that the Methodist clergy as a body were overly excited about these events, which inaugurated a decade of Methodist expansion on the northeast coast. While the missionaries specifically involved mentioned the revivals in circuit reports, the District Meeting gave them no prominence in the minutes for that year. For the Meeting, the most important event was administrative change, which they thought might drastically affect their personal futures - the proposed transfer of the Newfoundland District to the Conference of Eastern British America.

Back in 1852 the clergy had registered their opposition to this plan, mainly because of the risk of a decrease in funding for the District. Newfoundland was subject to “sudden and singular reverses” and therefore its missionaries continued to need external financial support. Moreover, its claim on Wesleyan Missionary Society funds was “in no respect second” to foreign missions just because its population was composed of British immigrants.<sup>39</sup> On the eve of implementation of the new Conference in 1855 the District was informed that it would be similar to the recent Australian Connexion plan and would not be detrimental to Newfoundland, but the District had not received a copy of the text and the missionaries were apprehensive about its implications “to ourselves or to our Work.” Samuel Sprague, the District financial secretary, feared that instead of being a

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., Reel 31, 1854-1867, John S. Addy to General Secretaries, Blackhead, April 11, 1855.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, May 19, 1852.

district of the Wesleyan Methodists of Britain, it would be a mere "mission" of the Eastern British American Conference, and "as missionaries" they would have "neither voice nor influence." He concluded acerbically that since many in the Canadian provinces considered Newfoundland to be "a kind of 'penal settlement'" the missionaries "would probably be treated as criminals," or those sent to replace them "would not be thought good enough for other places, but well enough for Newfoundland."<sup>40</sup> Edmund Botterell, the District chairman, assured Sprague that the change would not be detrimental to Newfoundland.<sup>41</sup> However, the missionaries as a body were mainly concerned about how the change might affect themselves as professionals, "that all the Brethren's rights and claims shall be secured to them." Since Newfoundland's new status was not a District, but a "kind of Mission Station," they were worried that they would not have "equal status" with the missionaries in the Maritimes. Thus, they did not focus on how the change might affect the thousands of Methodists in Newfoundland.<sup>42</sup> Lay leaders and trustees in St. John's supported the missionaries's concerns about "status," but they were also concerned about what they called "the peculiar circumstances of the Newfoundland

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., Reel 31, 1854-1867, Samuel W. Sprague, Hant's Harbour, to John Beecham, March 23, 1855. *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, Vol. II, 1855, 843.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., Reel 31, 1854-1867, Edmund Botterell to Samuel Sprague, St. John's, March 24, 1855.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, Carbonear, May 16, 1855. Response to Question 21: "Has the Chairman of the District received any instructions, advices, or observations from the Committee to be laid before the Brethren?"

District.” In particular, they wanted assurances that the District would receive as much money and as many missionaries as before.<sup>43</sup> In addition, there were concerns about the transition to responsible government. With Botterell leaving in the summer, they informed the Committee in London that they wanted “a man of no ordinary attainments” to replace him, and not Thomas Angwin, the person slated for the position by the missionaries. The incoming chairman and superintendent would be required to protect Methodist interests politically in the “entirely new form of Government” which was about to occur.<sup>44</sup>

They added that they found from their experience that missionaries from the North American provinces were not cut out for Newfoundland, because of their “unfitness” for its environment and circumstances.<sup>45</sup> Their protests were to no avail. John Beecham, designated by the committee to engineer the change, informed Edmund Botterell, that he was “greatly mistaken” in thinking that the committee had not noted any differences between Newfoundland and Australia. “All that is fully taken into account in our calculations.” In the Australian Connexion such diverse entities as “heathen Feejee, Tonga, and New Zealand” were to be incorporated. Therefore, neither the Newfoundland

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., Reel 31, 1854-1867, Leaders, Local Preachers and Stewards of St. John’s to John Beecham, August 1855.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., Reel 31, 1854-1867, Meeting, St. John’s, Received by the Committee February, 1855.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, 1843, Letter to Secretaries from George Ellidge on the “union of the several British North American Districts into a General Conference.”

Methodists nor the clergy should think there was a possibility of opting out of the new arrangement on the basis of any idea of Newfoundland uniqueness. Both the Conference and Committee in London had made their determination, therefore, "it must be decisively understood that when the time comes to carry the measure into effect, Newfoundland will be comprehended therein."<sup>46</sup>

Meanwhile, the *Provincial Wesleyan* published at Halifax, the "Connexional organ," became the promotional tool of clergy advocating the new 1855 administrative arrangement.<sup>47</sup> It would be seen "in all coming time" as the beginning of "a new and important era" in the history of the Eastern British America and Bermuda. John Beecham, the appointee of the British Conference, said the arrangement would be so significant that the day of the meeting would be "a day of days" for Methodism.<sup>48</sup> Newfoundland was not mentioned in the announcement and Beecham did not bother to visit the island as he had promised. Three missionaries from the island attended the Conference and returned with Matthew Richey, its new president, and Richard Knight, whose job it was to promote the new arrangement and counter the impression that

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., Reel 34, September 1814-December 1867, Minutes of the Missions Committee, London. Outgoing Letters - extracts, John Beecham to Edmund Botterell, Superintendent and Chairman of the Newfoundland District, March 21, 1854.

<sup>47</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, June 12, 1861, Letter from Newfoundland, St. John's, May 30, 1861.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., July 19, 1855, "The Inauguration of the Wesleyan Conference of Easter British America."

Newfoundland had been entirely ignored.<sup>49</sup>

Instead of being a “day of days,” by 1871 the incorporation of Newfoundland in the Eastern British America Conference was admitted to be “a blunder” which had been “growing worse year after year.” Most missionaries and money still came from Britain, but under the new arrangement, had the bureaucratic encumbrance of coming “through a second party,” the Eastern British America Conference.<sup>50</sup> In addition, as membership increased, more money had to be paid to the Conference, the effect of which, as John S. Peach wrote, was to “cripple us” and cause “our ruin financially.”<sup>51</sup> At the same time it may have facilitated the loss of missionaries to “the other provinces.”<sup>52</sup> Sometimes the criticism was acute. Thomas Fox, pointing out that there was no missionary for the Random Island and Smith Sound area, objected pointedly, “Shall between four hundred and five hundred inhabitants be left to mourn because the Eastern British American Conference cares not for their souls?”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., August 30, 1855, “The Deputation to Newfoundland.” Richard Knight had been a missionary in Newfoundland, 1816-1833, before transferring to the Maritimes.

<sup>50</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 12, 1868-1883, File 570, John S. Peach to Perks, Brigus, August 29, 1871.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., Box 11, 1858/63-1868/83, File 538, John S. Peach to Rev. G. Osborne, London, March 19, 1867.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., Box 10, 1852/54-1858/6, Box 10, File 17E, Samuel W. Sprague to Secretaries, November 27, 1856; SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 12, 1868-1883, File 570, Thomas Harris, Chairman, Harbour Grace, August 3, 1871.

<sup>53</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, February 15, 1871, Thomas Fox, Hant’s Harbour.

In spite of this administrative blunder, lay Methodists continued to expand the movement, so that by 1874 Methodism in Newfoundland had come of age. Membership, including those on trial, had increased by 797 between 1855 and 1871, but it jumped by an extraordinary 2246 to 5629 in the short span of four years from 1871 to 1874.<sup>54</sup> Those affiliated with Methodism were estimated to be 30,000, so that one in four of the population was a Methodist.<sup>55</sup> The movement had nearly tripled its number of circuits, and more than quadrupled its number of preachers. As the new president, George Seaton Milligan noted, Methodism in Newfoundland had surpassed the Maritimes and Ireland in its rate of increase, despite "an annual exodus of hundreds of our people to the United States or Canada."<sup>56</sup> Moreover in 1874 it moved from being a "kind of Mission Station," to its own Conference, one of the six making up the Methodist Church of Canada. Administratively it now had authority commensurate with the prominence it had gained in Newfoundland society itself.

#### 4.2

#### Respectability

However, it was a Methodism that was changing. In the larger centres it

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<sup>54</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 12, 1868-1883, File 570, George Milligan, St. John's, January 28, 1875.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., January 14, 1875.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., January 28, 1875. See also the large increase in the next 25 years, despite the continuing exodus, *Methodist Monthly Greeting*, November, 1899, 8, "What hath God Wrought? A review of Methodism in Newfoundland" by J.T.N; July, 1900, 12 "Newfoundland Methodism during the Century" by H.C. Hatcher.

abandoned its former habits of revival. In 1873 George Forsey still avowed, "We firmly believe in old fashioned Methodist revival," but he must have been trying to convince himself that it was so. In the same report he spoke of revival meetings which were "singularly free from excitement," being carried out with "the utmost decorum."<sup>57</sup> The "excitement" of the old Methodism was gone, to be replaced with "decorum" in the yearning for Victorian respectability.<sup>58</sup> "Scriptural holiness" or piety had to be well within the bounds of what was regarded as respectable. Refinement and decorum were the arbiters of the new spirituality. For God to pour out his spirit in the new Methodism it would have to be into a proper container. As early as 1864, the new chapel in St. John's (Gower Street Methodist Church) was presented as "central and respectable," housing "a rich-toned organ, superior to any thing in the provinces." While money was short for missionaries for the outports, its parsonage too, "for situation, for size, for convenience, and for respectability," there was "nothing like it in all the Conference of Eastern British America."<sup>59</sup> In this way churches participated in the architectural "monumentalism" of

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<sup>57</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, April 9, 1873, George Forsey, Burin Circuit.

<sup>58</sup>For Victorian respectability, see F.M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectability: A Social History of Victorian Britain, 1830-1900* (London: Fontana Press, 1988).

<sup>59</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, November 2, 1864, "Incidents in Newfoundland," John Brewster. See also Pitt, *Windows of Agates, A Short History of the Founding and Early Years of Gower Street Methodist (now United) Church in St. John's, Newfoundland*, 64-69; J.W. Nichols, ed., *A Century of Methodism in St. John's, Newfoundland 1815-1915* (St. John's: Dicks & Co., [1915]), illustration of "Gower Street Church, 1858."

the era, which attempted to instill morals through form.<sup>60</sup> Another church, built in 1873 (George Street Methodist Church), was of “ornamental Gothic” as proper for worship as those of the Tractarian Bishop Feild and his architect, William Grey. With circular towers on the outside, Gothic arch and gas lighting in the interior, and a “first-class organ” from “T.F. Roome, Esq., Church and Chamber Organ Builder, Toronto ... said to be one of the finest made,” the church was yet another statement that the new Methodist piety had to be embodied in cultivation and polish.<sup>61</sup> The *Provincial Wesleyan* reprinted a *Halifax Chronicle* report that the Boston Mendelssohn Quintette Club had been to St. John’s, a town of “much culture and refinement,” and had been heard by “the elite of the place” at the new Athenaeum built for “only first-class entertainments.”<sup>62</sup> The discourse was indistinguishable from that of the new Methodism and its churches. It was not a coincidence that the Athenaeum Hall was the site chosen by the ladies of the Methodist Benevolent Society for their annual concert and by the “Church and Parsonage Aid Society for their “Christmas Tree” presentation.<sup>63</sup> Methodism and respectability had become so blended as to be practically synonymous. Christianity in its Methodist version

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<sup>60</sup>“Architecture: monumentalism and morality,” Simon Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class, Ritual and Authority and the English Industrial City, 1840-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 40-43.

<sup>61</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, January 12, 1874, Newfoundland letter to editor from George S. Milligan, December 24, 1873; *Courier*, February 1, 1873. See also G.M. Story, *George Street United Church, 1873-1973*.

<sup>62</sup>*Wesleyan*, September 7, 1878.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, February 29, 1884.

had so identified itself with the society that it had become civilization.<sup>64</sup> There had always been a tension between the two. A writer to the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* in advertising Methodism had spoken of its “collateral benefits of civilization.” In addition to the spiritual, Wesley and the Methodist publications had also accentuated “habits of economy, a taste for the comforts of civilization, and the more substantial benefits of education.”<sup>65</sup> In St. John’s, the collateral and the essential had traded positions.

Yet there were some who were not quite comfortable with Methodism’s accommodation. Two writers to the *Provincial Wesleyan*, having referred to the fine new churches at Carbonear and Bonavista, said “All we want now is an out-pouring of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>66</sup> One wonders if they thought that the past was gone. It was only in remote places like Musgrave Harbour that one still heard of the vernacular revivals of bygone days, “A young man rushed out of one of the pews boldly testifying his resolution to serve God. The effect on the large audience was felt at once, penitents rushed forward on every side, we ascended the pulpit, nor did we interfere in any way, but left the Holy Spirit to do this our work in His own way.”<sup>67</sup> An item republished in the *Methodist Monthly Greeting*

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<sup>64</sup>For an exploration of the tensions between Christianity and civilization, see H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975).

<sup>65</sup>*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1830, 464. For an example of “habits of economy” see “Early Rising,” 1833, 857-858. In the same volume George Smith noted that at Portland, Dorset, those who were not converted were “in a good measure civilized” in the 1790s through Methodism, “Memoir of the Rev. George Smith,” 7.

<sup>66</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, April 13, 1874; January 29, 1876.

<sup>67</sup>*Wesleyan*, April 5, 1879, Letter from Musgrave Harbour, February 17, 1879.

asked, "Whither are we drifting?" taking the view that urban Methodists were no longer "true to the vital essentials" of the faith of John Wesley. They had given up the class meeting and had "taken to ... bridge." The "intensity" of Methodism was nowhere to be found. "The phraseology of passion remains, but the fire has gone. The old hymns so expressive of the old experience may be sung, but there is neither swing in the tune nor soul in the words."<sup>68</sup> Methodists had given up reaching for ecstasy and were now reaching for decorum and polite society. "An Open Letter" in the same paper urged Methodists to reclaim the religion of Wesley. It asserted that this could be done only by the gospel through revivals and spiritual power, and perceptively listing its replacements, stated, "Education cannot do it, valuable as it is; civilization cannot do it; moral reform cannot do it; social regeneration cannot do it." These trends had replaced the Methodism of revival of "olden time."<sup>69</sup>

The new Methodism was no longer an infantry storming the walls of Anglicanism, but instead, along with Anglicanism and Catholicism, occupied the ground of the dominant stakeholders of the society. Reason, order, gradual improvement became the norm in that society so that:

the church itself began to question publicly its old assumption that emotion, separation, and distinctiveness were essential for the survival of Methodism... The traits that had once defined Methodism as a distinct movement now limited both

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<sup>68</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, June, 1903, 11, "Whither are we drifting?" by S. Chadwick, *Methodist Times*.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, September, 1903, 10, "The Bi-Centenary Revivalistic Movement - An open letter by the General Superintendent."

its appeal and the prospects for growth and expansion.<sup>70</sup>

The symbol of this dominance and the change within Methodism was stated in singular fashion by its adopting Gothic architecture. It stated with clarity that the new battle was not with the Church of England, but with the materialism and secularism of the late-19<sup>th</sup> century, and it was not through the revivals of the past:

The new Gothic church proclaimed the power of God, but it tied the sacred to the institutions of Methodism and reinforced the authority of the church itself.... God still spoke to a fallen world through the feelings rather than the intellect, through the heart rather than the mind. In this respect the Gothic church was a cultural descendant of the old revivalist camp meeting... the beauty of the church inspired the heart with great thoughts and the mind with noble deeds; rather than striking down without warning and leaving the sinner writhing in agony.<sup>71</sup>

#### 4.3

#### Education

Education had been in dialectical tension with the religion of the heart of Methodism from the beginning. A year after becoming a Conference, Newfoundland Methodists, well on the way to respectability, were in the full flush of educational opportunity. Though they expressed public reluctance at the arrival of a fully denominational school system in 1875, in reality they eagerly welcomed it, and had favoured the change for some time. Subdivision of the Protestant education grant had been rejected as “inefficient” at a special District Meeting in 1850, but by the end of the

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<sup>70</sup>Westfall, *Two Worlds The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ontario*, 67.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 141.

decade the clergy were rethinking the matter.<sup>72</sup> At least, in 1858 they hesitated enough to defer a decision on an internal motion relating to it until a later meeting, and in 1866 a letter was published in the *Provincial Wesleyan* advocating subdivision:

There are local circumstances in the Colony which seem to render a system of denominational schools a necessity. The sub-division of the school grant is demanded by the existing state of things. Methodist schools should be established wherever at all practicable.<sup>73</sup>

Yet during the 1871 Annual District Meeting several notable Wesleyans of St. John's "unanimously resolved" to oppose subdivision. They then joined with a clerical contingent to form an official "Committee of Education" appointed by the District Meeting.<sup>74</sup> However, the clerical element was not opposed, and delayed action in order "to examine the Census of the Colony, and submit the leading objections to Subdivision to a future meeting of the Committee."<sup>75</sup> It would seem that arguments for subdivision based on advantages for Methodists in light of their increasing numbers held the day, for there was no resolution opposing subdivision entered into the available minutes. Yet in 1874 in announcing that denominational education was to take effect in the following

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<sup>72</sup>UC Archive, WY 100, Box 1, 1829-1873, "Minutes, Newfoundland District, Wesleyan Methodist Church, England, 1829-1850," Special Meeting on Subdivision of Protestant Grant, Carbonear, August 14, 1850.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., "District Journal, 1851-1858," District Minutes, May 20, 1858; *Provincial Wesleyan*, August 1, 1866, "Jottings from Newfoundland."

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., "District Book 1870-1871," Annual District Meeting, St. John's, Thursday, May 25, 1871; May 29, 1871; May 30, 1871.

<sup>75</sup>UC Archive, WY 100, Box 3, Meeting of Committee of Education, August 24, 1871.

year, George S. Milligan, President of the Newfoundland Conference, still presented the official line of Methodism as the reluctant participant in the strongest possible language, saying that "bigotry and prejudice have led to the adoption of this act." Newfoundland would now have "three sets of school" while it scarcely had the means for one.

Methodists agreed to it "for the sake of peace" while "abhorring" the "obnoxious Bill."<sup>76</sup> Milligan then moved from the Presidency of the Newfoundland Conference to the newly created position of Inspector of Methodist Schools.<sup>77</sup>

John Reay in Twillingate saw the change as a new opportunity for Methodism in Newfoundland. Though giving the official line that it had been "forced upon us," he went on to say that Methodists "shall be greatly the gainers in this circuit, and indeed in almost every settlement throughout the whole electoral District." Methodists were being handed free education for many new government-funded schools would be built "in purely Methodist settlements" and, what is more, would also be used for church services.<sup>78</sup> Reay's perspective was seconded by Charles Lench a quarter of a century later. Lench

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<sup>76</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, May 4, 1874, Letter to editor from George S. Milligan, St. John's, April 29, 1874. See also, *Methodist Monthly Greeting*, January, 1901, 2, "The Makers of Newfoundland Methodism" by Charles Lench on George S. Milligan.

<sup>77</sup>UC Archive, WY 100, Box 1, 1829-1873, "District Book 1870-1871," Newfoundland School and Agency Society Committee, June 17, 1875; Box 3, 1874-1902, Box 3 1875, Journal of the Newfoundland Conference, St. John's, June 15, 1875. James Dove said that Milligan opposed denominational schools but "bowed to the inevitable" and determined to make the best of it. *Methodist Monthly Greeting*, February, 1902, 8, Obituary of George Seaton Milligan by James Dove.

<sup>78</sup>*Wesleyan*, May 6, 1876, Journal of Green Bay Circuit by John Reay, Twillingate, March 23, 1876.

continued to follow the sanctioned script that Methodists did not seek denominational education, but had it “thrust upon” them. But he, too, noted that although he still heard Methodists stating that it was one of “the greatest blunders” of government, in fact it was “truly marvellous” for Methodism. Bishop Feild, an opponent for decades, was recast as a helpful partner of Methodism in his promotion of subdivision of the Protestant grant:

Grateful Methodists regard this as one of the most excellent things the good prelate ever did, and while scarcely regarding him as a maker of Newfoundland Methodism, he was certainly an important auxiliary to our growth and prestige as a denomination.<sup>79</sup>

State funding was one of the milestones in Methodism’s achieving denominational status. Gone were the days of seeing itself as a counterculture movement. It had moved to the center of the culture transforming, and being transformed by it, and state education was an important means to that end.<sup>80</sup>

#### 4.4

#### Women

Officially, Methodism in Newfoundland became a denomination of men. As with Methodism elsewhere in its denominational phase, it was men who took over leadership positions, taking control of “theological education, church property, preaching,

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<sup>79</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, January, 1901, 2, “The Makers of Newfoundland Methodism - 13. The Builders of our Educational System;” February, 1901, 2, “The Makers of Newfoundland Methodism - 14. The Division of the Protestant Educational Grant.”

<sup>80</sup>See Neill Semple on Methodism’s new mission “to transform the entire nation into a highly moral social order,” Semple, *The Lord’s Dominion The History of Canadian Methodism*, 334-362.

publishing, ecclesiastical committees, and the construction and implementation of church property.”<sup>81</sup> In this it came to mirror the exclusion of women in the Victorian culture around it, most notably exemplified in the male social club.<sup>82</sup> Women had had significant leadership roles in the growth of Methodism, but their contribution to the growth of Methodism was muted in the official record. For example, in the whole Newfoundland Methodist record there is no other woman of the stature of Martha Downes as a missionary and preacher, yet little would be known of her, but for her obituary. In addition to teaching in the school, she was a regular preacher on Sound Island, Placentia Bay, since she preached in the evening week after week while her husband did so in the morning.<sup>83</sup> The only other female preacher specifically mentioned as such was Maria Palmer who married the missionary Adam Nightingale.<sup>84</sup> John Waterhouse noted she had a reputation for preaching, saying that when her husband was absent “she could fill the

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<sup>81</sup>Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, 149.

<sup>82</sup>Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class, Ritual and Authority and the English Industrial City, 1840-1914*, 92.

<sup>83</sup>*Courier*, June 8, 1859; *Methodist Monthly Greeting*, November 1891, 62, “Obituary of Martha Downes, Sound Island.” Smith in his history of Methodism merely refers to her as the “equally zealous wife” of Charles Downes, Smith, *History of the Methodist Church ... of Eastern British America*, Vol. II, 373.

<sup>84</sup>NF GenWeb Vital Statistics Records, Avalon South Region, Vital Statistics Volume 26E, Anglican Cathedral of St. John the Baptist, St. John’s, Newfoundland, Marriages from 1754, Part Two, <[www.rootsweb.com/~cannf/as\\_vistat46.htm](http://www.rootsweb.com/~cannf/as_vistat46.htm)>.

gap and preach a good sermon.”<sup>85</sup> There were other female preachers who were not documented as such because they would not have been officially acknowledged as preachers by the Methodist hierarchy. For example, the missionary John Pickavant reported in the *Methodist Magazine* an obituary of Jane Hickson, wife of Thomas Hickson, formerly Jane Garland of Island Cove, that she had ability “both to feed and guide the flock of Christ,” which is close to stating that she was a preacher.<sup>86</sup> Her contribution must have been noteworthy, for the *Methodist Magazine* generally understated the contribution of women, as Elizabeth Muir noted regarding the Upper Canadian preaching ministries of Elizabeth Tonkin Collett and Mary Taft.<sup>87</sup>

Women, as well as men, led services as exhorters in the absence of the missionary. They would have at least mirrored the hortatory preaching of the missionaries, and may have on occasion given an expository message.<sup>88</sup> They would also likely exhort while meeting in house or chapel. As D.G. Bell observed, the Methodist understanding of conversion as “a personal ‘event’ - dramatic, instantaneous reception of the Holy Spirit -

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<sup>85</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, August, 1903, 6, “Forty Years Ago” No. 34 by Rev. John Waterhouse, Manchester.

<sup>86</sup>*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, Abridged Edition, 1824, 111. Abridged volumes were 200-300 pages shorter due to items being removed.

<sup>87</sup>Elizabeth Gillan Muir, *Petticoats in the Pulpit: The Story of Early Nineteenth-Century Methodist Women Preachers in Upper Canada* (Toronto: the United Church Publishing House, 1991), 26.

<sup>88</sup>For women as exhorters see, *Methodist Monthly Greeting*, July, 1900, 12, “Newfoundland Methodism during the Century” by H.C. Hatcher.

weakened the authority of all church hierarchy and tradition.” It gave a new authority and freedom to lay women and men to rise and speak in the meeting. As one woman declared, “when I feel confident, that the Lord calls me to speak, I dare not refuse.” Bell noted that in Methodism exhorting and preaching were clearly defined in separate categories. The latter involved expounding a text of Scripture, while in the former, women as well as men were encouraged to urge others to take an interest in being saved and in walking in holiness.<sup>89</sup> However this precise conceptual distinction was not borne out in Methodist practice. Robert Lowell, an Anglican, portrayed Methodist preaching in his *New Priest in Conception Bay*, as hardly expository, probably hortatory:

‘there was the text out of Scripture, sure,’ I says, ‘an’ a little about how we ought to do,’ I says; ‘jus’ like anybody; an’ then varses an’ scraps o’ poultry, an’ such; an’ then more, agen, an’ so on; but ‘e wasn’ a proper-growed sarmun, at all,’ I says; ‘not what I calls proper-growed.’<sup>90</sup>

Expounding a text, or expository preaching was a specific category of sermon which may have been the least common. Methodist missionaries generally preached for a desired end, namely conversion, rather than to explain and expound. Moreover, preaching by its very nature is to urge people to follow what one is expounding, and personal witness and experience are drawn on to do so. Thus Methodist missionaries often used

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<sup>89</sup>D.G. Bell, “Allowed Irregularities: Women Preachers in the Early 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Maritimes,” *Acadiensis* XXX, 2 (Spring 2001), 6, 10.

<sup>90</sup>[Lowell], *The New Priest in Conception Bay*, Vol. I, 184.

the words exhort and preach interchangeably.<sup>91</sup> Exhortation also crossed over into preaching, for often illustrations of events and persons in Scripture were drawn on to elicit the particular feelings and qualities that were the focus of the declaration. For talented women and men in an oral culture, the reference to a Bible event such as the parting of the Red Sea or the raising of Lazarus could be quite elaborate and detailed, and would be preaching, if not in name. Thus women preachers, officially recognized only as exhorters, were under-reported in print even more than their lay male counterparts, as in Methodism elsewhere.<sup>92</sup> Their ministry was at times so extraordinary that they do appear in the record on occasion. For example the veteran missionary, William Ellis, was so amazed by a couple of young women during the 1834 revival that he felt constrained to mention their preaching, and drew a comparison with the testimony of Wesley himself, possibly to fend off criticism:

Two young women were brought into deep distress; but in about two hours the Comforter came. First, the youngest when she got up and shouted aloud his goodness. And I can say, as the late great Wesley said on a similar occasion, such a sermon I never heard before. She talked so sweetly of Jesus and his matchless love as melted every heart in the house. Soon after, the other young woman

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<sup>91</sup>For example, John Corlett, "I exhorted the people at Silly Cove ... I do not recollect to have preached with more liberty." *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1827, 275. See also, PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 20, 1825-1828, William Wilson, Burin, Journal of visit to Placentia Bay, Oderin, September 17, 1826; Reel 24, 1835-1837, Thomas Angwin, Porte de Grave, July 14, 1836; *Provincial Wesleyan*, November 10, 1869, "Obituary of George Apsey."

<sup>92</sup>Muir, *Petticoats in the Pulpit: The Story of Early Nineteenth-Century Methodist Women Preachers in Upper Canada*, 5-7, 26-29.

mightily rejoiced in God her Saviour, and preached him to all present.<sup>93</sup>

Women also exhorted members as class leaders, of which there were numerous instances, but most of whom would have been unknown but for their obituaries.<sup>94</sup> Mrs. Andrew Butt, for instance, converted in 1863, was the first class leader on Flat Islands, Bonavista Bay.<sup>95</sup> The class meeting was a primary “means of grace,” being “one of the

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<sup>93</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS, Reel 23, 1832-1835, William Ellis, Bonavista, August 12, 1834.

<sup>94</sup>For women as class leaders, see SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 7, 1841/42-1846/48, Box 7, File 344, T.N., Obituary of Catherine Newell, Carbonear, April 29, 1845; *Provincial Wesleyan*, April 22, 1858, Hannah Goddard, Burin; January 18, 1860, Charles Comben, “At Henley Harbour one of the good sisters, a Leader from the Carbonear Circuit, regularly met her class every Sabbath;” May 2, 1866, Mrs. George Lake, Fortune; November 10, 1873, Elizabeth Finch, Trinity, later Elizabeth Wilson; March 23, 1874, Esther Stone, West Point, Lapoile Bay; May 11, 1874, Amelia Rogerson, St. John’s; *Wesleyan*, August 27, 1880, Jane Taylor, Carbonear, later Jane Bemister; March 14, 1884, Elizabeth Percy, Brigus; *Methodist Monthly Greeting*, September, 1888, 2, Emma Hollett, Burin; November, 1889, 10, Mary Wilkinson, St. John’s; February, 1893, 30, Elizabeth Goddard, Spoon Cove; November 1896, 170, Rebecca Taylor, Change Islands and Seldom; November 1896, 173, Hannah Darby, Burin; November, 1896, 185, Rachel Benson, Grates Cove; September, 1898, 135, Elizabeth Squires, Bay Roberts; April, 1899, 63, Mrs. Richard Pelley, Hant’s Harbour; December, 1899, 3, Elizabeth Mitchell, Burin; May 1900, 4, Mrs. James Whelan, Blackhead; July, 1900, 13, Emma H. Hollett, Burin; September, 1900, 9, Sarah Parsons, Freshwater; October 1900, 6, Mary Guy, Twillingate; January, 1901, 13, Julia Parsons, Freshwater; June, 1901, 10, Elizabeth Vigus, Burin; April, 1902, 10, Ann Samways, Twillingate; June, 1902, 11, Selina French, Moreton’s Harbour; July 1902, 16, Christiana Forsey; November, 1902, 12, Mrs. Jacobs, Twillingate; December, 1902, 12, Mary Ann Legrow, Blackhead; July, 1903, 14, Sarah Whelan, Western Bay; September 1903, 1, Nancy Penwell, Grand Bank; November, 1903, 1, Emma Butler, Clarke’s Beach; December, 1903, 5, Elizabeth Moores, Bonne Bay; March, 1905, 15, Isabella Whiteford Rogerson, St. John’s; July, 1905, 15, Mary Ann Taylor, Change Islands.

<sup>95</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, February, 1918, 19, Mrs Andrew Butt, Flat Island.

greatest bulwarks of Methodism,” as it was called in Placentia Bay.<sup>96</sup> John Waterhouse, in speaking of the social dimension of Methodism and reflecting on his time in Carbonear in 1858, recalled that the class meeting was “counted the most precious means of grace.”<sup>97</sup> The qualifications of the leader were high. The person was to be both moral and pious, zealous for conversions, and able to teach.<sup>98</sup> The class leader, not the missionary, was the pastor who was responsible for the week-to-week spiritual guidance and edification of a group of people within their responsibility, as a captain was in charge of a ship and its crew.<sup>99</sup> Thus, class leaders had a pivotal role in Methodism for the spiritual tenor of congregations. Their ministry was even more critical in large centres such as Carbonear and Twillingate, because class meetings were the most readily available means of grace during the week for many in the surrounding harbours and coves, who had to travel to attend the chapel on Sunday. During the expansion phase of Methodism on the south and

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<sup>96</sup>Ibid., July, 1908, 3.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., April, 1901, 3, “Forty Years Ago” No. 11, John Waterhouse, Manchester. “In North America ... the class meeting became the essential and distinguishing institution of Methodism. Assembled weekly under the supervision of a mature Christian leader, it held the society together and sometimes even serves as a surrogate family to lonely individuals who joined the fellowship. As mission operations expanded into newer areas, the class meeting often predated the arrival of the itinerant preacher or the formation of regular worship services, and thus it acted as a crucial advance base for church work. It also functioned as a training ground for exhorters, lay preachers, and even itinerant ministers.” Neill Semple, *The Lord's Dominion The History of Canadian Methodism*, 19.

<sup>98</sup>J. Crowther, *A Portraiture of Methodism* (London: Richard Edwards, 1815), 267 in Winsor, *Hearts Strangely Warmed*, 12.

<sup>99</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, September, 1911, 8-9.

northeast coasts, there were no chapels in most harbours and coves, and kitchen class meeting and prayer meeting were the distinctive means for the growth and maintenance of Methodism.<sup>100</sup> Thus it was in the capacity of class leader that women provided a key leadership role in the growth of Methodism, whether in larger centres it was Ann Samways leading a class of women in Twillingate or Isabella Whiteford Rogerson leading a class “mostly of men converts” in St. John’s, or whether on the margin it was Rebecca Taylor from Brigus leading a class at Change Islands in summer and at Seldom in winter.<sup>101</sup>

As was the case with Rebecca Taylor, in some settlements women assumed an even larger role than class leader. One gets the impression that they were pillars of Methodism in their communities. For instance, Emma Hollett at Burin, formerly Emma Buffett of Grand Bank, deemed both intelligent and pious, was “a most important leader.” Elizabeth Mitchell at Burin, also “of great intelligence,” in addition to being a class leader for 40 years, played a prominent role in prayer and testimony meetings. Mary Jane Rowsell was regarded as the founder of Methodism in Leading Tickles, “it is mainly to

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<sup>100</sup>Cyril R. Chaulk, “John Wesley and Newfoundland Methodism”, 164-165.

<sup>101</sup>UC Archive WY 200, Twillingate, Box 4, “Circuit Book 1868-1875,” 1869; *Methodist Monthly Greeting*, March, 1905, 15; November 1896, 170, “A Chapter in the history of Newfoundland Methodism” by Henry J. Indoe, Seldom, October 6, 1896. PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 35, 1823-1855. Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, “Reports of the Work of God in the Newfoundland District,” William Marshall, Green Bay, 1843.

her that we owe the establishment of our cause there.”<sup>102</sup> John Reay, an early historian of Methodism in Newfoundland, stated that singlehandedly Elizabeth Squires, a convert of Black in 1791, kept Methodism alive in Bay Roberts when it was without a missionary. He said, “but for her there would not have been any Methodist church at Bay Roberts.”<sup>103</sup>

Other women were particularly remembered for being able to lead the congregation in prayer. John Waterhouse remembered “Aunt Julia” Parsons at Freshwater as an exceptional person, particularly in prayer. Although “eminently-gifted and successful” as a class leader and worker,

The feature by which she was distinguished ... her remarkable talent and great power in prayer... she frequently rose up into the regions of sublime eloquence. In my experience as a minister during the last forty-two years, I do not remember another case, of either man or woman, who had such a genius for weaving verses, or lines of verses, of our hymns into her clear-sighted and strong-winged petitions.<sup>104</sup>

Mary Jane Avery of Grates Cove and Eliza Ann Beck on Sound Island had similar reputations.<sup>105</sup> Maybe most noteworthy of all in print was “Sister Lydia ... a saint,” of Hant’s Harbour. In the summer of 1868 the people were without fish and the missionary called a prayer meeting - many people prayed and the missionary prayed, then Mary Anne

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<sup>102</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, September, 1888, 2; December, 1899, 3; July, 1904, 2.

<sup>103</sup>*Ibid.*, September 1898, 135, “A Short Account of Two Church Members,” John Reay.

<sup>104</sup>*Ibid.*, January, 1901, 13, “Forty Years Ago” No. 9, Rev. John Waterhouse, Manchester, December, 1900.

<sup>105</sup>*Ibid.*, April, 1900, 7; *Wesleyan*, March 17, 1877.

Pelley prayed - and the fish came into Hant's Harbour. Moreover it was followed by a revival. While the missionary became famous for calling the meeting, most along the coast "held that Sister Lydia's was the potent influence that brought the blessing."<sup>106</sup>

Women often had to demonstrate adamant courage to stand alone, and at times withstand abuse from their husbands, extended family and other community leaders for their participation and testimony as Methodists. William Wilson at Bonavista spoke of a young woman who "suffered much opposition" from her husband who was "quite averse to Methodism." Before he was converted he had staunchly declared that "he would never be a Methodist, or forsake his religion."<sup>107</sup> A report of the most extreme abuse occurred at Bonavista when a woman who attended Methodist meetings became distressed about sin. Her friends called the doctor who could find nothing medically wrong with her, but "thought that bleeding would do her good, so he cupped her in the back of the neck." She went to her clergyman who told her she was "hypochondriacal." The doctor sent the Methodist missionary a note saying that her problem "arises from mistaken notions of religion; and, if, she was my wife, I would flog her well." A short while after "her head was shaved and blistered; her hands were tied; and her cruel father actually flogged her."

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<sup>106</sup>Moses Harvey, *How the Fish Came into Hant's Harbour Sixty Years Ago*, ed. Charles Lench (St. John's: Robinson & Co., 1926), 14-17. D.W. Johnson, *History of Methodism in Eastern British America* (Sackville: Tribune Printing Co., n.d.), 287. Garry Cranford and Ed Janes, *From Cod to Crab: Stories & History of Hant's Harbour* (St. John's: Flanker Press, 1995), 115-120.

<sup>107</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence Box 2, 1819/20-1823/25, File 97, William Wilson to Committee, Bonavista, May 19, 1823.

While a female member of the Methodist society was visiting her, “her brother ... began to swear at her, and call her father to come again and flog her.” On another occasion three female members of the society found the doctor present and the woman with “a strait-jacket on, and a blister on her head.” When they began to talk about religion “she was threatened with confinement in a dark room.” That same day the, Church of England clergyman “came in great wrath” and ordered the Methodist women to not visit her again. She was “never afterward permitted to enter a Methodist chapel.”<sup>108</sup> The ruling class of Bonavista, the clergyman and doctor, (no magistrate appeared) participated with the family in this physical abuse and denigration. Whatever Methodist faith she acquired, she was prohibited from associating with Methodists to express it.

While women were often the protagonists in prayer meetings by leading out in prayer, as early as 1850 in St. John’s the female voice was silenced with the rise in respectability. John Brewster contrasted the “fervour” of the women praying in Twillingate with the larger centres, where “in the calmer and more orderly meetings for prayer, the female voice is seldom heard.”<sup>109</sup> In keeping with the 19<sup>th</sup>-century social trend of “separate spheres” the ideal for female spirituality gradually became more and more that of transforming the home into a haven of holiness and love for the family. The

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<sup>108</sup>Wilson, *Newfoundland and its Missionaries*, 246-249. Wilson said that his source was a written report “taken down from the lips of the parties, on the respective days when the event occurred.” He suppressed the names, except for the woman, “Mrs. P.” and the Church of England clergyman, “John.”

<sup>109</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 29, 1849-1852, John Brewster, Twillingate, Green Bay, October 26, 1850.

obituaries of women reflect this change. Earlier obituaries eulogize women as significant spiritual agents in public space.<sup>110</sup> Later notices, when speaking of a woman's contribution as class leader or prayer leader, saw it as important to also add that while she provided this leadership, she did not neglect her responsibilities of spiritual domesticity.<sup>111</sup> Women still maintained spiritual authority in the denomination, particularly in the home, but they were shut out of most areas of governance. In this way Methodism sang the new song of patriarchy as they occupied the ground of the dominant culture, along with Anglicans and Catholics.

## 4.5

## Temperance

In the latter 18<sup>th</sup> century and the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, drinking alcohol was a normal part of life in Newfoundland, not just for Anglicans and Roman Catholics, but also for Methodists, and for Methodist missionaries. John Lewis, for instance, drank routinely on social occasions, and also when at some physical extremity due to illness or travel. Wet and cold on arriving at Grates Cove from Old Perlican, he was served "bread and cheese, rum and water, and ... tea" by Mr. Snelgrove. The next day was cold, so he soaked his

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<sup>110</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, April 22, 1858, Hannah Goddard, Burin; May 2, 1866, Mrs. George Lake, Fortune; November 10, 1873, Elizabeth Finch, Trinity, later Elizabeth Wilson; March 23, 1874, Esther Stone, West Point, Lapoile Bay.

<sup>111</sup>*Ibid.*, August 10, 1878, Catherine Gill; April 12, 1879; *Methodist Monthly Greeting*, November, 1903, 1, Emma Butler.

feet in warm water and once again “drank a warm tumbler of rum and water.”<sup>112</sup> He and the missionary, Ninian Barr, gave “a glass of grog” each to the men who were in the woods in February cutting the frame for a new chapel. At Burin, like Thomas Hickson later, his winter provisions included 2 ½ gallons of rum. He gave the men who brought his winter’s coal a “dinner of beef and two glasses of grog each.”<sup>113</sup> On an “exceeding cold” morning in English Harbour, Trinity Bay, James Hickson gave a piece of ginger bread “and a glass of hot wine and water” to each student attending the day school.<sup>114</sup> These practices followed the advice George Cubit in his “Observations of the island of Newfoundland,” given to the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Committee in London, namely, that the occasional use of “ardent spirits” was necessary because of the cold winter climate, especially since malt liquors were so expensive and scarce.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup>“Journal of John Lewis,” 1.01, April 1,2, 1815. See also, 1.02, August 4, September 3, 26, November 30, 1815, Archives and Manuscripts Division, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University, Coll-205; *Methodist Magazine*, 1820, 953, James Hickson, Journal, Island Cove. George Smith credited “some bottles of port wine ... under God” for his recovery from “a violent cold” on his second visit to Bonavista in 1796, *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1833, “Memoir of the Rev. George Smith,” 10.

<sup>113</sup>“Journal of John Lewis,” 1.04, February 27, 1816; 1.06, December 3, 8, 1817. UC Archive WY 200, Burin, Box 1, “Account Book 1821-1835.” Parsonage House account, October 20, 1821, 5 ½ gallons of rum. Rev. Thomas Hickson, Wesleyan Missionary, Burin Bay, Newfoundland.

<sup>114</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 18, 1822-1823, James Hickson, Trinity Harbour, December 28, 1822.

<sup>115</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 47, [George Cubit], “Observations on the island of Newfoundland,” March 1819; File 25, George Cubit to George Marsden, St. John’s, May 21, 1818.

Drinking was common on social occasions.<sup>116</sup> For example, on his way to Lower Island Cove from Western Bay, John Lewis dropped into a house and had “a glass of wine and a little bisket.” At other times he had tea, likely with those who could not afford wine. It appears that during his time at Burin Lewis’s regular social drinking was limited to the Spurrier agents and the higher class, possibly due to the postwar depression. He “drank some wine” with the captain of the ship who brought the magistrates to Burin, and when he was sick “took a glass of mulled port” with Dobey, the doctor, and Harrison, the agent for Spurrier at Ship Cove. Sometimes he was not sparing in his drinking alcohol. When departing from Oderin he noted that Lawlor, the Spurrier agent, “had plenty of beef steaks and wine and rum put on board for me. I ate a hearty dinner on board.” When dining with Captain Stanworth on the Spurrier’s vessel, *Upton*, he “drank a few glasses of sherry.”<sup>117</sup> Occasionally he drank a little too much. At Western Bay he drank a glass of ale “which made me quite stupid and almost unfit for the pulpit.” On another occasion he “took a harty draft of wine which operated very unpleasant.”<sup>118</sup>

Fishermen drank particularly on special occasions and at parties. The two biggest

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<sup>116</sup>Wilson, *Newfoundland and its Missionaries*, 347-349. See also Pope’s observations of “the cultural significance of alcohol and tobacco” in the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Atlantic world in his *Fish into wine: The Newfoundland Plantation in the Seventeenth Century*, 393-401.

<sup>117</sup>“Journal of John Lewis,” 1.01, April 28, 1815; 1.05, June 20, 25, 1817; August 4, 1817; 1.06. November 8, 1817. See also 1.02, August 7, October 20, November 6, 1815; 1.03, January 3, March 16, April 9, October 31, November 22, 1816.

<sup>118</sup>*Ibid.*, 1.02, August 27, 1815; 1.03, January 20, 1816.

events were in the fall of the year - straightening up with the merchant and weddings. The latter Lewis treated with alarm, as much or more because of the dancing, or the combination of drinking and dancing. At the wedding of Joseph Hollett and Martha Hodder after the summer's work, for instance, there was a an all-night party. Lewis, having officiated at the marriage, left the house and slept in "the *cuddy* of a boat" rather than be "confined" with those engaging in merriment, which he referred to in terms of "hell" and "the devils servants." But it was dancing which was the greater evil: "it creates expence, it injures health, it promotes drunkenness, it inflames the passions, it creates levity, it destroys the spirit of prayers and devotion, it kills time and destroys the soul forever." Lewis was dumbfounded to find that on the very night he preached at Thomas Moulton's house, they had a party. He stated that he had never experienced such a thing in his life - that a congregation would assemble "to worship God and to conclude the night in drinking and dancing. The devil could hardly do such a thing without a blush."<sup>119</sup>

Methodists were especially sensitive to the conviviality of dance, drink, and song. It was the nearest counterpart to the ecstasy of religion, and thus was its strongest competitor. The two were not infrequently compared. At Twillingate, when a converted John Baggs visited a Mr. Lisfield at Jenkin's Cove, brimming with enthusiasm, "the old gent ... thought he was drunk. Ah! So he was, with new wine."<sup>120</sup> Similarly, Bishop Feild

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<sup>119</sup>Ibid., 1.08, November 4, 22, 1818.

<sup>120</sup>"John S. Peach Diaries, 1841-1855," January 19, 1847.

spoke of the “intoxicating excitement” of Methodist revivals.<sup>121</sup> Before one of the revivals at Hant’s Harbour, “dancing, drunkenness, street walking, and the singing of songs filled up a great part of the night.” Shortly after, a revival occurred and instead, the voices of enraptured converts in shouts and songs “were heard in the streets.” This continued for several nights.<sup>122</sup>

The examples of drunkenness that surface in the Methodist record are often not always associated with the lower class. For instance, Mr. Bishop, a merchant of Ship Cove, fell over his wharf and “had like to have been killed” due to “the awful effects of drinking.” At Burin only two “drunkards” are mentioned in John Lewis’s journal, one of whom was the doctor.<sup>123</sup> Neither were Methodists exempt. John Bell, the chairman of the District, noted that when members were expelled it was because of drunkenness in almost every case.<sup>124</sup> Some of the members were lay leaders. In Lower Island Cove, classes had did not meet for over a year because the class leader had become a drunkard.<sup>125</sup> Previously, John Stretton, the local preacher at Harbour Grace, who “had stood so high in

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<sup>121</sup>Tucker, *Memoir of the Life and Episcopate of Edward Feild*, 186.

<sup>122</sup>“Journal of Thomas Fox, 1851-1877,” January 28, 1858.

<sup>123</sup>“Journal of John Lewis,” 1.05, September 24, 1817; Coll-205, 1.06. December 29, 1817; Coll-205, 1.08. September 20, 1819.

<sup>124</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence Box 2, 1819/20-1823/25, File 72, John Bell to Committee, St. John’s, November 20, 1821.

<sup>125</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 19, 1824-1825, Adam Nightingale, Island Cove, June 17, 1824.

this place both as a man of talent and piety,” also went the same way.<sup>126</sup> Even Methodist missionaries succumbed to drunkenness. William Ward’s three fellow missionaries told him that because of it, he had “defeated the end of [his] Mission, betrayed the cause of God, and ruined [his] character and usefulness” Two of the remaining three then had to “disown” Richard Taylor, also because of drunkenness.<sup>127</sup>

By the 1820s, there were reports from some areas of a great decrease, if not cessation, of drunkenness. John Walsh wrote in 1819 that, due to the work of Methodist preachers, there was “very little drunkenness” in Blackhead compared to ten or twenty years before.<sup>128</sup> Similarly, William Bullock reported that there was “very little intemperance of any kind among the settled inhabitants” at Trinity. William Wilson reported the same for Grand Bank.<sup>129</sup> Thus, combating drunkenness had already made progress before the formation of the Newfoundland Temperance Society on January 19, 1833. The society called for subscribers to abstain from “distilled spirits” and agree to “the moderate use of other liquors.” Membership would not be granted to any who drank

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<sup>126</sup>Ibid., Reel 18, 1822-1823, John Pickavant, Harbour Grace, November 18, 1822.

<sup>127</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 17, Samuel McDowell, William Ellis and Richard Taylor to William Ward, Carbonear, September 20, 1812; File 17, Samuel McDowell and William Ellis to Thomas Blanshard, Carbonear, July 8, 1813.

<sup>128</sup>*Methodist Magazine*, 1820, 237, John Walsh, Blackhead, October 20, 1819.

<sup>129</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A192, William Bullock to A. Hamilton, Trinity, November 23, 1826; MG 597, WMMS Reel 18, 1822-1823, William Wilson’s Journal, Grand Bank, August 12, 1823.

to excess.<sup>130</sup>

Within a decade the cry for temperance had turned into an appeal for teetotalism, or total abstinence. Already a "Temperance Coffee Room" had been opened in St. John's as an alternative to drinking alcohol, but concern was expressed at the Protestant Total Abstinence Society gathering that teetotalism only existed along "a narrow strip of coast" at "St. John's a few miles along the shore of Conception Bay" and that Protestants were "silent and inactive" in the cause unlike their Catholic counterparts.<sup>131</sup> Part of that inaction was due to an ambivalence among Protestants in general, including Methodists. The most that the District Meeting at Brigus, chaired by John Pickavant, could agree to was that people should abstain from "the drinking of ardent spirits unless in cases of necessity" - the position of the Temperance Society a decade before.<sup>132</sup> Their voice was somewhat muffled in that within the year Methodists had to deal with reports of the drunkenness of their chairman, John Pickavant, becoming "more public."<sup>133</sup> Moreover,

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<sup>130</sup>*Public Ledger*, January 22, 1833. So Philip Henry Gosse vowed in 1832, the year he became a Methodist convert, Thwaite, *Glimpses of the Wonderful*, 50.

<sup>131</sup>*Public Ledger*, February 18, 1842. The Irish Temperance movement was introduced to St. John's in 1841. See John FitzGerald, "Irish Fraternities in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century St. John's: The Total Abstinence Society," <http://www.heritage.nf.ca/society/irish-temperance.html>.

<sup>132</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, John Pickavant, Chairman, Address of the Annual District Meeting to the Methodist Societies in Newfoundland, Brigus, May 27, 1842.

<sup>133</sup>*Ibid.*, Reel 27, 1842-1845, John Snowball to Rev. Robert Adler, D.D., Blackhead, July 7, 1843; SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 8, 1846/48-1849/51, File 380, George Ellidge, Port de Grave, November 10, 1847.

not all Methodist leaders agreed with total abstinence. William Charles St. John, editor of the *Weekly Herald* at Harbour Grace, certainly was, but even he did not stop publishing liquor advertisements until 1848.<sup>134</sup> Nicholas Stabb and his wife were deemed to be “the most respectable and influential Wesleyans in Newfoundland,” yet in the 1850s he was still advertising “12 Puncheons of High Proof Rum” for sale.<sup>135</sup> Methodist missionaries did not agree on total abstinence. John Addy stood out among his fellow missionaries on his arrival in 1836 in that “he put aside the wine cup.”<sup>136</sup> Even in the 1850s the Downes were conspicuous for their position of absolute abstention from alcohol, “not for medicinal use, not even external application.”<sup>137</sup> As late as 1867 not all Methodist missionaries, 20 out of 23, would publicly identify themselves with teetotalism.<sup>138</sup>

Yet it was the Methodists who took the Protestant lead in the temperance movement. Bishop Feild was decidedly against voluntary societies in principle. In his view such societies had “no foundation” and lowered the proper position of the Church of

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<sup>134</sup>Whelan, “The Newspaper Press in Nineteenth-Century Newfoundland,” 122-124.

<sup>135</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 31, 1854-1867, Edmund Botterell to Rev Osborne, St. John’s, August 3, 1854; *Public Ledger*, September 5, 1854.

<sup>136</sup>*Wesleyan*, January 25, 1884. In 1848 John Lewis who had returned to Britain, and by then a teetotaler, was opposed by every Methodist minister in the District Meeting at Whitby, North Yorkshire. John Rylands Library, PLP53.34.1, John Lewis, Malton, June 29, 1848.

<sup>137</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, November 1891, 62.

<sup>138</sup>*Courier*, June 29, 1867.

England to which “truth is intrusted.”<sup>139</sup> He was troubled by drunkenness but had disdain for “what he called ‘the self-righteous absurdities of teetotalism.’”<sup>140</sup> Henry Winton, editor of the *Public Ledger*, a Congregationalist, was “shocked” and denounced him on the front page in February 1846. For Feild, however, moderate drinking was quite proper and “the church itself was the only temperance society to which one should belong.”<sup>141</sup> Thus Feild’s clergy drank routinely, at a time when teetotalism was being trumpeted as a cure to society’s ills.<sup>142</sup> The evangelical Anglican, Oliver Rouse, for instance, socialized in the 1840s with rum, wine, and beer on various occasions.<sup>143</sup>

Maria Rouse, his wife, was accused by a fellow Anglican, albeit at times a rival, of being “given to drink.”<sup>144</sup> While this shows that not all women were teetotalers, many played a significant role in the cause. Henry Winton, in speaking of the Total Abstinence Society festival at the Temperance Coffee Room in 1842, added that many women participated and observed that “female influence is one of the most prominent distinctions

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<sup>139</sup>*Times*, May 17, 1845, June 3, 1846.

<sup>140</sup>Tucker, *Memoir of the Life and Episcopate of Edward Feild*, 11.

<sup>141</sup>Jones, “Bishop Feild: A Study in Politics and Religion in Nineteenth-Century Newfoundland,” 21, 112. *Public Ledger*, February 20, 1846.

<sup>142</sup>*Public Ledger*, November 28, 1845.

<sup>143</sup>John C. Street, *The Journal of Oliver Rouse, Anglican Missionary in Newfoundland: September 1846 to May 1850* (Madison, Wisconsin: privately printed, 1983), 61, 62, 71, 100, 140, 168, 177.

<sup>144</sup>*Ibid.*, 89, 248.

of the present age.”<sup>145</sup> A decade later women made up half of the attendance at the large festival of the Sons of Temperance which included a public march and an outdoor tea.<sup>146</sup> Women had recently formed a “Daughters of Temperance” society.<sup>147</sup> Thus, while women were being banned from boards and pulpits as Methodism developed into its chapel phase, they took a larger role in voluntary societies such as the Daughters of Temperance, which endeavoured to influence society at large. As Carrol Smith-Rosenberg observed: “Temperance and abolitionist women asserted their right to speak publicly, to hold office in male organizations, to petition state and federal legislators, all in the name of a higher inner light.”<sup>148</sup> In total disregard for rank, Methodist women were introduced at an early age to this larger mission to reform society. They marched as children in the Band of Hope in “a public demonstration” for total abstinence from alcohol and tobacco, not only in St. John’s, but also in outports.<sup>149</sup>

Teetotalism continued to advance in Newfoundland in the 1840s. Roman

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<sup>145</sup>*Public Ledger*, February 18, 1842.

<sup>146</sup>*Ibid.*, July 12, 1853. The Sons of Temperance were a secret society which began in New York in 1842 in which members, using signs and oaths, covenanted to never drink alcohol or be associated with it, and to help each other in need.

<sup>147</sup>*Courier*, September 20, 1851. See Whelan, “The Newspaper Press in Nineteenth-Century Newfoundland,” 127-129.

<sup>148</sup>Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 130.

<sup>149</sup>For instance in Channel, *Provincial Wesleyan*, April 16, 1862. They also probably marched at Petites, Grand Bank, Fortune and Burin, *Provincial Wesleyan*, September 17, 1862; May 20, 1863; *Courier*, July 18, September 9, 1863.

Catholics, having "taken the lead" in the movement, marched in the streets in St.

John's.<sup>150</sup> F.W. Kellogg, later a member of the United States House of Representatives, came to town on a temperance speaking tour.<sup>151</sup> More temperance coffee rooms were opened.<sup>152</sup> William Charles St. John at Harbour Grace was able to report in 1845 that, unlike previous times of "riots and debauchery," the Christmas holidays were celebrated "without a single drunken individual been seen in the streets."<sup>153</sup> Bishop Feild reported that Mr. Howe, Slade's agent at Venison Islands, had six years previously given up taking "three times a day the usual allowance of spirits," and only drank spruce beer. He met with others who were "equally abstemious."<sup>154</sup> On the western shore at Petites, under the influence of a Methodist revival brought by the fishermen of Grand Bank, drunkenness had disappeared.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>150</sup>*Public Ledger*, January 5, 1844. The Methodist alliance with Roman Catholics in the temperance movement helped pave the way for political cooperation which ousted the Anglicans in the 1855 election for responsible government.

<sup>151</sup>*Ibid.*, May 1, 1849.

<sup>152</sup>*Ibid.*, November 26, 1847.

<sup>153</sup>*Courier*, January 15, 1845. Reprinted from the *Weekly Herald*. A Sons of Temperance Hall was opened in Harbour Grace with much acclaim in 1851. Whelan, "The Newspaper Press in Nineteenth-Century Newfoundland," 132-134.

<sup>154</sup>[Bishop Edward Feild]. *Journal of the Bishop of Newfoundland's Voyage of Visitation and Discovery on the South and West Coasts of Newfoundland and on the Labrador in the Church Ship 'Hawk,' in the year 1848*. *Church in the Colonies*, No. XXI. (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1849), 62.

<sup>155</sup>*Wesleyan*, December 8, 1849, "Notices of Newfoundland No.14," J.B. [John Brewster].

Yet temperance had not taken over the whole island. Even at Grand Bank, with its proximity to St. Pierre, drunkenness had not been uncommon before the 1849 revival.<sup>156</sup> There were also reports of drunkenness elsewhere on the south coast, particularly upon the arrival of traders, for instance at Rock Harbour, Grole, Pushthrough, and Pass Island.<sup>157</sup> Even a decade later a horrified Joseph Woods reported that in the 1859 election the Methodist missionary at Grand Bank, Thomas Gaetz, was associated with a plentiful supply of "rum, porter, and other intoxicating drinks" at the house of the local candidate. Gaetz wrote to the *Express* to clear his name and that of the "respectable and well-conducted men" of Grand Bank, but Woods noted that even then he did not deny that there was "beastly drunkenness" due to "abominable French rum."<sup>158</sup>

A new militancy came to the south-coast Methodists when residents formed "a Division of the Sons of Temperance" in Channel and Petites in 1860.<sup>159</sup> Two years later there were revivals in both places and the celebration of the joy of conversion became intermixed with public demonstration of the Sons of Temperance, "the scene was magnificent, the like was never before witnessed on the shore." Young people who had

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<sup>156</sup>Ibid., November 24, 1849, "Notices of Newfoundland No.12," J.B. [John Brewster].

<sup>157</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A194, William Jeynes to Rev. T.F.H. Bridge, December 21, 1840; "John S. Peach Diaries, 1841-1855," June 24, July 24, August 17, 1842;

<sup>158</sup>*Courier*, November 23, 1859; January 14, 1860; May 26, 1860. Woods himself ran unsuccessfully in Burin in the 1855 election, *Courier*, May 23, 1855.

<sup>159</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, October 9, 1861.

joined the "Band of Hope" also marched.<sup>160</sup> They had pledged to not partake of "intoxicating drink, tobacco, and bad language."<sup>161</sup> By then the battle for the Sabbath was largely won, and thus it disappeared out of the discourse on sins endemic to Newfoundland society. Originally, breaking the Sabbath was decried as much as, or more than, drunkenness.<sup>162</sup> It is difficult to discern which was regarded as the greater evil. John Lewis spoke more of Sabbath-breaking than drunkenness in his first letter from Burin.<sup>163</sup> In the 1840s John Brewster judged that Sabbath-breaking, not drunkenness, was "the principal evil" with which the first Wesleyan Missionaries had to contend in Newfoundland, and by the 1860s William Wilson was calling it the "gigantic evil" of the past.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>160</sup>Ibid., April 16, 1862. See also, Charles Ladner, "Memoirs," 38-39, United Church Archives, Victoria University, Toronto.

<sup>161</sup>Ibid., April 16, September 17, 1862.

<sup>162</sup>For instance, SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 47, [George Cubit], "Observations on the island of Newfoundland," March 1819; File 25, George Cubit to George Marsden, St. John's, May 21, 1818; File 49, Ninian Barr, Ninian Barr, November 3, 1819; Box 4, 1828/29-1833/34, File 181, Carbonear, Richard Knight, July 4, 1832; PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meeting, May 24, 1824; Reel 23, 1832-1835, William Faulkner, Burin, January 10, 1834; Reel 25, 1838-1840, William Marshall, Gaultois, December 4, 1839; *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1824, Abridged edition, 642, John Walsh, St. John's, January 9, 1824.

<sup>163</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 23, John Lewis, Burin, July 7, 1817. Printed in the *Methodist Magazine*, Vol. 2, 1817, 873.

<sup>164</sup>*Wesleyan*, November 10, 1849, "Notices of Newfoundland No.10," J.B. [John Brewster]; *Provincial Wesleyan*, July 20, 1864, "The Newfoundland Mission and its

It was through Petites that the Sons of Temperance came to Burin. "Several boat crews" had sailed to Petites to pursue the spring fishery, and a few of them joined the Sons of Temperance. When they returned to Burin others joined them, fourteen in all, and formed "the Star of the East Division, No. 7, of Newfoundland" of the Sons of Temperance on June 7, 1862. By the following summer the fishermen were able to boast of an increase in membership to 185 with more "flocking to join." It would appear that the revival at Burin the following year was a continuance among the people at large of this resolve of the fishermen to reorient their lives to a way of living in which former elements, for instance, "cheap liquor from St. Pierre," no longer played a substantial part.<sup>165</sup> This is even more probable since a similar revival occurred contemporaneously at Grand Bank and Fortune with "nearly all" becoming Sons of Temperance. In neither Grand Bank nor Fortune were "spirits or alcoholic drinks" any longer sold.<sup>166</sup>

By 1871 the Methodist ministers received a delegation from the Temperance League "with the utmost heartiness" and agreed to further total abstinence through local option. The "Permissive Bill," which gave "a two-thirds of the voters in any electoral district the power in ... to prohibit the sale of all intoxicating drinks," had been passed and all that was required was action, which they were prepared to give.<sup>167</sup> By 1874 three of

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Missionaries, No. 26," William Wilson.

<sup>165</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, May 6, 1863.

<sup>166</sup>*Courier*, July 18, 1863.

<sup>167</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, June 21, 1871, "Newfoundland District Meeting."

the fifteen electoral districts had “shut up the grog shops.”<sup>168</sup> The 1874 Eastern British America Conference was now prepared to go further, disavowing “all complicity of her members with the great evil of intemperance, whether by drinking, manufacturing, selling, signing petitions for licence, or furnishing or renting places for the sale of intoxicating liquors.”<sup>169</sup> As Neill Semple suggests, teetotalism became “the issue dearest to Methodists” and that they saw it as “the linchpin to all social reform.”<sup>170</sup> The clergy had moved with the people from temperance to teetotalism, and to the more militant position of local option by the 1870s.

Teetotalism by then had become, along with abstaining from tobacco, part of a goal “to effect a wholesome change in the habits of society.” To help bring this about Joseph Woods made an appeal for the prohibition of alcohol in Newfoundland, its “importation, manufacture, or sale.”<sup>171</sup> The goal was no longer limited to banning alcohol and tobacco, but had become a new vision for society of cleanliness, health, and

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<sup>168</sup>Ibid., May 4, 1874. Letter of J.J. Rogerson.

<sup>169</sup>Quoted in Naboth Winsor, “Methodism in Newfoundland 1855-1884,” 73. It was not until 1879 that a Church of England Temperance Society was sanctioned by its bishop. It included members who advocated moderation in drinking or total abstinence. Whelan, “The Newspaper Press in Nineteenth-Century Newfoundland,” 143-144.

<sup>170</sup>Semple, *The Lord's Dominion The History of Canadian Methodism*, 358. John Webster Grant noted that for many evangelicals “temperance steadily overshadowed other concerns, until in the minds of some it superseded faith, hope and love as the touchstone of Christian discipleship.” John Webster Grant, *The Church in the Canadian Era* (Burlington, Ontario: Welch Publishing Company Inc., 1988), 80-82.

<sup>171</sup>*Courier*, March 23, 1864.

respectability, in short, a new Methodism.<sup>172</sup>

In conclusion, as Methodism evolved in Newfoundland there were several dialectical tensions which were resolved as Methodism evolved from a popular movement into a denomination. The clergy was largely responsible for exacerbating, if not creating, administrative tensions. At the District Meeting, which excluded the laity, they made decisions which were obstacles to growth, and did not help the people as they expanded the movement. In particular, they tended to cluster themselves around circuits in Conception Bay and St. John's instead of stepping out to expand the work along the south and northeast coasts. They were extremely reluctant to recommend native talent for ministry and did not ask incisive administrative questions, for example, regarding the reconfiguring of Methodist administration in 1855. Instead they were largely taken up with how the change would affect them as professionals. A number were also reluctant participants in the temperance movement, especially as the people marched for total abstinence.

The clergy were leaders in resolving three dialectics, namely, the reign of respectability over enthusiasm, the state funding of Methodist education, and the exclusion of women from public ministry and administration. It was the clergy who, in their aspiration for Victorian respectability, worked to rid Methodism of its excitement

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<sup>172</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, February 22, 1865. See Westfall, *Two Worlds The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ontario*, 186-187. See also, Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1991), 21-23, 44-76.

and ecstasy. Instead of reaching for ecstasy Methodists turned to reaching for decorum and polite society. No longer seeking the revivals of the past with their repentance and anxiety over sin, followed by release and rapture - a matter of shame - they sought to strengthen their stake in the society of the present. Methodism became dazzled with the comforts of civilization. Denominational education facilitated this impulse as Methodism moved to the center of society. Clergy also led Methodism into becoming a denomination of men, excluding women from leadership positions as trustees, public prayer leaders, exhorters, and preachers. Gone were the days of community spiritual leaders such as Rebecca Taylor and Mary Anne Pelley. In spite of severe restriction in public worship, women continued to enlarge their influence, however, through voluntary societies, such as the temperance movement.

I could almost imagine myself surrounded by an English congregation of Methodists. How true it is that the gospel is the same everywhere. Oh! and how true it is that Wesleyan Methodism is the same everywhere.<sup>1</sup>

## Chapter Five: Newfoundland Methodism and the question of distinctiveness

When John S. Peach arrived as the Methodist missionary in Twillingate in the summer of 1846, he was struck by the similarity of the Methodism he encountered to that which he had known in England, so much so, that he could “almost imagine” he was back there.<sup>2</sup> This raises the question of how distinct, in fact, Newfoundland Methodism was. In discussing the subject of the uniqueness of Methodism to its different environments, David Hempton made a helpful distinction between its theology and its message. While the former was similar wherever Methodism spread, the latter became adapted to its differing environments, being “subtly altered by the social spaces in which it was expressed.”<sup>3</sup> This chapter will consider the question of the distinctiveness of Methodism in Newfoundland in relation to four features of Newfoundland life - the sea, sealing, merchant credit and the Church of England. Did extracting resources from the sea and on the ice affect Methodism by giving to its view of providence a more acute sense of insecurity? Did the system of merchant credit significantly affect the Methodist plan of

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<sup>1</sup>“John S. Peach Diaries, 1841-1855,” July 5, 1846.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, 80.

raising money? Did the presence of the Church of England as the only viable Protestant alternative affect Methodist culture in Newfoundland? Was Newfoundland Methodism “unrelated” to Wesley, or was it in constant contact with Wesleyan Methodism, particularly through published materials?

## 5.1

## Providence

In contrast to the concept of the aloof God of the deists, John Wesley believed in the immediacy of God, resulting in visible effects during conversion and in “special providences.”<sup>4</sup> So too did Wesleyan missionaries and members in Newfoundland. It was these “special providences” which gave a vigour and vitality to Methodism, second only to the communal search for ecstasy during prayer and class meetings, and Sunday services. For instance, in June, 1819, while “walking over the hill” on his second Sunday in Great Paradise in Placentia Bay, William Harding having just arrived from England as a tradesman to William Cook, met a woman wearing yellow clothes and bonnet. He knew immediately he was to marry her, for while in England “the first Friday in the month of May, 1812” he had had a dream of a future wife “dressed exactly” in that way. The dream came to him after he felt “led” to fast all day to find out whom he was to marry. The woman turned out to be Mary Brushett of Burin, who was a servant in the house of Harding’s master, William Cook, merchant of the harbour. They were married by Cook at

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<sup>4</sup>Knox, *Enthusiasm*, 519. For “general” and “special” providence, see McNeill, ed., *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1: 201-207.

Great Paradise “according to the rights of the Church of England,” the following April.<sup>5</sup> Interventions in life were divine smiles of prosperity and well-being. The very nature of depending on the sea for sustenance carried with it a daily possibility for both bounty and scarcity. When the harvests of the sea appeared in their seasons, whether seals, cod, caplin, herring, or squid, it was commonly agreed that “Providence sends them.”<sup>6</sup> At times of extremity, their arrival would be seen as “special providences” or divine blessings beyond the normal.

There were also extraordinary instances of deliverance which were thought miraculous. The missionary James England left England for Newfoundland, and had been at sea for over six weeks due to contrary winds and storms. The passengers and crew were without food when they came across seven casks of flour floating on the water. “All with one consent acknowledged it was a providential deliverance.”<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Solomon French was saved after being cast into the waves and ice, and landed on Fish Rock near Cape Charles. He concluded that his Methodism had proven that God was “near at hand and not afar off” and that his faith was especially suited to “the greatest danger an’

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<sup>5</sup>“William Harding Diary, 1793-1877.”

<sup>6</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, February 6, 1864, William Wilson, “The Newfoundland Mission and its Missionaries No. 6.” Wilson, *Newfoundland and its Missionaries*, 218.

<sup>7</sup>“A Journal kept by James England, 1837-1841,” January 7, 1838. Such a view of deliverance from the peril of the sea was not unique to Methodists. Successfully crossing the Atlantic had long been “regarded as a special providence by many devout travellers, be they Puritan, Quaker, or Anglican.” Ian K. Steele, *The English Atlantic 1675-1740: An Exploration of Communication and Community*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 11.

distress.”<sup>8</sup> Henry Parsons of Carbonear fell 90 feet over a cliff and escaped with “not a limb broken.”<sup>9</sup>

Methodists heard through their *Methodist Magazine* of such special interventions throughout the world. For example, in 1817, “The Providence of God asserted” section of the monthly periodical reported instances of “singular,” “extraordinary” and “remarkable” preservations and escapes from a bear, a pit, a shark, and from drowning.<sup>10</sup> There were also reports of “negative providence,” in the form of the death or dismemberment of those who were impious or opposed to Methodism. In 1818 Methodists read of an actor who died on stage at the theater, and of a sabbath breaker who while at his dinner broke a blood vessel “so that blood flowed copiously from his mouth, his nose, and ears” until he died.<sup>11</sup> Closer to home, the three sailors who held John Hoskins at Trinity and bedaubed him with tar, each died in separate accidents within five years.<sup>12</sup> A man who damaged the Methodist church at Bonavista and stole the pulpit cushions and books, was later frostbitten and had to have his legs amputated above the knees and thenceforth “he literally crawled about the streets.” His fate was particularly

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<sup>8</sup>George Bond, “The Castaway of Fish Rock,” *Canadian Methodist Magazine*, January to June, XXXIII, 1891, 507.

<sup>9</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, September 21, 1878.

<sup>10</sup>*Methodist Magazine*, 1817, 450, 599-601, 682-3.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 1818, 286-287, 359-360.

<sup>12</sup>*Arminian Magazine*, 1785, 629. Letter of John Hoskins, November 5, 1784.

poignant, since Methodists were often contemptuously called “crawlers” at Bonavista.<sup>13</sup>

The belief in the special interventions of providence was compatible with a worldview that entertained the possibility of supernatural acts. These acts were not necessarily connected to any belief in Christianity. For instance, John Hoskins wrote that while the sailor who did the actual tarring of him was crying out for mercy “in the agonies of death” due to an accident on a later voyage, “the Captain said he very clearly saw me stand by one of the sailors as he was furling the top gallant.”<sup>14</sup> When William Marshall, a Methodist missionary, visited Deadman’s Cove in Cape La Hune Bay, he was told by John Bragg that it received its names from the corpses of a vessel which had been wrecked about 70 years before. Bragg told him that several times he had covered the bones only to find them uncovered on his return. “He thought there was something supernatural connected with it,” said Marshall, something with which Marshall agreed, when they found the bones “nearly all uncovered” again.<sup>15</sup> Henry Lewis, in his narrative of Methodism coming to Foxes in the *Canadian Methodist Magazine* noted that belief in ghosts was commonplace:

The fisherman is not a whit behind the sailor in ghost-lore. The fishermen of Foxes had their quota of such stories. If you stood on Wester Head on a dark night

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<sup>13</sup>Smith, *History of the Methodist Church ... of Eastern British America*, Vol. II, 174. Also repeated for the edification of Methodist readers in Lench, *The Story of Methodism in Bonavista*, 70.

<sup>14</sup>*Arminian Magazine*, 1785, 629. Letter of John Hoskins, November 5, 1784. The vision had “such an effect on the captain” that he quit going to sea.

<sup>15</sup>“William Marshall, Diary, 1839-1842,” August 6, 1841.

... voices crying for help ... Mark Hicks' house haunted by the spirit of a Frenchman ... an old man who troubled a fish store ... With a host of such stories Foxes kept apace with its neighbours in such traditional 'yarns.'<sup>16</sup>

At other times Methodists believed that they were preserved from supernatural evil in the world. James England, for instance, had a dream, while in Conception Bay, of an evil spirit which repeatedly put out his candle while he kept lighting it. Finally, "I began to plead the blood of the Redeemer, and making a desperate rush at the wicked Spirit, I shouted so loudly, 'the blood! the blood! the blood!' that I awoke myself, being quite in a perspiration. What does this mean? The Lord deliver me from the powers of darkness."<sup>17</sup>

Providences could also be times of testing to make one's faith stronger, in addition to warnings to the unconverted to turn from their unbelief. Quite common in the written record are instances of harm coming to good people, and the requisite withholding of judgement on God. It was most often women who suffered as a result of this kind of providence, for it generally had to do with the sea. News causing grief was abrupt and excruciatingly brutal. At the end of the season, Temperance Hudson of the Blackhead circuit "went down to the beach with a glad heart to meet her son returning from the fishery, and they landed him in his coffin."<sup>18</sup> In an August gale at Cape St. Mary's in 1824, eight fishing boats and their crews were lost, 25 men, leaving five widows and "a

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<sup>16</sup>Henry Lewis, "How Methodism Came to Foxes, A Story of Life in Newfoundland," *Canadian Methodist Magazine*, January to June, 1884, XIX, 268.

<sup>17</sup>"A Journal kept by James England, 1837-1841," February 21, 1840.

<sup>18</sup>Charles Lench, *The History of the Rise and Progress of Methodism on the Western Bay Circuit* ... (St. John's: Barnes & Co., [1912]), 21.

great many fatherless children.” The Methodists lost three members of the Burin society, and their missionary, William Ellis, concluded that this event, though “painful,” was meant by God for good. In particular, an evidence of such good was the faith of Mrs. Walsh after she had come through the refiner’s fire. She had lost her husband, and with seven children she had no material means of support. Yet when Ellis visited her, she met him at the door with the testimony, “O Mr. Ellis, my Husband is taken from me, but God is with me, he is mine, yes he is my dear friend, I feel he is, O I am full of love of comfort of salvation. God will be my children’s father and he is my beloved.” In this way Mrs. Walsh, through her Methodist faith was able to deal with bereavement and total insecurity. Ellis called her response “resignation” - misleading in that it did not mean passive acquiescence. It meant actively embracing God by faith, however devastating the circumstances. Thus Mrs. Walsh’s testimony was that she “feels” God was with her. She was “full of love of comfort of salvation.”

In this way Methodism was particularly suited for a victorious life in desperate times, for through its spirituality, the very worst that life could offer became a catalyst for a more vibrant faith instead of a doorway to despair. Ellis said he preached on the August gale disaster the following two Sundays “to improve the dispensation,” by exhorting the people to take it as warning from God to stop living in a wicked manner, in particular to cease working on the Sabbath, for instance, by “splitting and heading fish.”<sup>19</sup> Because

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<sup>19</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 19, 1824-1825, William Ellis, Burin & Placentia Bay, September, 1824.

unthinkable events, not uncommon in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Newfoundland, became catalysts for a more vital godliness or warnings to the unconverted, they did not become challenges to Methodism, but opportunities of faith for members to live above the desolation one would normally feel in the human condition at such times. This was possible because earthly tragedy was not measured from a fixed point on earth, but from a fixed point in heaven. The “good” in any circumstance was that which leads people to repent and be converted, to a vital faith giving a greater appreciation of heaven, or paradoxically to a keener personal sense of God’s love in the present. Mrs. Walsh, a woman who encountered tragedy in Burin in 1824, clearly felt the latter.

This did not always happen, for at times there was no glimpse of any “good” resulting from events so extremely painful. Thus three years later in November when they were travelling from Burin to St. Mary’s Bay to their winter residence, “Joseph Hollett ... his wife and their children, his brother and his child and two men ... all nine found a watery grave.” William Wilson at Burin had heard a rumour that they had not reached their destination, but did not received verification until another family returned in late April to report that “he was overtaken by a most violent gale of SE wind when he carried away his mast and was driven on shore near Cape St. Mary’s.” Wilson was confounded. His only response: “How mysterious are the ways of Providence.”<sup>20</sup> But even in that response, in articulating a concept of abstract “Providence,” there was an attempt to make it at least once removed from that of God’s personal love.

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., Reel 20, 1825-1828, William Wilson, Burin, Journal, May 2, 1828.

Not everyone fishing at Cape St. Mary's survived with faith. Sometimes the experience was too much for a man to bear. William Harding recounted such a time when a boat and crew returned to Burin in 1830:

In the latter end of August George Purse was taken ill in the boat to sea, and coming home were like to be lost, running down the land before they saw it, in a dirty night. The noise had such effect on him that when they arrived and he was brought to our house, he was for days out of his mind, the bustle and uproar of the crew in trying to get the Boat away from the cliffs kept sounding in his ears, and he ever would be engaged in trying to get her off. This threw him into a great fever, so that he continued to be so until he died.

Harding noted that both his wife and Purse's mother "were in trouble about him for a time," one of the "many heavy trials" he had during his four-year stay at Great Burin. As he recorded in his memoir, he was able to deal with them through his Methodist faith stance, despite the trauma:

But the Lord who is faithful brought me through all. Glory be to His Holy Name. I trust I can say I enjoyed the love of God in my soul. We were a happy family and tho' unworthy daily received many blessings.<sup>21</sup>

1846 was a year of "unparalleled distress." Both the fishery and the potato crop failed. Much attention has been given to the loss of property from the fire at St. John's, but far more devastating on the south coast was the loss of life in a September gale. Samuel Sprague reported from Burin that eleven large boats and their crews of four men each were lost, and that most of the crew members were Methodists. "The stroke" was "dreadfully severe" because aging parents then had no sons to provide for them, and "many widows and a great number of children" were left destitute. Sprague did not

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<sup>21</sup>"William Harding Diary, 1793-1877."

address the issue of Methodists suffering from “the dark dispensations” but instead concluded, “The country has been and still is a wicked one and providence seems to be calling aloud on it to consider its Ways.”<sup>22</sup> In this way he was able to incorporate into his own theology one of the worst years in Newfoundland’s history, yet he avoided comment on how ordinary Methodists in his circuit incorporated the tragedy into their faith.

Beardsall argues there were different approaches to distress between Anglicans and Methodists. The former adopted a “canonic” stance of resignation to the will of God, and the latter a “charismatic” stance of personal encounter with the love of God. This distinction needs to be qualified. It is correct that there was frequent testimony among Methodists of a personal sense of God’s nearness in sickness leading to death.<sup>23</sup> However, the record does not show that Methodists and Anglicans had “profoundly different” responses to severe tragedy, except for some instances of those immediately involved.<sup>24</sup> While Mrs. Walsh testified to a personal experience of the love of God in tragedy, the common response of Methodists in events of utter desolation to the faithful is

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<sup>22</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 28, 1846-1848, Samuel W. Sprague, Burin, December 14, 1846.

<sup>23</sup>For example, *Provincial Wesleyan*, October 9, 1856, Obituary of Samuel Pitman, Whale Cove, Burin Circuit; February 13, 1861, Obituary of Captain Stephen Percy, Brigus; October 26, 1864, William Wilson, “The Newfoundland Mission and its Missionaries, No. 31”; September 5, 1874, Obituary of William H. Lucas, Fogo; *Methodist Monthly Greeting*, June, 1894, 87, Obituary of Amos Goudie, North West Arm, Green Bay by J.R. ; June, 1901, 2, “Forty Years Ago, No. 13,” Rev. John Waterhouse, Manchester.

<sup>24</sup>Beardsall, “Methodist Religious Practices in Outport Newfoundland,” 33-35, 85-86, 255.

similar to that of the Anglicans, namely, that providence is “mysterious” or “inscrutable.”<sup>25</sup> The Methodist response was similar to that of the Anglican clergyman, William Frederick Meek who in 1856 reported the death of three fishermen from Harbour Buffett during a July storm at Cape St. Mary’s - Samuel Pafford, “one of the most active and devoted parishioners,” his brother and brother-in-law. Meek noted that the safety of the large numbers of fishermen there summer after summer was possible only if the “all watchful Providence of God may grant to them calm and moderate weather which is generally the character of the season selected for their enterprise.” Being unsheltered from the open sea and so near to the cliffs, they could even appear to be “braving Providence,” but it was necessary for them to fish there to earn a living. Yet year after year, “very seldom” did a fatality occur. It left one perplexed, however, that in this particular instance it was the devout Samuel Pafford, “distinguished by his consistent Church principles, his zealous advocacy of every good work, and his great usefulness in leading others by his good example,” who died, while large numbers of fishermen from the harbour escaped.<sup>26</sup>

This Anglican response is not significantly different from that of the Methodists in

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<sup>25</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, 1849, Thomas Angwin, Blackhead Circuit report; SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 10, 1852/54-1858/6, Box 10, File 17E Charles Churchill to Rev. Elijah Hoole, on the death of the Robert A. Chesley, August 15, 1857; Thomas Hickson on the death of his brother, James, *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1840, 186, 193; John S. Peach on the drowning of Dr. Hunter at Grand Bank, “John S. Peach Diaries, 1841-1855,” July 19, 1854.

<sup>26</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A196, W.F. Meek, Harbour Buffett, September 15, 1856.

a narrative related by Henry Lewis regarding a tragedy at Foxes. Three men from the class meeting capsized their punt and drowned while searching for seals. Lewis related the story with considerable pathos as Peter Hudson, the class leader, attempts to open the meeting in the kitchen with prayer after the first hymn:

Uncle Peter rose slowly and gave out the hymn which is well known -  
     ‘And we are yet alive,  
     And see each other’s face.’

Then he prayed, but it was not the same as usual. He ... seemed to falter that night. There was a tremour in his speech ... By the time of the opening prayer was over, most of that little assembly were bathed in tears.<sup>27</sup>

Neither is it different from the response of the Methodist missionary George Ellidge to the death of his two young daughters, Sarah and Harriet. He told his fellow missionary, “Thus has the Lord smitten with a heavy stroke.”<sup>28</sup>

Sealing was more intense than fishing in its potential for both profit and disaster. During difficult economic times on the northeast coast in 1862, for instance, the ice came near to shore carrying thousands of seals to the region around Twillingate. This was received as a great act of providence - “the seals came in most astonishingly” - so that the northeast coast in an instant “was placed in easy circumstances.” The bounty in the Twillingate area was even more remarkable because the previous summer fishery had been poor and the winter severe. Moreover, because of problems with ice everywhere else that year, “the sealing voyage was all but a total failure.” The two steamships

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<sup>27</sup>Henry Lewis, “How Methodism Came to Foxes, 522.

<sup>28</sup>“A Journal kept by James England, 1837-1841,” March 8, 1840.

introduced to the seal fishery that year, the *Polynia* and the *Camperdown*, became stuck in ice. Forty ships were lost, and many returned to port without taking “even one seal.”<sup>29</sup> It is difficult to exaggerate the good fortune for an area when seals came to shore. In the spring, with the shelves bare, the immediate blessing of sustenance would have echoed in people’s minds the manna from God in the desert in the Old Testament.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, this manna could be traded.

Men, especially young men, often went out on the shore ice in search of seals, with considerable risk. Not uncommon are the accounts of sealers being “blown off” as the ice left the shore with a change in the wind. In Bonavista, at the height of the revival in the spring of 1855, twenty “men and boys” saw the peril of death turn to sudden prosperity. They were stranded on ice drifting out to sea, but were able to walk three miles to a sealing vessel, which upon boarding, took them sealing and after landing in Harbour Grace, they realized £50 per man.<sup>31</sup> Women mourning for their fathers, husbands and sons went from grief to joy at the news of their return. Similarly, men looking for seals drifted to sea in Notre Dame Bay, and “fathers and mothers and wives and children

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<sup>29</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 10, 1852/54-1858/6, File 508, Halifax, Botterell to Rev. W.B. Boyce, July 7, 1862. For 1862 as a turning point in the seal fishery see Ryan, *The Ice Hunters*, 143-147.

<sup>30</sup>Other instances were 1819, 1843, and 1855. See SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 49, William Ellis, Port de Grave, July 25, 1819; Wilson, *Newfoundland and its Missionaries*, 285; Robert Dyer’s Diary, Greenspond, 1841-1859, February 17-20, 1855.

<sup>31</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A197, Ernest A. Sall to Secretary of SPG, Bonavista, June 30, 1855.

mourned for the dead.” After drifting about on an ice-pan for eleven days, they were returned to the place of their departure “by a favourable change of wind.”<sup>32</sup> Near-tragedies such as these brought sorrow to unimaginable depths, before being followed by heights of joy and elation. The effect is best expressed in Bond’s novel, *Skipper George Netman*. A revival broke out in “Caplin Bight” just after the community was brought to the highest pitch of anxiety before four young men were rescued who had “blown off” from the shore while searching for seals when the ice had come “taut on the land.”<sup>33</sup> While precariousness of existence was common in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was particularly acute for families who depended on sealing, procuring their livelihood afloat on broken and uncertain ice during a season when the weather was at its most unpredictable. Apprehension regarding the spring pursuit of seals would have given a keener edge to that awareness of the precariousness of life and contributed to the potential for revival during the winter months.

Missionaries identified sealing as a barrier to the spread of Methodism, but it was sealers who played an integral role in that expansion. One of the highlights of the year for both Anglicans and Methodists, was the Sunday “sealers’ sermon” or “ice hunters’ sermon” before departing for the ice.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, it was the sealers themselves who were

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., A228, Thomas Boone, Twillingate, December 31, 1859.

<sup>33</sup>Bond, *Skipper George Netman*, 57-101.

<sup>34</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 5, 1833/34-1837/38, File 206, Adam Nightingale, Island Cove, May 10, 1834; *Provincial Wesleyan*, April 15, 1858, Letter from W.E. Shenstone, Carbonear; PANL MG 598 SPG A195, William

the catalyst for this event, since they expected such a sermon specifically related to the sealing voyage.<sup>35</sup>

Sealers brought their Methodism with them. In 1859, for instance, sealers were the means of carrying a revival to Catalina. The men had experienced a revival during the winter at such places as Blackhead, Island Cove and Old Perlican just before they headed to the spring seal fishery. After departure, because of adverse winds they sought shelter in Catalina harbour, remaining there for several days. Thomas Harris, the Bonavista circuit missionary said specifically that it was the “exhortations and prayers, full of holy importunity” of the sealers who attended the services at Catalina which initiated the revival. This is all the more striking because the sealers succeeded where the missionary had failed. Harris said that formerly they had “sat beneath the sound of the Gospel unmoved.”<sup>36</sup>

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Netten, Quarterly Report, Catalina, March 31, 1856; A197, Benjamin Smith, Quarterly Report, Lady Day, Trinity, 1856; A222, William Netten, Quarterly Report, Catalina, March 31, 1858; A223, Benjamin Smith, Quarterly Report, March 31, 1855; A226, Benjamin Fleet, South Shore, Conception Bay, June 28, 1860.

<sup>35</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A195, William Netten, Quarterly Report, Catalina, March 31, 1856.

<sup>36</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, October, 1890, 150, Thomas Harris, “Reminiscences, No. 3.” George Rawlyk noted that in the Maritimes “Exhorting, it may be argued, was far more influential than Biblical preaching in actually bringing about and sustaining religious revivals in Nova Scotia during the post-Alline period. Exhortation - a complex mix of personal testimony, introspective prayer, both articulated and unspoken concern for the spiritual welfare of one’s friends and neighbours, tears, sobs, and often other forms of frenzied emotional behaviour - became a vitally significant ingredient in the colony’s evangelical religious culture.” George A. Rawlyk, *Ravished by the Spirit Religious Revivals, Baptists, and Henry Alline*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University

Instead of seeing the sealers gathering together on vessels and going to the ice as a natural means for evangelism and the spread of Methodism as they communicated with their peers, the missionaries saw sealing as detrimental to the Methodist cause. It was rare for them to speak of sealing itself as a cause for moral degeneration.<sup>37</sup> Philip Tocque had offered this opinion in his *Wandering Thoughts* saying that sealing had "a tendency to harden the heart and render it insensible to the finer feelings of human nature."<sup>38</sup> John Brewster quoted Tocque on the matter in an article in the *Wesleyan* which gave it wide readership.<sup>39</sup> The common complaint of the missionaries, rather, was that it necessitated the men to be absent from "the means of grace," that is, from church and their preaching and guidance.<sup>40</sup> Not only that but while they were absent they were in the continuous company of "godless characters" and their "filthy conversation."<sup>41</sup> And lastly, they were

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Press, 1984), 111.

<sup>37</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 18, 1822-1823, John Haigh, Brigus, June 10, 1823.

<sup>38</sup>Philip Tocque, *Wandering Thoughts* (London: Thomas Richardson, 1846), 196.

<sup>39</sup>*Wesleyan*, November 3, 1849, John Brewster, "Notices of Newfoundland, No. 9."

<sup>40</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 18, 1822-1823, John Haigh, Brigus, June 10, 1823; William Wilson, Journal, Grand Bank, November 18, 1823; Reel 19, 1824-1825, Ninian Barr, Journal, November 30, 1823; Reel 26, 1841-1842, John S. Peach, Old Perlican, March 9, 1842; Reel 27, 1842-1845, John S. Addy, Carbonear, January 19, 1844; SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence Box 2, 1819/20-1823/25, File 72, Richard Knight to the General Secretaries, Carbonear, November 28, 1821; Box 3, 1823/25-1828/29, File 144, William Ellis, Brigus, June 12, 1828.

<sup>41</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 27, 1842-1845, John S. Addy, Carbonear, January 19, 1844; Reel 31, 1854-1867, Adam Nightingale to Secretaries, Port de Grave, April 26,

under a threefold pressure to break the Sabbath by sealing on Sunday, they were in need of money, they were in the company of others who wanted to go sealing on Sunday, and were under the command of captains who wanted them, and often commanded them to do so.<sup>42</sup>

There were examples of those who resisted this pressure to conform. For instance, a member of the society in the Port de Grave circuit had the fortitude to be the only person in a crew of 44 to refuse to go sealing on the Sabbath.<sup>43</sup> Others passed up the money and adventure by refusing to take a berth to the ice in the first place.<sup>44</sup> There were instances too in which the captain determined not to hunt on Sunday and the crew agreed to this

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1856; Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, 1831, Richard Knight, Carbonear circuit report; 1846, Jabez Ingham, Old Perlican circuit report; SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 9, 1849/51-1852/54, File 408, William Faulkner, Harbour Grace, February 8, 1849; *Provincial Wesleyan*, July 5, 1866, "Revival Intelligence, Old Perlican, J.W."

<sup>42</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 18, 1822-1823, Richard Knight, Carbonear, July 30, 1822; SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 5, 1833/34-1837/38, File 206, John Smithies, Blackhead, July 2, 1834; *Wesleyan*, September 22, 1849, John Brewster, "Notices of Newfoundland, No. 4"; February 6, 1864, William Wilson, "The Newfoundland Mission and its Missionaries, No. 6."

<sup>43</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 31, 1854-1867, Adam Nightingale to Secretaries, Port de Grave, April 26, 1856. George Bond dramatized such a showdown on the ice for the edification of Methodists and propagation of the gospel in "Captain Sam's Two Easter Sundays." Queen Elizabeth II Library Archive, Memorial University, George Bond Archive, Coll-236, 3.01.004.

<sup>44</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, May 21, 1865, Joseph Todhunter, Greenspond.

condition before they left port.<sup>45</sup> When members did seal on Sunday, there was the question of whether to expel them from society. This was not always done, because of the numbers involved, or possibly from the tendency to see it as a unique category of breaking the Sabbath, exclusive to sealing and to some degree warranted by it. However, from time to time a more zealous missionary would arrive at a circuit and dismiss from membership the offenders who would not promise to refrain in future voyages.<sup>46</sup> Even though the Sabbath was often broken, missionaries depended on the spring collection from the seal fishery. They never discussed refusing the money on account of the Sabbath issue.<sup>47</sup>

It is difficult to determine to what degree the observation of Sunday rest was followed on the ice floes. In 1890 W.T.D. Dunn called for more citizens to “work up public feeling” to pressure legislators to make sealing on Sunday illegal. He noted that in

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<sup>45</sup>*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1848, Vol. II, 934, Letter of John Brewster, St. John's, April 28, 1848. *Methodist Monthly Greeting*, April, 1901, 10, Charles Lench, “The Makers of Newfoundland Methodism, No. 15.”

<sup>46</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 5, 1833/34-1837/38, File 206, John Smithies, Blackhead, July 2, 1834; File 208, John Smithies, Burin, December 7, 1834.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, Box 2, 1819/20-1823/25, File 72, John Pickavant to Committee, Brigus, August 23, 1821; Box 7, 1841/42-1846/48 File 310, George Ellidge, St. John's, May 28, 184; PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 18, 1822-1823, John Walsh, St. John's, January 4, 1823; William Wilson, Journal, 1827; Reel 28, 1846-1848, George Ellidge, Port de Grave, December 29, 1847; Reel 32, 1858-1864, Newfoundland District Meeting, St. John's, May 30, 1861; Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, 1823, Local offerings for ministry, Richard Knight, July 4, 1823; *Provincial Wesleyan*, May 4, 1864 “Newfoundland Correspondence,” Paul Prestwood, St. John's.

his mission, Wesleyville, there were eight steamers with 1,200 men who went sealing and that 90 percent of the Methodist males eighteen years and over participated, and yet the Sabbath was "almost ignored." The "captains and crews" would have liked to observe the Sabbath on the ice but, without a law, if they did, others would take their seals. Furthermore, if a captain refused to hunt seals on the Sabbath, "the owner" would replace him. When all received equal pay it meant that Sabbath-keepers received money as a result of Sabbath-breaking. Another problem was that sealing took place in waters "beyond Newfoundland waters and Newfoundland laws."<sup>48</sup> The large proportion of Methodists participating in the hunt made the issue even more pronounced.<sup>49</sup>

The Church of England clergy were also exercised about sealing on the Sabbath. Johnstone Vicars in 1849 celebrated the fact that his parishioners did not sail from Brigus on Sunday even though they had been detained by the ice during the week.<sup>50</sup> Benjamin Smith sympathized with sealers being tempted to hunt on Sunday "considering that the prey is before their very eyes, almost in their hands, and that the value of each pelt of the young seal is from ten to fourteen shillings currency." It was his view in 1855 that most captains would not order the men over the side on Sunday, but few captains would

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<sup>48</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, March, 1890, 36, W.T.D. Dunn, "Seal Hunting on the Sabbath." Johnson, *History of Methodism in Eastern British America*, 311.

<sup>49</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, June, 1892, 166, Levi Perry, "A Burning Question," *Seldom-Come-By*, April 12, 1892.

<sup>50</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A194, Oswald J. Howell to Ernest Hawkins, Near Leicester, May 16, 1849, extracts of letter to Howell from Johnstone Vicars, Brigus.

attempt to hinder them from doing so.<sup>51</sup>

Although women did not go to the ice, they did have to decide whether they would work on Sunday making fish. Working on the fish-flakes was a labour common for women, and in many cases exclusively so. Yet Elizabeth Lock of Lower Island Cove, who was in charge of a female shore crew, told her husband to his disgust, "I will never again spread fish on the holy Sabbath." Lock's stand had all the makings of another Methodist public confrontation. When the first fine Sunday for drying fish came, she refused, and some called her a fool for risking the fishing voyage at its last stage, and for calling into question her family's welfare. However her "voyage" was providentially preserved, while those who spread their fish on Sunday lost theirs due to the fish being sunburnt. The result was not lost. As Wilson commented on Mrs. Lock's stand, "This was a great triumph, and the effect was soon seen in Island Cove and along the North Shore."<sup>52</sup>

Because of their view of the immediacy of God, Methodists laid great store in "special providences." Whether it was William Harding being told of his future wife, the fish coming into Hant's Harbour in answer to Mary Anne Pelley's prayer, or the casks of flour floating on the water for James England, these were seen as special interventions of God demonstrating his loving care. These happened in a world-view which already allowed for instances of the supernatural without specifically theological meaning, for

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., A223, Benjamin Smith, Quarterly Report, Trinity, March 31, 1855.

<sup>52</sup>Wilson, *Newfoundland and its Missionaries*, 220-221.

instance, the uncovering of bones in Cape La Hune Bay. Such a perspective was not unique to Newfoundland for the *Methodist Magazine* carried similar examples from the world over.

It would appear that for Methodists, in the intimate circle of relatives and friends who were lost at sea, tragedies were a catalyst to a keener faith. Yet, the record does not show a difference in the response to tragedy between Methodists and Anglicans. The reply of both is "How mysterious are the ways of Providence." Drowning, or the threat of it, was of such frequency, that the possibility of death was as real as the possibility of life. This sense of the precariousness of life, while not unique to Newfoundland, did give a vibrancy to Methodist faith. One cannot claim, however, that the resultant insecurity was the reason for women having such a large presence in Newfoundland Methodism, since women composed a majority of the movement in both Britain and America.<sup>53</sup> If there is a direct relationship between insecurity or anomie and Methodist spirituality, it is possible that women in 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century Newfoundland felt this insecurity more keenly, and this may have contributed to their participation in Methodism. Due to the intensive production in season of the cod and sealing fisheries, both of short duration, the Methodist ardour for Sabbath-keeping was severely tested and resulted in contests like that of Elizabeth Lock, in which women trusted to providence for their very survival. Methodist men, however, did not hold out for an equal Sabbath-keeping compliance in the seal fishery.

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<sup>53</sup>Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, 137.

## 5.2

## Merchants and the Credit System

Newfoundland Methodists had to deal with peculiar circumstances not only in acquiring their produce, but also in selling it. When John Brewster visited Conception Bay in 1846 - he had been in Newfoundland for just over a month - he was startled to find at Carbonear from fifteen leaders of class meetings that "not a single member paid a penny a week," as stipulated by Wesley. In St. John's for years there had been regular weekly and other collections. Since at least 1821, in addition to renting a pew, the Methodists in St. John's had been expected to "contribute at five Public Collections, give 6d Week Class money, besides Quarterly and monthly at the Sacraments." In addition, they gave to a public collection and to women who collected from house to house for the Auxiliary Wesleyan Missionary Society.<sup>54</sup> Arriving in the outports, Brewster concluded that Methodism was poorly financed because "it has never been allowed to work on its own principles."<sup>55</sup> Being a newcomer, he did not realize that the absence of cash was due not to parsimony, but to a largely non-monetary economy. The "absence of a circulating medium" for the offering at the weekly class meeting was an immediate and visible challenge posed by the credit system to one of the "principles" of Methodism - how it

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<sup>54</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS, Reel 18, 1822-1823, John Walsh, St. John's, January 4, 1823; Reel 25, 1838-1840, William Faulkner to WMMS, St. John's, July 24, 1838.

<sup>55</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 8, 1846/48-1849/51, File 378, John Brewster to "Madam," St. John's, January 7, 1846.

raised its finances.<sup>56</sup> The Missions Committee in 1823 had pressed “the necessity of enforcing wherever practicable” that members donate offerings at meetings.<sup>57</sup> However, Richard Knight, writing from Carbonear, said that because of the lack of cash in circulation, except in St. John’s, there were only two occasions to collect money, a lesser amount during the spring seal fishery, and a larger amount during the settling of the cod-fishery accounts in the fall. The spring collection was smaller but it was easier to collect, being in cash. The fall collection was problematic, except from “independent planters” who generally “will pay with pleasure.” The “dependent planters” gave subscriptions to the missionary or his helpers as they visited from house to house, but the problem arose when the list of subscriptions was brought to the office of the merchant. Unless the fishermen had a surplus in his account, the merchant would “advance not one shilling,” and because the merchant determined both the buying price for the fisherman’s fish and the selling price for supplies, it was likely that he had a surplus on his account, and not the fisherman.

Because of “the law of current supply,” all fish had to go to the supplying merchant, and fishermen were “watched with a vigilant eye” to make sure this was done. Not “even the smallest part of the voyage” could legally go to anyone but the supplying

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., Box 7, 1841/42-1846/48, File 310, George Ellidge, St. John’s, May 28, 1841.

<sup>57</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 33, “Minutes of the Missions Committee,” London, July 1814-July 1851,” Vol 1-6 (extracts), September 24, 1823.

merchant.<sup>58</sup> However, there were other suppliers, and despite the credit framework, when in need of food and supplies, and cut off by a merchant because of debt, fishermen could get credit and sell elsewhere.<sup>59</sup> This was “acted over and over again” in the fishery.

James Hennigar, the Methodist missionary at Burin did not see such initiative on the part of the fishermen caught in an oppressive system in a positive light. Rather he charged them with “dishonesty” and found that the “hard words and many other evils” arising from competing interests operated “much against the inculcation of morals and religion.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., Reel 18, 1822-1823, Richard Knight, Journal, December 20, 1823; 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, 1823, Local offerings for ministry, Richard Knight, July 4, 1823. For “the law of current supply” see Shannon Ryan, *Fish Out of Water: The Newfoundland Saltfish Trade 1814-1914* (St. John's: Breakwater, 1986), 59-61; Sean Cadigan, *Hope and Deception in Conception Bay: Merchant-Settler Relations in Newfoundland, 1785-1855* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 90-99.

<sup>59</sup>David Bradley, “Smugglers, Schemers, Scoundrels and Sleeveens.” See also Robert C.H. Sweeny, “Accounting for Change: Understanding Merchant Credit Strategies in Outport Newfoundland,” in James E. Candow and Carol Corbin, eds. *How Deep is the Ocean?: Historical Essays on Canada's Atlantic Fishery* (Sydney, N.S.: University College of Cape Breton Press, 1977), 121-137. For the credit system as oppressive to fishermen, see Rosemary Ommer's work on the Gaspé, Rosemary Ommer, *From Outpost to Outport: a Structural Analysis of the Jersey-Gaspé Cod Fishery, 1767-1886* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991). For an overview of issues relating to the credit system in Newfoundland history, see James K. Hiller, “The Newfoundland Credit System: An Interpretation,” in Rosemary Ommer, ed., *Merchant Credit and Labour Strategies in Historical Perspective* (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1990), 86-101. See also Stuart Pierson's review of this book, “Merchant Credit: Parasites or Animators,” in Stan Dragland, ed., *Hard-Headed and Big-Hearted Writing Newfoundland: Stuart Pierson*, 31-49.

<sup>60</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 24, 1835-1837, James Hennigar, Burin, December 1835.

Knight thought that the missionary had no option but to collect fish directly from the fisherman, although this could cause strained relations with the supplying merchant. Such action was a cause of endless complaint in the missionary letters, however, not because of friction with the merchant, but because physically collecting salt fish, a product generally regarded as malodorous rather than aromatic, was seen offensive to many missionaries because it involved manual labour. Thus Thomas Angwin wrote, "The people in England know nothing of the degradation to which your Missionaries submit in this land to raise the little they obtain. We are forced to go from stage to stage, and from Fish flake to Fish flake and with our own hands to collect the Fish."<sup>61</sup> The missionaries were aware of their status in society, and wanted to be above the "the rank of a common fisherman."<sup>62</sup> William Ellis wanted to move to the mainland hoping that his children would obtain "respectable situations" and rise above the "mean situations" they would likely find in Newfoundland.<sup>63</sup> The Methodist hierarchy encouraged the missionaries to "maintain a suitable social position," which most were eager to do.<sup>64</sup>

George Ellidge had a clearer view of reality. When asked by a gentleman from St.

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<sup>61</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS, Reel 26, 1841-1842, Thomas Angwin, Harbour Grave, June 23, 1841. So also SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 4, 1828/29-1833/34, File 181, John Pickavant, St. John's, January 20, 1832.

<sup>62</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A216, Letter of W. Kepple White re Oderin Church [1851].

<sup>63</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS, Reel 23, 1832-1835, William Ellis, Bonavista, August 12, 1834.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., Reel 31, 1854-1867, Thomas Smith, Port de Grave, April 24, 1854.

John's, if he "would be ashamed to be found among the Fish Flakes," he replied that "fish is the currency of Newfoundland" and that if such a person "were to see me about the Flakes I should not be ashamed of him for I should be sure he was come to look for Fish too." Elsewhere he stated that when it came to Methodist missionaries and their collections, "I answer that the Doctor, the Merchant, the Church Minister, the Romish Priest all go about from one poor fisherman to another."<sup>65</sup> They maintained their status, but they all stood on the shoulders of the fisherman. When there was no possibility of collecting fish or cash, the missionary would as a last resort go for whatever "the circumstances of the people can bestow - such as potatoes, cabbage, hoops, hay, wood, &c, or indeed any thing which he can dispose of."<sup>66</sup>

Secondly, collecting fish was difficult for the missionary because of a conflict of conscience. He was pressured by "the gentleman in London" to raise a portion of his salary, yet he felt as he stood on the fish flake that his purpose for being there placed him in a moral dilemma:

If I were to look at your children without shoes &c, I might say it were more proper that I should give you something than that I should receive anything from you. And looking at the next house with their rind instead of glass, and their poverty, rags coming through the window, I might say the same.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., Reel 28, 1846-1848, George Ellidge, Port de Grave, December 29, 1847; Reel 27, 1842-1845, George Ellidge, Bonavista, December 19, 1842.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, Letter of John Pickavant, Chairman to WMMS Secretaries, June 4, 1833.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., Reel 28, 1846-1848, George Ellidge, Port de Grave, December 29, 1847.

This inner struggle was even more acute for the missionary as a follower of Jesus Christ, a servant of the poor. Ellidge noted, "if there be anything like partiality in the Bible, it is partiality towards the poor man." He may have been thinking of a verse such as, "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, by ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit."<sup>68</sup> The poor themselves saw the contradiction, but instead of upbraiding the missionary, evaded his request by various replies, "the husband is not home, the fish is not ready, or it has not been shared and they cannot let any go till it has. The most time perhaps, you are told you came too late."<sup>69</sup>

It was rare for a Methodist missionary to criticize the credit system. This may have been partly due to the missionaries' tendency to gravitate to the house of the merchant or that of his agent for accommodation and society, rather than to that of the fisherman. Whether it was with the Lawlors at Oderin, the Nicolles at Jersey Harbour, or the Newmans at Harbour Breton and Gaultois, the missionary always attempted a snug relationship with the merchant.<sup>70</sup> They sailed across the Atlantic, often without charge, in their ships, and along the coast in their boats. They ate in the their dining rooms and

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<sup>68</sup>James 2: 15-16, *King James Bible* (London: George E. Eyre and William Spottiswoode, 1863).

<sup>69</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 28, 1846-1848, George Ellidge, Port de Grave, December 29, 1847.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, Reel 19, 1824-1825, William Ellis, Burin & Placentia Bay, September, 1824.

relaxed or led services in their parlours.<sup>71</sup> John Lewis stayed free of charge for months with Spurriers' agent at Burin, and even dined with the merchants on one occasion when they met to fix the price of fish.<sup>72</sup> It would have been difficult for a missionary to openly criticize the system. Lewis did write, however, that the people were under "the lash of the merchants" and when it came to giving to the missionary, "cannot do anything without their leave."<sup>73</sup>

During the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many English merchants went bankrupt, while others found it more profitable to do their business elsewhere. St. John's became the metropolis and many outport businesses failed. In 1842 George Ellidge looked back on the trade for the past twenty years and observed:

During that period a great proportion of the merchants or men in business in different parts of the Island have bended and broken like rotten sticks and now the merchants in the Out Harbours are exceedingly few and commonly the distance is very far between. In several places stores unoccupied are going to decay and those premises well suited to an Out Harbour Business are not occupied by men of business except on a very limited scale.... It may be said that the Business of Newfoundland has been transferred from the Out Ports to St. John's the Capital

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<sup>71</sup>For example, "Journal of John Lewis," 1.05-1.08, July 30, August 1, 4, 10, October 28, November 8, 1817; January 10, March 8, July 15, August 1-4, 1818; September 20, 1819; "William Marshall, Diary, 1839-1842," June 22, July 17, 19, 24, 26, 28, September 15, October 19, 21, November 12, December 19, 25, 1839. SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 3, 1823/25-1828/29, File 101, William Ellis to Jabez Bunting, Burin, August 4, 1823.

<sup>72</sup>John Rylands Library, PLP 69.31.2, John Lewis, Burin to George Cubit, Methodist Chapel, St. John's, April 13, 1818; "Journal of John Lewis," 1.05, September 24, 1817.

<sup>73</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence Box 2, 1819/20-1823/25, File 51, John Lewis to Joseph Taylor, Burin, December 17, 1819.

and that a good business may be done there.<sup>74</sup>

However, before that time one does not have to look further than the mansions of Poole to see how profitable the cod fishery was for British merchants.<sup>75</sup> George Cubit noted how splendid profits from the fishery accrued to Britain in his "Observations on the island of Newfoundland," a detailed account of which he wrote for the committee in London. Practically "all the conveniences and necessities of life," such as food, clothing, bricks and nails were imported from England and "money, or the value of money, is sent to England." As for exports of fish and oil, vessels which bring it to Spain, Portugal, or the West Indies "return to England with Hard Cash, or articles for the English market. Now as the fish costs nothing, but the expense of catching and curing, as the persons employed are British subjects who spend their money on articles of English production, it follows that the whole value of fish annually caught is a clear gain to English trade."<sup>76</sup> Meanwhile the missionaries and others wrote on and on about poor, barren Newfoundland while English vessels sailed home laden with riches from the trade.

Yet, it was not to British merchants but to Newfoundland fishermen that missionaries looked for funds to finance their venture. Both the Methodist and Church of

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<sup>74</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 28, 1846-1848, George Ellidge, Port de Grave, December 27, 1847.

<sup>75</sup>Derek Beamish, John Hillier and H. F. V. Johnstone, *Mansions and Merchants of Poole and Dorset* (Poole: Poole Historic Trust, 1976).

<sup>76</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 47, [George Cubit], "Observations on the island of Newfoundland," March 1819; File 25, George Cubit to George Marsden, St. John's, May 21, 1818.

England hierarchies in London pressured their missionaries to lean on fishermen and families to fund their colonial efforts. It was Church of England clergy, however, who saw the ineffectiveness of this strategy, and urged that British merchants involved in the Newfoundland trade pay more.<sup>77</sup> The absence of cash no doubt contributed to Newfoundland Methodists not becoming self-sufficient in providing for missionaries. But they were not exceptional in this lack for it was a common problem in the expanding Methodist mission of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>78</sup> In its chapel phase, however, it was the more affluent donors, and not the general membership, who contributed the lion's share of the mounting costs. That phase was most evident in St. John's with its rise as the economic centre of the colony.

Merchant credit was a circumstance peculiar to Newfoundland Methodists. The scarcity of money in the economy due to the credit system meant that a penny could not

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<sup>77</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A194, Bishop Spencer to Campbell, St. John's, December 30, 1840; [Bishop Edward Feild], *Diocese of Newfoundland. A Journal of the Bishop's Visitation of the Western and Southern Coast, August and September, 1845, with an Account of the Anniversary Meeting of the Church Society held October 15, 1845, Church in the Colonies, No. X* (London: Society for Propagation of the Gospel, 1846), 21; *The British Magazine*, August 1, 1845, 133-136; *Gospel Missionary*, XIV, 160, April 1864 (London: Bell and Daldy), 54-57, Letter of Rev. W.W. Le Gallais; *Colonial Church Chronicle and Missionary Journal*, Vol. XXI 1866, December 1866 (London: Rivingtons, 1867), 470-471, "Diocesan Endowment Fund For Newfoundland;" *Mission Field*, Vol. 16, 1871, July 1, 1871, 212-213, Bishop Feild to the SPCK; Vol. 22, 1877, August 1, 1877, 366-367, "Address from the Synod of the Church of England in Newfoundland to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts," by Thomas M. Wood, Ecclesiastical Commissioner, Chairman; Joseph F. Phelps, Clerical Secretary to the Synod; G.T. Rendell, Lay Secretary to the Synod." But also the Methodists, Wilson, *Newfoundland and its Missionaries*, 358.

<sup>78</sup>Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, "Money and Power," 109-130.

be paid during the weekly class meeting. It also meant that the missionary had to collect fish to pay for his services, a circumstance that he did not prefer since he did not want to be directly associated with salt fish. Despite the resultant difficulty in raising finances locally for ministry, a circumstance not unique to Newfoundland, the missionary rarely criticized the system that favoured the merchant and was detrimental to his parishioners. He tended to gravitate toward the merchant's table and sailed in his ships.

### 5.3 Wesleyan Methodism and the Church of England

Newfoundland Methodism was not unique in any of its essential characteristics, but it did have other accidental differences. As Charles Lench noted, these differences related to how Methodism appropriated the ways of the Church of England in paying clergy salaries, in building churches, and in some of its ecclesiastical forms. With a scarcity of cash because of the credit system, it was not feasible to follow Wesley's plan of a penny a week and a shilling a quarter. For Lench, the system of collecting in the fall carried with it "a tincture of the ecclesiastical tithe system" of the Church of England. Churches, too, were financed by what Lench called "individual proprietorship," or pew rents, because of the lack of wealthy members. With fishermen contributing labour and materials, this was "the most workable for small and poor communities."

Lench also found that Newfoundland Methodism in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century approximated the Church of England in some of its ecclesiastical nomenclature, which made it different from England. He traced this tendency to Laurence Coughlan's tenure

as an Anglican clergyman, and to the fact that most Methodist congregations were composed of former Church of England immigrants or their descendants. Thus chapels were generally called churches, and preachers were called parsons. Methodism also adhered to a degree of formality. The preacher wore "gowns and bands" as distinctive attire, and in many churches there were two pulpits, one for the missionary and one for the lay reader. Methodists were also more formal in continuing to use Wesley's *Abridgement* of the liturgy of the Church of England, long after it had been abandoned elsewhere.<sup>79</sup> Thus in Newfoundland there was an "Anglicanized Methodism," and, one could argue, a Methodism more like that of John Wesley than Wesleyan Methodism in England.<sup>80</sup> According to Lench, therefore, Coughlan's long-term effect on Methodism was not to cause it to be more emotional than elsewhere, but to be more formal than in England.

There is an inconsistency in Lench's argument that the use of "gowns and bands" was due to the Anglican ancestry of the congregations. His specific reason for its first use with John Pickavant, the chairman, in 1837, is more credible, namely, to place "the Methodist preacher an equal standing with the clergymen of other denominations." Thus it was due to aspiration for professionalization by the Methodist preacher himself, and possibly a desire for such by the congregation. George Ellidge wrote against the practice

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<sup>79</sup>As early as 1784, the American Methodist Episcopalals had "jettisoned the liturgical and formal side of the Wesleyan tradition," French, *Parsons and Politics*, 21. In Newfoundland even at the turn of the century, the preacher James Lumsden was called a parson. Lumsden, *The Skipper Parson*, 53.

<sup>80</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, April, 1900, 12; October, 1900, 2, "The Makers of Newfoundland Methodism," Lench, *The Story of Methodism in Bonavista*, 45.

in 1844 saying that wearing gowns and bands was unknown upon his arrival in 1824, and that it began with a novice missionary and “sometime after that the chairman and then another and another, till now the greater part wear them.” He did not like the change, for in his view there was no “good or imperative reason” to take up the practice. Still, there were few in the congregation at Harbour Grace against wearing a gown: “By some it is regarded as a matter of indifference, by several as desirable, by one person as undesirable.”<sup>81</sup> The practice was still in vogue in St. John’s when John Waterhouse’s arrived in 1859.<sup>82</sup> He said he also wore a gown at Blackhead, not preferring it, but as “part of my cross.” He called it a “sacerdotal figment of clerical millinery,” approximating too closely the priestly form of contemporary Tractarianism.<sup>83</sup> Lench said that wearing a gown during the service gradually declined, and suggested the practice was congregation-driven, with William Kendall at Burin in 1881 being the last Methodist preacher “who refused to wear it.”<sup>84</sup> Thus the distinctiveness of Newfoundland Methodism consisted merely in the way funds were collected and churches in

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<sup>81</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 7, 1841/42-1846/48, File 343, George Ellidge, Harbour Grace, April 8, 1844; PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 19, 1824-1825, Arrival of George Ellidge and Simeon Noall, September 23, 1824.

<sup>82</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, January, 1900, 10, “Forty Years Ago, No. 2,” Rev. John Waterhouse, Manchester, November 15, 1899.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, April, 1900, 10, “Forty Years Ago, No. 3,” Concluded, Rev. John Waterhouse, Manchester, December, 1899.

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*, October, 1900, 2, “The Makers of Newfoundland Methodism,” Charles Lench; Johnson, *History of Methodism in Eastern British America*, 333.

Newfoundland due to the credit system, and some matters related to Church of England form.

#### 5.4 Newfoundland Methodism and John Wesley

The loudest proponent that Newfoundland Methodism was unique was Arthur Kewley who said it was “unrelated, except in name, to John Wesley.”<sup>85</sup> However, the record shows that writings of Wesley, and other Methodist publications, were widespread in Newfoundland, so it is reasonable to conclude that Wesleyan ideas were extensive. William Wilson, writing in 1864, stated that during his ministry (1820-1832), “Among our own people where books were found, we were sure to see Wesley’s *Appeal*, Wesley’s *Journals*, or his *Sermons*; sometimes the whole of his *Works*.”<sup>86</sup> Moreover, the Wesleyan Methodist missionaries who came to Newfoundland, in addition to the Bible, continually used Wesley’s written works in their ministry. George Cubit, the chairman at St. John’s, for example, sent John Lewis, the first missionary in Placentia Bay, “about a dozen” copies of Wesley’s *Sermons* to distribute to those who could read. Wesley’s *Sermons on Several Occasions* was possibly second only to his *A Collection of Hymns for the use of the people called Methodists* for continuing his influence on the movement. The *Sermons*

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<sup>85</sup>Kewley, “The First Fifty Years of Methodism in Newfoundland 1765-1815,” 7.

<sup>86</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, July 27, 1864, William Wilson, “The Newfoundland Mission and its Missionaries No. 27.”

covered such themes as sin, the new birth, temptation and Christian perfection.<sup>87</sup> Wesley concentrated also on conduct covering such topics as use of money, dress, and duties of husbands and wives. Lewis did not have the *Works* but did have “a few of his controversial pamphlets.” He also had the *Magazines* and *Notices*.<sup>88</sup> While travelling from St. John’s to Burin in an open boat, he spent a calm Sunday, June 15, 1817, “reading the *Magazines* to the crew.”<sup>89</sup>

The *Arminian Magazine*, renamed *Methodist Magazine* in 1798 and *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* in 1822, contained reports from Districts, news, sermons and other material as deemed appropriate by the Wesleyan Methodist Conference in London. The *Missionary Notices* were made up of extracts of letters from missionaries. Thus John Lewis had for distribution and for his personal use the standard publications of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference. It is difficult to overestimate the volume of evangelical publications in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the Methodist press was a major contributor. James Hickson at Bonavista ordered “about 40 or 50 of the *Rules of the Society*” and “6 of this

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<sup>87</sup>Wesley, *A Collection of Hymns for the use of the people called Methodists; Sermons on Several Occasions* (Bristol: J. Grabham and W. Pine, 1760). See Wesley’s sermons, “Christian Perfection” and “On Perfection,” and “A Plain Account of Christian Perfection, as Believed and Taught by the Reverend Mr. John Wesley, from the year 1725, to the year 1777,” in John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3<sup>rd</sup>. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), Vol. VI, 1-19, 411-424; Vol. XI, 366-446.

<sup>88</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 24, John Lewis, Burin, December 2, 1817.

<sup>89</sup>*Methodist Magazine*, 1817, Vol. 2, 872, John Lewis to George Marsden, Burin, Placentia Bay, July 7, 1817.

year's *Magazines*."<sup>90</sup> Many Newfoundland communities were amply supplied. At Harbour Grace for example, William Faulkner reported in 1849, "fifty additional volumes of our last Wesleyan Publications have just been added to the congregational library."<sup>91</sup> John Pickavant advised the young men, "Let your leisure hours be improved by reading the Bible and other religious books, particularly our own *Magazine* and Mr. Wesley's *Works*, more especially his Sermons and "Appeals to men of Reason and Religion."<sup>92</sup> William Harding at Collins Cove, Burin, had long been doing just that, and he particularly liked the biographies in the *Magazine*, desiring to emulate the people whose "testimonials and memorials of faith" he read there.<sup>93</sup> Through these Methodist publications people were informed about what the Methodist hierarchy preferred, and what was happening to Methodist missionaries throughout the world. The material came in sermons, excerpts from journals, reports of providence, revivals, obituaries, and persecutions.

Missionaries read these publications during class meetings and prayer meetings. While the electrifying revival of 1830 with its "ecstasy of joy" was happening in

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<sup>90</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 19, James Hickson to James Buckley, Bonavista, December 16, 1815.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., Box 9, 1849/51-1852/54, File 408, William Faulkner, Harbour Grace, February 8, 1849.

<sup>92</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, John Pickavant, Chairman, Address of the Annual District Meeting to the Methodist Societies in Newfoundland, Brigus, May 27, 1842.

<sup>93</sup>*Wesleyan*, April 21, 1877, Obituary of William Harding of Collin's Cove, Burin Circuit, by J.P.

Blackhead for instance, Richard Knight read at a prayer meeting "Mr. Wesley's account of the remarkable work of God among the children of Kingswood in the year 1770."<sup>94</sup>

Those attending could conclude that they were not participating in a unique phenomenon, but were part of an outpouring of the Spirit that began with the founder in Britain.

Thomas Bugden, reading in his home at Haystack, Placentia Bay, could feel likewise.<sup>95</sup>

Newfoundland Methodists could also read about themselves. William Wilson went in a skiff from Old Perlican to Hant's Harbour, and brought with him an account of their spirituality in *Missionary Notices*, so the people of Hant's Harbour could feel that the work of God among them was being presented around the world for their edification and comfort. The vernacular Methodism of Hant's Harbour was "almost proverbial," for with only an occasional visit from the missionary of Lower Island Cove and Old Perlican, the people maintained their spirituality with "unity, affection and oneness" and to such a degree that nearly every adult in the harbour was a member of society and converted.<sup>96</sup> At St. John's, John Walsh reported that nearly every week an item such as a memoir was read from the *Methodist Magazine*, and a missionary item the first Monday of each month, thus enabling them to "unite with our friends in other parts of the world." James

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<sup>94</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 4, 1828/29-1833/34, File 176, Richard Knight, Blackhead, June 25, 1830.

<sup>95</sup>"A Journal kept by James England, 1837-1841," October 16, 1841.

<sup>96</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence Box 2, 1819/20-1823/25, File 71, William Wilson to Committee, Island Cove, August 13, 1821. See *Missionary Notices*, December, 1820, 380-381, "Extract from Mr. James Hickson's Journal, Island Cove, July 15, 1820," or, *Methodist Magazine*, 1820, "Missionary Intelligence," 953-954.

Hickson did the same at Bonavista.<sup>97</sup> In this way people heard how exacting missions could be elsewhere, for example, the West Indies, where several missionaries died.<sup>98</sup> Thus while the circumstances of life in Newfoundland could be difficult, this was not a unique phenomenon. John Brewster, in the bewildering times of the late 1840s, after reading the newspapers of the day, concluded “we are not alone the sons of misfortune. The long lamentable accounts of Colonial distress throughout the kingdom of Great Britain tell me that other Colonies have sounded the depths of commercial distress. When I have read of rebellion in Ceylon, of bankruptcy in West India, of war in South Africa and India, I have thought, ‘What must our Committee feel on these occasions!’”<sup>99</sup>

Members also read the *Magazine* and *Notices* in their homes and took to heart what they read and heard. Thomas Budgen at Haystack, Placentia Bay, “prized very highly” a few copies of *Missionary Notices* and was particularly struck with “one containing intelligence from the South Seas about King George preaching the Gospel. He said, ‘it gladdens my heart when I read this, and see what the Lord has done.’”<sup>100</sup> Far from feeling isolated, Thomas Bugden felt connected, not through trade in fish, but through his

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<sup>97</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, 1823, John Walsh, St. John’s circuit report; Reel 18, 1822-1823, James Hickson, Bonavista, December 22, 1823.

<sup>98</sup>*Ibid.*, Reel 20, 1825-1828, Charles Bates, Bonavista, October 17, 1826; Simeon Noall, Grand Bank, May 11, 1827.

<sup>99</sup>*Ibid.*, Reel 29, 1849-1852, John Brewster, Burin, April 13, 1849.

<sup>100</sup>“A Journal kept by James England, 1837-1841,” October 16, 1841. SOAS, *Missionary Notices*, Vol. VIII, March, 1837, 425-439.

religion. He reckoned that at Haystack he was an integral part of a great drama that God was carrying out through Methodism, which encompassed the world - even kings in the South Seas were converted by Wesleyan missionaries and became preachers themselves, as he had done. Through tracts and Methodist missionary literature, Bugden was able to connect to the larger world of the empire. Some placed portraits of preachers, icons of Methodism, on the walls of their homes. Having read their letters and sermons and extracts from their journals, these pictures were marked reminders to fishermen, their families and neighbours, that they were in the vanguard of a Christian movement which was second to none, and which was worldwide in its proportions. When John Brewster, while sitting in a home in Pouch Cove, talking with the "good man who had been a Wesleyan for many years," saw a portrait of Dr. Newton "with the help of a little glue stuck on the walls of that poor fisherman's hut," he was reminded of hearing that very man preach and kindling his own call to be a missionary.<sup>101</sup>

Wesley's ubiquitous *Collection of Hymns for the use of the people called Methodists* was a mainstay of Newfoundland Methodism whether in chapels, winter tilts, sealing vessels, or on the Labrador. With the great revival of 1830 in Blackhead, Richard Knight had to immediately order 54 copies to meet the demand.<sup>102</sup> William Wilson noted

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<sup>101</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 8, 1846/48-1849/51, File 378, John Brewster, St. John's, May 6, 1846. The portrait of Robert Newton had appeared in *Methodist Magazine*, January, 1833, facing -1.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., Box 4, 1828/29-1833/34, File 175, Richard Knight, Blackhead, June 25, 1830. Extracts printed in *Methodist Magazine* 1831, 62-63.

that the first Methodist missionaries were “all good singers” and brought the well-known reputation of Methodist singing and music to Newfoundland, so that singing, often accompanied by a violin or two, and sometimes a bass viol, became part of Methodist culture.<sup>103</sup> On occasion it was during the singing in services that conviction and conversions took place.<sup>104</sup> It would be difficult to exaggerate the role of hymns in vernacular Methodism in Newfoundland. People memorized the lyrics and tunes and sang them in their homes and outdoors during the daily round, and in this way incarnated Methodism into popular culture. Philip Tocque remembered, for instance, that during the 1830 Carbonear revival, “everywhere you would hear men, women and children singing on the flakes, in the stages; the fishermen in their boats, night and day sing the great revival hymn, ‘I am bound for the Kingdom, Will you go to glory with me?’”<sup>105</sup> At Merchantman’s Harbour on the Labrador coast, everyone worked at the fish, “some throwing it up on the stage, some throating, some heading, some splitting, others salting, and putting it away. The girls employed in this place ... continued to sing some of our

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<sup>103</sup> *Provincial Wesleyan*, August 3, 1864, William Wilson, “The Newfoundland Mission and its Missionaries, No. 28.”

<sup>104</sup> PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 19, 1824-1825, James Hickson, Bonavista October 25, 1824; *Wesleyan Notices Newspaper*, February 27, 1851, John Brewster, Twillingate, Green Bay, September 4, 1850, 46, reprinted in the *Wesleyan*, April 19, 1851; W. Edgar Mercer, *A Century of Methodism in Twillingate and Notre Dame Bay, 1831-1931* (Twillingate: Twillingate Sun Office, [1932]), 20.

<sup>105</sup> *Methodist Monthly Greeting*, December, 1899, 10. “Historic Methodism” by Philip Tocque. See also Thwaite, *Glimpses of the Wonderful*, 52.

beautiful hymns whilst engaged in their labor for hours at a time.”<sup>106</sup> James Lumsden witnessed this Methodist joy at Random Sound:

At work in the home or in the fields, you will hear their cheerful voices raised in song; and the only songs they know are the best, ‘the songs of Zion.’ The grand old hymns of Wesley and Watts, to the grand old tunes, in the communities in which I lived, were known by young and old, and sung everywhere.<sup>107</sup>

Martin Ivamy of English Harbour, just before he died, in telling James Hickson of his rejoicing in God, stated that he had sung hymns of the Lamb “thousands of times ... in my boat” and now he was going to Immanuel’s land to sing them for ever.<sup>108</sup> The hymns became part of the popular culture in part because of they synchronized with the lives of the people. Every time that Solomon French sang in a Methodist meeting, “Though waves and storms go o’er my head, though strength, and health, and friends be gone,” he was touched anew with the reminder of “His great love and care” for him through the memory of his singing it alone the night his vessel, the *Huntsman*, was shipwrecked, and he was thrown into the waves that were crashing ashore on Fish Rock near Cape Charles, and his providential rescue.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 32, 1858-1864, Thomas Fox, Catalina, November 13, 1860, Journal of voyage to Labrador.

<sup>107</sup>Lumsden, *The Skipper Parson*, 72.

<sup>108</sup>*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1827, 139, Obituary of Martin Ivamy, English Harbour, Trinity Bay by John Corlett.

<sup>109</sup>George J. Bond, “The Castaway of Fish Rock,” *Canadian Methodist Magazine*, January to June, XXXIII, 1891, 502, 504. Hymn No. 189, “Now I have found the ground wherein sure my soul’s anchor may remain,” in Wesley, *A Collection of Hymns for the use of the people called Methodists*.

The hymn singers from Fortune Bay were a significant lay impulse in Methodism taking root at Burin. John Lewis could not sing, and it was on August 30, 1818, over a year after his arrival, that the people had singing in the service led by “the Fortune Bay men.” Lewis incorporated singing the next two Sundays, noting that he had “the Fortune Bay singers” with him. There was singing also on October 25, the day that Miss Power “fainted away,” Lewis hoped in repentance, and that Mrs. Goddard became convinced of her sins. Despite the leader being drunk, such singing would have added a striking dimension to the usual service, with Lewis alone reading and preaching.<sup>110</sup> It would have given the services a lay dimension never before experienced in Burin. This popular impulse, along with Lewis’s preaching, seems to have been a factor in the conversions that began in October.

It was hymns to which Methodists resorted when their own words failed, and only singing could express the joy of their souls. Thus Virtue Vey, daughter of James and Mary Butler of Port de Grave, who was converted during William Black’s 1791 visit, confined to her bed by sickness, became “indescribably happy” like never before, and suddenly in the silence of the night sang, “I’ll praise my Maker while I’ve breath....”<sup>111</sup> At other times joy came while they were singing. Hannah Goddard at Burin said that while at home with an illness and singing “Great source from whom all blessings flow,” the

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<sup>110</sup>“Journal of John Lewis,” 1.07, August 30, 1818; September 6, 13, 1818; October 25, 1818.

<sup>111</sup>*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1845, Vol. 11, 1052-1057, “Memoir of Mrs. Virtue Vey of St. John’s, Newfoundland.”

hymn "brought a ray of light unto my mind. It shone brighter and brighter until I was lost in wonder, love and praise. My soul felt so much of the power of God that I lost all sense of my pain."<sup>112</sup> Hymns were also prominent in ministry to the dying. At Whale Cove in the Burin circuit, Samuel Pittman's last request was to sing, "Glory be to God, all is well; all is well."<sup>113</sup> On Sound Island, Placentia Bay, Eliza Ann Beck at her departure read the Bible and "parts of Wesley's beautiful hymns" and then "She pointed in joy to something which mortal eye could not perceive ... ecstasy."<sup>114</sup>

Wesley's sermons and tracts were another means to help followers stay the course and communicate to others the values of Methodism. With the missionary not present, having read to one another Wesley's sermon, "Advice to the People Called Methodist with regard to Dress," the people of Hant's Harbour promptly "put away their ear and other rings, bows of ribbands, and all superfluous apparel."<sup>115</sup> Ninian Barr at Trinity witnessed

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<sup>112</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 48, Hannah Goddard, Burin to Joshua Bryan, Burin, June 5, 1819.

<sup>113</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, October 9, 1856, Rev. Elias Brettle, Burin, September 22, 1856, Obituary of Samuel Pitman, Whale Cove, Burin Circuit, age 32, September 13, 1856.

<sup>114</sup>*Wesleyan*, March 17, 1877, Obituary of Mrs. Eliza Ann Beck of Newtown, Sound Island, by H.C.H., Sound Island, January 12, 1877.

<sup>115</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence Box 2, 1819/20-1823/25, File 51, James Hickson to Committee, Island Cove, July 5, 1820. For Wesley's sermon, "Advice to the People Called Methodist with regard to Dress," see Wesley, *Works*, Vol. XI, 466-478. See also his sermon, "On Dress," Vol. VII, 15-26. The reference to dress was curiously omitted from Hickson's account printed in the *Methodist Magazine*, 1820, 954, possibly because the editor did not want to offend many Methodists in the homeland who were on their way to respectability and were no longer heeding Wesley's advice.

the revelry of the last of October when servants had finished their term of indenture. "In the dark of night while they were loudly roaring I silently walked in a retired spot and with a broken heart reflected on their condition." But he did not stop there. On the following Sunday he preached on the topic of drunkenness and distributed Wesley's tract, *Word to a Drunkard*, "because it speaks plainer and better than I can."<sup>116</sup> When William Wilson at Grand Bank wanted to impress on the people the importance of fasting, instead of giving his own discourse, he read Wesley's *Sermon on Fasting* to the people.<sup>117</sup> Later at Burin when exercised about smuggling in the area, he spoke to the society and read to them Wesley's *Word to the Smuggler*.<sup>118</sup> While George Apsey was on the Labrador coast supervising the loading of two vessels at Ship Cove for Fryer, Gosse and Pack, he went on shore to a planter's house and read the Church of England service to the people, most of whom were Anglicans from Bay Roberts, but sang Methodist hymns and preached the "Venerable Founder's sermon" on appearing before the judgement seat of Christ.<sup>119</sup>

There is little danger of exaggeration in writing of the use of Methodist

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<sup>116</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence Box 2, 1819/20-1823/25, File 52, Ninian Barr to Joseph Taylor, Trinity, November 6, 1820. Wesley, "A Word to a Drunkard," *Works*, XI, 169-171.

<sup>117</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 19, 1824-1825, Grand Bank, William Wilson, Journal, March 26, 1824.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid., Reel 21, 1828-1831, William Wilson to Committee, Burin, November 5, 1828.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid., Reel 25, 1838-1840, George Apsey, Ship Cove, Labrador, September 16, 1839.

publications in the missionary effort, for evangelism and for teaching the converted.

Visitation was a principal component of Methodist ministry and the distribution of tracts a fundamental aspect of visitation. Newfoundland was no exception.<sup>120</sup> One benefit of such distribution, as William Ellis noted, was “they would preach to the people in their own houses,” long after the missionary had departed, and in this way maximize his effort.<sup>121</sup> Ninian Barr attempted to get maximum benefit from tracts by forming the members of the Sunday school into a “reading society” and giving each member a tract every week to read themselves, and to read to “their parents, neighbours, and fellows.” When they returned each tract, he questioned them about its content and their reading of it to others; thus it was “much more extensively read than if given away.”<sup>122</sup> This system was particularly effective in the not uncommon situation where only the children were literate.

Given the lack of missionaries, distributing tracts was often a substitute for

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<sup>120</sup>For instance, *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1824, (Abridged edition), 642-643, John Walsh, St. John's, January 9, 1824; 1827, 130-131, John Corlett, Journal, Trinity; 1859, 185, John S. Peach, Notre Dame Bay; *Provincial Wesleyan*, January 6, 1864, Labrador Mission, John Goodison, Carbonear, October 8, 1863; December 8, 1873, Letter from George S. Milligan; PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 22, 1831-1833, John Smithies, Burin, December 13, 1831; Reel 24, 1835-1837, Adam Nightingale, Bonavista, December 10, 1836; Reel 25, 1838-1840, Gaultois, William Marshall, Gaultois, December 4, 1839; Reel 27, 1842-1845, James Norris, Trinity, January 11, 1844; Reel 30, 1852-1853, Edmund Botterell, St. John's, August 24, 1853, Trip to Twillingate.

<sup>121</sup>*Methodist Magazine*, 1818, 72, William Ellis to Mr. Blanshard, Trinity, August 1, 1817.

<sup>122</sup>*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1822, 270, Ninian Barr, Bonavista, December 30, 1821.

visitation. For instance, John Haigh, by way of the fishermen of Grand Bank, dispersed tracts along the western shore to such places as Ramea, Burgeo and Cape Ray, which he was not able to visit at the time.<sup>123</sup> The Wesleyan Tract Society in its promotion of tract distribution, advertised that “a single tract ... travels over a vast surface, visits numerous families, awakens a spirit of inquiry, and is thus adapted to convey the word of life.” It was especially suited to the common man to whom “folios of theology” were not suited. It was especially useful to attack a specific sin in society, for example, profanation of the Sabbath, drunkenness, swearing. A tract “as the small round stone in David’s sling, though a mere nothing to look at, was so forcefully aimed as to bring down the enemy.”<sup>124</sup>

The Bible, *Methodist Magazine*, and other evangelical publications were prominent in a vernacular Methodism in which mobility was particularly pronounced. Fishermen, instead of leaving the harbour and forgetting all about their spirituality as soon as the chapel was lost from view, as was often portrayed by various missionaries, availed of printed material as one means for their mutual edification. With specific reference to the Bible, Thomas Angwin at Island Cove observed that the fishermen of Grand Bank “generally carry one in their boats and such is the nature of their calling they are sometimes three or four Sabbaths at sea or in some distant harbour where they cannot attend public worship. Under these circumstances they find their Bible a most useful and

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<sup>123</sup>*Methodist Magazine*, 1821, 637, John Haigh, Grand Bank.

<sup>124</sup>*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1856, 448, 449, 453, “Value of Tracts in Upholding the Sanctity of the Lord’s Day,” 443-453.

delightful companion and guide.”<sup>125</sup> Bible reading was one of the most pronounced commands of Methodism, and many of its followers did so in the privacy of their homes. At Adam’s Cove, at the passing of the eldest member of the society, John Lewis noted that he had read the Bible without glasses to his dying day at age 103.<sup>126</sup> A large portion of the Newfoundland populace were absent from the chapel and missionary arrangement during the winter. During that time Methodists found that printed material constituted an important means in the maintenance of their spirituality. Thomas Angwin, while stationed at Grand Bank, for instance, gave his congregation books, tracts, and *Magazines* for their “useful and profitable reading” during the winter transhumance “far up the Bay.”<sup>127</sup> Sealers also were supplied with tracts on their voyage, often in competition with tracts from Church of England clergymen and the Newfoundland School Society.<sup>128</sup>

After the Newfoundland District joined the Conference of Eastern British America

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<sup>125</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 5, 1833/34-1837/38,, File 206, Thomas Angwin, Island Cove, June 24, 1834.

<sup>126</sup>Ibid., Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 18, John Lewis to Thomas Blanshard, Adam’s Cove, May 26, 1815.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid., Box 5, 1833/34-1837/38, File 206, Thomas Angwin, Island Cove, June 24, 1834.

<sup>128</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A222, Benjamin Smith, Trinity, October 16, 1854; A223, Benjamin Smith, Quarterly Report, Trinity, March 31, 1855; September 30, 1855; *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1833, 441, “Newfoundland School Society.” Robert Dyer’s Diary, Greenspond, 1841-1859, March 1, April 17, 1842; August 8, 1845; February 27, 1846; Report for May, 1846; February 27, 1847; February 25, 1848; March 1, 1849; February 27, 1850; February 27, 1851; February 26, 1852; March 3, 1853; February 27, 1855; February 27, 1856; February 27, 1858; February 28, 1859.

in 1855, the *Provincial Wesleyan* became the primary publication for news about the District. Through reports sent to the Halifax publication from various circuits, Newfoundland Methodists could read about what was happening not just in the Maritimes and elsewhere, but in other harbours and coves in Newfoundland. The publication was also used to inform the committee in London about the work in Newfoundland. Thus W.E. Shenstone at Lower Island Cove informed the committee, "the *Provincial Wesleyan* article "Missionary Meetings Newfoundland ... gives ... a good view of the state of things in this locality."<sup>129</sup> The *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* was still received locally, and while it did carry occasional articles about Newfoundland and British North America, it remained the primary vehicle for news about Britain and foreign missions.

Thus Methodism in Newfoundland was continually informed by the Wesleyan print of the day. Wesley's *Journals*, *Sermons*, *Rules of the Society*, and tracts, and *Methodist Magazines* and *Missionary Notices* were widespread throughout the century, and read with much gravity in homes, tilts, and schooners, and during class and prayer meetings. Wesley's *Hymns* were sung in houses and chapels, on flakes and stages, and in the woods, on the sea, and on the ice. Yet, how the Methodist message was heard and expressed was nuanced particularly by life and labour in Newfoundland. The dangers involved in fishing and sealing gave an experience of the precariousness of life, which resulted in a keen awareness and susceptibility to conversion and revival. Intense

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<sup>129</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, 1858/63-1868/83, Box 11, File 537, W.E. Shenstone, Lower Island Cove, February 10, 1865.

seasonal production came into direct conflict with the doctrine of the Sabbath, with the result that public stands refraining from breaking the Sabbath became part of the Methodist identity. Merchant credit was so extensive and encompassing that it affected the Methodist way of raising funds, in that members could not donate a penny a week. Lastly, the Church of England being largely the only alternate Protestant form, Methodism in Newfoundland retained Anglican remnants much longer than in other regions where Methodism took root. These local factors gave a subtle distinction to its Methodism.

Earthquakes and great convulsive changes of the earth ... the overturning of a kingly house, or razing of a boundary - any of these will find a place in history; but ... a thing of more account than any change of earth or empire is the upturning of a single man's being. Does any man who reads this know ... what it is to feel that the world of a man's being is breaking from its orbit, and must be heaved into a new one, and there fastened by sure bonds of drawing and withdrawing, and not, in the mean time, between the new and old, to wander wild, and go to wreck.<sup>1</sup>

#### Chapter Six: Early Methodism in Conception Bay, St. John's, and Trinity Bay

This chapter argues that the historiography of Newfoundland Methodism has a misplaced focus on the perceived benefits of the formal administration and an expanded clergy which began in 1815. It is correct that in the Carbonear-Harbour Grace area Methodism had been struggling, and might be called a failure. This situation was not reversed by an influx of missionaries even though they sought a religion of emotion. They acknowledged their lack of success and blamed it on the circumstances of work in Newfoundland, namely, mobility. It was the 1829-1832 revival in the area, and not the changes of 1815, which rescued Methodism in central Conception Bay. Moreover, because of the focus on the establishment of administration in the Carbonear-Harbour Grace area, and Methodism's lackluster results in the region up to that time, the robust Methodism of the north shore of Conception Bay and the south shore of Trinity Bay has been overlooked. As a result, the historiography of early Methodism has been skewed toward a motif of barrenness. However, farther north, ordinary people, without

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<sup>1</sup>[Lowell], *The New Priest in Conception Bay*, Vol. II, 186-187.

administration and generally without missionaries, heralded an ardent Methodism of experience to each other, and to other communities which were within reach by land or sea. The role of distress and anomie in the revivals in the region is also considered.

Methodism in Conception Bay to the end of 1829 had not done well. It had not grown significantly despite a substantial increase in the number of Wesleyan Methodist missionaries from three in 1810 to eleven in 1817. By the end of 1828 membership in Carbonear, for instance, had grown to 69 from 53 in 1823.<sup>2</sup> This did not necessarily mean a low church attendance. Carbonear was largely a Methodist town, and John Pickavant reported in 1828 that though membership was low, they had the largest congregation on the island, "in fact the whole community feel in a greater or less degree the influence of Methodism, and perhaps in no part of Christendom (taken as a whole) are the morals of the people more consistent, their attendance on the ordinances of religion more regular, or their attachment to their Ministers more strong." He quickly added that "this is not all we look, pray, and preach for," since Methodism was not about church attendance and morals and ordinances, but about conversion and religious experience.<sup>3</sup>

Despite a major effort in Conception Bay from 1815, where most of the

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<sup>2</sup>PANL, MG 597 WMMS Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings.

<sup>3</sup>Methodists outnumbered Anglicans two to one in 1836. CNS, Census of Newfoundland, 1836. SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 3, 1823/25-1828/29, File 144, Carbonear, John Pickavant, January 14, 1828. For experience as "the characteristic trait" of Methodism, see "Religious experience: the supreme passion" in Roy, "A Reappraisal of Wesleyan Methodist Mission in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century."

missionaries were concentrated, there were few “revivals of religion” to report. John Corlett seemed at a loss to explain the sedate form of Methodism in Newfoundland. Methodists were more like Presbyterians and Anglicans in England. He did not know whether it was due to climate or education, but he rarely saw his congregation in tears. In Conception Bay this was especially the case; “even the Methodists themselves will tell you they do not like Ranters, and will not be heard to say Amen to a prayer upon any consideration in this Bay.”<sup>4</sup> In 1826 Ninian Barr described a nominal Methodism in the circuit, as he had known it for the previous decade. Although congregations were large and the people strongly identified themselves with Methodism, it was a Methodism which was wanting. It was not a religion of the heart. The people reminded Barr of those portrayed by Wesley, who “know everything and feel nothing.” As a result Methodist Carbonear had few members and little evidence of the Holy Spirit in its meetings. He concluded that the “often stated” reason of the absence of the people from the circuit pursuing the fisheries was the main cause of their pallid spirituality, but he began to wonder if Methodism was suited to Newfoundland at all. It “arose out of particular circumstances, and does not so well apply to this country as in the land where it arose.”<sup>5</sup> Otherwise, why was Methodism as he knew it still largely absent in Newfoundland, even after such a concerted missionary effort? John Pickavant in 1828 also found that although

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<sup>4</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 3, 1823/25-1828/29, File 147, Harbour Grace, John Corlett, January 2, 1829. He observed that Methodism in Trinity Bay was more like “Home Methodism,” however.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., File 121, Carbonear, Ninian Barr, April 27, 1826.

Carbonear was a moral Methodist community, there was still a notable absence of "vital godliness."<sup>6</sup>

The revivals of Coughlan and Black, of former generations, could not be reignited, despite the strenuous efforts of the British missionaries to bring into life a Methodism such as they knew back home. Thus early Methodism in Conception Bay in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was not as is often portrayed. Arthur Kewley, for example, contrasted the Methodism in Newfoundland and that in Britain. For the first 50 years Methodism in Newfoundland was only such "in name," he argued, and assigned Coughlan's emphasis on "emotion" as one of the reasons. The movement was rescued in 1815 by true British Wesleyan Methodist clergy who, he presumed, had no such emphasis, but instead focused on organization.<sup>7</sup> Yet after over a decade of effort, these very missionaries were writing home to the committee that Methodism in Conception Bay was not as they knew it, precisely because of the lack of emotion.

The nature of work in Newfoundland was seen by Methodist preachers as the most significant contributor to what they regarded as an atypical Methodism. William Ellis and Samuel McDowell, writing to Thomas Coke from Carbonear in 1810, were only able to report that the number in society do not tell the whole story of Methodism on the island.

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., File 144, Carbonear, John Pickavant, January 14, 1828.

<sup>7</sup>Kewley, "The First Fifty Years of Methodism in Newfoundland 1765-1815," 7, 17. Jacob Parsons was the first to emphasize the value of organization to Newfoundland Methodism, it being made a District in 1815. Parsons, "The Origin and Growth of Newfoundland Methodism 1765-1855," 35-50.

Their thought was that "the business of this country" militated against their efforts to spread the gospel. In particular, they were thinking of the fishery on the Labrador coast and Northern Peninsula. This fishery drew not only men, but whole families, away from attendance at the regular meetings in the Methodist circuit, which were regarded as essential for a healthy spirituality, and also exposed them to "bad company and Sabbath-breaking."<sup>8</sup> The cod fishery was only one aspect of "the business of this country" which hindered their efforts. John Pickavant, nearly twenty years later, added sealing to the Labrador fishery as "local impediments" holding back the progress of Methodism, particularly in places like Carbonear. Instead of remaining in a circuit which would provide a "regular settled opportunity" of hearing the word and receiving instruction, for six months out of twelve, the people were on the move, and remote from access to preaching and other meetings. In addition, the seal fishery in itself was "an employment above all others the most demoralizing in its character."<sup>9</sup>

Richard Knight was possibly the most articulate exponent of the view that the occupations pursued in Newfoundland worked against the progress of Methodism. Writing from Blackhead in the fall of 1829, he had little to report of an uplifting nature despite his energetic efforts:

The chief cause of my sorrow is I have spent my strength to so little purpose. The more I know of Newfoundland ... the more I am convinced that many and

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<sup>8</sup>*Methodist Magazine* 1811, 275. Letter from Carbonear, November 23, 1810.

<sup>9</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America Correspondence, Box 3, 1823/25-1828/29, File 144, Carbonear, John Pickavant, January 14, 1828.

formidable obstacles arising from the nature of its commerce, the character of its occupation, and the desultory situations of its population, present themselves against religion. The fisheries alone powerfully counteract the good done during the long winter season. During the winter when we can get the people under our ministry in a regular form, when the members can have the advantage of steadily attending their classes, and we have our charge more immediately under our eye, we have the promise of a shower. We are blessed with some of its droppings, and in a few instances have felt its sweetly overwhelming sway. But the spring no sooner opens than hundreds pour forth from this, and other circuits to the awfully demoralizing pursuits of the seal fishery, their good impressions are hereby brought to a perilous crisis, and many, very many, forget the vows they made to God when the power of his Spirit was heavily upon them. The seal fishery has scarcely ended before preparations commence for the cod fishery, and here the whole time is required. Day and night they are engaged, and I can assure you the Missionary must exert himself in no small degree to keep up their attention during the Sabbath. To these obstacles we have had frequent occasion to advert in our communications with you.<sup>10</sup>

In fact, he had noted it in his previous report. The seal and Labrador cod fisheries took the people away altogether, while the inshore fishery on the North Shore caused people to be so physically spent that they practically fell asleep in church. Thus the sealing and cod fisheries “prevent the growth of those good convictions and resolutions which they have felt and formed” while attending.<sup>11</sup> Methodism could not prosper in Newfoundland because of the nature of its industries.

In fact, Methodism had done well in the northern circuit of Old Perlican - Lower Island Cove, for instance, but not in the circuits from Carbonear to St. John's where the missionaries were concentrated. The impetus was lay revivals and enthusiasm. John

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., Box 4, 1828/29-1833/34, File 151, Black Head, Richard Knight, December 7, 1829.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., File 149, Black Head, Richard Knight, July 6, 1829.

Hoskins arrived in Newfoundland in 1774, intending to earn enough money to continue to America as a school teacher. At Old Perlican he served as a lay reader and in addition to reading Wesley's sermons, he "spoke a few words extempore" and exhorted the people in "the most essential parts of the religion of the heart: such as repentance, remission of sins, and holiness." He told John Wesley, "I insisted on the necessity of conversion. I told them, 'You must be born again; you must have the witness in yourselves; God's Spirit to witness with your spirit that ye are the children of God.'"<sup>12</sup> However, it was not until 1779 when John Hoskins was in England and the people themselves were in charge, that a revival broke out:

About the middle of January, there was a very extraordinary out-pouring of the Spirit upon them, and it spread throughout the whole harbour ... about thirty believers were added to the little number we heard before ... When they were met together ... there was such a crying out for mercy as astonished all who heard or saw them ... sometimes four or five hours together.<sup>13</sup>

Thus the people and their Methodism were thriving. There was not a missionary in sight. Methodism continued to flourish, served by local preachers "raised out of these stones."<sup>14</sup>

Moreover the revival spread from Trinity Bay to the north shore of Conception Bay. Without any involvement of clergy the people came from "many miles distance." Hoskins singled out as one example, people from Lower Island Cove. Five or six came

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<sup>12</sup>*Arminian Magazine*, 1785, 27, 26.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 86-87. Such expression was common to Methodism, as demonstrated on both sides of the Atlantic in Yorkshire and South Carolina revivals. See Hempton, *The Religion of the People*, 11-12.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 628.

over to Old Perlican to see the revival for themselves. They were converted, “felt the truth as it is in Jesus” and motivated by the religion of experience, returned to their homes. By August, 1780, says Hoskins, there were 30 of them in Society. Significantly, John Hoskins mentioned that while Methodism was thriving in Old Perlican and “in several parts of this island,” yet “in Harbour Grace and Carbonear, where Mr. Coughlan laboured, it is dwindled almost to nothing.”<sup>15</sup> Thus when John Stretton wrote to Wesley from Harbour Grace in 1785 that Methodism “seems to be at a stand here,” he must have been referring primarily to the town and its immediate region, rather than to the island.<sup>16</sup> Matters had not improved there nearly twenty years later, for John Hillyard on his second visit to Newfoundland for the London Missionary Society, reported in 1804 that Harbour Grace and other places in Conception Bay, as far as “vital godliness” was concerned, were in a state of “great stagnation.”<sup>17</sup>

It is the focus on Harbour Grace and Carbonear in the first 50 years of Methodism which has skewed its interpretation. William Black said that in 1791 he found John McGeary, Newfoundland’s first Methodist missionary, in Carbonear “weeping ... over his lonely situation, and the lamentable state of the people.” Still, matters may not have been as poor as this portrayal appears to indicate. McGeary, in Newfoundland for six years,

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 143-144.

<sup>16</sup>*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1851, II, 871.

<sup>17</sup>SOAS, LMS, America, Box 1, John Hillyard to George Burder, Harbour Grace, January 16, 1804.

seems to have been missing home and bemoaning the lack of fellowship of other missionaries. He was despondent, and shortly after he returned home in 1792, he left mission work altogether.<sup>18</sup> Black's reference may say as much about McGeary's state of mind as the state of Methodism in Carbonear. Still, there was no revival during McGeary's ministry, hence the standard reference to "the lamentable state of the people" of the area. Yet, it was not uncommon for preachers to contrast the state of a mission upon their arrival to that when they left, and Black may be an instance of this in his portrayal. He mentioned that there was "no regular Society," meaning one that was according to his pattern of respectability, possibly with male leadership, as in Halifax, for he also stated that "fifteen women meet among themselves."<sup>19</sup> He could have called it a class meeting, which was regarded a distinctive means of grace of Methodism "perhaps beyond all others" and it was thriving in Carbonear at the time of Black's visit with fifteen women in attendance.<sup>20</sup> John Reay, an early historian of Methodism in Newfoundland, stated that just one woman, Elizabeth Squires, a convert of Black in 1791,

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<sup>18</sup>Smith, *History of the Methodist Church ... of Eastern British America*, Vol. I, 287. Hans Rollmann concluded that McGeary had a "dismal effect" in Newfoundland. "The pillars fall, yet the building stands": Methodist lay preachers and missionaries in Newfoundland after Coughlan, 1773-1791," 6. Unpublished manuscript by Hans Rollmann.

<sup>19</sup>*Arminian Magazine*, 1792, 122-123.

<sup>20</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, October 1902, 10. Hans Rollmann argues that in this part of Conception Bay it was "female remnants" such as these "who preserved in their small class meetings a Methodist religious identity." Rollmann, "The pillars fall, yet the building stands," 2.

kept Methodism alive in Bay Roberts when it was without a missionary. Reay went so far as to conclude that “but for her there would not have been any Methodist church at Bay Roberts.”<sup>21</sup> This entirely different perspective on women and the health of Methodism was given also by John Waterhouse, reflecting back to his time in Carbonear in 1859:

The simple, earnest, spiritual life of Methodism has depended ... upon the blessed ministry of devoted Christian women. Carbonear Methodism of forty years ago was rich in having on its roll of membership a goodly number of women who knew the power of the love of Christ, and who appreciated the great spiritual help they found in our Class Meetings.<sup>22</sup>

Black did not travel to Island Cove and Old Perlican, having the outsider’s fear of straying too far from his point of entry and departure, lest he have to stay all winter.<sup>23</sup> The focus on Black’s record has resulted in a misrepresentation of the state of Methodism in Newfoundland, for according to correspondence, a decade earlier he would have found Methodism thriving to the north under lay leadership. Yet Methodist historians have taken the record of Carbonear and Harbour Grace and built a misguided historiography of Methodism upon it, focusing on 1815 as a turning point. Arthur Kewley mistakenly concluded that after 25 years Methodism “ended dismally” because of “its reliance on committed lay preachers” and had to be rescued by the 1815 “regulations and requirements” of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference of England setting up

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., September 1898, 135. “A Short Account of Two Church Members,” John Reay.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., January 1901, 13. “Forty Years Ago, No. 9,” Rev. John Waterhouse, Manchester, December, 1900.

<sup>23</sup>*Arminian Magazine*, 1792, 234.

Newfoundland as a District.<sup>24</sup> Similarly John Webster Grant concluded that “for forty years after Coughlan’s departure, it consisted mainly of barely glowing embers that flared up fitfully at times and as often threatened to go out altogether,” until it was rescued by “organization.” Only then began “the real expansion of Methodism” in Newfoundland.<sup>25</sup>

In fact in 1815 far from being “barely glowing embers,” Methodism was thriving not only in the Old Perlican region, but on the North Shore of Conception Bay as well. Samuel McDowell reported in 1811 that he had visited Lower Island Cove and experienced “the happiest season I ever spent in Newfoundland” after being on the island for three years. While he was preaching there was such passion that he could not be heard, being drowned out both by the cries of sinners pleading for mercy and by others “praying and adoring God who brought them out of darkness.” They were also organized into a class meeting with 55 members.<sup>26</sup> Their fervour and zeal continued into 1820 with the helpful ministry of two prominent laymen, one at Hant’s Harbour who also visited Scilly Cove, and another, William Garland, Sen., at Island Cove.<sup>27</sup> By 1823, the earliest year for which we have regional data, the Island Cove-Old Perlican circuit had five times

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<sup>24</sup>Kewley, “The First Fifty Years of Methodism in Newfoundland 1765-1815,” 22-24.

<sup>25</sup>Grant, “Methodist Origins in Atlantic Canada,” 36.

<sup>26</sup>*Methodist Magazine*, 1811, 438. Carbonear, July 4, 1811, William Ellis and Samuel McDowell to the Missionary Committee.

<sup>27</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 2, 1819/20-1823/25, File 51, James Hickson to Committee, Island Cove, July 5, 1820. Extracts printed in *Methodist Magazine*, 1820, 876-878, 953-954.

the membership of Carbonear, and just a dozen less than the entire Methodist membership of the remainder of Conception Bay.<sup>28</sup> Adam Nightingale, who had just arrived in Newfoundland, was amazed by the Methodists he found at Old Perlican: "I do not remember being at any class in England in which the members express themselves more rational and scriptural."<sup>29</sup> Thomas H. James, writing in 1902, was struck with the glaring omission in the Methodist record of the enormous lay ministry in the Island Cove-Old Perlican circuit. At Old Perlican, for example, the lay ministry of John Hoskins, was continued by such men as Pelley, Gooby, Green, Brooking, J. Tilley and W. Christian, J.P.

Take the name of Pelley as an illustration. It is more than 25 years ago since we were stationed at Hant's Harbour, and after a residence of three years, and subsequent visits on different occasions, yet we have no recollection of any one ever mentioning this name as a local preacher on this circuit. From his great grandson, Richard Pelley of Hant's Harbour, now 86 years of age, we have gathered the following facts: He came from Christ Church to teach the art of boat building; was a local preacher at Old Perlican.... His descendants now may be found at Hant's Harbour, Carbonear, Fogo, and probably at Pelley's Island.<sup>30</sup>

Women were also lay ministers of distinction. Mrs. Richard Pelley, in addition to being a nurse and midwife, was a class leader for 40 years.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, ministering out of the

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<sup>28</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, 1823.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., Reel 18, 1822-1823, Adam Nightingale, Island Cove, November 10, 1823.

<sup>30</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, September, 1902, 10, "Historical Sketch from the Island Cove Circuit" by T.H.J. [Thomas H. James].

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., April, 1899, 63, Obituary of Mrs. Richard Pelley by William Kendall.

view of the missionary correspondence, were John Barber, Isaac Eddy, John Green, John Soper, John Husson, and Richard Parsons at Hant's Harbour; Cooper, Snelgrove, Benson, and King at Grates Cove; and Jasper Hiscock and Adam Follett at Scilly Cove.<sup>32</sup>

It was settlers from the Island Cove-Old Perlican circuit who brought Methodism to Random Sound on the north side of Trinity Bay. When James Hickson visited Hant's Harbour in 1821 he found a thriving lay Methodism of five class leaders, one of whom was the local preacher, J. Tilley "who has not got ordinary talents."<sup>33</sup> This was likely John Tilley who, having worked in Shoal Harbour for a number of years, moved with his family there in 1847.<sup>34</sup> His son Moses Tilley was a prominent lay preacher in Shoal Harbour, first conducting services in homes. Within a decade he and three others had built a church and he "occupied this pulpit Sabbath after Sabbath with great success," there being no clergyman in the area until 1872.<sup>35</sup> The missionary, Samuel Snowden

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., September, 1902, 10, "Historical Sketch from the Island Cove Circuit" by T.H.J. [Thomas H. James].

<sup>33</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 19, 1824-1825, Adam Nightingale, Island Cove, June 17, 1824.

<sup>34</sup>Transhumance from Hant's Harbour to "solitary parts" of Trinity Bay was common. PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 35, 1823-1855, Charles Bates, Hant's Harbour, May 28, 1833. For information on the intelligent, industrious, and pious Methodist, John Tilley, see Phillip Tocque, *Newfoundland, As it Was and As It Is in 1877*, 134-135; Smith, *History of the Methodist Church ... of Eastern British America*, Vol. II, 54; Wendy Martin, *Once Upon a Mine: Story of Pre-Confederation Mines on the Island of Newfoundland* (Montreal: Canadian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy, 1983), 48.

<sup>35</sup>The 1869 census showed there were 267 Methodist adherents in Random Sound. CNS, Census of Newfoundland, 1869.

judged him to be a man of "of sterling integrity ... In varied meetings I listened with delight to his experience."<sup>36</sup> Another son, Aaron, also was an ardent Methodist holding the first class meeting at Shoal Harbour. He continued to hold class meetings and prayer meetings until his death.<sup>37</sup> From Hant's Harbour also, John Pelley and his family, the first settlers, brought Methodism to George's Brook in 1862.<sup>38</sup> Another settlement in Random Sound, formed by migratory Methodism in this circuit was Northern Bight (Hillview). Matthias Martin, who moved there from Grates Cove in the mid-1860s, became its first lay reader, class leader, and Sunday-school teacher. It had already known "the ring of the woodman's axe" before, but with his arrival did "Jehovah's praises echo from a Methodist prayer-meeting" as "this old warrior of the cross lifted his robust voice to God in prayer and sung his favourite hymn: 'Jesus lover of my soul.'"<sup>39</sup> Thus by migration from the Island Cove-Old Perlican circuit the communities of the Random Sound area were settled "chiefly" by Methodists, and by their lay ministry they maintained and

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<sup>36</sup>*Wesleyan*, June 9, 1877, Obituary of Moses Tilley by Samuel Snowden, Shoal Bay, May 10, 1877.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, February 12, 1883, Obituary of Aaron Tilley, Esq., by Jesse Heyfield. See also, May 1926, 5-6, "Early Methodism in Random and Smith's Sound," J. Leawood.

<sup>38</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, February, 1905, 12, Obituary of "Grandma Pelley," Shoal Harbor Mission, William Kendall; May 1926, 5-6, "Early Methodism in Random and Smith's Sound" by J. Leawood. Leawood's main source of information was Frederick Pelley of George's Brook, who was 80 years old in 1926. Hant's Harbour was a totally Methodist town in 1869 having 735 Methodist adherents and not a single Anglican. Old Perlican had 822 Methodists and nine Anglicans. CNS, Census of Newfoundland, 1869.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, November, 1896, 187, Obituary of Matthias Martin.

renewed their spirituality until aided by clergy, who as in most places, were latecomers.

The way that Methodism spread in Newfoundland as a popular movement is described well in James Lumsden's portrayal of a revival that began at Lee Bight (Adeytown) and spread to Northern Bight and elsewhere in Random Sound among the people who had migrated in large measure from such places as Hant's Harbour, Old Perlican, and Grates Cove.<sup>40</sup> It admittedly began with the missionary who, being detained in the settlement due to a heavy snowfall, preached in his host's kitchen. But his preaching was only a flanker from the chimney catching the forest, for the revival was dispersed throughout the region not by Lumsden, but by the people themselves:

The young converts from Lee Bight carried the fire to Northern Bight, and from there it spread to every cove and harbor on the circuit, and places beyond. Almost every convert sought to win for Jesus his child, his parent, his brother, or sister, or friend. There sprang up immediately a band of noble Christian workers, particularly young men. At Northern Bight for about three weeks all but the most necessary work stopped, and the people devoted themselves to praise and prayer.... There was no need for preaching. 'All hands for Christ,' the words of one of our number who was mighty in appeal, struck the right keynote. Though the meeting would last for hours, there was never a break in song or prayer.<sup>41</sup>

Due to the mobility of the population for wood production in winter and for fish and seals in the spring and summer, there was a continual communication among the population, which facilitated the spread of Methodism. So, too, at Random Sound during

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<sup>40</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, May 1926, 5-6, "Early Methodism in Random and Smith's Sound" by J. Leawood; Wilfred B.W. Martin, *Random Island Pioneers* (St. John's: Creative Publishers, 1990); Patricia Small, *Harcourt: A Historical Profile* (St. John's: Jespersen Press, 1996), 8.

<sup>41</sup>Lumsden, *The Skipper Parson*, 81.

the revival, a sealing schooner waited at Fox Harbour (Southport) to go to the ice on March 1, the date set by the government for sailing. One of the crew returned to Northern Bight for some forgotten tools and returned to the schooner a converted man. The vessel was further detained and finally departed for the ice fields with the captain and crew, except one, converted, described in the experiential language of having given their hearts to God. Neither was the sealers' religion left on shore, for the schooner as it sailed north, like the Grand Bank fishermen sailing west, became "a floating Bethel," in which Methodist prayer and hymns of praise permeated the vessel in no less degree than the redolence of its seal oil.<sup>42</sup> Methodism in Newfoundland was very much a "Bethel" religion since the people found the presence of God to be not only in the chapel and with clergy, but in their boats, on their flakes, or in their kitchens in summer, or in their tilts in winter. Thus the preachers of Methodism were the people themselves as they sang and shared their spirituality with their friends and neighbours.

Blackhead also had a significant Methodist presence from Coughlan's time, with the second highest membership in 1823. Coughlan himself had preached there and experienced a revival, and the people built a church to hold 400 in less than two weeks.<sup>43</sup> William Black, spending the greater part of his time in Carbonear and Harbour Grace, visited Blackhead only once, for four days from August 25 to 28 in 1791. His impact was

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 82-84.

<sup>43</sup>Coughlan, *An Account of the Work of God in Newfoundland*, 18-19.

noteworthy in that there were some converts and 40 decided to attend class meetings.<sup>44</sup>

Yet it is clear that Blackhead's healthy state did not derive in any large degree from Black's visit. William Thoresby visited from Harbour Grace in March 1797, and found a normal and regular Methodism. He met the classes and a number were converted. In February of the following year in Adam's Cove he was quite touched, as he looked out his window, by the piety and zeal of "more than sixty persons coming down a high mountain, some walking, and some running to the house of prayer." He was back in March to a larger crowd than he had seen before, some journeying five miles to hear the message.<sup>45</sup> Far from being in a phlegmatic state, members such as Elizabeth Hudson of Adam's Cove, converted during Coughlan's ministry, were 25 years later still robust in their faith, "diligent in all the means of grace ... going through all kinds of weather, frost, and snow, winter and summer, to worship God ... often inviting her neighbours to come to Christ; she prayed with the afflicted and unconverted."<sup>46</sup> Samuel McDowell on his January visit to Blackhead in 1811 wrote that he "found the Classes in a prosperous state, and the people in general athirst for the word of God. During my stay there several joined in Class who seemed to be awakened."<sup>47</sup> On this visit the missionary obviously found

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<sup>44</sup>*Arminian Magazine*, 1792, 233.

<sup>45</sup>William Thoresby, *Narrative of God's Love to William Thoresby*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Redruth: J. Bennett, 1801), 73, 110.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>47</sup>*Methodist Magazine*, 1811, 438. William Ellis and Samuel McDowell Missionary Committee, July 4, 1811.

Methodism in Blackhead in a healthy state.<sup>48</sup> The people were meeting in classes praying, "athirst for the word," and building each other up in the faith. The visit of the preacher was no doubt a spiritual lift to them, but not to be relied on. It was the people who were shouldering responsibility and maintaining their Methodism "in a prosperous state" from month to month and year to year.

Thus, up to 1828 it was the north - the north shore of Conception Bay to Bonavista - which contained the majority of Methodists - 646, over 60 percent of the Methodists on the island.<sup>49</sup> St. John's to Carbonear made up 301 members, while the Burin Peninsula and south coast had 99. The twofold increase in the number of missionaries and organization of the District Meeting had accomplished little in the major part of Conception Bay. The earliest available data, 1823, show a similar demographic, the Blackhead to Bonavista area having nearly 65 percent of the membership, the remainder thinly spread in the principal part of Conception Bay, St. John's and the Burin Peninsula.<sup>50</sup> With the revival in Bonavista that year and the nearly doubling of membership, Methodism was clearly concentrated to the north. Carbonear and St. John's

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<sup>48</sup>But John Walsh was not overly impressed with Blackhead in 1819, at least with one of the classes in particular. Yet there were several classes meeting. John Rylands Library, PLP 110.11.2, John Walsh, Blackhead, to George Cubit Methodist Chapel, Glasgow, Scotland, November 4, 1819.

<sup>49</sup>Bonavista is examined in the next chapter.

<sup>50</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, 1823, 1828; UC Archive, WY 100, Box 1, 1829- 873, "Minutes, Newfoundland District, Wesleyan Methodist Church, England, 1829-1850." Minutes for 1829.

were minor players by comparison.

A significant shift in the demography of Methodism began at the end of the 1820s. The Black Head-Western Bay, Carbonear, Harbour Grace and St. John's circuits doubled, or, in one case, nearly tripled in size while numbers elsewhere remained stable. It is clear that it was revivals, and not Wesleyan Methodist organization which was responsible for these increases in numbers and passion. By the time the returns were brought to the District Meeting in the summer of 1832, such was the increase that had taken place in these four circuits that it nearly doubled the membership for the island.<sup>51</sup>

The first signs of what could be termed Newfoundland's first great awakening became evident at Harbour Grace in 1829 with a doubling of membership. John Corlett, the local missionary, reported there were "many interesting incidents" during this revival but does not detail any of them. His report to the District Meeting was about a new seriousness in spiritual matters showing itself in a desire for membership, husbands learning to love their wives, and families having household prayer.<sup>52</sup> Corlett was rather disappointed with this rather calm approach, and would rather have seen more religious fervour. Methodism had become "livelier. But alas! The life of Newfoundland Methodism is death compared with home Methodism." The Methodism he experienced in Trinity Bay approached more closely what he had experienced in England, but his

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<sup>51</sup>UC Archive, WY 100, Box 1, 1829-1873, "Minutes, Newfoundland District, Wesleyan Methodist Church, England, 1829-1850." Minutes for 1829, 1832.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., Newfoundland District Meeting, Brigus, May 20, 1829.

reports show disappointment at the kind of Methodism which prevailed there also.<sup>53</sup>

What he said of New Perlican sums up his frustration: he “saw no trembling, no appearance of good being done.”<sup>54</sup> Wanting to experience a revival, he departed just when it began to happen.<sup>55</sup> John Smithies, who had a reputation of being “quite a revivalist,” preached in Harbour Grace for a two weeks in July, 1829, but had little to report, except that “one young woman” whose experience of God was “so manifest to all, that we were melted down into gratitude” at a class meeting.<sup>56</sup>

The first news of a new era in Methodism in the Carbonear area came from John Haigh in May 1830, when the fishermen were home from the seal fishery and families had not yet departed for Labrador and the northeast coast. Finally, a missionary began to see a Methodism of emotion in Carbonear and described it in the usual words of God pouring out his Spirit. There were indications that many were “convinced of sin” for some time. Then on Good Friday “a very respectable young man” spoke of his deep conviction, and on Easter Sunday at the prayer meeting “we had great mourning on account of sin.” The

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<sup>53</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 3, 1823/25-1828/29, File 147, Harbour Grace, John Corlett, January 2, 1829.

<sup>54</sup>*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1827, 276.

<sup>55</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 4, 1828/29-1833/34, File 175, District Meeting. John Pickavant, Chairman. Richard Knight, Secretary. May, 1830.

<sup>56</sup>John Rylands Library, PLP 66.14.1, Richard Knight to George Cubit, Portugal Cove, June 4, 1829; *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1829, 853, Extract of a letter from John Smithies, September 2, 1829.

following Wednesday a class of thirteen members was formed, and in the evening at Freshwater "the voice of prayer could scarce be heard on account of their great lamentation, when one and another were brought into the liberty of the children of God." The "religion of experience" had indeed come to the Carbonear circuit, and burst outside the confines of chapel and weekly class and prayer meetings. Philip Tocque, writing nearly 60 years later, remembered that during this "remarkable revival ... everywhere you would hear men, women and children singing on the flakes, in the stages; the fishermen in their boats, night and day sing the great revival hymn, 'I am bound for the Kingdom, Will you go to glory with me?'"<sup>57</sup> Tocque himself joined the Methodist Society at that time.<sup>58</sup> People concluded that "there had not been such a feeling in the harbour since the time that Mr. Black visited this place about 38 years ago."<sup>59</sup>

Haigh realized that the revival was not a result of his personal efforts as a missionary. His description shows that the people themselves were major contributors:

Some of our young converts are possessed of considerable abilities and they exert themselves much for the promotion of the divine glory in the salvation of sinners and for their own advancement in piety and experimental acquaintance with divine things. They have prayer meetings among themselves in the evenings when we have no public services, into which they introduce those on whose minds they

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<sup>57</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, December, 1899, 10. "Historic Methodism," Philip Tocque.

<sup>58</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 25, 1838-1840, Philip Tocque to Secretaries of the WMMS, St. John's, January 11, 1840. Marjorie Doyle wonders also if his father's sudden death "prompted a religious crisis." Doyle, *Newfoundlander in Exile*, 8.

<sup>59</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 4, 1828/29-1833/34, File 174, Carbonear, John Haigh, May 15, 1830.

have reason to conclude the Holy Spirit has already begun to work, and they have in several instances already been very serviceable to such individuals both of bringing them to the Saviour and into close connection with the church.<sup>60</sup>

The converts were not all young. A slightly older convert of notable talent and zeal was George Apsey who had been in Newfoundland since 1812 when he came to Carbonear as a clerk for Messrs. Kemps, a firm later bought in 1824 by Pack, Gosse, and Fryer.<sup>61</sup> Converted in 1830 he continued as a member of "eminent usefulness" for 39 years, as a preacher and exhorter, class leader, prayer leader and visitor of the sick.<sup>62</sup> He had an immediate impact on other clerks. Philip Henry Gosse found Apsey's change of character at his conversion "very striking." Before he could be "hot and irascible" and once called Gosse a "son of a bitch." After his conversion he could "bear unmoved the vilest railing." Through Apsey's influence, the clerks at Elson's were converted, beginning with Gosse himself in 1832, the last year of the Carbonear revival.<sup>63</sup> Samuel Sprague, who came to

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., File 176, Carbonear, John Haigh, July 20, 1830. Neither was this the first notable lay Methodism in Conception Bay. John Stretton wrote in 1775: "a poor illiterate fishermen ... boldly stood up, and spoke in his name; him we constantly hear ... Mr. Thomey also exhorts ... this is done from house to house." Letter of John Stretton to Eliza Bennis, November 14, 1775, *Christian Correspondence; being a collection of letters, written by the late Rev. John Wesley, and several Methodist preachers, in connection with him, to the late Mrs. Eliza Bennis, with her answers, chiefly explaining and enforcing the doctrine of sanctification, now first published from the originals* (Philadelphia: B. Graves for T. Bennis, 1809), 210. I thank Hans Rollmann for alerting me to this source.

<sup>61</sup>Beamish, Hillier and Johnstone, *Mansions and Merchants of Poole and Dorset*, 75.

<sup>62</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, November 10, 1869.

<sup>63</sup>Rompkey, ed., "Philip Henry Gosse's account of his years in Newfoundland, 1827-1835," 243-244, 251.

Newfoundland as a clerk when he was thirteen and had “sunk deeper than ever in iniquity,” probably referred to Apsey when, while speaking of his conversion, said that a young man “pressed upon me the necessity of a change of heart and showed me that repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>64</sup> George Apsey’s prayers were considered instrumental in the revival which began in Carbonear in 1849.<sup>65</sup>

The 1830 revival caused Haigh to reconsider the long-held idea that absence at the fishery was an obstacle to Methodist piety. In commenting on families about to depart for the Labrador and northern Newfoundland fisheries, he allowed that “the good Spirit of God is able to keep alive and carry on the good work in their souls,” even to bring them from conviction to conversion.<sup>66</sup> It stood to reason that as they did at home, the people to the north would continue to hold their prayer meetings and exhort each other to salvation while pursuing the fishery, no matter how distant from Carbonear and its missionary. This he found to be the case. In December he reported that all except one who went northward returned in the fall “in fully as good a state as when they went away.”<sup>67</sup>

Meanwhile at Blackhead, the circuit next door, Richard Knight, who had written so despondently at the end of 1829 of labouring “to so little purpose” since 1817, had a

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<sup>64</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, Letter of S.W. Sprague to Secretaries, Carbonear, June 9, 1838.

<sup>65</sup>*Wesleyan*, September 22, 1849.

<sup>66</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 4, 1828/29-1833/34, File 176, Carbonear, John Haigh, July 20, 1830.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, December 13, 1830.

whole new outlook six months later. In June 1830, a month after Haigh's report from Carbonear, he wrote that the Blackhead circuit had experienced a revival "in a more remarkable manner than ever was previously witnessed." It started with the young and spread to adults and became a "more than ordinarily deep awakening." So ardently did those who were converted exhort others to turn to God, that all the missionary could do was "stand still" and observe. Several young men became prayer leaders of "astonishing fervour." One woman on her way home from a meeting "entered a house, sang a hymn, exhorted the family to seek God and prayed with them" and then went on to other houses. Such was the demonstration of "the soothing power of peace and the ecstasy of joy" of the converted, that Knight reckoned that should the "the proud despisers of experimental religion" witness the experience, it would "thaw their freezing calculations and spoil all their vain philosophy." Knight himself was astonished. He never expected to see "the indescribable radiance of their countenances ... exceeded until before the throne of God."<sup>68</sup> The brook soon became a river. Membership increased from 161 to 220 in 1830, and it nearly tripled to 640 in 1831.<sup>69</sup> The revival transformed the Carbonear to Western Bay area from a nominal, church-attending Methodist area to that of a religion of experience and passion.

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid., Box 4, 1828/29-1833/34, File 151, Blackhead, Richard Knight, December 7, 1829; File 175, Blackhead, Richard Knight, June 25, 1830. Extract printed in *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1831, 61-62.

<sup>69</sup>UC Archive, WY 100, Box 1, 1829-1873, "Minutes, Newfoundland District, Wesleyan Methodist Church, England, 1829-1850." Minutes for 1830 and 1831.

Knight, too, began to change his mind on the fishery being an impediment to the growth of Methodism. As the fishery began in the spring of 1830 he opened the door to the possibility that although temptations “abound from the nature of their situation, yet the Saviour will be with them to keep them.”<sup>70</sup> In his September report he reproved himself for his lack of faith, for not only had absence at the fishery not dampened the revival, it had “beyond any expectation ... been diffused deeper and wider over all the thirsty land.”<sup>71</sup> This testimony is further evidence that the revival of 1829-1832 was an indigenous popular movement. The missionary played a part, but by no means a major one. All through the summer the fishermen and their families, without a missionary, without his preaching, and without the “means of grace” centered on the church, not only maintained their new Methodism of the heart, but deepened their spirituality and communicated it to others.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, Methodist zeal was not diminished during the arduous summer fishery on the North Shore, when church activities were normally relegated to Sunday. Rather, they built each other up and propagated their faith in the fishing boat, on the wharf and in their kitchens. Thus Knight found that after toiling for over a decade “to so little purpose” his presence was not indispensable for Methodist ardor to extend “wider and deeper.” The result instead was similar to that which occurred when he was away from

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<sup>70</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 4, 1828/29-1833/34, File 175, Blackhead, Richard Knight, June 25, 1830.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., File 176, Blackhead, Richard Knight, September 23, 1830.

<sup>72</sup>Most all residents of the area considered themselves nominal Methodists. Wilson, *Newfoundland and its Missionaries*, 195.

the circuit attending the District Meeting in St. Johns. He wrote, "the Lord had graciously carried out his work in my absence. Twenty had obtained liberty, and more than that number had joined the classes."<sup>73</sup>

St. John's Methodism did not experience the dramatic increases of Carbonear and Blackhead, yet it added from 35 to 50 people to its membership each year from 1829 to 1832.<sup>74</sup> Thus this awakening shifted the balance in Methodism from the north, to Carbonear and St. John's. The capital had become the commercial and political center of the island and contained "a very large majority of all the rank, talent, wealth and influence to be found in the whole Island," as the stewards of the Methodist church there observed.<sup>75</sup> Because of this it already tended to occupy a larger place in the annals of Methodism than its membership warranted - 200 in 1832, compared with 871 in the Carbonear and Blackhead circuits.<sup>76</sup> Many of these were migrant members from

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<sup>73</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 4, 1828/29-1833/34, File 176, Blackhead, Richard Knight, September 23, 1830. Philip Tocque who lived in Carbonear at the time, estimated that Knight was "not what may be called an eloquent preacher." *Methodist Monthly Greeting*, December 1899, 10, "Historic Methodism," Philip Tocque.

<sup>74</sup>UC Archive, WY 100, Box 1, 1829-1873, "Minutes, Newfoundland District, Wesleyan Methodist Church, England, 1829-1850." Minutes for 1829-1832.

<sup>75</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 4, 1828/29-1833/34, File 178, St. John's, Stewards, December 18, 1830.

<sup>76</sup>UC Archive, WY 100, Box 1, 1829-1873, "Minutes, Newfoundland District, Wesleyan Methodist Church, England, 1829-1850." Minutes for 1832.

Conception Bay, for example, from Harbour Grace.<sup>77</sup>

One wonders whether there were local factors which contributed to this great awakening. Alan D. Gilbert noted Max Weber's theory of anomie and religion, "that man is at his most religious in situations in which the powerlessness, contingency, and material insecurity of human existence are most acutely apparent"<sup>78</sup> E.P. Thompson also saw a correlation between what he called "psychic disturbances" - for instance, food crises and rumours of battles during the Napoleonic wars - and incidence of revival.<sup>79</sup> David Hempton, an accomplished Methodist historian, concluded that indeed there is "little doubt that religious revivalism thrived on the perceived vulnerability of individuals and social groups when confronted by rapid social change or by threats to health and personal security."<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup>Wilson, *Newfoundland and its Missionaries*, 195-196; Smith, *History of the Methodist Church ... of Eastern British America*, Vol. II, 32; Nichols, ed., *A Century of Methodism in St. John's*, 17.

<sup>78</sup>Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England*, 186. Gilbert's definition of anomie is "social disorganisation - the breakdown of established social and cultural systems - in which there is a loss of solidarity produced by the collapse of old social structures, and a loss of consensus as norms and values previously taken for granted are challenged or overthrown," 89, 229. For the origin of this concept, see "The Anomic Division of Labor," Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1933), 353-373.

<sup>79</sup>Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 920.

<sup>80</sup>Hempton, *The Religion of the People*, 25. For other discussion of the relationship between religious receptivity and marginality, liminality, dislocation, transition and distress, see Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 12, 55-76, 268-270; Carwardine, *Trans-Atlantic Revivalism*,

In Newfoundland there was certainly economic vulnerability and insecurity. There was a significant decrease in cod exports, about 200,000 quintals, in 1831 and 1832. The growing population could ill afford the decrease. In 1815 cod exports of over one million quintals supported a population of 40,500. In 1831 and 1832 cod exports of just over 700,000 quintals had to support an increased population of 60,000.<sup>81</sup> However, the times of revival and crisis do not completely coincide. The revival began in 1829 and was nearly over by the spring of 1832, before the summer fishery. Data on the large increase in membership in 1832 was reported to the District Meeting in May when the summer fishery was about to begin.<sup>82</sup> The data on sealing may be more significant. Shannon Ryan demonstrated that half the men in Newfoundland depended on the seal fishery for their income, in addition to cod. Moreover by the beginning of the 1830s Conception Bay and St. John's controlled over 90 percent of the industry.<sup>83</sup> This would mean that the significantly diminished catches of 1828 and 1829 had a large impact on the region.<sup>84</sup> Again, however, this would not explain the major increase in the revival which occurred

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51-56; Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, 135-164.

<sup>81</sup>Ryan, *Fish Out of Water*, 258.

<sup>82</sup>UC Archive, WY 100, Box 1, 1829-1873, "Minutes, Newfoundland District, Wesleyan Methodist Church, England, 1829-1850." Minutes for 1831.

<sup>83</sup>Ryan, *The Ice Hunters*, 98, 129.

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*, 445. Slightly over 199,000 seal skins in 1829 compared with over 536,000 in 1830. Ryan noted, however, that there is some confusion between "seals taken" and "seals exported" precisely in the year 1829, 446.

in 1830, a time when both cod and seal catches were high.

Neither does it explain why the revival was confined to the Carbonear, Blackhead and St. John's circuits, and did not occur in other areas where there was intense poverty. In relatively near Old Perlican, for instance, Charles Bates reported in 1829 that people were destitute due to the worst fishing voyage in memory. Poverty continued in 1830. In December 1831 at Hant's Harbour people were living on "potatoes only." The majority of the people could not afford winter supplies because the summer catch had been poor and, what there was went to the merchant, and still "was not sufficient to meet his demand."<sup>85</sup> William Wilson reported in November, 1830, that in a poor country Bonavista "was the poorest of the Newfoundland stations" and there was a threat of starvation. He reported in July the next year that the fishery had "almost entirely failed." He explained in October, 1831, that while the seal fishery had replaced the cod fishery as the main source of income in Conception Bay and St. John's, this did not apply to Bonavista where there were only four schooners engaged in the seal fishery, employing about 80 men out of a population of 2,000. The majority were still dependent on the cod fishery, which had failed.<sup>86</sup> Even farther afield, William Wilson reported from Burin in April, 1829 that the poverty of many was "truly awful." George Ellidge wrote in

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<sup>85</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 4, 1828/29-1833/34, File 151, Old Perlican, Charles Bates. December 24, 1829. File 177, Old Perlican, Charles Bates, October 14, 1830. File 180, Hant's Harbour, Charles Bates, December 25, 1831.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., File 177, Bonavista, William Wilson, November 8, 1830; File 179, Bonavista, William Wilson, July 25, 1831; File 180, Bonavista, William Wilson, October 31, 1831.

December of the same year that the fishery had failed again at Burin.<sup>87</sup> Hardship would have been doubly severe since the large Placentia Bay firm of Christopher Spurrier with premises at Burin and Oderin collapsed in the summer of 1830, causing a shortage of supplies and dislocation of workers.<sup>88</sup> Richard Knight noted that in 1831 many parts of Newfoundland “were reduced to all but positive starvation.” Such “putrid substances” as dogfish were eaten and in one case even horse meat.<sup>89</sup> In none of these areas of poverty and crisis outside of Conception Bay did a revival occur.<sup>90</sup>

Maybe relevant to the Conception Bay area were the “unusually heavy losses” of sealing ships and cargoes in the spring of 1829, though most of the crews were saved. In 1830 during a gale on March 27, several vessels loaded with pelts were lost with their crews.<sup>91</sup> Tragedies such as these brought sorrow and insecurity to widows, children, and relatives left behind that was more acute than poverty, no matter how chronic. It is not a coincidence in George Bond’s novel, *Skipper George Netman*, Skipper George was

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<sup>87</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 21, 1828-1831, Burin, William Wilson, April 14, 1829; Burin, George Ellidge, December 9, 1829.

<sup>88</sup>Beamish, Hillier and Johnstone, *Mansions and Merchants of Poole and Dorset*, 22. See Spurrier bankruptcy notice, *Public Ledger*, October 26, 1830.

<sup>89</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 4, 1828/29-1833/34, File 181, Carbonear, Richard Knight, July 4, 1832.

<sup>90</sup>There was a revival at Grand Bank in 1829. UC Archive, WY 100, Box 1, 1829-1873, “Minutes, Newfoundland District, Wesleyan Methodist Church, England, 1829-1850.” Minutes for 1829-1832.

<sup>91</sup>Ryan. *The Ice Hunters*, 284-285.

converted by his friend, Tom Williams, when they were separated from their schooner and the ice pan they were on was breaking up - life as precarious as it gets. "Sir ... when a man is drowning all his life comes back to him like a flash." Similarly, a revival broke out in "Caplin Bight" just after the community was brought to the highest pitch of anxiety before four young men were rescued who had "blown off" from the shore while searching for seals when the ice had come "taut on the land."<sup>92</sup> George Bond wrote from a Methodism he knew.

On the eve of the Conception Bay revival there is some question as to the degree of insecurity caused by the juxtaposition of English Protestants and Irish Catholics, a situation unparalleled in the outports, except in Burin and Placentia Bay. Gertrude Gunn argued that the continual contact between them caused "an uneasy state of suspicion and aversion" in the late 1820s. For this view she relied upon an excerpt from Philip Henry Gosse's memoir, "Anecdotes and Reminiscences" in Edmund Gosse's biography of his father.<sup>93</sup> One wonders, however, how much Gosse was reading back into the year 1827 the more intense situation of 1832 and later. There is no doubt that Gosse, on his arrival from England, was startled by the large presence of Irishmen in Conception Bay, speaking of their "predominance" being "a novelty" to him.<sup>94</sup> But did they predominate? This may

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<sup>92</sup>Bond, *Skipper George Netman*, 20-31.

<sup>93</sup>Gunn, *The Political History of Newfoundland 1832-1864*, 8. Quoting from Edmund Gosse, *The Life of Philip Henry Gosse* (London: Kegan Paul, 1890), 7-8.

<sup>94</sup>Rompkey, "Philip Henry Gosse's account of his years in Newfoundland, 1827-1835," 221.

have been his perception due to their relatively large number, and interpreted by later events. Prowse, also referring to Gosse's biography, said that "Carbonear was the most turbulent district in the colony," but he had the 1835 attack on Henry Winton in mind.<sup>95</sup> As a merchant's clerk Gosse would have felt himself a target of Irish acts of grievance for better wages, since as Linda Little has demonstrated, acts of violence were not random but specifically targeted at what was deemed to be oppressive authority.<sup>96</sup> This would have had minimal effect on the Protestant working-class population at large. Moreover, the sealers' strike during the winter of 1832 towards the end of the revival was a concerted attempt by both Protestant and Catholic workers to gain more income from the merchants, a class rather than a religious action. Still, the economic hardship giving rise to the strike pointed to a material insecurity. Neither did the political agitation leading to representative government in 1832 register anything near approximating a feeling of vulnerability in the populace.

The coincidence of vulnerability and revival is an intriguing question. During William Black's revival in Conception Bay, 1791 and 1792, Grant Head found that cod production reached "new lows." He noted that in 1790 the Anglican clergyman reported that there was "the highest pitch of distress ever known in Conception Bay."<sup>97</sup> Yet,

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<sup>95</sup>Prowse, *History of Newfoundland*, 439.

<sup>96</sup>Linda Little, "Collective Action in Outport Newfoundland: A Case Study from the 1830s," *Labour/Le Travail*, 26 (Fall 1990), 37-59.

<sup>97</sup>Head, *Eighteenth Century Newfoundland*, 206.

looking at the history of Methodism in Newfoundland there seems to be far more distress than revival. The post Napoleonic War depression from 1816 to the 1818, for example, saw only two revivals, quite localized, at Bonavista and Adam's Cove, although an impoverished Newfoundland had its number of missionaries boosted from six to eleven.<sup>98</sup> Moreover, the revival at Bonavista began in 1814 during an era of prosperity. William Ellis reported at the time, "Bonavista is on fire, the love of Jesus is burning in 36 souls, and the flame is still spreading."<sup>99</sup> One would have thought instead, that 1817-1818, the winter of "famine, frost and fire," would have been a banner year for revivals.<sup>100</sup>

In addition to the oft-repeated economic insecurity there was the daily vulnerability experienced by the fishermen in both the cod and seal fisheries. Later, John Brewster in comparing the life of the missionary to that of the fisherman, wrote:

It is the fisherman, the hardy, storm-beaten fisherman, who has cause, if cause there really be, to complain. His life is daily exposed, above the ordinary and common exposure to danger and death. He draws his means of subsistence from the very gulph of death. His wife and children, in eating the bread he has earned, feel something as David felt ... 'Shall I drink the blood of these men who have put their lives in jeopardy?' 1 Chronicles 11:19.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 21, James Hickson, Bonavista, December 6, 1816; File 23, Thomas Hickson to James Wood, Bonavista, August 25, 1817.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., File 17, Samuel McDowell to Missionary Committee, Conception Bay, January 10, 1814.

<sup>100</sup>Prowse, quoted in Ryan, *The Ice Hunters*, 46-47.

<sup>101</sup>*Wesleyan*, October 6, 1849 "Notices of Newfoundland No. 5," J.B. [John Brewster].

Whatever the role of distress or anomie, in central Conception Bay it was not the increase in clergy after 1815, but the vernacular Methodism of widespread revival which turned this minority into the large force that it became. For over ten years, newly arrived British missionaries had preached and organized to little effect, and had blamed it on the mobility of the population. They despaired over the absence of the Methodist emotion they were familiar with back home. Methodism "of the heart" did not flourish in this area until the revival of 1829-1832, and it was this awakening which brought about the rescue of Methodism in the area.

Because of the focus on Carbonear and Harbour Grace, the Coughlan-Black and Stretton-Thomey correspondence has been emphasized to such a degree that the historiography has been tilted toward a theme of barrenness, and the history of the major sector of Methodism in Newfoundland has practically been ignored. Early Methodism in Newfoundland was vigorous and resilient in the region north of Carbonear, that is, in such places as Old Perlican and Lower Island Cove, and as we shall see, Bonavista. Thus, the interpretation of the first 50 years of Methodism in Newfoundland has been based on the history of a minority, and it has resulted in a distorted emphasis on the importance of the formation of the Newfoundland District in 1815.

My voice was soon drowned amidst the bitterest cries. Those that had found mercy applied themselves to exhorting and praying with the distressed. Many, most all as they were brought into liberty became exhorters - parents hastened to their children, and children to their parents.... I observed that most of them that were in the deepest anguish of spirit, received the blessing of assurance in the greatest ecstasy.<sup>1</sup>

Chapter Seven:                      Bonavista and Bonavista Bay

This chapter argues that the 1815 clergy-led formalization of Newfoundland Methodism was even less relevant to Bonavista Bay than to Conception Bay. It was lay leadership and revivals which advanced Methodism in Bonavista, Bird Island Cove, and Catalina. When residents migrated to other areas of the bay they brought their Methodism with them. The District formed in 1815 did not station a second missionary in the bay until nearly half a century later, when John S. Allen was sent to Greenspond. The Church of England made efforts to secure itself against the Methodists, but it was a divided house. Its clergy barely tolerated the presence of the evangelical Newfoundland School Society. Despite a continual Anglican presence at Greenspond in Bonavista North beginning in 1828, the region was largely claimed by a vernacular Methodist revival in the early 1860s.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 19, 1824-1825, James Hickson, Journal, Bonavista, March 5, 7, 1824.

<sup>2</sup>Guildhall Library, *Proceedings of Newfoundland and British North American Society for Educating the Poor, 1828-1829* (London: Gunnell and Shearman, 1829), 43-44.

Methodism became prominent in Bonavista Bay, but not primarily through the clergy. While John Hoskins had some good intentions for the town of Bonavista in 1784, it was not until a decade later that George Smith elected to go there, after ministering in Conception Bay. Sent in answer to a request from John Stretton at Harbour Grace for a missionary, he became in Charles Lench's words, "the pioneer Methodist Missionary of Bonavista."<sup>3</sup> However, missionaries to Bonavista were not in great supply. It was twelve years after Smith's departure that John Remington arrived in 1809, and found the Methodists "doing well." There was no sense of crisis from being without a missionary, since "Messrs Saint and Cole had developed into useful laymen and acceptable preachers."<sup>4</sup> William Ellis, informed Thomas Blanshard, the book steward of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, that in 1815 he found the Methodists in Bonavista "happy in the enjoyment of his Heavenly love ... this is to be attributed to the indefatigable exertion of Mr. Saint and a young man Cole ... The former acts as a Local Preacher and the latter exhorts and meets the class."<sup>5</sup>

Ellis did not mention the work of William Ward, who was in Bonavista from 1810 to 1812. Ward drowned and there are "but few details" of his work there.<sup>6</sup> Thomas Coke

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<sup>3</sup>Wesleyan Methodist Magazine, 1833, 7. Lench, *The Story of Methodism in Bonavista*, 36.

<sup>4</sup>Lench, *The Story of Methodism in Bonavista*, 40.

<sup>5</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 18, William Ellis to Thomas Blanshard, Bonavista, July 26, 1815.

<sup>6</sup>Lench, *The Story of Methodism in Bonavista*, 76.

appraised him as “an excellent and zealous man, and a good preacher,” but the other three Newfoundland missionaries wrote in September 1812, that they had to admonish him for drinking too much liquor: he had “defeated the end of your Mission, betrayed the cause of God, and ruined your character and usefulness, besides disregarding the rules of our Connexion.”<sup>7</sup> He repented and it was agreed “that he would have a further trial.”<sup>8</sup>

This brings into sharp relief the role of the Methodist laity in Bonavista. They upheld Methodism for over a decade after George Smith’s departure in 1797, and continued to do so despite receiving a missionary who turned out to be an encumbrance. It was not until Ellis’ arrival in 1813 that they received further missionary help. He had not intended to stay for the winter, but witnessed “such a work of God” that he stayed till the following summer.<sup>9</sup> This is not to say that the consecutive ministries of Ellis and the two Hicksons were not significant.<sup>10</sup> All three met a large response in Bonavista, but in speaking of “the great things” done during James Hickson’s first year, Ellis was careful to

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<sup>7</sup>SOAS, WMMS *The Annual Report of the State of Missions*, 1811, 14. SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 17, Letter of Samuel McDowell, William Ellis and Richard Taylor, Carbonear, September 20, 1812.

<sup>8</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 17, Samuel McDowell, William Ellis to Thomas Blanshard, Carbonear, October 21, 1812.

<sup>9</sup>*Methodist Magazine* 1815, 158, William Ellis to Missionary Committee, November 26, 1814.

<sup>10</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, Box 1, File 21, James Hickson, Bonavista, December 6, 1816; File 23, Thomas Hickson to James Wood, Bonavista, August 25, 1817; John Rylands Library, PLP53.34.1, James Hickson, Port de Grave, to Joseph Entwisle, Methodist Chapel, City Road, London, August 14, 1817.

mention the work of Saint and Cole.<sup>11</sup> A decade later the missionary Charles Bates reported that, regrettably, a local preacher, probably Cole, had had to move to winter quarters because of poverty at Bonavista. This layman “in conjunction with two or three others, fostered the infant society of this place for many years after Mr. George Smith had left it, and before the regular appointment of a Missionary, and since the latter period has regularly acted in the capacity of a Local Preacher in the absence of the Missionary.”<sup>12</sup>

Lench possibly played down the role and ability of laymen in calling them “acceptable preachers.” William Wilson thought that Saint “preached with much acceptance,” a much more positive nuance.<sup>13</sup> This yeoman service by Charles Saint and Benjamin Cole, and the vigorous Methodism they nurtured, is entirely missed in the “barely glowing embers” assessment by John Webster Grant of Newfoundland Methodism in 1815.<sup>14</sup> When James Hickson arrived at Bonavista at the end of the year he testified, “Glory be to God. I have felt more of his love while I have been in this place than I ever did before. I received the blessing of sanctification when my dear friend Mr.

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<sup>11</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 21, William Ellis to James Wood, St. John's, November 23, 1816.

<sup>12</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 20, 1825-1828, Charles Bates, Bonavista, December 8, 1826.

<sup>13</sup>Wilson, *Newfoundland and its Missionaries*, 179.

<sup>14</sup>Grant, “Methodist Origins in Atlantic Canada,” 36.

Saint ... was praying.”<sup>15</sup>

Missionary reports show that it was revivals in the north, not organization and administration, which account for the larger numbers. Moreover, these revivals were popular movements. In the correspondence there is a tendency for missionaries to highlight their role, and either to ignore the lay contribution, or to let it recede into the background. John Bell, the chairman of the District, writing to James Wood, a member of the WMMS, stated “The Lord owned the labours of Brother James Hickson and sinners have been convinced of sin and converted to God.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, in the clerical discourse, the role of the lay leaders is lost and it becomes identified with the Wesleyan missionary who happened to be present. However, William Ellis, more familiar with Bonavista, and more open to lay ministry, included the work of Saint and Cole. In 1815 Ellis told Thomas Blanshard that Methodism was doing well in Bonavista despite his lengthy absence because of the “indefatigable exertion” of these two men ministering to the people by preaching, exhorting and leading class meetings.<sup>17</sup> Ellis had by then moved on to Blackhead, leaving Bonavista unsupplied.<sup>18</sup> In other words, Bonavista Methodism relied

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<sup>15</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 19, James Hickson to James Buckley, Bonavista, December 16, 1815.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., File 23, John Bell to James Wood, Island Cove, June 17, 1817.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., File 21, William Ellis to James Wood, St. John's, November 18, 1816; File 18, William Ellis to Thomas Blanshard, Adams Cove, January 18, 1815.

<sup>18</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 15, 1800-1817, William Ellis, Sampson Busby, John Pickavant to Thomas Blanshard, Carbonear, January 6, 1815.

on local leadership for both its ministry and revivals. Not that the missionaries did not play a significant role, particularly through their preaching, but lay leaders were active contributors.

Bonavista Methodism was a vernacular religion. During the long absences of a missionary it was the people who maintained Methodist spirituality. Even when a missionary was there, they did not recede into the background. For instance, it was the people, and not the missionary, who were prominent in the flagstaff showdown at Bonavista. When the Methodist chapel opened in 1814, the magistrate, a member of the Church of England, was shocked that the Methodists hoisted a flag to signal a service. "What, directly opposite the church?" He vowed to cut the flagstaff down if it was flown again. This was a confrontation of enormous local drama. The population had a week to wait, discuss, and speculate about the coming confrontation. On the Sunday the townspeople "assembled in considerable numbers." As the magistrate's son was lifting the axe upon the order, "Jared, cut down the flagstaff," Charles Saint said that he "had taken advice." The magistrate was unnerved upon hearing the legal term "advice" and withdrew his command. Unsure about his authority, "his worship retired amidst the jeers of the people." Such was the moment of the encounter, and so fixed in the memory of the population, that the event was immortalized as a ballad.<sup>19</sup> Gerard Ford, the magistrate, was so deeply shaken that it changed his views to the point that he bought a pew in the

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<sup>19</sup>Wilson, *Newfoundland and its Missionaries*, 200-202. See Wilson for excerpt of ballad.

new chapel and supported the Methodist missionary from 1815. Charles Lench later concluded, "we think in charity that it was only the result of a misunderstanding." But this seems due to Ford's daughter and grandsons having had become members, and Lench wanting to be conciliatory, rather than to the historical clash that it was.<sup>20</sup> The flagstaff confrontation echoed down the century, for it took place not esoterically in books, between clergy, or in a drawing room, but was visible to all, replete with drama, and rich in symbol. The people had taken on the magistrate, a defender of the Church of England, who had to walk away with the Methodist flag still flying over his head.

In the 1820s there continued to be a vibrant vernacular Methodism at Bonavista. Wilson, who was "ever jotting down in his note book anything of interest that might be turned to good account in after days," was the first to record the membership of the circuit, when he entered five class leaders in 1823 with weekly pastoral supervision for 113 members.<sup>21</sup> Noting that Bonavista Methodism had never lacked lay leaders, Lench spoke of the importance of the class meeting, which by 1919 had experienced a severe decline. Without the class meeting Methodism would be "largely shorn of her strength" for it was the source of its "phenomenal growth and progress."<sup>22</sup> He was making the

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<sup>20</sup>Lench, *The Story of Methodism in Bonavista*, 57, 110.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 80, 49-50.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 51-52. Methodism had begun as an *ecclesiola in ecclesia* in protest against the spiritual laxity of the Church of England, and class meetings were the form of *collegia pietatis* which were its hallmark. For the role of the *collegia pietatis* in forming a "pure" church within the church, and Wesley's borrowing the framework from the Moravians, see Joachim Wach, *Sociology of Religion*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944),

argument that the laity, and not the clergy, were the key to Methodist growth.

In January, 1824 a massive revival, lasting till the end of April, began at Bonavista and spread to Bird Island Cove and Catalina, the three main centres of the circuit. As a result of this revival the circuit increased in membership from 113 in 1823 to 200 in 1824 and to 260 in 1825, the highest of any circuit on the island.<sup>23</sup> The people took the lead in reaching for ecstasy, and the missionary, while not absent, played only a subsidiary role. It was at the love feast on January 15 that people were first converted and immediately testified of their salvation; what is more, others "were forward to speak" of their desire. In the first week of March about twenty were converted, that is, "set ... at glorious liberty," at Bird Island Cove from which arose "a shout of joy." When James Hickson went back to Bonavista all he did was announce a hymn and immediately the people took over with "wailings, mournings, groanings, and bitter cries" of repentance. On Sunday afternoon he visited a part of the harbour where some were in a state of repentance and two were converted, but meanwhile, by people taking the lead, there was "another meeting held in another part of the harbour at the same hour where eight souls received the Spirit of adoption and cried 'Abba Father.'" In the service that night, March 7, it was the people who led the service again,

One respectable and able young man cried aloud just as he was leaving his seat in

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173-176; and Davies and Rupp, *A History of the Methodist Church in Britain*, 51-52, 218-224.

<sup>23</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, 1823, 1824, 1825.

the singing gallery before he reached his place below. The Lord filled him with exceeding joy and he with his able voice announced in the ears of all present that God had for Christ's sake pardoned his sin and that he was not ashamed to declare it before all men. This made every wound bleed more abundantly but was as a cordial to mine and every believer's heart. My voice was soon drowned amidst the bitterest cries. Those that had found mercy applied themselves to exhorting and praying with the distressed. Many, most all as they were brought into liberty became exhorters - parents hastened to their children, and children to their parents ... I went up into the gallery and looked down on what was passing below, and it put me in mind of the house of the prodigal's father when his son that was lost was found, was dead and was alive again.<sup>24</sup>

The missionary became not the leader of this meeting, but simply one of the participants, and finally just an observer. It was the "able young man," filled with "exceeding joy" who was the catalyst. The meeting was filled with the voices of the whole congregation as they prayed for and exhorted one another, with the missionary viewing them from the gallery. The meeting began at 6 or 7 p.m. on Sunday evening and continued until 3 a.m. the following morning. Some were on their knees praying for six hours. Nearly 40 people, through the ministry of their friends, relatives and neighbours, were converted during that single meeting.

This was more like a camp meeting than a gathering where the preacher was ordering the various aspects of a service. As Nathan Hatch has observed, in camp meetings the preacher was superceded by the emotional release and loud testimonials of the congregation.<sup>25</sup> It was the people themselves who were the initiators and movers after

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., Reel 19, 1824-1825, John Boyd, Journal, Trinity, March 1, 1824.

<sup>25</sup>Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 50. For a Canadian example, the Hay Bay camp meeting, see Rawlyk, *The Canada Fire*, 143-161.

they had come together as the voice of the preacher was drowned out “amidst the bitterest cries.” Moreover, those “brought into liberty” joined the converted, becoming “exhorters” along with them. In contrast to the previous revival of 1814, where Ellis observed that “with the exception of one man, conviction for sin was deep and rational; nothing wild or noisy,” Hickson states there were “such wailings, mournings, groanings, and bitter cries I never witnessed before.”<sup>26</sup> It may have been too extreme for him. Commenting on a later revival he stated that he was thankful they were preserved from “every mark of wildness ... which many run, in extraordinary revivals ... my soul hateth it.”<sup>27</sup> Yet, these conversions were no ephemeral phenomenon, for many of these individuals approached life with a whole new orientation. Mary House, a convert who had been “a sinner of no ordinary description” went on to maintain “an upright character” and to be held in “the esteem and friendship” of the society of which she became a member, and others, for the next twelve years, and died faithful to her beliefs.<sup>28</sup>

Monday night between candlelight and midnight, fourteen or fifteen more were converted at another meeting. One man “appeared as one in deep convulsions, his handkerchief off, his shirt neck unbuttoned, and waistcoat open, and a friend wiping the

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<sup>26</sup>*Methodist Magazine*, 1815, 158, William Ellis to Missionary Committee, Adam’s Cove, November 26, 1814.

<sup>27</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 2, 1819/20-1823/25, File 51, James Hickson to Committee, Island Cove, July 5, 1820.

<sup>28</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 24, 1835-1837, Adam Nightingale, Bonavista, August 30, 1836.

sweat steaming from his head and bosom.” Both he and his wife were converted and “returned home together rejoicing in God their Saviour.” Another man was “filled with raptures of joy” at his conversion and when he came over to the missionary in the meeting, said Hickson, “his joy became more ecstatic and I caught a measure of his spirit.” Clearly, then, the missionary was more of an observer than a participant, and certainly not an initiator, as the people were attaining the ecstasy they were reaching for.

The revival continued at Bird Island Cove and Catalina while the missionary was at Bonavista. On March 20 at Catalina, sealers “from different parts of the country” gained first-hand experience of the revival when several schooners came into the harbour because of contrary winds. Hickson said, “Some mocked it, some doubted it, some were pricked in their heart, and by all it was made a subject of conversation.”<sup>29</sup> No doubt that conversation continued on the schooners as they went to the ice, and in homes and stages when they returned to their settlements to prepare for the Labrador fishery. What is more it was a conversation of fishermen discussing what they had seen and heard from other fishermen, not from an elite in Harbour Grace or St. John’s. In this way the vernacular Methodism of the Bonavista Peninsula had great potential to spread to other communities.

The revival extended over several communities and continued for four months. The missionary travelled from place to place lending a sermon and encouragement here and there. For example, during a visit to Bird Island Cove at the end of March, Hickson found that the membership had increased from two to 39. He openly acknowledged that it

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., Reel 19, 1824-1825, James Hickson, Bonavista, October 25, 1824.

was not his ministry which precipitated this tremendous growth of Methodism. Rather George Crewe, a class leader, was "the chief instrument that God used in this place." Hickson probably started off as a reluctant participant in this revival, being "especially averse to noise and every thing like disorder in the worship of God." But he quickly became a defender of the "apparent disorder" and seeming "confusion" in the services when he saw that people were being converted, and how it was happening. The noise was from those who were in a state of conviction and repentance. The confusion was from those who were praying for and exhorting them, or "communicating to each other what they feel." Certainly he concluded that these events were not his doing, nor in a way his responsibility, since he was persuaded they occurred because "the Spirit of God is so generally and eminently poured out." Yet while the people were totally involved in the revival, Hickson seemed to be on the periphery.

The revival would also have given the Methodists of the Peninsula an identity separate from that of the Church of England. Its vernacular dimension, with practically everyone speaking in extemporaneous prayer, exhortation and praise, and its ecstasy, were distinctive from the clergy- or lay-read service of sermon and responses from the Prayer Book. Some members of the Church of England perceived the threat, for Hickson noted that at Bonavista, "The Church, the Church, leave not your Church was heard on every side." At Bird Island Cove some who converted in the Methodist meeting wanted to remain in the Church of England, but were rejected by a portion of the local Church of

England congregation.<sup>30</sup>

However, the vigorous Bonavista circuit was not well served by the District Meeting. In 1832 the laity were more hindered than helped by a missionary once again. William Wilson, it seems, was “extremely disliked.”<sup>31</sup> The following year Wilson received a letter from the Committee that the District Meeting charged him “with having conducted myself so improperly that there is scarcely a place or Circuit in the whole District willing to receive me and that all the Societies shun me as a common pest.”<sup>32</sup> However, since the Anglican clergyman, George Dodsworth, was “not merely unpopular” but “absolutely held in contempt,” William Bullock, the Anglican clergyman at Trinity, was worried that the Methodists would still capitalize on the situation. He wrote to Archdeacon Wix: “There is no keeping back the truth that the Mission of Bonavista is fast sliding out of our hands and unless you do something quickly to save it, there will be a complete secession from the Church.”<sup>33</sup>

That the Church of England was losing ground in Bonavista in the 1830s is surprising. It was immediately following the revival that George Coster, the archdeacon,

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid. Lench, *The Story of Methodism in Bonavista*, 142.

<sup>31</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A192, William Bullock to Archdeacon Wix, Trinity, March 28, 1832.

<sup>32</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 5, 1833/34-1837/38, File 204, William Wilson, Journal, Trinity, November 13, 1833. Wilson defended himself against three charges in his letter from Trinity of December 3, 1833. See File 204.

<sup>33</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A192, William Bullock to Archdeacon Wix, Trinity, March 28, 1832.

was sent there in 1825. He was also made the ecclesiastical commissary. Thus Bonavista was the site of the highest ecclesiastical office until Edward Wix's appointment in 1830, when the archdeaconry moved to St. John's. Moreover, when Bishop Inglis visited Bonavista in 1827, he "met a large congregation," confirmed 210 persons, and consecrated the church and graveyard, thus officially making it Church of England property.<sup>34</sup>

However, unlike at nearby Trinity, which also had a permanent clergyman, the Church of England was not able to gain a monolithic hold on Bonavista. It seems that a vibrant lay religion sympathetic to evangelicalism had been present for some time. A significant portion of the local congregation had asked the SPG in 1795 to appoint George Smith, the evangelical Methodist missionary, as Church of England clergyman.<sup>35</sup> Coster, soon after his appointment, was also faced with an evangelical element. The Newfoundland School Society inquired about setting up a school in the town, which he wanted to discourage. He wrote to the secretary of the SPCK, knowing he would receive a sympathetic ear, instead of to the whole board of the SPG because "a certain party in the Church" was represented among its active members and they would not agree with his sentiments. This "certain party" was in charge of the Newfoundland School Society, and

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<sup>34</sup>*A Sermon Preached ... together with The Report of the Society for the Year 1827*, Bishop John Inglis, Journal, June 24, 1827, 77-78.

<sup>35</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 16, Bonavista Petition with 37 signatures to Archbishop of Canterbury with a cover letter by magistrate John Bland, October 8, 1795. See also *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1833, 8-9.

though belonging to the Church of England, were characterized by "Evangelical principles and feelings." Yet they were doing "too much good" for him to publicly oppose them, because as a result they had popular support. Moreover, although they were strongly attached to the Church of England he did not want them "to form a junction with any of the enemies of the establishment," that is, the Methodists. They were intent on coming to Bonavista but he argued with them against it "so strongly, assigning reasons so indisputably good," that they gave up for the moment. Then the Assistant Secretary, Mark Willoughby, visited Newfoundland and came to Bonavista and started talking with the residents. Coster attempted to dissuade him saying there was a school there already and the people were too poor to pay and would not keep their promises. He was "encouraged, however, by others to go round the Harbour and consult the people," did so, and received much support. Coster said he could not argue further lest "I should only render myself suspected by hostile feelings," which, of course, he had. The Newfoundland School Society disregarded his advice, sent two teachers to Bonavista, and as a result the "The Day School of our Reader is forsaken by every scholar." Their presence also raised a problem with the Sunday school, for if he let them teach, they would want to be solely in charge of it and would report it "as wholly theirs," as had happened in Harbour Grace. The problem was they were so much more qualified than his "reader" and had such popular support that he could not stop them.<sup>36</sup> Thus the Church of

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<sup>36</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A192, George Coster to Richard Lendon, Cloisters, Westminster. Bonavista, November 9, 1826. "A copy of the letter sent to Mr. Parker, Secretary to the Society PCK;" Guildhall Library, *Proceedings of Newfoundland and*

England in Bonavista had a threefold tension, those who were in sympathy with Coster's views, those who supported the Newfoundland School Society, and the evangelicals who were sympathetic towards Methodism. This threefold division was a reality for the Church of England in much of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Newfoundland.

In the spring of 1834 there was another large revival in Bonavista enlarging the Methodist membership from 174 to 254, the first increase since the revival a decade before.<sup>37</sup> It began on March 10 and continued through April, presided over by the veteran missionary William Ellis who had been 25 years in the colony. Although he noted that it caused him to work harder than at any time previously, his account reveals that he was more of an observer than an initiator. It started amidst the people during a love feast instead of during a clergy-focused event, and continued throughout the week during prayer meetings. When he returned from Bird Island Cove in the evening on Good Friday and entered the chapel, he was completely astonished at what he saw, "Many faces beaming with joy, many mourners groaning for pardon, and all engaged either in praise of prayer. I believe about 25 were made the subjects of God's favour this day." He simply became part of a service which was already taking place and continued until 2 a.m. He would not have been able to attend all of the prayer meetings throughout Bonavista on Saturday. On Easter Sunday he could not preach as the people themselves took over the

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*British North American Society for Educating the Poor, 1826-1827* (London: Gunnell and Shearman, 1827), 22-24.

<sup>37</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, 1825, 1833-1834.

service, "the songs of those lately pardoned, and the sighs of the distressed constrained me to leave off speaking, and stand and ponder and adore the God of love." Neither could he preach in the evening as the people "wrestled with God" from 6 to 10 p.m. Not only that, while he was at Bonavista, a similar revival was taking place at Bird Island Cove. The people saw these events as a "work of God" which was seen as a revival of the religion of experience. God's workings were evidenced through the emotions of the people, through feeling, as their hearts were "melted" and they fell to the floor, as they cried aloud, groaned, "wrestled," and wept, and as they rejoiced in love till 2 a.m. with "faces beaming," still "wet with tears," but now of joy.<sup>38</sup> This was the heart of Methodism, the source of its energy and zeal as a popular movement. Its form and structure were simply a shell of this religion of the heart, which was all that remained when the experience faded, and which then became the focus of Methodism itself, and especially of the institutional record.

Apart from a small revival in 1839, the Bonavista circuit declined steadily until 1854.<sup>39</sup> This numerical decline was not as negative as may first appear, since much of it was due to migration for resources, rather than to a falling away from Methodism.<sup>40</sup> Jabez

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., Reel 23, 1832-1835, William Ellis, Bonavista, August 12, 1834.

<sup>39</sup>UC Archive, WY 100, Box 1, 1829-1873, "Minutes, Newfoundland District, Wesleyan Methodist Church, England, 1829-1850," Minutes for 1839; PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, 1855.

<sup>40</sup>Chesley W. Sanger, "The Evolution of Sealing and the Spread of Settlement in Northeastern Newfoundland," in Mannion, ed., *The Peopling of Newfoundland*, 136-145.

Ingham noted in 1846 that “many members have left the place and gone to remote places where no Wesleyan Minister can visit them. Many more are on the point of leaving us for the same localities.”<sup>41</sup> Thus, as with Conception Bay, there was a continual loss of Methodists from the Bonavista circuit as they moved further north to places where there was no missionary to keep records for the District Meeting.

There was another quite large revival in Bonavista in the late fall of 1854 when membership doubled from 150 to 299.<sup>42</sup> The revival happened during the tenure of a Thomas Smith, an unlikely coincidence. Smith had not wanted to come to Newfoundland, preferring Nova Scotia or New Brunswick, and went to Bonavista under protest, pleading to be sent somewhere else.<sup>43</sup> He was keen that missionaries maintain their status above the people, that they “be given to the pursuit and cultivation of intellectual attainments ... maintain a suitable social position ... be respectable in their personal appearance.”<sup>44</sup> Yet in January 1855, he found himself in the midst of “a

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<sup>41</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 28, 1846-1848, Jabez Ingham, Bonavista, October 27, 1846.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, 1855. The 1857 census showed an increase of Methodist adherents from 675 to 929 and an Anglican decline of 130. By the time of the 1869 census the Methodists had a majority in Bonavista. At nearby Bird Island Cove, while the Anglicans had increased slightly from 52 to 72 in 1857, the Methodists had increased from 301 to 435. CNS, Census of Newfoundland, 1845, 1857, 1869.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., Reel 30, 1852-1853, Thomas Smith, Port de Grave, November 22, 1852; Reel 31, 1854-1867, Thomas Smith, Port de Grave, April 24, 1854; May 29, 1854.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., Reel 31, 1854-1867, Thomas Smith, Port de Grave, April 24, 1854.

powerful and extensive Revival of Religion in the Bonavista Circuit.”<sup>45</sup> Although he is a large figure in his journal with his preaching and arranging, he did not bring about the revival, which had happened against a backdrop of the fear of cholera. That role was acknowledged to belong to “a respectable fishermen” who was converted in St. John’s earlier in the fall, likely while selling his fish and acquiring winter supplies.<sup>46</sup> Neither was Smith a major player. For example, on November 14 1854, he was asked to come to the home of the class leader, James Brown, and upon entering witnessed an event he had never before seen. The people had gotten together and brought about their own revival with “about sixteen persons ... giving a lively expression to their joyous feelings in a variety of ways,” some testifying, some singing, and others congratulating each other for their happiness of salvation. They all rushed him to share their “transport of joy.” He then endeavoured to comfort others who had not been “set at liberty.” Similarly, he was sent for to close a prayer meeting of “very powerful emotions” on December 12, in which some were rejoicing and praising God for their salvation, while others were weeping and crying aloud.<sup>47</sup> The people themselves had come together reaching for ecstasy, and Smith understood his role to be, not to accentuate the joy, but to simply subdue and terminate

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., Thomas Smith to the Committee, Bonavista, January 25, 1855; *Methodist Magazine*, Vol. II, 1855, 653-656.

<sup>46</sup>CNS, *The Wesleyan Notices Newspaper*, March 29, 1855, “Extracts of two Letters from the Rev. Edmund Botterell, dated St. John’s, December 26<sup>th</sup>, 1854, and February 6<sup>th</sup>, 1855.”

<sup>47</sup>*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, Vol. II, 1855, 654, 656, Thomas Smith, Bonavista, January 25, 1855.

the meeting.

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century there was little concerted Methodist effort north of Bonavista. In 1795 George Smith decided to leave Conception Bay and preach farther north. In Smith's *History* we read a very brief condensation of this work in the biography by his son, published in the 1833 *Methodist Magazine*.

For more than a year, Smith confined his labours chiefly to Conception Bay. He then went northward as far as Greenspond, where, as well as at Trinity Bay and Bonavista, he formed small societies.<sup>48</sup>

We can conclude due to the migratory habits of the population that some of the members of that Greenspond Methodist society possibly had become familiar with Methodism while in Conception Bay.<sup>49</sup> Three decades passed until a second Methodist missionary journeyed north. John Corlett, stationed at Trinity, left a record of his July 1826 visit to Greenspond. He was struck by the lack of religious observance on Sunday. The

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<sup>48</sup>Smith, *History of the Methodist Church ... of Eastern British America*, Vol. I, 290. See also *Methodist Magazine*, 1833, 8. The London Missionary Society considered sending a missionary to this region - Bonavista, Greenspond and Trinity Bay - in 1800. SOAS, LMS, America, Box 1, John Hillyard to Joseph Hardcastle, St. John's, July 18, 1800.

<sup>49</sup>Sealing was a great attraction. In 1793 exports of seal oil from Bonavista and Greenspond were greater by far than anywhere else on the island. CO 194/21, fol. 425. "Annual Report on the Fishery and Trade of Newfoundland for the Year ending October 10, 1793." Quoted in Ryan, *The Ice Hunters*, 52. The northward trend of population migration for staples is well documented by Staveley, Macpherson, Sanger, and Head. See Michael Staveley, "Population Dynamics in Newfoundland: The Regional Patterns;" Alan G. Macpherson, "A Modal Sequence in the People of Central Bonavista Bay, 1676-1857;" Sanger, "The Evolution of Sealing and the Spread of Settlement in Northeastern Newfoundland," in Mannion, ed., *The Peopling of Newfoundland*. Head, *Eighteenth Century Newfoundland*, Chapters 10 and 11.

merchants had their stores open, people bought fishing gear and provisions or relaxing “rehearsing the news,” and children played. The people were “not, however, so abandoned” as to be fishing on Sunday, although they made preparations so they would be ready for fishing on Monday. Corlett was struck by the lack of observance, but there was more than a vestigial remembrance of the Sabbath in Greenspond. So much so that at the height of the fishing season Corlett could draw a crowd to his preaching in Garland’s store, which on that Sunday ended up replacing the normal Church of England service led by a lay reader. He spent the week visiting and distributing tracts, but met only one family with whom his earnest religion struck a responsive note and who wanted him to stay. The following Sunday was a different matter. About 70 or 80 people came to the afternoon service and “all were very attentive and serious; many trembled and wept much.” Moreover, on Monday there was a notable decrease in swearing as fishermen left the harbour. One young man spoke to him of renewing the thirst for God that he had before coming to Greenspond. Unlike George Smith’s visit, however, there was no indication of his gathering any into a society.

The Methodists lost an opportunity in not responding to Corlett’s call for a missionary to Greenspond. The merchants were against him because they were carrying on business on the Sabbath, which the people also desired to do, along with hunting seals and birds. Singing and dancing were also popular. Yet there was obviously enough sympathetic response to his message to make Greenspond the centre of a mission, especially since people did business with the merchants in Greenspond from Middle Bill

Cove, Pinchard's Island, Swain's Island, Fool's Island, Gooseberry Island and Pouch Island, all of which could "be easily visited, with the happiest effects, several times a year."<sup>50</sup> It is quite possible that a portion of his congregation on the second Sunday were from some of these islands.

The news of the Methodists venturing north set off alarm bells among the Church of England clergy. Within the week following Corlett's visit, Archdeacon George Coster, the clergyman at Bonavista in the midst of a Methodist revival, sent letters to both Bishop Inglis in Halifax and Anthony Hamilton, the secretary to the SPG in London, warning them that he had just heard "only a few days ago" that the Methodists were up to "much mischief" in Greenspond. They had better send a clergyman fast, before a Methodist missionary was sent there.<sup>51</sup> Coster immediately went to Greenspond "a place of more than common importance" to recoup any Methodist gains. He approached the people with an artful bluff, telling them that he had no intention of competing with another religious agency for their support. They were free to choose, but the SPG would send a missionary to them only if they showed "a decided preference of them to all other." Coster told Hamilton he was surprised at their "unanimous" consent and promised to do his best to get them a missionary.<sup>52</sup> Though not able to send a missionary right away, the

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<sup>50</sup>*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1827, 129-132, John Corlett, Journal, 1826.

<sup>51</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A192, George Coster to Anthony Hamilton, Bonavista, July 19, 1826.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, George Coster, Bonavista, November 4, 1826.

Church of England hierarchy took immediate steps to secure Greenspond. The archdeacon sent John Chapman, the SPG clergyman at Twillingate, to stay a month the following summer, and the Bishop of Nova Scotia, in his first episcopal visit to Newfoundland, made it a port of call and confirmed 76 persons and “encouraged the expectation of a clergyman.” He also consecrated the church, thus securing it legally as Church of England property.<sup>53</sup>

The Anglicans could not relax, however. Coster worried that if they continued without a clergyman in Greenspond and the Methodists made another attempt, “it may not fail a second time.” Not understanding that Corlett was visiting without any promise of a missionary, Coster overestimated Methodist funds and ministerial supply thinking their resources “must be inexhaustible.” He feared losing Greenspond and other places:

The choicest of the flock will be won over to their assemblies, for despair of being served in their own way, and from a reasonable preference for any mode of worship to none at all; and having been hearers for a while, they will in the end be induced to become members of the Society - when they are irrevocably lost to us.<sup>54</sup>

Newfoundland did get another Anglican missionary in 1827 but Bishop Inglis sent him to Ferryland instead of to Greenspond. Coster was disappointed, since Greenspond was important “in giving us the command of Bonavista Bay.” Since it was a supply centre for the region it was in that sense even “far more favourably situated than Bonavista,” and

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., John Chapman to Anthony Hamilton, Secretary, Twillingate, December 15, 1827. *A Sermon Preached ... together with The Report of the Society for the Year 1827*, Bishop John Inglis, Journal, June 28, 1827, 80-81.

<sup>54</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A192, George Coster to Anthony Hamilton, Bonavista, December, 1826.

also had direct commerce with England. He was thus “most anxious” to “take secure possession of it.”<sup>55</sup> A further cause of unease was the dissension within Greenspond itself. Bishop Inglis noted in his journal that the people were “distracted by contentions, which unfortunately check every good undertaking.”<sup>56</sup> Such discord would likely be replicated in religious differences and did not augur well for Coster’s vision for the people of Greenspond as a single Church of England congregation.

As a strategist Coster saw an even greater problem in attempting to “secure possession” of the numerous coastal settlements for the Church of England. Because of a limited number of fishing rooms and fishing grounds, settlements were continually reproducing themselves as the population grew. It was Coster who was the first to clearly state this settlement pattern and the problem of cost it presented for providing religious services and education:

Every little cove along the coast is now more or less inhabited, and those which today are perhaps occupied by only a single family may in a few years be thickly populated. But the population cannot increase in any such place much beyond a certain point. When there are as many fishing rooms erected as there is space for, a partial migration must soon take place to some other spot not fully occupied. Thus almost innumerable little settlements are forming too poor to contribute more than the merest trifle towards their own religious instruction or their children’s education.<sup>57</sup>

Since these communities would rarely be large enough to fund clergy, Coster saw the

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., George Coster, Bonavista, July 21, 1827.

<sup>56</sup>*A Sermon Preached ... together with The Report of the Society for the Year 1827*, Bishop John Inglis, Journal, June 28, 1827, 80.

<sup>57</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A192, George Coster, Bonavista, July 21, 1827.

answer in lay readers providing religious services, and where capable, filling educational needs by teaching Sunday school. These lay readers would also be a line of defence against Methodists, in preventing “churches which we caused to be built from being changed into conventicles.” His view was that Church of England missionaries encouraged the people to build churches in their settlements and Methodists came and took them over. In reality, communities of their own initiative built churches in the hope of a missionary. They were thus common property until they were handed over to either denomination exclusively by a majority in the community. For the Church of England this occurred when the Bishop “consecrated” the property. For the Methodists it occurred when it was “settled on the Conference Plan” and thereby made the property of the Connexion.<sup>58</sup> Of course, there was much more to religion than property. A corollary of this concept of lay ministry is that whoever, whether Methodist or Church of England, was more adept in providing for the spiritual needs within the community would “secure” it or a large portion of it to the one and it would be “lost” to the other. Therefore, because of the potential spread of vernacular Methodism, although the Anglicans had a clergyman in Greenspond in 1828 and in Twillingate in 1817, decades before any Methodist missionary, there was no certainty that either Bonavista North or Green Bay was secure to

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<sup>58</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 20, P.G.W. Eastaff to Committee, St. John's, October 30, 1816. The Wesleyan Methodist securing of property began with William Black at Carbonear during his visit to Conception Bay in 1791. “The Journal of William Black, in his visit to Newfoundland,” *Arminian Magazine*, 1792, 235. Smith, *History of the Methodist Church ... of Eastern British America*, Vol. I, 283.

them.

Meanwhile, instead of concentrating on the northeast coast where the coves and harbours were beginning to fill up with inhabitants, the Methodists concentrated on a mission among the Inuit of Labrador. In 1821 the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Districts appointed a Mr. Avaré to the "the Indians on the Labrador Coast." He died before undertaking the voyage so the missionaries in Newfoundland were told about the intended mission. A simultaneous initiative had been taken by the Newfoundland District to send a missionary to Labrador "to make enquiries with reference to the establishment of a mission to the Indians." With the death of Avaré the Committee approved the Newfoundland initiative and "the instructions" sent out to Avaré were "were transferred to the Missionary who may have been appointed by the chairman of that District."<sup>59</sup> Dragging its feet the Newfoundland District informed the Committee in 1823 that a missionary would be sent the following summer.<sup>60</sup> However, the mission to the Inuit was jeopardized by the attention given to the large number of Methodists engaged in the Labrador fishery from Conception Bay, where the majority of the missionaries were stationed. Thomas Hickson during the summer of 1824 spent considerable time among

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<sup>59</sup>PANL MG 597-33 WMMS, July 1814-July 1851, Minutes of the Missions Committee, London Vol 1-6 (extracts), September 5, 1821. SOAS, *The Report of the Wesleyan - Methodist Missionary Society; 1821* (London: T. Cordeux), cvi.

<sup>60</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, 1823 .

Newfoundland fishermen, but did preach also to the Inuit at Groswater Bay.<sup>61</sup> Because of his success the Committee in London resolved to appoint a missionary for the area.<sup>62</sup> None was appointed, however, and instead Richard Knight visited during the summer fishery of 1825.<sup>63</sup> In 1826 George Ellidge became the first missionary to the Labrador Inuit to stay for the winter, choosing Snook's Cove (southwest of Rigolet) as the site for a "permanent mission."<sup>64</sup> Yet Hickson had reported in 1824 that there was little chance of the mission succeeding "unless the Esquimaux could be prevailed on to settle in kind of Villages during the winter."<sup>65</sup> By 1828 the District Committee was talking of abandoning the Labrador mission as "insurmountable" unless they could model it after "the plan adopted by the Moravians."<sup>66</sup> Thus the Methodist expansion effort was directed away from Greenspond while the Church of England cemented its hold on the island and endeavoured thereby to secure "the command of Bonavista Bay."

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<sup>61</sup>*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1825, 58-62, 136-138, 206-207.

<sup>62</sup>SOAS, *The Report of the Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary Society for the year ending December 1824* (London: B. Bensley), 133.

<sup>63</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 2, 1819/20-1823/25, File 105-107, Richard Knight, Journal of visit to Labrador, October 22, 1825.

<sup>64</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS, Reel 20, 1825-1828, John Corlett, Trinity Bay, November, 1826; *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1827, 132.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, Reel 34, September 1814-December 1867, Minutes of the Missions Committee, London. Outgoing Letters - extracts. Letter to William Croscombe, St. John's, March 18, 1825.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings. Letter of John Pickavant, Chairman and Richard Knight, Secretary, St. John's, May 10, 1828.

In 1838 William Faulkner drew attention to the wide expanse north of Bonavista without any Methodist missionary, an area which had only one SPG missionary.<sup>67</sup> The short-term response of the District Meeting was to direct the missionary at Bonavista to visit more extensively “than they have been accustomed to do of late years.”<sup>68</sup> Bonavista Bay was a place of mobility resulting in a migratory Methodism. When George Ellidge visited Tickle Cove Pond in the fall of 1842, he found the woman who had been leading a class of “several who consider themselves as members of our Society” had moved on to another place. In her absence the class ceased meeting. It is quite possible, however, that she began another class in her new community. The class at either place was part of the undocumented diaspora of popular Methodism which was not registered in the official records of the Newfoundland District. Such records were only of members and meetings within the immediate purview of the missionary of the circuit, and of class leaders officially appointed by him. Members migrating to the terra incognita of the northeast coast, for example, disappeared from the District minutes, although there is evidence, in Tickle Cove Pond, for example, that the people who were resettled saw themselves as more Methodist than ever.

Ellidge’s account points to a variety within Methodism and a people in continual transition. The new lay reader at Tickle Cove, who had been a member of society and class leader at Bonavista, refused to continue in the same capacity after migrating to

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid., Reel 25, 1838-1840, William Faulkner, St. John’s, December 11, 1838.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., George Ellidge, St. John’s, May 29, 1839.

Tickle Cove because he found the Methodists there too “noisy and disorderly.” George Ellidge, the missionary at Bonavista, was more in sympathy with the lay reader than the people. He represented a more formal Methodism and wanted the same at Tickle Cove, wishing that the official class leader would have prevailed and thus begun “a better state of things” than the religion of the heart cultivated by the previous female class leader who had moved to another place.<sup>69</sup>

Ellidge himself, with his formal Methodism, was welcomed by the people of Salvage during his three week-stay. This is not surprising since many of the residents had migrated from Bonavista, where some of them likely were Methodists, or were sympathetic to Methodism.<sup>70</sup> The Church of England hierarchy would not allow Ellidge to preach in church, so the people and lay reader closed the church and attended his services in the school. An older man, “one of the strongest Churchmen in the place,” said he would speak to the Anglican clergyman on his next visit as to why Ellidge could not speak in the church. In 1842 it was not Salvage, however, but Flat Islands, which showed potential progress for Methodism, for three or four Methodists had migrated there from Carbonear, where they had been members of a class. Ellidge encouraged them to form a

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid., Reel 27, 1842-1845, George Ellidge, Bonavista, December 19, 1842.

<sup>70</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 6, 1837/38-1841/42, File 288, John S. Addy, St. John's, June 11, 1840 - Journal, Salvage, September 19, 1839. The 1845 Census of Newfoundland reported 288 Anglicans, and one Methodist.

class with Mr. Pike as leader, and gave him a copy of Burder's, *Village Sermons*.<sup>71</sup>

Twenty years later there were two classes.<sup>72</sup> Thus Alan Macpherson's statement that it was a "homogenous" community in 1857 needs to be qualified.<sup>73</sup> The 1857 census officially listing the population under the umbrella of the Church of England, masked a deep division.<sup>74</sup> As the missionary of Bonavista North, J. S. Allen, stated, "The doctrines of conversion and the witness of the Spirit are difficulties insurmountable to the generality of the people... Conversion is generally supposed to be the leaving of one church and joining another, while the witness of the Spirit is rank fanaticism."<sup>75</sup> The 1869 census finally officially acknowledged a presence of Methodists on Flat Islands which had been there for at least a quarter century.<sup>76</sup>

By 1860 the bay had just one missionary giving token service to about 1,500

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<sup>71</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 27, 1842-1845, George Ellidge, Bonavista, December 19, 1842.

<sup>72</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, April 6, 1864, J.S. Allen, Greenspond.

<sup>73</sup>Macpherson, "A Modal Sequence in the People of Central Bonavista Bay," 117.

<sup>74</sup>1857 Census listed 210 people of the Church of England and no Methodists.

<sup>75</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, April 6, 1864, J.S. Allen, Greenspond.

<sup>76</sup>The Anglican clergyman, Julian Moreton's observed that the 1857 census overlooked "dissent" in the Greenspond Mission. PANL MG 598 SPG A225, Julian Moreton, Greenspond, September 30, 1858. The 1869 Census listed 54 Methodists at Flat Islands. Methodists complained of census under-reporting. John Brewster commented on the 1845 Census of Grand Bank, "The census, of course, gives a much lower number, as Government Agents know not our Shepherd's mark, and therefore cannot count our sheep." *Wesleyan*, November 24, 1849, John Brewster, "Notices of Newfoundland, No.12."

Methodists.<sup>77</sup> One of the Saints from Bonavista “visited Greenspond in a schooner and held some prayer-meetings which resulted in a revival of religion.”<sup>78</sup> This lay initiative was likely the catalyst for Greenspond being designated a “Mission” of Conference and John S. Allen being appointed in 1862. It was Joseph Todhunter, however, appointed in 1864, who obtained the status of the heroic missionary in the area, much like William Marshall at Twillingate. A great revival, the significance of which it is difficult to overestimate, occurred during his ministry, but it is also difficult to gauge his role. J.B. Wheeler at Musgrave Harbour recalled that during Todhunter’s preaching “strong men shook like aspen leaves, mothers wept aloud and cried for mercy at the penitent form,” and as the missionary, Jeremiah Embree, put it, “the work advanced gloriously under him.”<sup>79</sup> But it would appear he was only one significant player in it. Maybe a more accurate perspective is that the revival was “witnessed” by Todhunter, as another writer said.<sup>80</sup> During it, astoundingly, Cobblers Island at the northern end of the circuit became

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<sup>77</sup>This is an interpolation. The 1857 Census listed 1083 Methodists and the 1869 Census listed 2094 for Bonavista Bay.

<sup>78</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, November, 1893, 164, “My Predecessors,” Charles Lench.

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*, March, 1914, 15, Obituary of “Sister Ann Whiteway” by J.B. Wheeler, Musgrave Harbour, January 28, 1914; *Wesleyan*, September 9, 1876, Report from Greenspond Circuit by J. Embree, Blackhead, August 25, 1876.

<sup>80</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, March, 1902, 10.

Methodist almost overnight.<sup>81</sup> At a four-hour prayer meeting in a house at the former community “The Holy Spirit came as ‘a rushing mighty wind’ ... some were in a state of great prostration, and strong men under the stroke of the Spirit wept like children.” At the latter the residents were in prayer all week “unable to pursue their daily avocations.” When it was over only three or four adults remained unconverted.<sup>82</sup> There were also converts at Cape Freels, Middle Bill Cove, and Cape Island at the same “marvellous spiritual awakening.”<sup>83</sup> One can gather how it spread as a popular movement from the conversion of Jacob Rideout. On a winter afternoon people “in their newly-found joy” gathered in a home, probably in the kitchen, to exhort, sing praise, and intercede in prayer for a neighbour. “The intercessory, importunate, faithful petitions, intermingled with sobbing, penitential supplications of the brokenhearted, were soon followed by shouts of triumph, praise and thanksgiving, which found expression in holy song.” The young man, Jacob Rideout, who had been on his knees “wringing his hands,” and with “streaming eyes,” arose with “a face radiant and a heart aglow, exclaiming: ‘I love Jesus,

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<sup>81</sup>CNS, Census of Newfoundland, 1869. Sanger, “The Evolution of Sealing and the Spread of Settlement in Northeastern Newfoundland,” 142-145.

<sup>82</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, May 21, 1865, Joseph Todhunter, Greenspond.

<sup>83</sup>The 1869 census showed 43 Methodists where there had been none before. Five years later Cape Freels, Middle Bill Cove had also switched from Church of England to Methodist. At nearby Cape Island, Methodists outnumbered Anglicans by two to one. CNS, Census of Newfoundland, 1857, 1869; Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1874.

hallelujah!”<sup>84</sup> No clergyman was present, no interior architecture of a church building, just people of the community meeting in a house using their gifts of singing, intercession, and exhortation so that a neighbour might be brought from penitential despair to the transport of a felt salvation, a stellar example of “the incarnation of the church into popular culture.” The people as they gathered for hours in kitchens “exalted the vernacular in word and song as the hallowed channel for communicating with and about God.”<sup>85</sup> Even in Greenspond Todhunter was not the initiator of the movement. At one time when he returned to the town he found that already “the work of God had broken out there, and was spreading like fire amongst the dry stubble.” All he did was join the people in their rapture and organize the people, about 50 converts, into classes.<sup>86</sup>

Yet Todhunter was seen as the cause of a massive departure from the Church of England, and as a result he and his people endured a litany of persecutions from Anglicans - windows were broken during services and fowl thrown in among the worshipers. At other times people were “pelted with snowballs” on the way home. Todhunter’s boat was “blubbered” to prevent travel, and once a hole was broken in the

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<sup>84</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, September, 1905, 2, Obituary of Jacob Rideout by Alfred Vincent, August 10, 1905.

<sup>85</sup>Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 9-10.

<sup>86</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, May 21, 1865, Joseph Todhunter, Greenspond. As a result of this revival the 1869 census showed 140 Methodist adherents at Greenspond, where it had not a single Methodist in 1857. By 1874 the Methodists had increased to 458 while the Church of England declined by 137. CNS, Census of Newfoundland, 1857, 1869; Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1874.

skiff so he could not return home. It was Todhunter's fate to receive possibly the worst Methodist maltreatment ever exhibited in Newfoundland, even more extreme than that to John Hoskins. About 60 men lay in wait and attacked him and four friends as they were returning from Pool's Island. Using flake boughs they covered him with blubber from a keg they had brought along and gave him "several blows" to the head so that he had a headache daily for two weeks.<sup>87</sup> Ruth Whitemarsh, originally from Pinchard's Island, who helped clean him up, said the mob also used coal tar and rolled him in feathers.<sup>88</sup> His health was so impaired that he had to return to England.<sup>89</sup> In this act the rage of a segment of the Church of England against Methodism was reified as in the smashing of an icon. All the authority and status was powerless to block or suppress a movement which chose a democratic sharing in the rapture of conversion over the clerical dispensation of religion from a Tractarian distance.

There is evidence however that there was revival in Bonavista North before either Allen or Todhunter. For instance, Julian Moreton in 1859 spoke disparagingly of Methodists who had moved to Poole's Island from Conception Bay. They "practised many indecent extravagances at several revival meetings, which they hold in my people's

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid., May 21, 1865, Joseph Todhunter, Greenspond. Smith added they were going to run him into an opening in the ice, Smith, *History of the Methodist Church ... of Eastern British America*, Vol. II, 166.

<sup>88</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, March, 1913, 14, Obituary of Ruth Whitemarsh.

<sup>89</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, November, 1893, 165, "My Predecessors" by Charles Lench; Ibid., January, 1900, 10.

houses. In most cases their frantic noise and gesture had shocked the people's sense of reverence and propriety." One revival even caused a woman to have "nervous illness and mental derangement."<sup>90</sup>

Greenspond Island itself, even with a Julian Moreton "in full orders" and with a fine new church, was not safe from Methodist overtures.<sup>91</sup> Moreton noted that although the census returned most of the people in the mission as Church of England "a large number" had migrated there from places in Newfoundland "where dissent is rife, and where they attended the Meeting house, and they still hanker after it." Yet he called them "my Flock."<sup>92</sup> Furthermore there was a rapidly growing settlement "at the back of Greenspond Island" which was too far for church attendance and the Methodists were likely to put a chapel there.<sup>93</sup>

Methodists in the region were continually moving about with their message. For example at Cape Island and Cobblers Island, many of them in the exuberance of their recent conversion, had to come to Greenspond, a mercantile centre, for supplies as they had been doing for decades.<sup>94</sup> Methodists also mixed with Anglicans in such "migratory

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<sup>90</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A226, Julian Moreton, Greenspond, June 30, 1859; September 30, 1859.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., A225, Julian Moreton, Greenspond, September 30, 1858.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., A226, Julian Moreton, Greenspond, December 31, 1859.

<sup>94</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 20, 1825-1828, John Corlett, Trinity, July 19, 1825, Journal of a visit to Greenspond, June 5-July 11, 1825. Extract printed in *Wesleyan*

pursuits” as sealing, cutting wood “in the bay” and visiting St. John’s for supplies. In the spring of 1856 Moreton wrote 22 sealing captains to help persuade the crews to donate five percent of their share in the voyage to help pay for the new church.<sup>95</sup> Some of the men who made up these crews would have been Methodists walking over the ice from as far away as Twillingate.<sup>96</sup> After the sealing voyage whole families of Methodists and Anglicans regrouped at different places on the Labrador coast to fish. Due to the continual mobility of the population there were many opportunities for Methodists to be missionaries to their new neighbours in each changing situation.

In conclusion, it was the people who communicated a Methodism of ecstasy to each other in their various pursuits in Bonavista Bay. The organization of Newfoundland into a district had a negligible impact on the area. Methodist clergy were stationed intermittently at Bonavista, but a couple of them were actually hindrances. The work, empowered by revivals, was shouldered by talented local lay leadership at Bonavista, and even more so at Bird Island Cove and Catalina. When Methodist clergy finally arrived in Greenspond in Bonavista North in 1862, the District Meeting having focused on migrants to Labrador up to that time instead, they were greeted by a revival of religion of the heart already in progress. It was this vernacular Methodism that the Church of England, even

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*Methodist Magazine*, 1827, 129-132.

<sup>95</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A222, Julian Moreton, Greenspond, December 31, 1854; March 31, 1855.

<sup>96</sup>*Ibid.*, A194, Thomas Boone, Twillingate, Quarterly Report, Christmas, 1854.

with its authority and long-standing presence centred in Bonavista and Greenspond, was powerless to contain, despite zealous efforts publicly and administratively to do so. Neither Archdeacon Coster attempting to outmaneuver Methodists administratively, nor the Anglican magistrate challenging them publicly, nor residents violently attacking Joseph Todhunter was able to control the vigorous popular movement. How popular it was is singularly illustrated by the conversion of Jacob Rideout at Cape Freels. The evangelical Newfoundland School Society, which was strong in Bonavista and Greenspond, helped Methodism by dividing Anglicanism. Its similar theology also enabled Anglicans to make a shorter step to Methodism than those convinced of Feild's sacramental and ritualistic Tractarianism.

Several persons were struck to the earth, and lay groaning in indescribable anguish. At the same moment many believers were so overpowered with joy and love that they lost all command over themselves. I felt alarmed at such extraordinary demonstrations of religious feeling; insomuch that I could neither 'rejoice with them that rejoiced,' nor 'weep with them that wept.' I stood amazed!<sup>1</sup>

## Chapter Eight: Twillingate and Notre Dame Bay

This chapter examines the challenge of Methodism to the Church of England in Twillingate and Notre Dame Bay. The Church of England had established itself formally in Twillingate before the Methodists, and was quite strong, having a clergyman stationed there, supported by magistrates and merchants. It had also had a Congregationalist element. Yet the Methodists, with the appeal of religious ecstasy, were able to successfully challenge the Anglican order and authority and to supercede the Congregationalists in what was the centre of the bay. Fogo alone exceeded their grasp. Through a migratory vernacular Methodism, people more successfully took over Notre Dame Bay, than either Conception Bay or Bonavista Bay.

The beginning of Methodism in Notre Dame Bay is generally associated with John S. Addy's reconnaissance in 1841 and the subsequent organization of the mission the following year. However, Henry J. Indoe stated that "When the history of Methodism in Notre Dame Bay shall be fully written it will be both interesting and instructive to notice

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<sup>1</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 30, 1852-1853, John Brewster, Green Bay, May 10, 1853. [Green Bay, i.e., Notre Dame Bay].

how that laymen, having been converted in Conception Bay, were the forerunners of the ministers.”<sup>2</sup> This was indeed the case. H.C. Hatcher recalled that “some persons” who had been educated in the Sunday school in Harbour Grace migrated to the bay in 1831, and W. Edgar Mercer gave a glimpse of some of these lay “forerunners” on Twillingate Island:

In the year 1831 a few Wesleyans met in the home of a Bro. Moores, Back Harbour; Bro. Roberts, Bluff Head; Bro. S. Wheeler, Twillingate Harbour; and Bro. Dowland, Little Hr., and held cottage or class meetings.... ‘the new Society’ ... the members called themselves. These little groups, who believed in the Witness of the Spirit, adoption and regeneration through the power of the Holy Spirit, banded themselves together as a Society and were ministered to by local preachers and class leaders, so that ‘the Word ran and was glorified.’ The Methodist revival that was started by Mr. Coughlan was still burning, and souls were being born again of the Spirit and believers were quickened, and for these little groups to keep their faith in spite of the fact that they had not the ministrations of a minister, so that the time arrived when they were able to come together and establish a Church, is one of the miracles of Methodism. Good progress was made during the first ten years of the Society’s existence, so that in 1841 the congregation had increased to such an extent through the amalgamation of these groups, that it was found necessary to secure a Minister and a Chapel, as the early Wesleyan churches were called.<sup>3</sup>

This was the time of the Carbonear-Blackhead “Great Awakening” of 1830-1832, and the revival would have been felt quickly in the Twillingate area because of what

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<sup>2</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, November, 1896, 170. “A Chapter in the history of Newfoundland Methodism,” Henry J. Indoe, *Seldom*, October 6, 1896. Smith said that “several Methodist families” from Conception Bay moved “to two or three of the islands” in Notre Dame Bay, Smith, *History of the Methodist Church ... of Eastern British America*, Vol. II, 367.

<sup>3</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, July, 1900, 12, “Newfoundland Methodism during the Century,” H.C. Hatcher. Mercer, *A Century of Methodism in Twillingate and Notre Dame Bay*, 7-9. Mercer thus concluded that the Methodist Church in Notre Dame Bay “was born in a private home, the services being conducted by worthy laymen,” 155.

could be called transhumant Methodism, that is, Methodist families communicating their spirituality when they arrived to pursue the seasonal fishery. John Addy said in 1841 that there were “upwards of two hundred inhabitants every summer principally from the south” pursuing a summer fishery in the region.<sup>4</sup> One of the reasons for settling on Twillingate as the centre of the mission was that “great numbers of the Members of our Societies and Congregations in Conception Bay are generally here during the summer months for the purpose of prosecuting the Fishery.”<sup>5</sup> When Addy visited Change Islands in 1841 he found Methodists from Cupids who, “while separated from their pastors and sanctuaries,” were “striving to promote each other’s piety. They were having a prayer meeting when we arrived.”<sup>6</sup> This summer migration from Conception Bay was likely an established custom by 1831. When Marshall visited Change Islands in 1842 he also noted “many” Methodists from Cupids, and mentioned that a class had been formed among the settlers. It had been reduced from eight to six because one member had gone back to Cupids, and Rebecca Taylor, “our leader in this place,” had died.<sup>7</sup> Thus there was both a

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<sup>4</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 26, 1841-1842, John S. Addy, Journal of visit to “Green Bay, or rather the Bay of Notre Dame,” July 24, 1841.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., Letter of William Marshall, Twillingate, Green Bay, October 26, 1842.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., John S. Addy, Journal of visit to “Green Bay, or rather the Bay of Notre Dame,” July 24, 1841.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., Letter of William Marshall, Twillingate, Green Bay, October 26, 1842; Reel 35, 1823-1855. Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, “Reports of the Work of God in the Newfoundland District,” William Marshall, Green Bay, Twillingate Islands, 1843.

resettlement and transhumant Methodism at Change Islands since those who had resettled there encouraged and were encouraged by those who came to fish each summer. In this frontier environment, in contrast to St. John's or Carbonear, a woman was the acknowledged leader, an illustration of Valenze's cottage religion phase among the lower class.<sup>8</sup> The Methodism of the summer fishermen and the settlers developed without a missionary.

As residents of Conception Bay migrated to Change Islands in the summer, so settlers at Change Islands would migrate in the winter for wood production. When William Taylor of Cupids came to Change Islands between 1840 and 1845, he spent the winters at Seldom and "his good wife, bringing her religion with her, gathered a class during those winter months." Thus Rebecca Taylor appears to have been the first Methodist leader at Seldom, also. Two of the first Methodists in Seldom were women, Mrs. Rowe and a Miss Wilcox of Brigus who had married John Holmes and arrived there in 1834. Henry Penny arrived in 1846, "I came round from Carbonear and landed in Seldom the day after St. John's wer' burned." He became for many years the "spiritual guide of the settlement," since "the visits of the Anglican clergyman were like those of the angels, few and far between, while those of his Methodist brother were for the first sixteen years of still rarer occurrence," that is, until the first appointment to the Fogo

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<sup>8</sup>Valenze, *Prophetic Sons And Daughters*, 11, 52.

mission in 1862. Penny held services in the house of Mr. and Mrs. Rowe.<sup>9</sup> Thus a layman in charge of Methodism in Seldom was helped by the missionary only in the rare event of a visit.

Methodism in Notre Dame Bay did not begin with a missionary visiting and preaching Methodists into being through conversion. Rather, residents already of Methodist conviction migrated there from other areas of the island, another example of resettlement Methodism.<sup>10</sup> The society made “good progress” through a lay ministry of “local preachers and class leaders.” George Minty was a class leader “possibly before” Marshall, serving for over 40 years in that capacity, as did Peter Samways, on the north side of Twillingate and Jasper Dowland at Little Harbour.<sup>11</sup> What Mercer called “one of the miracles of Methodism” was the pattern of Methodist growth on the Twillingate Islands. It was only after the foundational pioneer lay ministry had developed to a suitable level that “a Minister and a Chapel” were sought. Thus it is misleading when the clerical record later stated that William Marshall “laid the foundation of Methodism” in

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<sup>9</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, November 1896, 170. “A Chapter in the history of Newfoundland Methodism,” Henry J. Indoe, Seldom, October 6, 1896.

<sup>10</sup>For instance, when William Wilson returned to the Bonavista circuit in 1829 he found that the numbers in society at Catalina had decreased because a failure of the fishery had caused “many ... to emigrate to a distant part of the island,” likely Notre Dame Bay. SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 4, 1828/29-1833/34, File 149, William Wilson, Bonavista, July 18, 1829, 123. Printed in *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1830, 134.

<sup>11</sup>Mercer, *A Century of Methodism in Twillingate and Notre Dame Bay*, 43-44.

the Twillingate circuit.<sup>12</sup> This is not to attempt to detract from Marshall's work, but the migratory Methodism of the northeast coast accounts for his success there, in contrast to his earlier work on the south coast.

When Addy made his first visit to Little Harbour on Twillingate Island he found a person there who "assembles his neighbours every Lord's Day and reads one of Burder's *Village Sermons*." This individual had been converted "in a remarkable manner" and "some of the others had been converted without the outward means of grace." Addy concluded, "God has gone before us." Conversions through lay ministry had taken place before the Methodist missionary had arrived. It is a question how "Methodist" Little Harbour was. People assembled for worship but it is not known, for instance, whether they read the Anglican service. George Burder was a Congregationalist minister who was also Secretary to the London Missionary Society. *Village Sermons* was an evangelical appeal to a pan-Protestant evangelical populace focusing on such subjects as redemption, regeneration, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the new heart.<sup>13</sup> As Secretary to the London Missionary Society, Burder was primarily interested in the publication of the Gospel, whether, as he said, the preachers were "Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Wesleyan, Baptist, or

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<sup>12</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, February 1891, 221. "Reminiscences - Twillingate," Rev. Thomas Harris.

<sup>13</sup>Henry Forster Burder, *Memoir of the Rev. George Burder* (London: F. Westley and A.H. Davis, 1833). The Newfoundland School Society "received sixteen sets of *Sea and Cottage Sermons* and *Sermons to the Aged*, for the use of catechists on the island." PANL MG 598 SPG A193, Archdeacon Wix to Archdeacon Hamilton, St. John's, August 8, 1831.

Independent.” His message suited Methodists well, and in appreciation, his funeral sermon was preached by the famous Anglican writer and preacher of Methodism, John Fletcher.<sup>14</sup>

By the time of Addy’s visit in 1841 Twillingate Island had long been familiar with the London Missionary Society. The first missionary of any persuasion to be stationed in Twillingate, John Hillyard, a Congregationalist, was sent by the society in 1799 as the result of a local petition. After two winters he reported that the society was made up of 24 converted members in addition to himself and his wife. He had expectations too, for the following winter, since he found the winter “the most favourable season” for preaching and teaching.<sup>15</sup> However, when his contract was over he did not remain. John Moors, a former resident of Christ Church asked the society for another missionary so that Twillingate might have another person “qualified with abilities” to preach the gospel. Meanwhile Moors held service each Sunday and noted “the one thing needful, the salvation of sinners was the subject of the sermon I read last Lord’s Day afternoon.”<sup>16</sup>

It is likely that John Moors was of the family of “Bro. Moores” of Back Harbour, mentioned by Mercer as one of the Methodist “forerunners” in whose home “a few

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<sup>14</sup>Burder, *Memoir of the Rev. George Burder*, 345, 360-363.

<sup>15</sup>SOAS, LMS, America, Box 1, John Hillyard to the Directors of the Missionary Society, Twillingate, November 3, 1801.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, John Moors to William Kingsbery, Twillingate, October 29, 1802.

Wesleyans” were meeting in 1831.<sup>17</sup> The James Moors who welcomed William Marshall in 1842 was probably one of John Moors’ sons, since he mentioned in 1802 that four of his children were part of the society.<sup>18</sup> It is difficult to determine how “Wesleyan” the Moors family was. Charles Comben in his obituary of James Moors stated that Marshall found in him “a friend” of Methodism, and that through Wesleyan Methodism “he was more fully instructed in the plan of redemption.”<sup>19</sup> This implies he was not quite a Methodist before and received instruction in the Methodist concept of holiness - for example, entire sanctification. As Protestant evangelicals they would have been familiar with and open to the Methodist settlers from Conception Bay and those engaged in the migratory summer fishery. John Hillyard himself, before arriving in Twillingate, had gone to Harbour Grace from Carbonear and not only visited, but preached for John Stretton whom he called “a useful minister in the Wesleyan connexion.” He intended to send a letter to Twillingate “by a small fishing boat” announcing his arrival in Newfoundland and his intention to come at the end of the summer.<sup>20</sup> The following summer James Bulpit, the Methodist missionary at Carbonear, came to Twillingate for a

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<sup>17</sup>Mercer, *A Century of Methodism in Twillingate and Notre Dame Bay*, 7-9. Moors and Moores are variant surnames.

<sup>18</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 26, 1841-1842, Letter of William Marshall, Twillingate, Green Bay, October 26, 1842. SOAS, LMS, America, Box 1, John Moors to William Kingsbery, Twillingate, October 29, 1802.

<sup>19</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, June 18, 1862.

<sup>20</sup>SOAS, LMS, America, Box 1, John Hillyard to the Directors of the Missionary Society, St. John’s, June 24, 1799.

month in exchange with Hillyard who visited in Conception Bay.<sup>21</sup> Thus Bulpit in 1800 was probably the first Methodist missionary to visit Twillingate. In the summer of 1801 Hillyard married a niece of Stretton and the ceremony was officiated by Bulpit at Carbonear. Thus the last year that Hillyard was in Twillingate, Jane, Stretton's niece, who was raised "in somewhat of a superior situation" ministered with him in "both ... the church and school."<sup>22</sup>

Hillyard was back in Twillingate again in the summer of 1804 for a passing visit. He found to his delight that the people in the society still conducted their lives in a manner "becoming the gospel" and a number of the young people were "seriously inclined." He appeared to be concerned, however, that many of the inhabitants had requested a SPG missionary through Governor Gambier.<sup>23</sup> But Hillyard was no longer committed to Twillingate and just held it in reserve as a last resort missionary station, if St. John's did not work out.<sup>24</sup> The Moors family did not give up. In 1813 they were still requesting a missionary from the London Missionary Society.<sup>25</sup> While making these requests the people ministered to their own spiritual needs. In 1815 the Anglicans in

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., John Hillyard to Joseph Hardcastle, St. John's, July 18, 1800.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., John Hillyard to the Directors of the Missionary Society, Twillingate, November 3, 1801. [Bicentennial History Committee], *The Dissenting Church of Christ at St. John's 1775-1975* (St. John's: St. David's Presbyterian Church, [1975?]), 49.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., John Hillyard to the Directors of the Missionary Society, July 5, 1804.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., John Hillyard to George Burder, October 24, 1806.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., W.J. Hyde to George Burder, December 24, 1813.

Twillingate requested “a resident Minister” from the SPG and promised him £250 annually.<sup>26</sup> When John Leigh arrived in 1817 in answer to their request, he underestimated the theological astuteness and diversity of religious experience at Twillingate, cultivated for nearly two decades. He reckoned that the majority of those absent from the Church of England had stayed away simply because the service had “been most disgracefully performed by some in a state of inebriation.” The dissenters in the town joined these more serious church goers, not vice versa. If they had not the leadership of a Mr. Newman who arrived at this time as an agent of Mr. Colbourne, “all this would have been forgotten.” Fortunately he was discharged from his position as a result of his views and all in Twillingate would “ere long be united”<sup>27</sup>

Matters did not unfold as he hoped. When John Chapman arrived in 1824 he found Twillingate “full of dissent.”<sup>28</sup> The majority of these Nonconformists were Congregationalists, and not Methodists, for they opposed “the baptism, prayers, and, as they call them, the forms of the Church of England.”<sup>29</sup> Chapman at one point called them

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<sup>26</sup>*A Sermon Preached Before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts at their Anniversary Meeting ... February 17, 1815* (London: S. Brooke, 1815), 37.

<sup>27</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A191, John Leigh, Twillingate, April 17, 1817.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, A193, John Chapman to Bishop Spencer, Twillingate, October 10, 1840.

<sup>29</sup>*A Sermon Preached Before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts ... together with The Report of the Society for the Year 1828* (London: C.J.G. and F. Rivington, 1829), 86.

Baptists.<sup>30</sup> His strategy to bring them into the Church of England was to “gradually” win them over by relating to them with “a moderate, gentle, and mild carriage” and by charging very little for church services. Yet as late as 1840 he was still not sure they were secure to the church, and therefore services would still have to be offered nearly free “for some years.” Even then there were in Twillingate “still some fierce and violent Dissenters ... whom nothing can ever reconcile to the Church.”<sup>31</sup>

It is possible that those who were attending Chapman’s services were Methodists since they had no issue with Anglican “forms” of worship. In many places Methodists attended Anglican services, particularly if there was no Methodist chapel, or service at that time of day. This did not mean necessarily they had become Anglicans. William Bullock stated that while they had a missionary the Methodists at Trinity “always” attended the afternoon Anglican service, and when he left, they became “a regular part of the congregation.”<sup>32</sup> When another Methodist missionary came, they simply went back to

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<sup>30</sup>*A Sermon Preached Before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts ... together with The Report of the Society for the Year 1825* (London: G. Woodfall, 1826), 58.

<sup>31</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A193, John Chapman to Bishop Spencer, Twillingate, October 10, 1840. *A Sermon Preached Before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts ... together with The Report of the Society for the Year 1828* (London: C.J.G. and F. Rivington, 1829), 8.

<sup>32</sup>*A Sermon Preached Before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts ... together with The Report of the Society for the Year 1824* (London: G. Woodfall, 1825), 56.

their chapel again.<sup>33</sup> What made affiliation even more difficult to discern was that Anglicans also attended Methodist services. For instance Thomas Grantham at St. John's in 1819 said that "many" of his congregation attended their services and were "conspicuous in their zeal for Methodism."<sup>34</sup> When Peter Pering ministered in Portugal Cove in 1830 he could not tell who was in front of him, Methodists or Anglicans. Neither could Bishop Spencer in Burin in 1843. He observed at the time, "It is difficult to distinguish accurately between the church members and the Methodists, many persons attending the church service and the worship of the Methodists indiscriminately."<sup>35</sup> Thus, in focusing only on the few Dissenters who did not attend his services, Chapman overestimated the loyalty of his congregation to the Church of England.

Methodists in Chapman's congregation at Twillingate attended the chapel in St. John's during visits to the city, likely in the spring and fall, and showed "a strong attachment" to the ministry. When Addy arrived in Twillingate in 1841 he was "surprised to find so strong a desire still existing" for a Methodist missionary. Yet he noted that they had already sent many invitations for such a missionary, and two men had

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<sup>33</sup>*A Sermon Preached ... together with The Report of the Society for the Year 1825*, 56.

<sup>34</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A190, Thomas A. Grantham to Rev. A. Hamilton, St. John's, May 20, 1819.

<sup>35</sup>*A Sermon Preached Before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts ... together with The Report of the Society for the Year 1831* (London: C.J.G. and F. Rivington, 1832), 124-125. MG 598 SPG A194, Journal of Bishop Spencer to Placentia Bay, July 3, 1843.

actually gone to St. John's "to arrange for the reception of a Methodist preacher" in 1840.<sup>36</sup> Requests had been made from other settlements in Notre Dame Bay also.<sup>37</sup> It is likely that Exploits Burnt Island was one such settlement, for when John Leigh visited the island in 1822 as Ecclesiastical Commissary he found that the people were "partly of the established religion, and partly Protestant dissenters." They had begun to build a church together and William Manuel, a resident, had already agreed to read both services "alternately" in the new building, something which he had already been doing in the community.<sup>38</sup> Nearly twenty years later Chapman in 1841 found that one-third of the population was Methodist.<sup>39</sup> This is a striking report and demonstrates the strength of a migratory vernacular Methodism. The people had migrated from Conception Bay and continued their Methodism on the island in the summer and in their tilts in the winter without as much as a single visit from a Methodist missionary. It is possible that Chapman underestimated the Methodist presence, for when William Marshall arrived for a week in September 1842, he found that of the 300 inhabitants "most of them manifest

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<sup>36</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 26, 1841-1842, John S. Addy, Journal of visit to "Green Bay, or rather the Bay of Notre Dame," August 18, 1841; PANL MG 598 SPG A193, John Chapman to Bishop Spencer, Twillingate, October 10, 1840.

<sup>37</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 25, 1838-1840, Committee of Auxiliary WMMS, St. John's, June 4, 1839.

<sup>38</sup>*A Sermon Preached ... together with The Report of the Society for the Year 1822*, Report of John Leigh, Ecclesiastical Commissary, 54.

<sup>39</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A193, John Chapman to Bishop Spencer, Twillingate, October 13, 1841.

great attachment to us as a body.”<sup>40</sup>

Similarly, in 1842, Bishop Spencer found on his visit to Moreton’s Harbour that the people were “on the very eve of becoming dissenters.”<sup>41</sup> There may have been some Baptists among them, for Chapman had found in 1832 that “some individuals in this part, and especially in Moreton’s Harbour, are very hostile to the ordinance of Baptism, and by an impudent assurance which such people are seldom short of, have succeeded, for a time, to persuade others to consider this ordinance of little, or no, importance.” They may have had a problem with infant baptism, believing instead in believer’s baptism. The leader later “openly acknowledged his error,” said Chapman, and had his children baptized.<sup>42</sup>

While Chapman treated Methodists coming to his church with a “mild carriage,” the relationship soured when William Marshall arrived as the first Methodist missionary for Twillingate in 1842. Marshall had congregations of a reasonable size in the different places that made up Twillingate, and many showed a spiritual concern, but he did note that “every means is made use of by the Church party to prevent the people from

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<sup>40</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 26, 1841-1842, Letter of William Marshall, Twillingate, Green Bay, October 26, 1842. The 1845 census under-reported Methodists, registering only 48, and 274 as Anglicans. CNS, Census of Newfoundland, 1845.

<sup>41</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A194, Spencer to Campbell, Twillingate, August 1, 1841.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., A193, John Chapman to Archdeacon Wix, Twillingate, June 11, 1832; John Chapman to Archdeacon Wix, Twillingate, May 5, 1836. Baptists would not have adhered to infant baptism, but to baptism upon conversion, or believer’s baptism.

attending.”<sup>43</sup> The following year he detailed some of the opposition. People attempted to disrupt the services, and several times broke the chapel windows, the latest being December 25 when they broke ten squares of glass and one of the sashes. He had asked that the perpetrators be apprehended, but he had doubts that they would since he believed that the elite of the town, “at least one of the mercantile establishments,” was in collusion with the vandals.<sup>44</sup>

John Reay later gave a detailed account of how the opposition at Twillingate was planned in one instance and who was involved: “All the great men - the *honourable* men - of the harbor, the merchants, the magistrate, and the minister” got “up in arms against the Methodist heretic” for preaching the Gospel. “A merchant ... named Slade ... gathered a company, and after plying them with rum, and seeing them furnished with a bottle and two or three glasses, and also with a few pickets from the fence, went along with them to the meeting, where they soon began to pass around the glasses and to indulge in “a few remarks.” But “among the Methodists were certain stalwart, broad-shouldered, brawny-armed men who ... speedily cleared the house of the intruders, much to their surprise and much to the alarm of the merchant.” One man, Thomas Pook, recalled after he was converted that he and others placed a keg of gunpowder under the new chapel to blow it up, but quit before carrying the plan through. Marshall applied to the magistrate for

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<sup>43</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 26, 1841-1842, Letter of William Marshall, Twillingate, Green Bay, October 26, 1842.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., Reel 27, 1842-1845, William Marshall, Twillingate, December 29, 1843.

protection but the magistrate refused it, telling him that he had no authority to preach. Before this Slade almost stopped the chapel from being built. Since the man who donated the land owed him money Slade said that as soon as it was built, he would seize the chapel. A woman overheard him, told Marshall who then built the chapel on land belonging to another Methodist who was not in debt.<sup>45</sup>

George Bond captured the flavour of fishermen's assertion of independence in his narrative, "How the Gabbites Came to Gull Cove," a fictional name of a settlement in Notre Dame Bay in the 1840s. The people received the Methodist visitors in the face of the merchant's threats "against any of his dealers who had anything to do with them." Skipper Ned Byles epitomized this refusal to be held in subjection by the merchant, "I told 'en quietly that I didn't owe him any money, that my house was my own, an' that as it was a free country I intended to please myself."<sup>46</sup>

It is noticeable that the magistrate, the merchant, and the minister were accused here of conspiring against the Methodists gaining an independent identity in Twillingate. Why would there be such complicity among the notables? It would appear that religion,

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<sup>45</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, November 1899, 12, "Methodism in Green Bay," John Reay. Reprinted from the *Provincial Wesleyan*, 1875. Copy unavailable, see the *Wesleyan*, May 6, 1876. Smith, *History of the Methodist Church ... of Eastern British America*, Vol. II, 370-371.

<sup>46</sup>George Bond, "How the Gabbites Came to Gull Cove, A Story of Early Methodism in Newfoundland," 23, Queen Elizabeth II Library Archive, Memorial University, George Bond Archive, Coll-236, 3.01.013. "Gabbites" in the story was a term of derision for Methodists, 3. Published in *Canadian Methodist Magazine*, January to June, XLI, 1895, 143-149, 231-237.

in particular the protection of Anglicanism, was the primary motive in this confluence of power. John Slade, the eldest son of Robert Slade of Poole, was an ardent follower of the Church of England. John Chapman said that when he arrived in Twillingate in the summer of 1838, in addition to giving financially to the church, he gave it "the weight of his influence, which is considerable here." He contributed to the building of five churches and promised £700 toward a tower for the church at Twillingate.<sup>47</sup> It is difficult to see how Slade would see Methodism as a threat to merchant credit or his business. It is more credible that the merchant and magistrate were using the power of money and law in an attempt to maintain a religious and ideological hegemony in Twillingate. Church of England merchants actually risked losing money by threatening to "stop the supplies" to fishermen such as Simon Jacobs who attended Methodist services.<sup>48</sup> It is obvious that the three were supporting each other in the apex of power and "and a threefold cord is not quickly broken."

Slade appears to be of a different stamp from the merchants at Trinity, for example, where one of the merchants was "a disbeliever of revealed religion" but yet promoted the building of churches in the outharbours. George Skelton, a resident, said the merchant did it as a means to get the fishermen back into debt to him and make money

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<sup>47</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A193, John Chapman to A.M. Campbell, Secretary, SPG, Twillingate, December 19, 1839; Bishop Aubrey George Spencer to Campbell, St. John's, November 16, 1841. Edith M. Manuel, *St. Peter's Anglican Church, Twillingate, 1845-1970* (St. John's: Creative Printers, 1970), 15, 17.

<sup>48</sup>*Methodist Magazine*, Vol. II, 1856, 664, Obituary of Simon Jacobs.

during the time of the Napoleonic war prosperity:

A few years ago during the war on the Peninsula, fish, the almost only produce of the Island, became a valuable article of commerce, and the persons who caught it, (ie., the whole bulk of the inhabitants in the out-harbours) were comparatively speaking, becoming rich, and in some measure independent of the merchant. To counteract this, various articles of luxury, formerly unknown here, were introduced amongst them; and amongst these were every species of fine clothing, so that in many instances a fisherman's wife was in possession of every species of finery. To wear this in her wretched hovel would have been the height of folly and extravagance. It was therefore necessary that the building of churches should be encouraged, with the avowed object, that it would give the fishermen's wives and daughters an opportunity of wearing their fine clothes which otherwise they had no opportunity of doing, and thus enrich the merchant. And this object I pledge myself to have heard publicly avowed by the above mentioned Magistrate in a conversation at the Parsonage House.<sup>49</sup>

This is not to imply there was only elite opposition to Methodism, or that it was only from a few rowdies bent on getting drunk. Methodists in their opposition to drinking and dancing had a reputation of being against celebration and enjoyment which was part of the lifestyle of fishermen and their families. George Bond noted this popular opposition to Methodism in his "How the Gabbites Came to Gull Cove." The people resisted the Gabbites, as the Methodists were derisively termed, because they were deemed to be against "every bit of pleasure in life." Liza, before she was converted had had a reputation for partying - "as for a spree or a dance, why there warn't her equal in the place." But now that was all gone because Methodists "won't let 'ee drink a sup o' rum or go to a dance at all." In addition many people saw Methodists as betraying the Church of England, their connection to the homeland. As one woman said of Liza, "An' if I saw

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<sup>49</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A191, George Skelton, J.P., Trinity to Rev. William Morice, Secretary, SPG, Trinity, January 5, 1819.

Lize I'd let her know what she's done, 'disgracin' her bringin' up an' her father that come out from England, an' brought his prayer-book wi' im that the parson gave 'im when he was confirmed."<sup>50</sup>

Most Methodists who attended Marshall's services were migrants who had settled on Twillingate Island before his arrival, as was the case at Exploits Burnt Island. There was no great expansion of Methodism during his ministry. He did have some notable conversions, possibly of nominal Methodists, beginning at Bluff Head Cove during his first winter. He was able to report 30 members and twelve on trial in the summer of 1843, and, he commented, "a goodly number have been brought to experience a change of heart." Yet these results were for the "Twillingate Islands."<sup>51</sup> His own estimate of the whole Twillingate Circuit a month before he died was simply, "conversions are rare."<sup>52</sup> Thus most of the increase in Methodist membership in the Twillingate Circuit from zero in 1842, to 45 in 1843, and to 110 in 1846 is accounted for by the registration of Methodist settlers.<sup>53</sup> With the coming of the missionary, Methodists were written up as

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<sup>50</sup>Bond, "How the Gabbites Came to Gull Cove," 143-149, 231-237.

<sup>51</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 27, 1842-1845, William Marshall, St. John's, June 12, 1843.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., William Marshall, Twillingate, December 10, 1845.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, 1842-1846.

members of official classes.<sup>54</sup> Before, they had participated in fellowship groups, prayed together, and attended services, but were invisible officially.

Many of them may have been members of other circuits. In his 1825 District Meeting report, for instance, William Croscombe, the chairman, noted that despite the revival in Bonavista - which should have boosted the total number of "members in societies" of the whole District of Newfoundland - there was only a small increase. One of the reasons for this was that "some have migrated to more remote places where there are no societies to be a part of."<sup>55</sup> Thus there was a continual disappearance of Methodist members because of migration to areas where there was no official apparatus. In addition to formal members, there were also many nominal Methodists who migrated, especially from Conception Bay before the 1830 revival.

Despite the modest results with regard to conversions, in the Newfoundland Methodist record there is no person regarded more highly than William Marshall. He became the embodiment of Twillingate Methodism, the identification of the beginning of Methodism in Twillingate, and even in Notre Dame Bay. Later missionaries eulogized him as an heroic pioneer, and even as a martyr, hinting that his death may have been due

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<sup>54</sup>Mercer stated that John Addy on his arrival "gathered together the few souls who had formed class-meetings previous to his appointment," as visiting missionary in 1841. Mercer, *A Century of Methodism in Twillingate and Notre Dame Bay*, 9.

<sup>55</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, 1825.

to persecution.<sup>56</sup> No one doubted his dedication and single-mindedness. But there were dedicated lay Methodists who were critical to the survival and enlargement of Methodism in their settlements. Samuel Wheller is an example of a dedicated Methodist who also died at his post. He was first “awakened” when John Addy preached in Twillingate in the summer of 1841, but was not converted until “just as the schooner was entering the harbour of Twillingate” while returning from St. John’s in the fall. It was probable that he had gone to St. John’s for provisions, and while there attended the Methodist chapel. On his return to Twillingate he immediately began to exhort his friends and neighbours to be converted. He was the Methodist preacher in the community until Marshall’s arrival the following summer, for Addy had remained in the community only two days “and the people of Twillingate saw his face no more.” When Marshall considered moving elsewhere because of a lack of conversions from his preaching, it was Wheller who persuaded him to stay. That winter, however, he endured harrowing distress when he and Samuel Pelley were overtaken in a storm while hunting for birds. The boat capsized, and they were marooned on an island. Pelley was frozen to death, and Wheller had to have portions of his feet amputated with a hatchet. After several months confined to bed he was finally able to attend service on crutches and lead the service while Marshall was absent, a service Wheller provided, along with being class leader, until his death from

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<sup>56</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, December 14, 1864, September 23, 1876. *Methodist Monthly Greeting*, February, 1891, 221; April, 1902, 10. Mercer, *A Century of Methodism in Twillingate and Notre Dame Bay*, 10.

consumption in the summer of 1845.<sup>57</sup>

It appears that the coming of Methodist preachers to Twillingate in 1841 and 1842 was too much for John Chapman. When he heard of the possibility in 1840 his response was, "This I dread."<sup>58</sup> After nearly twenty years of ministry in the community cajoling Dissenters, he realized it might have been for nothing. Upon the arrival of Marshall in 1842 the Methodists attending St. Peter's Church departed to found their own chapel.<sup>59</sup> In 1843 Chapman left. A committee composed of the elite, John Peyton, John Slade, Andrew Pearce, William Stirling, and John Colborne, in saying goodbye to Chapman expressed disapproval of the recent "dissent in our hitherto undivided community." It was this assertion of popular religious freedom on which Chapman concentrated in his reply. He did not name Methodism but clearly referred to it in deprecating "licentious enthusiasm" and "wild feelings of fanaticism."<sup>60</sup> Thomas Boone, Chapman's replacement, left no doubt that it was Methodist dissent which had presented a challenge to Anglicanism. When asked if there were "temporal discouragements," he said, "Yes.

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<sup>57</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, November 1899, 12, "Methodism in Green Bay," John Reay. PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 26, 1841-1842, John S. Addy, Journal of visit to "Green Bay, or rather the Bay of Notre Dame," August 17, 1841. PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 27, 1842-1845, William Marshall, Twillingate, December 10, 1845. Smith, *History of the Methodist Church ... of Eastern British America*, Vol. II, 369.

<sup>58</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A193, John Chapman to Bishop Spencer, Twillingate, October 10, 1840.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, A194, SPG form, Question 21, Thomas Boone, June 29, 1846.

<sup>60</sup>*Public Ledger*, August 4, 1843.

Dissent in the shape of Wesleyanism. The schism was introduced a year or two before I came to the Mission, and seems now deeply seated.”<sup>61</sup>

The animosity between the Anglicans and Methodists at Twillingate exposed a division which one might not have expected, given their relatively similar Protestant theology. There is little doubt that Chapman was an evangelical Anglican, since the emphasis in his ministry was the Protestant principle of “the Bible, as the only rule of faith and practice.”<sup>62</sup> He took issue with what he understood as Methodist distortion of the Bible, rather than making an argument based on high church principle.<sup>63</sup> He also took issue with Bishop Feild’s Tractarianism, his view of baptismal regeneration, for instance.<sup>64</sup> St. Peter’s Church at Twillingate, built during Chapman’s ministry, was constructed according to evangelical architectural principles with its “preference for pews, and galleries, and pulpits in the center of the building,” a style preferred by the evangelical Bishop Spencer and disparaged by the Tractarian Bishop Feild.<sup>65</sup> Richard Newman, in the employ at Twillingate of Thomas Colbourne of Sturminster, and a

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<sup>61</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A194, SPG form, Question 21, Thomas Boone, June 29, 1846.

<sup>62</sup>*Times*, October 19, 1850.

<sup>63</sup>*Public Ledger*, August 4, 1843.

<sup>64</sup>Thomas E. Collett, *Church of England*, No. 2 (St. John’s: Joseph Woods, 1854), 13-14.

<sup>65</sup>Quoted in Tucker, *Memoir of the Life and Episcopate of Edward Feild*, 188. Speaking of galleries, Grey noted that Feild “wages war against them.” “The Ecclesiology of Newfoundland,” 157.

parishioner of Chapman, was eager to discern that which was “most agreeable to scripture,” an evangelical Anglican emphasis. He read the *Evangelical Rambler* and the *Evangelical Spectator* for his spiritual edification.<sup>66</sup>

However, the Protestant evangelical emphases of the authority of the Bible, the priority of preaching, the substitutionary atonement of the cross, and justification by faith were not the ground of Chapman’s disagreement with the Methodists. It was rather the work of the Holy Spirit. Before the lines between Anglican and Methodist had been dramatically drawn in Twillingate, Chapman noted in 1836 that he had received “Stebbing’s *Polemical Tracts*, principally on the operations of the Holy Spirit.” He praised the book for addressing “the wild opinions” often held on the subject.<sup>67</sup> Stebbing argued that the Holy Spirit did not produce an experiential salvation in the believer. Justification was by faith, but it was not attended by an assurance that one feels. To believe that the presence of the Holy Spirit resulted in “sudden and violent snatches,” ecstasy, prophecy, dreams, or visions in an individual was to succumb to “dangerous enthusiasm.” The practice of extemporary prayer was “a vain and foolish pretension.”<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Letter of Richard Newman, Twillingate, to his sister, August 13, 1828; to his brother, December 17, 1827; July 1, 1829. <[www.genweb.ca/nfddata/hist/2/newman.htm](http://www.genweb.ca/nfddata/hist/2/newman.htm)>. Copy of Journal at PANL.

<sup>67</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A192, John Chapman to Archdeacon Wix, Twillingate, May 5, 1836.

<sup>68</sup>Henry Stebbing, *Polemical Tracts; or a Collection of Papers written in defence of the Doctrines and Discipline of the Church of England* (Cambridge: University Press, 1727), 29-30, 35, 69, 73.

Chapman had cause for concern for he already had dealings with “wild opinions” in Twillingate. A decade earlier he had wondered if another place of worship would be opened in the community by “two, or three men that boast much of particular revelations made to them by God, and mistake heated imagination, it seems, however contrary to the written word, for the operation of the divine Spirit.”<sup>69</sup> The next year a place of worship was opened and he gave particulars of some of their beliefs:

The substance of the doctrines taught in it was that at the end of the world the wicked shall have their respective bodies raised, but the righteous shall not; but their souls shall inherit the risen body ... of the Redeemer; that ordinances of the gospel worship are useless; and that the Spirit works in men without the use of human means, and in a way altogether miraculous. I could say more of the same sort, but here is enough to shew you that according to this account, men go mad to become religious.<sup>70</sup>

Chapman would have known that these teachings were not Methodist. On his departure from Twillingate, though severe in speaking of the Methodists, he charged them only with wild enthusiasm, not unorthodox doctrine.<sup>71</sup> Letters to the Editor in response reminded him and others that Methodists were orthodox believers, and held a respect for the Church of England which was not held by other Dissenters. A letter to the *Public Ledger* drew attention to religious liberty and emphasized the scriptural orthodoxy of

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<sup>69</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A192, John Chapman to Anthony Hamilton, Secretary, Twillingate, October 28, 1826.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., John Chapman to Anthony Hamilton, Secretary, Twillingate, December 15, 1827.

<sup>71</sup>*Public Ledger*, August 4, 1843.

John Wesley.<sup>72</sup> A person from Moreton's Harbour replied that John Wesley considered his preachers to be laymen and would not have countenanced a schism from the Church of England, as had happened in Twillingate. Methodist clergy were not clergy at all and were only called such out of courtesy.<sup>73</sup> A Wesleyan minister replied that he agreed in condemning teachings which were unscriptural; but as for ordination in the Church of England, John Wesley wrote that apostolic succession was "a dream which no man ever did or can prove," and many Anglicans agreed with him. Methodists were not hostile to the Church and desired its well-being. It should be kept in mind that "a great proportion" of the people of Twillingate grew up as Dissenters, not Anglicans, and Methodists simply went to the settlement to preach the Cross.<sup>74</sup>

Methodism was one fissure in a threefold division in Anglicanism at Twillingate, as at Bonavista. Chapman noted that contrary to his "expectations and wishes," teachers from the newly-formed Newfoundland School Society were "rather too enthusiastic."<sup>75</sup> They were able to cooperate, however, and while Chapman was in England the teacher and a lay reader kept services for him in Twillingate.<sup>76</sup> The teachers were dedicated to the

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid., August 11, 1843.

<sup>73</sup>*Times*, August 16, 1843.

<sup>74</sup>*Public Ledger*, September 1, 1843.

<sup>75</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A192, John Chapman to Anthony Hamilton, Secretary, Twillingate, December 15, 1827; December 6, 1829.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., John Chapman to A.M. Campbell, Secretary, Twillingate, December 7, 1835.

Church of England, but were evangelical. Their autonomy as an independent society does not seem to have been a problem in Twillingate, however, unlike with Archdeacon George Coster at Bonavista and William Bullock at Trinity.<sup>77</sup>

In Twillingate and Burin the services of Methodist and Church of England clergymen were exactly opposite.<sup>78</sup> Burin had the presence of a Methodist missionary from 1817, but no permanent Anglican clergyman until 1841. Twillingate received its first Anglican clergyman in 1817, while no Methodist missionary was stationed there until 1842. Nevertheless, Methodism achieved a success in Twillingate unparalleled in its history in Newfoundland. It succeeded to such a degree against an already established Church of England, that it might be called "the Twillingate exception," for it is generally agreed in Methodist historiography that Methodism prospered in areas where Anglican services were weak.<sup>79</sup> The Church of England was certainly not weak in Twillingate when the first Methodist missionary was stationed there in 1842. It continued to have the regular services of a resident clergyman, buttressed by the recent arrival of the English

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<sup>77</sup>Ibid., Archdeacon George Coster to Hamilton, St. John's, August 27, 1824; George Coster to Richard Lendon, Cloisters, Westminster. Bonavista, November 9, 1826. "A copy of the letter sent to Mr. Parker, Secretary to the Society PCK." A193, William Bullock to Archdeacon of NL, Trinity, October 25, 1833.

<sup>78</sup>For Burin see chapter 9.

<sup>79</sup>Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society: South Lindsey 1825-1875*, 5-9; Robert F. Wearmouth, *Methodism and the Working-Class Movements of England 1800-1850* (London: The Epworth Press, 1937), 5; David Hempton, "Methodism," in *Nineteenth-Century English Religious Traditions*, ed. D. G. Paz (London: Greenwood Press, 1995), 120; Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England*, 69; Winsor, "Methodism in Newfoundland 1855-1884," 129-134.

merchant, John Slade of Poole, and by the support of the stipendiary magistrate, John Peyton, jr. It also enjoyed popular support for its building was enlarged from 800 to 1000 by the labour of volunteers who were not short in number or ability, "for all here can use hatchet, and the saw, &c pretty well."<sup>80</sup>

The principle reason John Chapman left Twillingate, a year after William Marshall's arrival, appears to be that he could not handle the secession of Methodists from his congregation. Thirty were meeting in society, and another twelve on trial, and they were building the frame of a chapel in Twillingate harbour.<sup>81</sup> Thomas Boone in 1847 had to face a robust vernacular Methodism unknown in Chapman's time, of twelve classes and their leaders who met not only in Twillingate, but also when in the woods and when fishing in the summer. The membership had nearly doubled, said John S. Peach, but it did not show up in Methodist records, because the people joined the class meetings "while away from the station." Nothing is more telling of how popular this Methodism was than that brief comment. Fishermen, women, and families had been converted, and joined classes as they ministered, testified, exhorted, preached, and prayed with each other while away in their winter tilts, and all the missionary at Twillingate did was await their

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<sup>80</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A193, John Chapman to A.M. Campbell, Secretary, SPG, Twillingate, December 19, 1839. Amy Louise Peyton, *River Lords, Father and Son* (St. John's, Jespersen Press, 1987), 102.

<sup>81</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 35, 1823-1855. Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, "Reports of the Work of God in the Newfoundland District," William Marshall, Green Bay, Twillingate Islands, 1843.

arrival and enter them in the official records "when our people come out of the woods."<sup>82</sup>

On the second Sunday of 1850, however, Methodism became even more of a threat to the Church of England at the beginning of a revival in which more than 100 in the circuit were converted in a manner which was in itself a challenge to the regular Anglican order of service. The religion of experience was so pronounced that Peach said it reminded him of the conversions that Wesley described in his *Journal*, in which people were "apparently frantic, others struck dumb, and others as though they were dead." Many were groaning for redemption while others were shouting praises to God after receiving it.<sup>83</sup>

For one immigrant this revival was the culmination of a long religious pilgrimage. Before he left England, his sister had given him a Bible but he did not read it in Newfoundland until the death of his first child, after which he resolved to reform his life and abstain from drunkenness. The fisherman attended the Church of England, but the clergyman, although preaching against sin, did not preach justification by faith. Meanwhile he received letters from his sister exhorting him "to turn to the Lord." Tears came to his eyes when he heard John S. Addy preach, but he soon left and "we seemed as a people abandoned to darkness." When Marshall came and preached justification by faith, he concluded that it was not enough to save him. He read his Bible from cover to

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<sup>82</sup>Ibid., 1847 Report of the Work of God in the Newfoundland District, John S. Peach, Green Bay.

<sup>83</sup>UC Archive, WY 103, Box 1, "Newfoundland District Spiritual State Reports, 1840 - 1857, John S. Peach, 1850 Green Bay Circuit Report.

cover and afterwards thought himself to be “a good man.” Marshall’s death took away his confidence and left him feeling “as a man sinking into the sea.” But Peach came, and while the congregation was singing hymn 365, “O God of my salvation hear, and help a sinner to draw near,” his salvation did come and “the Spirit of God did fill me with joy and gladness.” His testimony illustrates the Methodist religion of experience, in contrast to and in a direct challenge to the religion of order of the Church of England at

Twillingate:

O, Sir, that light and joy of the Spirit were as the morning-star to my soul! I have been exposed to death in stormy nights at sea; I have known the sorrows of men expecting to see their vessel founder in the dead of night; I have lashed up my helm, lain-to with reefed sail, and cast myself on deck, anxiously awaiting the morning star; and I have sprung up with joy the moment I saw the morning-star, confident that we should soon make the harbour. But the joy of pardoning grace was unspeakably greater, when the light of the Spirit of God was as the morning-star to my soul.<sup>84</sup>

It is noteworthy that his conversion came not with Peach’s sermon, but with the lay ministry of congregational singing, and the joy of it was expressed not in the land-oriented language of the preacher, but from his own sea experience as a fisherman.

The revival was opposed “by earth and hell.” Most of the windows in the chapel were smashed, but to no avail. By 1850 there were 29 classes in the “extensive circuit” supplied by a buoyant lay witness and ministry.<sup>85</sup> The missionary did not play a primary

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<sup>84</sup>*Wesleyan Notices Newspaper*, February 27, 1851, Missions in British America, Newfoundland, Extract of a letter from John Brewster, Twillingate, Green Bay, September 4, 1850.

<sup>85</sup>UC Archive, WY 103, Box 1, “Newfoundland District Spiritual State Reports, 1840 - 1857, John S. Peach, 1850 Green Bay Circuit Report.

role in the awakening or in conversions during this revival. His preaching and visiting was almost totally limited to the Twillingate Islands, and even in this region, mostly to Twillingate, with visits to Bluff Head Cove, and to a lesser extent Little Harbour. Yet in 1851 the membership in the circuit had reached 230, from none in 1842.<sup>86</sup> At Little Harbour the layman, Jaspar Dowland, who had "a great knowledge of the Scriptures, and could bring portions with surprising readiness and suitableness 'to point a moral or adorn a tale,'" continued to minister up to 1873, as witnessed by John Reay:

Jasper's Sabbath rest was usually spent in the summer time as follows: Prayer meeting at Little Harbor at 7 a.m., Sunday School at 9.30, preaching at 11. Immediately after dinner, he would get into his little punt and cross the Main Tickle, either to Merritt's Harbor or to Friday's Bay, and preach there, and visit anybody who was sick.... He got back in time for 'a dish of tea,' after which there was preaching at 6.30, followed by a prayer meeting. At his preaching service he usually read a sermon, but made comments, and gave explanations, and emphasized admonitions and appeals as he went along.... During the winter he used to go to all the outlying places to hold religious meetings. He went often to Crow Head, travelling in the snow all the distance ... seven or eight miles ... He lost his way when returning home once, and was out all night, but he said he just trod a path for himself, and walked back and forth praying and singing hymns, and repeating portions of God's Word till the morning.<sup>87</sup>

Another singular account of lay ministry and mobility is that of Robert Rideout who went from Twillingate to Black Island to mend herring nets. He made it a condition of his contract that he could read the Bible, and pray morning and evening with the family with which he was residing. Rideout was a seasoned Methodist, for he was "acquainted

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<sup>86</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, 1842-1851.

<sup>87</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, September, 1898, 135, "A Short Account of Two Church Members," John Reay.

with Wesley's *Works*" and had "a well-trying experience in vital godliness." He was obviously a preacher since his "exposition of the Scriptures and prayer were with power." Preachers were typically distinguished from exhorters by being designated as expounders of the Scriptures. Two daughters of the family were converted and this resulted in much "discussing and defending" of Methodism on the island. While Rideout was mending the nets, a man and his wife from the opposite side of the island came to discuss salvation with him. They had migrated to Notre Dame Bay twenty years before with their "pious parents" who were Methodist converts from Harbour Grace. The couple, "to a certain extent backsliders," were restored through talking with Rideout - all of Black Island began inquiring "after eternal things," and others were converted. Rideout finished his net-mending and returned to Twillingate and told the missionary, John Brewster, what had transpired. Brewster promptly went to Black Island, formed a class and appointed a leader, returned, and the people continued to minister to each other. A couple from Twillingate then went to teach in a school that the people built in the centre of the island.<sup>88</sup>

Revivals continued throughout Notre Dame Bay, coming more frequently than the approximately ten year intervals at Burin. In 1853 there were over 60 converts, mostly young people, at Black Island, the new settlement of Little Bay Islands, and in Twillingate

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<sup>88</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 29, 1849-1852, John Brewster, Twillingate, October 30, 1851; partially published in *Methodist Magazine*, Vol. 1, 1852, 206. The text says "Robert R.," most likely Robert Rideout, a class leader in Twillingate in 1853. UC Archive, WY 200, Fogo, Box 2, "Green Bay Circuit Book, 1846-1868," 1853.

itself.<sup>89</sup> Brewster was totally out of his element during this revival at Twillingate, as at Grand Bank in March, 1849. He was at home with the moderate emotion at its beginning in late January at a prayer meeting at Bluff Head Cove when “a few cried for mercy” and received it, and when a couple invited a few friends over and there was joy and praise till midnight. But at the weekly preaching and prayer meeting the people got out of hand in his estimation, demonstrating a Methodism of such emotion and experience that he had never known, and he stood there paralyzed in shock:

Several persons were struck to the earth, and lay groaning in indescribable anguish. At the same moment many believers were so overpowered with joy and love that they lost all command over themselves. I felt alarmed at such extraordinary demonstrations of religious feeling; insomuch that I could neither ‘rejoice with them that rejoiced,’ nor ‘weep with them that wept.’ I stood amazed!

Brewster found a few others in the congregation who were in the same state of “wonder and fear” over these events, as he was, and invited them to pray privately with him about how to proceed. However, at a prayer meeting in a place called “The Arm” people went beyond anything they did before. Some roared, some rejoiced, and others fainted, while a number in attendance “rushed out alarmed.” Brewster’s response was to again be filled with “unbelief and fear and shame.” One woman who was “pouring forth her soul’s love to Jesus in tears of joy” he wanted to “lecture on decorum.” He wanted to lay his hand on a man who was “smiting his heart in deep agony and beg him to be calm.” But then

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<sup>89</sup>UC Archive, WY 103, Box 1, “Newfoundland District Spiritual State Reports, 1840 - 1857, John Brewster, 1853 Green Bay Circuit Report. By 1857 there were 112 Methodists at Little Bay Islands, and on the eastern side of the bay, 141 Methodists at Muddy Hole and Doating Cove (Musgrave Harbour), where there had been none a little over a decade before. CNS, Census of Newfoundland, 1845, 1857.

something happened to Brewster himself. He said that suddenly his anger left him, he was filled with joy and joined those around him and “rejoiced with them with all my ‘might before the Lord.’”<sup>90</sup> He had such an encompassing experience of vernacular Methodism during the prayer meeting, that he deemed his yen for respectability was a contrived aspect of his middle class culture, so he let it go or lost it in the moment when the freedom of wonder, love and praise replaced the paralysis of “wonder and fear.” It was a rare instance of a missionary stepping out of his glass cage of professional and class detachment and becoming one with the people in their Methodist religion of the heart. Generally they stood aloof and “observed” as James Hickson had at Bonavista nearly 30 years before.<sup>91</sup>

Although the *Methodist Magazine* did not print Brewster’s account, as it had many of his previous letters, the magazine did print a report drawing attention to the “ecstatic joy” of a similar revival at Leeds.<sup>92</sup> In Newfoundland, the chairman of the District, Edmund Botterell, made it a point to note that the congregation behaved with “the utmost decorum” on his visit to Twillingate the following August. He was struck by the people’s facility in prayer, particularly their “forms of expression,” which he judged was “far more correct” than in their normal conversation. He credited their exceptional ability to

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<sup>90</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 30, 1852-1853, John Brewster, Green Bay, May 10, 1853.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., Reel 19, 1824-1825, James Hickson, Journal, Bonavista, March 5, 7, 1824.

<sup>92</sup>*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, “The Recent Church Movement at Leeds,” 1854, 919.

familiarity with the Bible and with the prayers of Methodist ministers.<sup>93</sup> Similarly, Thomas Fox credited his fellow missionaries for the widespread Methodism in Notre Dame Bay. Because of the work of these "Spiritual Fathers ... There is scarcely a harbour or cove where the fruits of Methodism are not seen."<sup>94</sup> It is clear, however, that such clerical self-credit is undeserved. At Black Island, it was a layman, Robert Rideout, who was the missionary, bringing his message to a people already familiar with it because of a migratory Methodism from Conception Bay. It was laymen too who continued to nurture the movement on Black Island. Similarly, at "The Arm," Brewster could only be called an appendage to the revival that was taking place. He nearly obstructed its progress by almost attempting to order people to stop expressing the aspirations of their hearts. Needless to say, the presence of such clergymen would in itself have been a constraint in the minority of prayer meetings that they were able to attend. It is quite obvious that Edmund Botterell would have been annoyed with the expression of such heartfelt passion. Yet the revival resulted in a total of sixteen classes in Twillingate, led by an equal number of men and women with such surnames as Rideout, Roberts, Minty and Samways, exercising their ministry as pastors, the services of the missionary as class leader not

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<sup>93</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 30, 1852-1853, Edmund Botterell, St. John's, August 24, 1853, Journal of a trip to Twillingate, Sunday, August 14, 1853.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, 1854 Reports of Religious State of the various Circuits in the Newfoundland District, Green Bay Circuit. *Methodist Magazine*, Vol. II, 1854, 844.

being necessary.<sup>95</sup>

Again in 1857, Paul Prestwood reported "a great revival" in Twillingate with prayer meetings "held every night with crowded attendance in different parts of the harbour."<sup>96</sup> Three years later, "scores" more "trembled, wept, repented, believed in Christ," the oldest convert being 86 years old. To what degree this was a lay movement can be gleaned from the note that "on one night five prayer meetings were being held at the same hour in different parts of the settlement" and that the revival extended "to other places in this Bay."<sup>97</sup> It was a revival that did not impress the Anglican clergyman, Thomas Boone.

I cannot but mourn ... for those who have been drawn into the belief that the exciting and outrageous scenes which have been exhibited this winter in the shape of revivals have God for their author. What has taken place almost baffles description and I would rather cast a veil over them than expose them to the light. The wild cries, the maniac actions, the dancing and jumping as the process of conversion goes on are dreadful to think of, and it is far more dreadful to think that any man professing to be a Minister can lead the ignorant and simple to propose or believe that it is all the work of God.

Every night there was a prayer meeting and sometimes two or three in different parts of the islands. It was no unusual thing for them to remain till two

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<sup>95</sup>UC Archive, WY 200, Fogo, Box 2, "Green Bay Circuit Book, 1846-1868," 1853.

<sup>96</sup>UC Archive, WY 103, Box 1, "Newfoundland District Spiritual State Reports, 1840- 1857, Paul Prestwood, 1857 Green Bay Circuit Report.

<sup>97</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, May 6, 1860, "Revival in Newfoundland," Thomas Harris, Twillingate, January 24, 1860. There was distress, as Harris notes that during the previous fall there had been losses of vessels and men in "successive storms," two vessels with twenty crew while returning from St. John's. Moreover, Boone noted that later in the year measles took the lives of 45 infants and children in his church alone. PANL MG 598 SPG A228, Thomas Boone, Twillingate, December 31, 1860.

or three o'clock in the morning, praying, raving and converting. The prayers of their deluded souls were devoid of all reverence, decency, and sense. Some in the Harbour and very many in the Bays have been drawn away from the Church in consequence of these outrageous and absurd proceedings. The poor people believe that these things are absolutely necessary to salvation and hence they seek by every means to excite ... their feelings by which they obtain a proof which they think unmistakable that they are now safe and sure for heaven. They feel their sins have actually passed away and because they feel this they are happy. Hence their jumping and dancing. It is impossible to argue with them and a waste of time to attempt to point out a better way.<sup>98</sup>

Boone saw his people, including a churchwarden, leaving Church of England order and decorum for passion and ecstasy, and apart from condemning it, he had few ways to combat it. Possibly in desperation, in the midst of the revival he precipitated another showdown between the Anglicans and the Methodists that rivaled the battle of the flagstaff at Bonavista.<sup>99</sup> Due to its public nature and drawn-out drama it became indelibly etched as a victory against a domineering Church of England in the memories of the people of Twillingate, and of Methodists throughout the island. In Hart's Cove on the south side of the harbour, where the majority of Methodists lived, there was a graveyard which people saw as the "common property" of the community.<sup>100</sup> However, in preparation for Bishop Feild's visit in the summer of 1857, Boone had the cemetery enclosed, as the bishop wanted to consecrate it as the exclusive property of the Church of England. The bishop was "robed" in his episcopal vestments and about to proceed to the

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<sup>98</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A228, Thomas Boone, Twillingate, December 31, 1860.

<sup>99</sup>Wilson, *Newfoundland and its Missionaries*, 200-202.

<sup>100</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, December, 1899, 7, "Methodism in Green Bay," John Reay.

cemetery to carry out the ceremony, but at that moment a note from a Methodist was handed to him protesting the act, and he had to disrobe and await clarification. Two lawyers sided with Boone that the Church of England had “a most undoubted right” to the cemetery, and one wrote a letter to the Methodists telling them not to bury anyone in the cemetery without Boone’s permission. Boone would permit the burial of a Methodist only if he had the “the exclusive right of burying.”

Matters were not brought to a head until the revival in the fall of 1859, when the Methodists made an “unwarrantable aggression.” A former member of the Church of England, since converted to Methodism, died, and the family wanted him buried next to his father in the Hart’s Cove cemetery. Boone had locked the cemetery, and refused them the key; so, said he, they broke down the fence and the Methodist missionary performed the burial service.<sup>101</sup> There were Anglicans guarding the cemetery, but Thomas Harris, the missionary, actually ordered people to break down the fence, and had a constable on hand to arrest any who disturbed the peace by trying to prevent “the large procession” from proceeding to the grave site.<sup>102</sup> Boone decided to bring a case to court to claim the graveyard as “the exclusive right of the Church.” However, the judge sided with “the unjust pretensions of the Wesleyans” because the cemetery had not previously been enclosed and there were Methodists buried there. This was a strategic loss, since the

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<sup>101</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A228, Thomas Boone, Twillingate, December 31, 1860.

<sup>102</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, December, 1899, 7, “Methodism in Green Bay” John Reay; January, 1900, 2.

Church of England had wanted to build a church next to the cemetery at Hart's Cove on the south side of the harbour "to retain the members of the Church on that side."<sup>103</sup> Boone had hoped to regain members to his church and there had been some indication of their coming back, but "all is now changed."

The Methodists were further fortified in their convictions by hearing of "amazing conversions in Ireland and elsewhere," another reminder that people were connected to the larger world through print.<sup>104</sup> In seeing their experience of God reflected in revivals elsewhere through the pages of the *Provincial Wesleyan*, Methodists in Twillingate saw confirmation that they, not the Church of England, were the people of God. As one letter to the *Wesleyan* noted, the features of the revival in Ireland, which echoed "the revival scenes" in Wesley's *Journal*, showed that "Bodily affections, sudden and remarkable conversions, and overwhelming visitations of mental depression and conviction are not novelties in connection with that heaven-given system whose high mission was to spread scriptural holiness throughout the land."<sup>105</sup> Methodists also saw their lay movement validated, for the revival in Britain also "arose through the instrumentality of a few earnest laymen, and some of those converted under their ministry instantly began to

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<sup>103</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A228, Thomas Boone, Twillingate, December 31, 1860; December 31, 1861.

<sup>104</sup>*Ibid.*, December 31, 1860.

<sup>105</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, September 7, 1859, "Letter from Newfoundland" to editor from Aleph, August 26, 1859. For the role of experience in "scriptural holiness, see "Religious experience in conversion and instant sanctification," in Roy, "A Reappraisal of Wesleyan Methodist Mission in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century," 198-209.

preach the Word,” and thus they were not about to be stopped by a clergyman and his bishop arrogating unto themselves privileges that they believed were available to all.<sup>106</sup>

What made the defeat particularly bitter to Thomas Boone was that his former churchwarden and other converts, who had originally signed the bishop’s consecration paper, now sided with the Methodists and charged him and his church with “tyranny and bigotry.” It would be difficult to exaggerate this public discomfiture of the Church of England and its perceived entitlement in Twillingate. Through it the Methodists gained a populist victory for both themselves and their faith, for they did perceive it as a matter of both “tyranny and bigotry.” Disregarding the power of merchant, magistrate, minister, and bishop, they carried out their own perception of what was just and fair regarding the burial. Boone charged them particularly with thinking that “bishops are nothing but gentlemen of high respectability,” which they thought had no right to enclose their common property.<sup>107</sup> In this public act the Methodists of Twillingate who had “not one wealthy man among them” were agents of their own freedom.<sup>108</sup> The clergyman concluded in disgust that “their object has for some time been to bring church and

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<sup>106</sup>Ibid., July 21, 1859.

<sup>107</sup>The missionary John S. Peach at Twillingate saw Bishop Feild as just “a mortal man with a three cornered cap.” “John S. Peach Diaries, 1841-1855,” December 5, 1846.

<sup>108</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, December, 1899, 7, “Methodism in Green Bay,” John Reay, concluded. Yet, Bishop Feild said in 1868 that “young adventurers” who “generally are dissenters” had replaced the “old establishments.” Tucker, *Memoir of the Life and Episcopate of Edward Feild*, 235.

meeting house upon the same level.”<sup>109</sup>

Although missionaries were present, the people continued to take responsibility for their Methodism during mission meetings. With the advantage of drift ice linking the islands and settlements in the middle of winter, 1864, meetings were held at Twillingate and Moreton's Harbour. A contingent coming the sixteen or eighteen miles from Exploits Burnt Island was seen as “nothing very tragical” for “Green Bay men,” and neither did travelling from Twillingate over the ice to Fogo and fetching Thomas Fox in a komatik. Although the area missionaries were present, it was local leaders, as usual, such as Joseph Minty and H. Knight, who chaired the meetings, and other laymen spoke “words warm from the heart.” A writer to the *Provincial Wesleyan* was so struck by the ability and ministry of these laymen, that he gave a reminder of the integral role they played in Green Bay Methodism:

Whoever knows the part which the laity have taken from the commencement in the great work of Methodism, and the wide and beneficial influence exerted by them as exhorters, local preachers, &c., would have delighted to hear our friends on this occasion. This was no ‘show-work.’ It was real hearty speaking that one could both *hear* and *feel*.<sup>110</sup>

It was such laymen speaking “simple and heartfelt words of exhortation to scattered companies” that Methodism needed throughout Notre Dame Bay, instead of people being

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<sup>109</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A228, Thomas Boone, Twillingate, December 31, 1860.

<sup>110</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, May 4, 1864, “Newfoundland Correspondence,” Green Bay, E.K., Exploits Burnt Island, February 10, 1864.

“dependant on printed books,” a poor substitute.<sup>111</sup> It would appear that the trend toward “printed books” was advancing, and the writer was appealing to the vernacular Methodism which had been so successful in the multitude of settlements in the bay.

That the Church of England in Twillingate was undoubtedly evangelical under John Chapman did not help it against the Methodists. It may have been detrimental. Agreeing on the basic doctrines of the faith, more and more of Chapman’s parishioners were drawn to the Methodist religion of experience, only having to jump over the minor hurdle of church government. As Bishop Feild bent the church toward Tractarianism, with its hierarchical enclosure of the spiritual through the elevation of the sacrament, heightened stature of the clergy, and discourse of the Apostolic Church, it had less appeal to many of the people. Even when Bishop Feild visited in 1859 and officiated at the morning service with at least five other clergymen, there was still low attendance.<sup>112</sup> After nearly two decades of Bishop Feild’s influence, Thomas Boone noted that at Twillingate many of his parishioners had “no very great attachment” to Tractarianism.<sup>113</sup> By 1866 “a large number” of his congregation had left, having been “changed by those monstrous and

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<sup>111</sup>Ibid. See also Henry Lewis on the lay contribution to Methodism in “How Methodism Came to Foxes,” 165.

<sup>112</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A228, Thomas Boone, Twillingate, December 31, 1859. The clergyman, Louis Legrand Noble, on his way north with the artist, Frederick Edwin Church, was in Twillingate on July 3, the day of Bishop Feild’s visit. Noble, *After Icebergs with a Painter*, 103-104.

<sup>113</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG Thomas Boone, Twillingate, December 31, 1863.

exciting revivals” and “drawn away into those schismatical societies.”<sup>114</sup>

A fire that destroyed the new church and manse in 1868 may have invigorated Methodism in Twillingate even more. It received wide publicity through the *Provincial Wesleyan*. John Goodison, the local missionary, collected over \$1,000 in Montreal and elsewhere on “a tour through the provinces” in the new Canada, and a new church was built in little more than a year.<sup>115</sup> From 1866 to 1876 the number of Methodists increased from an attendance of 700 in the whole circuit to 1,500 in Twillingate itself. With a major concentration on the south side of the harbour, but now having 350 members on the north side, they built a second church in what had been the domain of the Church of England. What is more, the 1874 Education Act made them “greatly the gainers” by giving them their own schools, for Methodists were the majority of the population in most of settlements in Notre Dame Bay. Moreover, as Methodist teachers many of the lay readers now received a salary.<sup>116</sup> Methodism in the colony, and in Twillingate in particular, had reached a state not unlike the day of its Sabbath School Festival, “an almost unclouded sky, bright sunshine, a fine invigorating breeze.” Three hundred students with banners flying and singing hymns, marched about the town. The public meeting, chaired by George Minty, was attended by Sheriff John Bemister, who was there

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<sup>114</sup>Ibid., May 2, 1866. See also, Ibid., December 31, 1869.

<sup>115</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, April 8, 22, July 15, 22, 1868; June 23, 1869.

<sup>116</sup>*Wesleyan*, May 6, 1876, “Journal of Green Bay Circuit,” John Reay, Twillingate, March 23, 1876.

because the Circuit Court was meeting.<sup>117</sup> The Methodists had arrived.

The expansion of Methodism continued beyond the Twillingate Islands. At Exploits Burnt Island during the winter of 1857, many of "the most worldly and wicked" were converted.<sup>118</sup> This is an eminent example of a lay Methodism which flourished on its own for nearly 40 years. The first missionary was not stationed there until 1859, long after an 1822 Anglican report that there were fishermen and their families who were "dissenters."<sup>119</sup> John Chapman in 1841 estimated that one-third of the population were Methodists, and William Marshall went there the following year he estimated that most of the inhabitants "manifest great attachment" to Methodism.<sup>120</sup> The people there were comfortable with an evangelical Protestantism which included the church services of both Anglican and Methodist laymen. The 1857 census showed that Methodists had risen to over half of the population of Exploits Burnt Island, solely through lay ministry. A lay reader read the service, but more importantly, Henry Daniel, the District chairman, found

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<sup>117</sup>*Wesleyan*, October 19, 1878, "Twillingate Sabbath School Festival," William Swann.

<sup>118</sup>UC Archive, WY 103, Box 1, "Newfoundland District Spiritual State Reports, 1840 - 1857, Paul Prestwood, 1857 Green Bay Circuit Report.

<sup>119</sup>UC Archive, WY 100, Box 1, 1829 - 1873, "Newfoundland District Journal, 1859 - 1873," 1859 Annual District Meeting, Carbonear, May 18, 1859. SOAS, *Minutes of Conference*, 1859, 273. *A Sermon Preached ... together with The Report of the Society for the Year 1822*, Report of John Leigh, Ecclesiastical Commissary, 54.

<sup>120</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A193, John Chapman to Bishop Spencer, Twillingate, October 13, 1841; PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 27, 1842-1845, William Marshall, Twillingate, Green Bay, October 26, 1842.

“a lively, thriving society” and that the people “conduct prayer meetings among themselves.” He realized that seldom had he heard “prayers more intelligent, fervent, powerful” than those he heard on Exploits Burnt Island, which also evidenced an “intelligent, fervent, powerful” vernacular Methodism, with the slimmest of input from the missionaries.<sup>121</sup>

There were other thriving centres of Methodism in Notre Dame Bay, Little Bay Islands possibly being the most notable for being the farthest removed from Methodist missionaries. When Henry Daniel visited the place in 1858 he found it to be “Wesleyan ground,” as the recent census of 112 Methodists out of a population of 128 had shown.<sup>122</sup> However, he was taken aback by their meeting house of vertical round studs and roof of bark, “which they call a chapel.” Yet in that humble abode he found “freedom and power” to preach.<sup>123</sup> It seems that “freedom and power” had been the order of day for the lay Methodism of Little Bay Islands, where almost the total population was Methodist, a record that few missionaries could match in places where they followed each other year after year for decade after decade.

By 1870 Wesleyans had taken over the north side of Notre Dame Bay, 1,000 from

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<sup>121</sup>Ibid., Reel 32, 1858-1864, Daniel, St. John's, October 26, 1858; published in *Methodist Magazine*, 1859, 186.

<sup>122</sup>CNS, 1857 Census of Newfoundland.

<sup>123</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 32, 1858-1864, Daniel, St. John's, October 26, 1858; published in *Methodist Magazine*, 1859, 186.

Ward's Harbour, (later Beaumont), and Tilt Cove alone.<sup>124</sup> Moreover, they had done so through migration and lay ministry with only minimal help from missionaries who visited from time to time.<sup>125</sup> Methodists from Cornwall who had come to work in the copper mines were prominent in ministry.<sup>126</sup> For instance, at Tilt Cove Theophilus George began services in Isaac Winsor's store. His first convert, Sister H. Locke, took over services when he was absent.<sup>127</sup> John Saint of Bonavista was stationed as a local preacher at the "Little Bay Island and Cape Shore Mission" in 1864.<sup>128</sup> The trend continued. In 1877 the Anglican clergyman at White Bay found this eastern extremity of his mission "almost

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<sup>124</sup>SOAS,, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 12, 1868-1883, File 570, Henry L. Cranford, Twillingate, December 10, 1870. The 1857 census had registered Methodists on the French Shore at Englee, St. Anthony, and Griquet. The 1869 census registered 71 Methodists at Red Bay, Labrador, as compared with 41 Church of England, and also 40 at Henley Harbour, where they were outnumbered only slightly by the Church of England. By 1874 Methodists at Bonne Bay on the west coast had increased to 270 from 28 in 1869. There was a much smaller number in the Bay of Islands, 70 in 1874. CNS, Census of Newfoundland, 1857, 1869. Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1874.

<sup>125</sup>James A. Duke spent a winter there in 1860 instead of remaining on Exploits Burnt Island. *Provincial Wesleyan*, May 6, 1860, "Revival in Newfoundland," Thomas Harris, Twillingate, January 24, 1860.

<sup>126</sup>SOAS,, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 12, 1868-1883, File 570, Henry L. Cranford, Twillingate, December 10, 1870. Martin, *Once Upon a Mine*, 13. Thomas Shaw, *History of Cornish Methodism* (Truro: D. Bradford Barton, 1967), 68-75, 120-121.

<sup>127</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, June, 1898, 86, Obituary of Sister H. Locke, Tilt Cove.

<sup>128</sup>UC Archive, WY 100, Box 1, 1829-1873, "Newfoundland District Journal, 1859- 1873," 1864 Annual District Meeting, St. John's, May 27, 1864.

given over to Wesleyanism," except for Nipper's Harbour, which was about half Church of England. Bett's Cove, which had taken over from Tilt Cove as the new mining centre, was a centre of religious diversity. Wesleyans followed Roman Catholics and Anglicans as the third largest group in the place, but it also had Presbyterians, Baptists, and others, from "Newfoundland, Germany, Nova Scotia, Cornwall, California, France and Australia." The proprietor of the mine, Francis Ellershausen, was a nominal German Lutheran, "whose mind is filled with copper," not religion, said Temple.<sup>129</sup> Notre Dame Bay with its large Methodist majority was an anomaly in Newfoundland.

The one large settlement where Methodists did not make headway was Fogo. As late as 1853 all that could be reported was "a few members, at least 12 in number."<sup>130</sup> When Edmund Botterell visited he found just one Methodist family, who had services in their home, and which had not seen a missionary in three years.<sup>131</sup> Although the

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<sup>129</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A242, Robert Temple, White Bay, June 30, 1877. Martin, *Once Upon a Mine*, 19. Gerhard P. Bassler, *Vikings to U-boats: The German Experience in Newfoundland and Labrador* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 89-95.

<sup>130</sup>UC Archive, WY 200, Fogo, Box 2, "Green Bay Circuit Book, 1846-1868," 1853. According to the 1857 census there were a similar number of artisans, merchants and traders at both places. CNS, Census of Newfoundland and Labrador.

<sup>131</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 30, 1852-1853, Edmund Botterell, St. John's, August 24, 1853, Journal of a trip to Twillingate. Mobility due to the seasonal round played a role in conversion, since in 1861 Thomas Harris visited a "Mr. Pope" on Fogo Island who once opposed religion but was converted "in the Bay" during the winter and now opened his house for prayer. Later in the year there were rumours of a lay revival on the island so a missionary was sent there to assess the situation. *Provincial Wesleyan*, April 10, 1861; May 1, 1861.

Newfoundland Methodist Missionary Society noted Fogo as needing a missionary in 1816, one was not sent until 1862.<sup>132</sup> Meanwhile the Church of England, fearing that a Methodist missionary was about to be appointed and gain “an organized footing,” appointed a clergyman in 1841.<sup>133</sup> James A. Harvey arrived in Fogo to minister in a newly built church, with the help of the people of Twillingate, and of John Slade, who contributed “materially” to its construction.<sup>134</sup> Both Fogo and Twillingate were able to benefit from having a resident Poole merchant stationed in the area, who had the authority to distribute mercantile largesse, unlike agents of Poole merchants who had no such authority. Fogo also benefitted from the enlarged sphere of ministry of the Church of England in Newfoundland initiated by its first Bishop Aubrey Spencer. However, although church matters proceeded well in an outward way over the next two decades, clergymen registered their dissatisfaction with a lack of substance in religion at Fogo. William Elder complained that the people rendered regular but “superficial” or perfunctory service at Fogo, in contrast to the residents of Change Islands.<sup>135</sup>

Similarly, Reginald Johnson was pleased with the new church tower built with the

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<sup>132</sup>*Methodist Magazine*, 1816, 469, Meeting of the Newfoundland Methodist Missionary Society, Carbonear, John Gosse, Esq., Chairman.

<sup>133</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A193, John Chapman to Bishop Spencer, Twillingate, October 10, 1840; Bishop Spencer to A.M. Campbell, Twillingate, August 1, 1841.

<sup>134</sup>*Ibid.*, John Chapman to A.M. Campbell, Secretary, SPG, Twillingate, December 19, 1839; John Chapman to Secretary, SPG, Thornton, March 2, 1841.

<sup>135</sup>*Ibid.*, A222, William A. Elder, Fogo, Christmas, 1854.

help of the merchants, Slade and Cox, but expressed dissatisfaction with the spirituality of the inhabitants:

Sunday after Sunday I am obliged to witness and put up with many acts of irreverence in the public worship. Do what I can, I cannot get the people (at least some of them) to kneel during prayers. Some stand, or lean over the pews, others, and the greater number, sit to pray to God. Some even throw their legs along the seat when they should be on their knees, and this, after both public and private monition. When I speak to them, they acknowledge the truth of what I say and admit that they are in the wrong, but Sunday comes, and they have forgotten what was said to them.

The parishioners considered that as long as they were not "notorious evil doers" they were doing everything that was required, but they had "a sad apathy about real and inward holiness."<sup>136</sup> When the Methodist Thomas Fox arrived in 1862 he found that the people "for the most part" were anxious that he had come "to break up their establishment, Episcopacy." This was in great contrast to Change Islands, where he found "genuine religion ... conversions ... and the presence of God."<sup>137</sup> Johnson noted that his Methodist counterpart met the same "religious apathy" as he did in Fogo. He regretted that although people attended his services, they did so because of "force of habit," and not because of any Anglican "religious vitality."<sup>138</sup>

The Methodist "lay patriarch," John G. Lucas, arrived in Fogo at the same time as

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<sup>136</sup>Ibid., A226, Reginald M. Johnston, Fogo, April 11, 1860; A227, Reginald M. Johnston, Fogo, October 1, 1860; December 30, 1860; A230, Reginald M. Johnston, Fogo, January, 1863; January, 1864.

<sup>137</sup>"Journal of Thomas Fox, 1851-1877," July 10, 28, 1862.

<sup>138</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A230, Reginald M. Johnston, Fogo, January, 1863.

Fox.<sup>139</sup> A tireless Methodist layman, Lucas had been a school teacher, but was appointed to Fogo as a Revenue Officer.<sup>140</sup> This was not lost on Johnson, who observed that although only 30 or 40 had left his church, structural changes, in particular “government and mercantile appointments,” had occurred in Fogo, which were detrimental to the Church of England but favourable to Methodism. These changes augmented the efforts of the new missionary with “his preaching, his prayer meetings, his class meetings, his temperance meetings and many other kinds of meetings to undermine the Church and its best interests” by their “novelty and excitement, and the seductiveness of this popular Protestantism.” The Revenue Officer was “a decided Wesleyan,” and gave free services as a lay reader and local preacher. His daughters went about the town giving out tracts and leading in prayer. The new agent of one of the mercantile firms was also a Methodist. Furthermore, “an opposition (Dissenting) house of business,” replaced John Slade and Co., who had been staunch supporters of the Church of England.<sup>141</sup> The merchants lent

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<sup>139</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, November, 1896, 170-171, “A Chapter in the history of Newfoundland Methodism,” Henry J. Indoe, *Seldom*, October 6, 1896.

<sup>140</sup>*Ibid.*, March, 1906, 3. He served as a class leader for over 50 years.

<sup>141</sup>Probably referring to the Duders. When the Methodist Church in Twillingate burned in 1868 it had an outstanding debt to Edwin Duder. UC Archive, WY 200, Fogo, Box 2, “Green Bay Circuit Book, 1846 - 1868,” 1868. Mrs. Thomas C. Duder was the organist and led the singing in the Fogo Methodist church for ten years. *Methodist Monthly Greeting*, January, 1903, 10. Bishop Feild also complained of the Church of England being “divided and desolated” by this change. Letter of Bishop Feild to the Rev. Canon Seymour, Twillingate, November 14, 1868, printed in Tucker, *Memoir of the Life and Episcopate of Edward Feild*, 235-236. For the changeover of the old English merchant houses in the outports to the St. John’s merchants, see Ryan, *Fish Out of Water*, 62-64.

their influence to the Methodist cause, for example, by appointing Methodists in their offices. In addition, the new Colonial Secretary "with whom we in the outharbours have chiefly to do," was a Methodist who did his best "to appoint Wesleyan Education boards, Wesleyan schoolmasters, and to divert educational funds to Wesleyan purposes, and in all this seconded by a Wesleyan Inspector of Schools."<sup>142</sup>

Thomas Fox was helped by there being many Methodist families in his circuit who had migrated "from other parts."<sup>143</sup> The Anglican clergyman thought it was "strange" that all the recent settlers to Fogo were Dissenters.<sup>144</sup> In fact it was not strange at all, but simply another instance of people migrating to an area because of their religious, not economic, values which were of primary importance to them. When they heard of a Methodist missionary moving to Fogo they followed him. Their Methodism would have also benefitted them economically from the new concentration of government and

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<sup>142</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A234, Reginald M. Johnson, Fogo, December 31, 1865. John Bemister, the new Colonial Secretary, under the Frederic Carter administration, an active Methodist, was trustee of the church in Carbonear and often chaired meetings of the Wesleyan Missionary Society. SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 9, 1849/51-1852/54, File 409 Carbonear Report of Trustees, Carbonear, November 1, 1849; PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 25, 1838-1840, Rules and Regulations of Carbonear Wesleyan Missionary Society, April 2, 1839; Reel 29, 1849-1852, John S. Addy, St. John's, "Missionary Meetings in Conception and Trinity Circuits," December 15, 1851; *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1854, I, 473. Both Bishop Feild and H. W. Hoyles protested against John Haddon being appointed Inspector of Schools in 1861 because he was a Wesleyan. PANL GN2/2 1858 Box 47 Letter of Bishop Feild to Governor Bannerman, May 28, 1858. *Courier*, Editorial, April 17, 1861.

<sup>143</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 32, 1858-1864, John S. Peach to William. B. Boyce, London, Blackhead, February 3, 1864.

<sup>144</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A233, Reginald M. Johnson, Fogo, January, 1865.

mercantile Dissent in the harbour. Despite these new advantages, in the absence of any revivals, the Methodists made no great gains in Fogo. The Anglican clergyman in 1868 said that, in fact, some who had left the Church had returned and the "schism" was not advancing.<sup>145</sup>

John Reay writing in 1875 claimed that "nowhere in Newfoundland has the progress of Methodism been so rapid as in Green Bay."<sup>146</sup> The census data bear him out. There was an astounding increase in the Methodist population and a commensurate decline in that of the Church of England, which is even more pronounced if one looks at the population statistics to 1884. Between 1857 to 1869 the Methodists in Notre Dame Bay more than doubled to 4235. The Church of England increased by only 600 to 6846 in the same period, and then to a mere 6989 in 1874. Even more striking, in the District of Twillingate from 1874 to 1884 the Church of England lost 377 members dropping to 3840, while the Methodists gained 3379 members, increasing to 8220.<sup>147</sup>

What can account for this startling Anglican decline and Methodist increase, unparalleled in the rest of the island? One has to dismiss Naboth Winsor's first reason for the expansion of Methodism, the scarcity of Church of England clergymen, since Methodist missionaries were also rare. Anglican clergymen were more perceptive in

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<sup>145</sup>Ibid., A235, Alfred M. Oakley, Fogo, December 31, 1868.

<sup>146</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, November 1899, 12, "Methodism in Green Bay," John Reay.

<sup>147</sup>Census of Newfoundland, 1857, 1869; Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1874, 1884.

discerning that their disadvantage was due not to Methodist missionaries, but to the active Methodism of the people themselves. Walter R. Smith at Exploits in 1871 pinpointed lay Methodism as the foremost reason for their success. Where the Church of England had only "one office-bearer" in the person of a clergyman, lay reader, or schoolmaster, there were "a score" of local preachers, for "almost every male" and "many females" were local preachers among the Methodists, who "baptize, bury, preach, hold meetings, revivals, and even marry."<sup>148</sup> It was the lay men and women who were propagating Methodism in the bay, and Smith was echoing the judgement of Bishop Feild himself when he wrote that:

The Methodists, who by their class leaders and prophetesses are busy everywhere, have made much havoc of the flock in this mission, driving some out of their senses and many out of the Church.<sup>149</sup>

Similarly, Thomas Boone at Twillingate, having visited Moreton's Harbour and Tizzard's Harbour, concluded that, "It is not so much the Wesleyan Ministers as the people who are successful in drawing away our people." He specifically referred to the people holding prayer meetings as being detrimental to the Anglican cause.<sup>150</sup> Again, George

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<sup>148</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A239, Walter R. Smith, Exploits, December 31, 1871.

<sup>149</sup>Quoted in Tucker, *Memoir of the Life and Episcopate of Edward Feild*, 170.

<sup>150</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A238, Thomas Boone, Twillingate, December 31, 1869. So also George Bond noted, "Who that has laboured on the out-port circuits of Newfoundland has not been filled with amazement at the fluency and eloquence of speech, the clearness of idea, the fulness of insight, and the fervour and pathos of expression with which new converts, often utterly illiterate, and by nature modest and shrinking, are enabled to tell of their experience and to appeal to their unconverted friends?" Bond, *Skipper George Netman*, 105.

Chamberlain, recently appointed to Moreton's Harbour, and possibly wearied from the services of Holy Week, despaired that vernacular Methodism was such a force: "The Methodists are so energetic that it is almost impossible to keep pace with them. Every one of them who can read is considered qualified to discharge the duties of a preacher."<sup>151</sup> In an oral culture it was not necessary to be literate in order to be a powerful preacher.

The Church of England handicapped their lay readers by insisting they read sermons, rather than preach extemporaneously. Reading was little suited to a call to the passion and action of the Methodist religion of the heart. It would have been a particular hindrance to many whose forte was freely speaking in public, and who could only read with difficulty.

Of course, lay readers had to preach doctrine as interpreted by the Church of England. This generally meant preventing Methodist-tending sermons which they might preach if permitted to preach extemporaneously. Thus Lewis Amadeus Anspach at Harbour Grace ordered that a lay reader was "to read such sermons and such sermons only, as I shall myself give him." Schoolmasters were not allowed to preach, but only to read, and only sermons published by the SPG.<sup>152</sup> Schoolmasters who were paid a salary had from time to time be kept in check on this matter. For example, George Coster noted,

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<sup>151</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A232, George Seymour Chamberlain, Moreton's Harbour, April 14, 1864.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid., A190, Lewis Amadeus Anspach to Doctor Morice, Harbour Grace, December 19, 1803; A191, Harbour Grace, John Leigh to Anthony Hamilton, January 15, 1821.

possibly in reference to John Curtis at Portugal Cove:

One of these Readers ... while he takes the money of the [SPG] Society for reading in the Church, he gratifies his vanity elsewhere by praying and preaching extempore. He is a useful man as a Schoolmaster, and I should be sorry to lose his services ... but I am persuaded the Society would not have his irregular proceedings pass unnoticed for example's sake."<sup>153</sup>

Archdeacon Wix chastised John Burt at Harbour Grace for allowing laymen "to take the lead in extemporaneous prayer," and for allowing them "to explain passages" when they read the Bible.<sup>154</sup> Such prayer and exposition, like preaching, would allow people a spiritual freedom outside of hierarchical control which the Church of England would not permit.<sup>155</sup>

Yet many preferred extemporaneous worship, whether in preaching or prayer, seeing it as coming from the heart and more directly from God. John Waterhouse, writing of Christopher Vey, a popular local preacher who "cultivated the gift of extemporaneous speech," noted that he spoke out of a "vital and robust Spiritual experience" in contrast to the "Biblical exegesis and religious thought" that were the foundation of sermons at the

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<sup>153</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A192, Archdeacon George Coster to Hamilton, St. John's, August 27, 1824. PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, 1823. A similar complaint was made of Mr. Brace at Bareneed, "You know he is an extempore preacher." PANL MG 598 SPG A193, Charles Blackman to Archdeacon Wix, Port de Grave, September 29, 1831; Archdeacon Wix to Charles Blackman, St. John's, October 3, 1831.

<sup>154</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A193, Edward Wix to Rev. Burt, Harbour Grace, July 1832.

<sup>155</sup>Bishop Feild required Oliver Rouse as a deacon to declare that he would "conform to the Liturgy as by law established." Street, *The Journal of Oliver Rouse*, 99.

end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>156</sup> Such preaching was so “potent with the vulgar” who regarded it, if not inspired then at least “the unpremeditated language of affection and truth,” that Bishop Spencer, when formerly a missionary at Trinity, preached extemporaneously “in order to draw the people from the meeting-house.”<sup>157</sup> Unlike many local preachers, some of the Methodist missionaries did not have this “natural gift of fluency” and had to memorize their sermons because the people “give us credit for being able to do wonders in the way of speaking at a minute’s notice.”<sup>158</sup> Thus Methodists had lay readers, not being “lay readers” except in name, but powerful preachers not dependent on books and other written material. The Anglican clergyman at Salvage was at a loss how to thwart such preachers, for instance, at Middle Arm, Bloody Bay, finding “argument useless” since they believed they were “miraculously gifted with the Holy Spirit.”<sup>159</sup> Even without the claim of a more direct inspiration, extempore preaching had its own appeal as being frank and straightforward:

The people prefer it. They like a man to look them full in the face, and address them boldly from the heart, not the manuscript. The electric preachers have all spoken extempore. Wesley, Whitefield, Spurgeon, Beecher, the Catholic preachers, the Methodist, the preachers who have produced the greatest

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<sup>156</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, September, 1903, 2, “Forty Years Ago, No. 35,” John Waterhouse, Manchester, July, 1903.

<sup>157</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A192, Aubrey George Spencer, Trinity, January 24, 1821; April 5, 1821.

<sup>158</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, February, 1902, 6, “Forty Years Ago, No. 19,” Rev. John Waterhouse, Manchester, December, 1901.

<sup>159</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A239, H.M. Skinner, Salvage, March 31, 1873.

impression, and the widest and longest, have all looked straight into the eyes of the people, and giving them sermons hot and fresh from their own souls.<sup>160</sup>

In addition, in an oral culture the people experienced their Methodism through an extemporaneous medium of testimony, exhortation, and prayer in the class meeting, prayer meeting, and Sunday services. The erudite George Bond was simply astonished with the fluency of class leaders, not knowing that books might take it away from them:

As I have listened to some of these men, their wonderful power in prayer, their depth of experience, and extraordinary facility of utterance in giving expression to it, I have longed that they had in youth the advantages of education. Some of them can scarcely read, some of them cannot read a word. And yet the most beautiful language, so simple, so correct, will pour from their lips.<sup>161</sup>

Reading a text was fine with regard to the testimony of others, for example those written up in the *Methodist Magazine* and in the *Missionary Notices*, but it was not a worthy medium of communicating personal experience of God. People who spoke spontaneously, also spoke the familiar language of the heart of the new world, of the sea

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<sup>160</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, December 25, 1861, "Extemporaneous Preaching."

<sup>161</sup>Bond, *Skipper George Netman*, 55-56. In the service on the ice in his "Captain Sam's Two Easter Sundays," he writes, "Poor Dave wasn't much of a reader, but he was slowly spellin' it out like," but afterward when the sealers prayed extemporaneously, "such prayers I thought I never heard before." Queen Elizabeth II Library Archive, Memorial University, George Bond Archive, Coll-236, 3.01.004, 9. See also Bond's description of "a Newfoundland fisherman's prayer," the first such prayer they had ever heard "from one of their own class" in his "How the Gabbites Came to Gull Cove," Coll-236, 3.01.013, 21. What Bond did not realize was that education might take such fluency from them. James Lumsden commented in his book, *Skipper Parson*, "Doubtless, as education spreads, out of the lay reader the local preacher will be evolved." Lumsden, *The Skipper Parson*, 87. Henry J. Indoe replied, "I pray 'So mote it be!' remembering that in Nova Scotia it has not so followed." *Methodist Monthly Greeting*, May, 1906, 2. Lumsden, *The Skipper Parson*, Review by Henry J. Indoe, Nova Scotia."

and fishing and sealing, of the land in its winter and summer dress, in contrast to newly arrived preachers with their foreign allusions and illustrations of British countryside and manners. While the language of the latter had a certain appeal, it did not address their present world. It would have been local class leaders, exhorters and prayer leaders who spoke of being lost upon "the dark storm-swept seas of sin," salvation as making the best fishing voyage, dying as weighing anchor, and a person's end being "the harbour or the lee shore."<sup>162</sup> Having been already expert in their ability to "'yarn' about storms, shipwrecks, and ghosts," they applied that expertise to the Methodist message.<sup>163</sup>

Notre Dame Bay is the most outstanding example in Newfoundland of a migratory vernacular Methodism. While Conception and Bonavista Bay are similar examples, nowhere else but in Twillingate was there such a discomfiting of Anglicanism, and in no other bay was the dominance of Methodism so complete. Fogo alone remained an Anglican stronghold against the Methodist onslaught. Evangelical Anglicanism in Twillingate, buttressed by magistrate and merchants, was powerless to defend the Church against leakage to Methodism, and may have with its similar theology, abetted it. Tractarianism brought an even greater rupture. Caught up in the vernacular Methodism of

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<sup>162</sup>Bond, *Skipper George Netman*, 98, 66, 108, 114, 125. See also Captain Sam's reference to his identity as a Methodist, "The Lord Jesus Christ is my Captain ... an' the Methodist Church is the ship I sails in. I likes her, I do. She sails well, is a good carrier, an' can be depended on in a breeze of wind. A fine stiff craft she is, well built and well found." George Bond, "Captain Sam's Two Easter Sundays," 3, Queen Elizabeth II Library Archive, Memorial University, George Bond Archive, Coll-236, 3.01.004.

<sup>163</sup>Lewis, "How Methodism Came to Foxes," 159.

revival, people poured out of St. Peter's Church, repelled by a sacramental and sacerdotal version of the faith. Methodists in Twillingate included not only "poor" fishermen, but also clerks and agents of the new businesses who took over from the old English firms.

The "foundation" of Methodism was laid long before the arrival in 1842 of its first missionary, William Marshall. While clergy played a subsidiary role in the Methodist success, especially in Twillingate, it is clear that it was the people themselves who determined the spirituality of the majority of Notre Dame Bay, as they reached for the highest note of ecstasy from Cape Freels to Cape St. John. Whether in Twillingate, Change Islands, Exploits Burnt Islands or Little Bay Islands, by exercising a choice for a popular religion of experience, instead of submitting to one of order and hierarchy, people dramatically affirmed their own ability and power, and to such a degree, that they added a new dimension to Newfoundland culture, the capability and acceptability of the vernacular. The successful resistance at Hart's Cove to Anglican authority and power, similar to the flagstaff event at Bonavista, was a public demonstration that a populist Methodist movement was prepared to take a stand for an equal place in society.

Mrs. Goddard, very poorly but very happy in God. She was for some time on her knees that she did not know whether in the body or out of the body. She forgot all her sufferings, lost in ecstasy.<sup>1</sup>  
December 7, 1818

## Chapter Nine: Burin and Placentia Bay

### 9.1 Burin

This chapter will examine the role of the missionary and the laity in the Methodist expansion to the Burin Peninsula and Placentia Bay. It will also consider the impact of such characteristics as the high degree of winter transhumance at Burin, mobility of settlement in the bay, the predominance of Catholics, the Cape St. Mary's fishery, the proximity to Maritime Methodists, the late arrival of the Church of England, its strategic plan, and its change to a Tractarian spirituality. The impact of revival and the change within Methodism to respectability will also be studied.

John Lewis, the first Methodist missionary in Placentia Bay, arrived in June, 1817, a few months after Richard Knight in Fortune Bay. A merchant lent him a store in which to preach at Oderin, and "all the Protestants assembled." He proceeded to Burin where he was lent the courthouse and had "good and attentive" congregations though this was the height of the fishing season. On his third Sunday, July 6, the fishermen returned with their catch from Cape St. Mary's.<sup>2</sup> This may have caused him to make the seemingly

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<sup>1</sup>"Journal of John Lewis," 1.08, December 8, 1818.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1.05, June 22, 29, 1817; July 6, 7, 1817.

contradictory remarks that, "there is no religion, no morality, not even a form of godliness. The Sabbath is profaned by all: drunkenness is a prevailing evil; and others of as deep a dye I could mention."<sup>3</sup> He determined not to confine himself to Burin but to visit the other settlements in the bay in September.<sup>4</sup>

Burin was not isolated when John Lewis introduced Methodism in 1817. Communication with England by way of Poole was constant. William Harding's diary reminds us that in the early decades of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century there were still young men coming to Newfoundland, who could, and often did, return to Britain when their service was completed. Such was the ease with which one could do this that when Harding thought he should return to England with his new bride, she reminded him that they "could get a passage from Burin any Fall if I did not like to settle in the country."<sup>5</sup> Vessels arrived from and departed to such ports as Dublin, Waterford, and Cadiz. Lewis was able to go on board and make use of their libraries, and found that Scottish captains had more religious books than the English. The captain of a brig from Aberdeen, a Methodist, was "a constant attender in every port." His wife from Kingston, Jamaica, was familiar with Methodists. Schooners, often with newspapers, arrived from St. John's and the

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<sup>3</sup>*Methodist Magazine*, Vol. 2, 1817, 873. John Lewis to G. Marsden, Burin, Placentia Bay, July 7, 1817. He was in Placentia Bay for less than three weeks, and he may have been making a formulaic comment.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, Vol. 2, 1817, 872. John Lewis to G. Marsden, Burin, Placentia Bay, July 7, 1817. This was according to the will of the Auxiliary Missionary Society meeting of January 15, 1816, in Carbonear. 1816, 469.

<sup>5</sup>"William Harding Diary, 1793-1877."

Maritimes, particularly Halifax.<sup>6</sup> Lewis read of the June 18, 1817 Carbonear and chapel fires three weeks after the event.<sup>7</sup>

The regional area of communication through fishing and transhumance was the whole of Placentia Bay to Cape St. Mary's to the east, and westerly to Fortune Bay. There was an overland route to Fortune Bay, but there was little connection with the northeast coast. Lewis said it was "easier to correspond with a friend in England than one in Bonavista from Burin." This frame of reference for many, and for Lewis himself, was the mental, social, and physical landscape of England, and not Newfoundland, "Many of the people are from home."<sup>8</sup>

Lewis met opposition from Thomas Grantham, the Church of England clergyman, whom he had followed at Burin.<sup>9</sup> Grantham was disturbed by Methodism coming to Burin after his departure. He told the school teacher, William Tulk, that if he wanted to be paid by the SPG, he should not give permission to Lewis to preach in the schoolroom. Lewis wondered what kind of man Grantham was, forbidding him to preach when he

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<sup>6</sup>John Rylands Library, PLP 69.31.2, John Lewis, Burin to George Cubit, Methodist Chapel, St. John's, April 13, 1818.

<sup>7</sup>"Journal of John Lewis," 1.05, July 8, 1817.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., October 26, 1817; Coll-205, 1.07. August 17, 1818; Coll-205, 1.08. July 5, 1819. SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence Box 2, 1819/20 - 1823/25, File 51, John Lewis to Joseph Taylor, Burin, December 17, 1819.

<sup>9</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A190 Rev. Thomas Grantham to Rev. A. Hamilton, Burin, December 10, 1816.

would not stay and preach himself.<sup>10</sup> Governor Pickmore also tried to shut Lewis out of the courthouse where he held services, sending word by a surrogate that only clergy of the Church of England were allowed to hold services there. Residents refused to allow this action, saying they built the courthouse at their own expense, excepting £100.<sup>11</sup> Lewis, with the agreement of “the magistrate and principal persons” decided to continue to preach there until he should be forbidden by the governor “officially ... under his own hand.”<sup>12</sup>

After a year of preaching and visitation, neither Lewis nor John Haigh, who replaced Knight in Grand Bank and Fortune Bay, held out much hope for Methodism on the south coast. Both advised their fellow missionaries, probably at the District Meeting in May 1818, that the area had “had a sufficient trial” and it was time to move on to “try other ground.”<sup>13</sup> People were not turning to God in their distress from the post-war depression. In the fall of 1818, however, there was a small revival. Beginning on October 25, there were several conversions, mostly neighbours, in rapid succession: “I have never witnessed the like before in so short a time.” Lewis formed a class of ten

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<sup>10</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 24, John Lewis, December 2, 1817.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., File 24, John Lewis, December 2, 1817.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., File 25, George Cubit, St. John's, December 20, 1817.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., File 47, James Hickson, Harbour Grace, January 9, 1819; John Rylands Library, PLP 69.31.2, John Lewis, Burin to George Cubit, Methodist Chapel, St. John's, April 13, 1818.

members. Fifteen converts could not attend class meetings because Burin was composed of a number of islands. He did an about-face: "I do not know of any station in the land where the prospects are more promising." He asked to remain another year.<sup>14</sup>

Hannah Goddard, his first Methodist convert in Burin, attested that Lewis had ministered for a year with no results, but she then came under conviction, to such a degree that her friends thought she was "going mad." Goddard's was a conversion of experience, for she stated that after a time of repentance, "I enjoyed an indescribable joy from a sense of my acceptance with God through Jesus Christ."<sup>15</sup> Lewis was himself elated, seeing in her conversion his purpose for being a Methodist missionary: "This is true Methodism. May God give us more of this stamp."<sup>16</sup>

Hannah also mentioned that her daughter, Sarah Bartlett, and her husband, and another couple, probably within her immediate social circle, were converted.<sup>17</sup> It is

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<sup>14</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 48, John Lewis to Rev. J. Taylor, Burin, May 17, 1819.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., Joshua Bryan to Joseph Benson, Shaftesbury, April 5, 1819; Hannah Goddard to Joshua Bryan, Burin, June 5, 1819. Bryan had been in Newfoundland and had returned to England.

<sup>16</sup>"Journal of John Lewis," 1.08, December 11, 1818.

<sup>17</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 48, Hannah Goddard to Joshua Bryan, Burin, June 5, 1819. For obituaries of converts at the time, Hannah Goddard, Sarah Bartlett, Thomas and Martha Hollett and Hannah Darby, see obituaries in the *Provincial Wesleyan*, April 22, 1858; July 8, 1858; *Wesleyan*, July 8, 1881. *Methodist Monthly Greeting*, November 1896, 173. Other converts were George Mitchell and Richard Willey, "Journal of John Lewis," 1.08, November 22, 1818; January 5, 1819.

evident that while Lewis's preaching was instrumental in providing the symbolic framework for the "new birth," the social network of the Goddards was key to the spread of Methodism in Burin. This did not mean that matters proceeded harmoniously. Hannah's husband took some time before taking to Methodism. When Lewis held a class meeting in his house and he was not invited, because he was "in a great rage swearing" the day before, he charged them with despising him and shutting him out. When writing of another incident that upset Mr. Goddard, Lewis said that if he were a woman he would rather be "tied to a bull" than married to that man.<sup>18</sup> But it was the local network of relationships that enabled Methodism to spread. For example, when relatives and friends visited her while she was sick, Hannah urged them to turn to God. Thus it was not primarily at public services at the courthouse, but in peoples' kitchens that spirituality began to grow.

When Lewis came back from the District Meeting in St. John's in June he found that two people wanted to join the class, being "deeply convinced of sin." On his return from his three-week visit in Placentia Bay in August he found that three or four more had joined the class.<sup>19</sup> Methodism had travelled through the web of personal relationships while he was absent. Lewis said of Hannah Goddard that "Jesus Christ is the centre of her joy," and that she was the centre of the class meeting. She was the first convert, was patient in severe illness, and she experienced an ecstasy which John Lewis himself wished

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<sup>18</sup>"Journal of John Lewis," 1.08, February 25, 1819; June 27, 1819.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, December 11, 12, 1818; June 20, 1819; August 29, 1819.

he could feel.<sup>20</sup> She was the model of the religion of experience to which others aspired, and the magnet which drew them together. On the other hand, at Oderin, Stephen Lawlor's more cerebral Methodism travelled only to his wife.<sup>21</sup> As an agent for Spurrier, he had no friendships to provide a conduit for his Methodism. Rather he was the people's master, and had a reputation for being a rather stern one.<sup>22</sup>

The courthouse was not the prime site for corporate spiritual expression. Rather, it was spiritual intimacy in the homes of the Goddards, Holletts, and Moultons, where Methodism began to make gains. There is no reference in Lewis's journal to Hannah Goddard leading class meetings of mixed gender, or preaching or teaching. This would have been frowned upon by the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, which condemned preaching by women in 1803.<sup>23</sup> Yet it is likely that she did so at this early stage of Methodism in Burin, since, as Deborah Valenze found in cottage Methodism in the United Kingdom, at the informal household phase of Methodism women had a much less

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., January 8, 1819.

<sup>21</sup>On December 10, 1817, Lewis sent Lawlor several books, John Fletcher, *Works*, Vol. 1; David Simpson, *Plea for Religion*; John Wesley, *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*; Disney Alexander, *Reasons for Methodism*. On May 16, 1818, he sent him Richard Baxter, *Saints' Everlasting Rest* and John Howe, *Blessedness of the Righteous*. "Journal of John Lewis," 1.06; 1.07.

<sup>22</sup>"Journal of John Lewis," 1.06, November 3, 1817.

<sup>23</sup>Gwendolyn Davies, "In the Garden of Christ': Methodist Literary Women in Nineteenth-Century Maritime Canada," in Scobie and Grant, eds., *The Contribution of Methodism to Atlantic Canada*, 206.

confined role in public spiritual leadership.<sup>24</sup>

The work continued over the next decade in the Burin circuit without any dramatic increases, except a jump in membership in 1832 from 46 to 68.<sup>25</sup> In fact, decline was common, but this did not mean necessarily that members had backslidden, since accidental death and migration were not infrequent. For instance, William Ellis reported the circuit lost three members in an August gale in 1824.<sup>26</sup> Mobility was even more significant. In 1819 Lewis lost two members who emigrated to Prince Edward Island.<sup>27</sup> There was also migration to other parts of the island, particularly Placentia Bay, where they would no longer be registered as members.

Because of the nature of the fishery, Lewis found Sabbath-breaking at Burin far beyond anything he had encountered at Port de Grave and Conception Bay where he had previously ministered. On the third Sunday after his arrival he noted that few attended the

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<sup>24</sup>Historians see an illustration of 'Thirsk's Law' in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Methodism, with women losing their "temporary position of influence" as leaders and preachers, as the movement continued from its revivalist expansion phase to the more formal chapel phase in which it became a denomination. Hempton, *The Religion of the People*, 181, 185. Fn.12 "In a paper on 'The history women' at the Irish Conference of Historians in Belfast in 1993, Joan Thirsk stated that at the opening of all new enterprises women were able to play an important part before the structures were later cemented by men." Valenze, *Prophetic Sons And Daughters*, 11, 52.

<sup>25</sup>UC Archive, WY 100, Box 1, 1829-1873, "Minutes, Newfoundland District, Wesleyan Methodist Church, England, 1829-1850." Minutes for 1831, 1832.

<sup>26</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 19, 1824-1825, William Ellis, Burin & Placentia Bay, September, 1824.

<sup>27</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 49, John Lewis to Secretary of Wesleyan Missions, Joseph Taylor, Burin, October 11, 1819.

service because "the boats came home with fish." In Burin the Sabbath was broken "in the most glaring and profligate manner."<sup>28</sup> Again in August there was a lean congregation because "the boats came home from the cape with some fish."<sup>29</sup> Fishing at Burin was a seven-day-a-week activity, unlike in Greenspond where people bought provisions on Sunday, stood about discussing the news, and made preparations for Monday, and "were not so abandoned as with one consent to prosecute the fishery on the Sabbath-day."<sup>30</sup> During July, August and September, many Burin fishermen travelled to Cape St. Mary's twice a week. They caught their bait on Sunday and crossed Placentia Bay at night in order to be on the fishing grounds at dawn on Monday. Returning to Burin with the catch in the middle of the week, they did the same thing over again and returned on Sunday. This meant they had to gut, split, and salt their fish on the Sabbath, in addition to catching bait for the following week. Even though they made these two trips a week, two thirds of them in 1817 were in debt to the merchant. How much more indebted would they be observing the Sabbath and making only one trip? It would annoy merchants, and it would leave fishermen "without money, without credit, and without the means of providing for a large family." Moreover, in addition to these "peculiar circumstances," there was much more fog than in Conception Bay and as a result sometimes "the whole week is wet and

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<sup>28</sup>"Journal of John Lewis," 1.05, July 6, 1817. SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 23, John Lewis, Burin, July 7, 1817.

<sup>29</sup>"Journal of John Lewis," 1.05, August 17, 1817.

<sup>30</sup>*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1827, 129-132. Journal of John Corlett, July 2, 1825.

the Sunday fine and dry.” By spreading it on Sunday, sometimes up to £1,000 of fish could be saved. Lewis preached against breaking the Sabbath, but he wondered aloud to the committee what he should do. “What I want to know of you is which you think is the greatest evil - letting the fish spoil after it is caught, or curing of it on Sunday.”<sup>31</sup>

The fishermen did not wait for an answer. “With one voice” they made the argument that they were “compelled from necessity,” and a vigorous argument it was.<sup>32</sup> In addition to the appeal to common sense, they buttressed their case by appealing to the Bible. Fishing on the Sabbath is “the one thing needful,” interpreted not as Mary’s spiritual worship at the feet of Jesus but as Martha’s preparation of a meal in the Gospel of Luke. And did not Jesus tell the Pharisees, “Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into the pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath Day?” By this *a fortiori* argument people felt they were “authorized” to fish on Sunday to save their families from hunger.<sup>33</sup> In defending their work to make a living, the fishermen demonstrated a familiarity with the Bible at variance with the not uncommon portrayal of their ignorance. In addition, it shows that while Sabbath-breaking was decried as one of the three prevailing sins of the people, this was not the people’s self-perception. Rather,

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<sup>31</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 23, John Lewis to WMM Committee, Burin, July 7, 1817.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 19, 1824-1825, William Ellis, Burin, William Ellis, November 29, 1825. The reference is to Luke 10:42, KJV; Reel 20, 1825-1828, William Wilson, Burin, October 5, 1826. Luke 14:5, KJV.

they viewed themselves as moral in the responsibility they took to provide for their families through their industrious work habits. They also appealed to custom in their homeland. As English farmers gathered their harvest on the Sabbath, so Newfoundland planters split and spread their fish. ““In England the best people work in a wet harvest.””<sup>34</sup>

In 1823, the earliest year for which we have data, there were three classes at Burin, each with over twenty members, at Burin Bay, Great Burin, and Little Burin, led by Jane Hickson, Thomas Hollett and William Harding. From 1825 when there were 88 members, there was a general decline in circuit numbers to a low of 46 members in 1831. However, in 1832 there was a nearly 50 percent jump in membership to 68.<sup>35</sup> Numbers do not speak to the quality of Methodism. William Ellis reported that though there was no revival in 1825 there was an increase in numbers, seriousness, unity and love which should not be overlooked. In addition, the Sabbath was now much more sanctified by the people.<sup>36</sup> Burin being “a cluster of islands and peninsulas,” it required a measure of zeal in rough weather to attend services. There are few better portrayals of the earnestness of vernacular spirituality than Ellis’ description of the little boats of Burin coming to worship:

Tis not uncommon on the Lord’s Day to see 8 or 10 small boats coming to the

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., Reel 20, 1825-1828, William Wilson, Burin, October 5, 1826; Reel 19, 1824-1825, William Ellis, Burin, William Ellis, November 29, 1825.

<sup>35</sup>UC Archive, Burin, Box 1, “Account Book, 1821-1835.”

<sup>36</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 19, 1824-1825, William Ellis, Burin, William Ellis, November 29, 1825.

House of the Lord in some of which may be 5 or 6 females while at the same time it blows so hard that they are drenched with water, or it freezes so intensely that their wet garments would almost stand erect. And in this state they remain in Church till the prayers are read and a Sermon preached, then return home Subject to the same Suffering.<sup>37</sup>

It would appear that ardour did not wane during the three year ministry of William Wilson, but numbers were on the decrease. It must have been numbers that Wilson had in mind when he declared after a short time in the circuit that "the cause of religion is at a stand amongst us." People were still quite zealous for he also stated that fishermen "do their utmost" to get back home from Cape St. Mary's to be in Burin for Sunday services.<sup>38</sup>

While Methodists were declining in numbers from 1825 to 1831, the Church of England sent clergymen to visit. In 1825 Charles Blackman remained nearly two weeks and held services.<sup>39</sup> In 1827 Bishop Inglis and his assistant, William Bullock, visited and confirmed 36 persons in the court house. Inglis noted that "a Methodist teacher very politely ... offered me the use of his meeting house" which had once been owned by the Church of England, but it had "passed into the hands of the Methodists."<sup>40</sup> Two years

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., Reel 20, 1825-1828, William Wilson, Burin, July 25, 1826; Reel 19, 1824-1825, William Ellis, Burin & Placentia Bay, September, 1824. See also SOAS,, *Missionary Notices*, Vol. 4, 189. Thomas Hickson, Burin, November 15, 1822.

<sup>38</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 20, 1825-1828, William Wilson, Burin, October 5, 1826.

<sup>39</sup>*A Sermon Preached ... together with The Report of the Society for the Year 1825*, 52.

<sup>40</sup>*A Sermon Preached ... together with The Report of the Society for the Year 1827*, 100-101.

later William Bullock again visited and wrote that “the population is still strictly Episcopalian,” denying the existence of the Methodists who were in Burin at least since 1818.<sup>41</sup> In 1830 Archdeacon Wix visited and held services in the courthouse. The Methodists had offered him their chapel which he noted had “formerly been our own” and “of course, I declined it.”<sup>42</sup> It would appear that the Methodists of Burin wanted cordial relations with the Church of England and still saw its religious tradition as part of their identity.

While transhumance or dual-residence was a feature of most Newfoundland communities, in Burin it was particularly pronounced. Starting in November the population began to move to winter quarters principally at Freshwater Pond, Mortier Bay, and the western shore. At their winter locations people were industrious, cutting firewood, building or repairing boats, and cutting “timber for making and replacing their fishing rooms.”<sup>43</sup> They made oars, gaffs, buckets, handbars, fencing, shores, cribbing, and longers for flakes and wharves. For the fisherman, almost everything he needed for life and work he made of wood, even anchors, in the form of killicks. The winter season was

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<sup>41</sup>*A Sermon Preached Before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts ... together with The Report of the Society for the Year 1830* (London: J.G. and F. Rivington, 1831), William Bullock to Archdeacon Coster, Trinity, October 21, 1829, 11.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, Archdeacon Edward Wix, Journal, October 9, 1830, 90.

<sup>43</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 22, 1831-1833, John Smithies, Burin, September 19, 1832; Reel 26, 1841-1842 James England, Burin, December 4, 1841.

an indispensable part of the informal economy making up the work year.<sup>44</sup> So extensive was the late-fall migration from Burin that Wilson saw his congregation in 1826 reduced from 300 to between twelve and twenty.<sup>45</sup>

Moving residence in the uncertain weather of November and December had its own dangers. Joseph Hollett, his wife and family, his brother and child, and two others were drowned in a November gale in 1827 while moving for the winter to St. Mary's Bay.<sup>46</sup> With only one Protestant family at Burin Bay, one at Little Burin, and four at Great Burin remaining for the winter, Wilson decided on a measure "without precedent" - to live with the people in their winter quarters. With over a dozen Protestant families and over twenty members of Society at Freshwater Pond, he decided to live there for the winter, calling it "Wesley Vale." When they were assured he was coming, the people quickly built him a house of perpendicular studs in five days. Throughout the winter Wilson preached, and held class and prayer meetings at Wesley Vale and at Mortier Bay, two hours away, but without "any particular conversion."<sup>47</sup> This turned out to be a one-time experiment. Wilson remained in Burin the following winter because few of the people moved. A

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<sup>44</sup>Sweeny, "Accounting for Change: Understanding Merchant Credit Strategies in Outport Newfoundland," 135-137.

<sup>45</sup>*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1827, 641. William Wilson, Wesley Vale, Burin.

<sup>46</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 20, 1825-1828, William Wilson, Burin, Journal, May 2, 1827.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, December 9, 1826; William Wilson, Wesley Vale, June 17, 1827. *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1828, 58. William Wilson, Burin, May 17, 1827.

measles epidemic brought by a schooner from Halifax so much interfered with the fishery that the people could not take up winter supplies with the merchants. Thus they did not migrate in November as usual.<sup>48</sup>

There was possibly some dissatisfaction with Wilson's decision to move from his mission station. In September 1833 he was notified by the Missionary Committee in London that there were "charges of imprudence" brought against him at the District Meeting by his fellow missionaries, and that the charges were of such a serious nature that he would be transferred to Bedeque in Nova Scotia. One of these charges had to do with his moving to Freshwater Pond for the winter. In defending himself, he said that a person named Moore who corresponded with William Ellis jokingly wrote that "'Our Parson is gone into the woods on half pay,'" and this was mistakenly construed as general dissatisfaction with his action.<sup>49</sup>

It is probable that Wilson was not the only one in the woods holding Methodist services. Charles Bates, also reporting in December, 1826, stated that because of poverty many of his members had to leave Bonavista for the winter and go across the bay where food, especially birds, were more plentiful. Among them was "a valuable local preacher," who was one of the laymen who had nurtured Methodism in Bonavista during the long

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<sup>48</sup>*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1828, 58. William Wilson, Burin, May 17, 1827. PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 20, 1825-1828, William Wilson, Burin, November 2, 1827.

<sup>49</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 5, 1833/34-1837/38, File 204, William Wilson, Burin, Journal, November 13, 1833. Files 204-205, William Wilson, Trinity, December 4, 1833.

interval after the departure of George Smith, and continued to do so after others came.<sup>50</sup>

This man, probably Benjamin Cole, in all likelihood held services, prayer meetings, and class meetings at Barrow Harbour or its vicinity during the winter of 1826 - 1827.

Neither was Wilson the first to make a "Wesley Vale" out of the migration to winter quarters. That variation on Methodist ministry was first carried out by a layman. William Harding, already familiar with Methodism, who came to Newfoundland as a blacksmith in 1819, under contract with William Cook of Great Paradise, Placentia Bay.<sup>51</sup> He married Mary Brushett of Burin, whose family was Methodist, when his indenture ended with the merchant. He began attending Methodist meetings in Burin, the first time since leaving England. In the spring of 1821 he was much convinced of sin by a sermon of Thomas Hickson and "entered a fresh covenant with God" at a class meeting, to which he was invited by Richard Willey, converted under John Lewis's ministry two years before. Hickson asked him if he would hold Methodist services during the winter in Mortier Bay, to which he agreed. As a layman he seems to have discharged the services of a Methodist minister, for he held a service each Sunday with those who were in the

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<sup>50</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 20, 1825-1828, Charles Bates, Bonavista, December 8, 1826.

<sup>51</sup>William Harding is a reminder that a number of emigrants from Britain were already sympathetic to Methodism upon their arrival in Newfoundland. They had been to Sunday services, attended prayer meetings, or even had attended class meetings while in England. "William Harding Diary, 1793-1877." There was an early Methodist presence in the south of England. For example, by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century there were already Methodist societies in 40 parishes in Dorset, for instance, in Poole, Weymouth, Bridport and Portland. Barry J. Biggs, *The Wesleys and the Early Dorset Methodists* (Gillingham, Dorset: Woodsorrel Publications, 1987), 55, 59-61.

vicinity and walked five miles down to “the Ticks or Reach” during the week to hold another. This he did again the following winter, a tremendous effort by a man working to make his living in the woods, and at the same time, offering his pastoral services for free.<sup>52</sup> This was an effort demonstrating much Methodist passion and commitment. He commented in his reminiscences, “It was a pleasant and happy winter. How delightful to serve God.” Still, he does not get even a passing mention from Hickson in his letter published in the *Methodist Magazine* in 1822.<sup>53</sup> The omission in the missionary correspondence of such a sizable lay contribution to the Methodist effort is a reminder of how limited to the work of missionaries alone this correspondence most often is. A reference to a lay ministry is the exception, so one has often to deduce the breadth and depth of that ministry from the mere logic of the circumstances as related in the missionary correspondence.

By 1836 the Methodists had made only limited progress in Burin and Placentia Bay after twenty years of effort, and that without any Protestant competition. Their record of attempting to gain members in society was actually dismal, showing a decrease of six between 1826 and 1836. Wilson reported in 1828 that he could handle strange climates and foreign cultures, and even opposition from enemies to Methodism, but the worst of all was “painful recollection that we have almost laboured in vain,” which had been the

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<sup>52</sup>“William Harding Diary, 1793-1877.”

<sup>53</sup>*Methodist Magazine*, 1823, 837. Letter of Thomas Hickson, Burin, November 15, 1822.

situation of Methodist missionaries in the Burin circuit for more than ten years. The missionaries had preached from the pulpit and visited from house to house, but the people “continued unmoved.”<sup>54</sup>

A few may have been moved without the missionary present. Elizabeth Goddard, for example, was converted in 1827 at a prayer meeting at Thomas Hollett’s house in Spoon Cove. To describe it in her diary she used the language of ecstasy, “I felt full of holy joy. I could compare myself with David. I danced with joy.”<sup>55</sup> Still, Methodists actually declined in the Burin circuit from 77 members in 1826 to a mere 46 in 1831, but a small revival in 1832 brought their membership up to 68, the first increase within the period.<sup>56</sup> John Smithies was able to report the uncommon news that “several souls were awakened ... several backsliders returned” and some were brought into “perfect love,” or entire sanctification.<sup>57</sup> However, numerically there was little of a positive nature to report until 1837 and 1838 when members in society increased from 71 to 91 and 108

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<sup>54</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 21, 1828-1831, William Wilson to WMMS, Burin, November 5, 1828; December 2, 1828;

<sup>55</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, February, 1893, 30. Obituary of Elizabeth Goddard, Spoon Cove, Burin.

<sup>56</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, 1823-1826; UC Archive, WY 100, Box 1, 1829-1873, “Minutes, Newfoundland District, Wesleyan Methodist Church, England, 1829-1850.” Minutes, 1827-1838.

<sup>57</sup>UC Archive, WY 100, Box 1, 1829-1873, “Minutes, Newfoundland District, Wesleyan Methodist Church, England, 1829-1850.” Minutes, John Smithies, Burin, 1832.

respectively.

To explain this poor showing, the missionaries appealed to local circumstances, and to positive results other than conversions and increase in membership. The “migratory callings and pursuits” of the people, particularly their moving to winter tilts from November to May, resulting in “their long absence from the means of grace,” was the most common reason given for the failure of Methodism to flourish.<sup>58</sup> This thinking focused on the missionary in his chapel, instead of on the people themselves, as the nexus of Methodism. However, John Smithies, though thinking similarly, allowed that transhumance was not altogether detrimental to Methodist spirituality,

In the fall of the year they are scattered abroad and in the winter are situated here and there as best suits their conveniences in building or repairing of Boats, or providing materials for the coming season. When we consider their migratory callings and pursuits we cannot but feel thankful to the God of grace that they keep up the joy, light and flames of divine love even in a small degree on the mean altars of their hearts.<sup>59</sup>

He did not allow for the possibility that the people in taking responsibility for their own spirituality during the winter may have fortified and enhanced it. This was quite within reach given the vernacular nature of prayer and class meetings, and hymn singing.

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<sup>58</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 21, 1828-1831, William Wilson to WMMS, Burin, November 5, 1828. Wilson neglected to mention his Grand Bank thesis that people’s transhumance for fish and wood production actually enabled the spread of Methodism. Reel 23, 1832-1835, William Faulkner, Burin, January 10, 1834; December 1, 1834; SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 3, 1823/25-1828/29, File 101, William Ellis to Jabez Bunting, Burin, August 4, 1823.

<sup>59</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS, Reel 22, 1831-1833, John Smithies, Burin, November 19, 1832.

When conversions were rare, Methodist missionaries generally appealed to improvement in morals, a general Protestant ethic, for comfort that their work and purpose as missionaries were not without effect. For example, William Faulkner, allowing that the absence of conversions was “calculated to weaken the courage and depress the faith” of the missionary, drew some solace that drunkenness, swearing, and Sabbath-breaking had “in some measure passed away” since missionaries had been coming to Burin.<sup>60</sup> In this way moral improvement was the consolation prize of Methodist missionaries, in the absence of the religion of experience. So too, George Ellidge, after a trip into Placentia Bay, attempted to buoy himself up with the thought that the people were living “if not in Comforts of the Holy Ghost, yet in the fear of God.”<sup>61</sup>

Richard Williams, chairman of the Newfoundland District, reported in 1847 that the Burin circuit had “risen to a point of importance that it never before attained,” under the ministry of Samuel Sprague, a passionate Methodist who wanted Protestant Burin to be a Methodist town.<sup>62</sup> A couple of years earlier he had learned that Bishop Feild intended to make a more concerted effort to make it Church of England. Two Anglican clergymen, Thomas Grantham and George Baring Cowan, had come in 1816 and 1841,

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., Reel 23, 1832-1835, William Faulkner, Burin, January 10, 1834; Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, William Faulkner, Burin Circuit Report, May 20, 1835.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., Reel 21, 1828-1831, William Wilson, April 14, 1829. Burin, George Ellidge, December 9, 1829.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., Reel 28, 1846-1848, Richard Williams, St. John's, November 26, 1847.

but remained only briefly. In 1845 the deacon and schoolteacher, Benjamin Fleet, announced plans to leave the court house and renovate a school as a church.<sup>63</sup> Sprague did understand why he did not go to another of the towns nearby where there was no Protestant missionary, Methodist or otherwise. Caustically he remarked, that had a Methodist missionary been sent there, "soon ... the boasted successors of the apostles with their only apostolical practices would be seen there and heard too, denouncing as schismatics, apostates, and pretenders all who think fit to differ from them."<sup>64</sup> With the arrival of Edward Feild in 1844 this became the response which Methodists increasingly encountered from the bishop and his clergy. Not that missionaries had not had to deal with apostolic succession before. In 1841 George Cowan wrote from Burin that while he found many who intermittently attended his ministry "halting between two opinions," he was confident that in time they would become convinced of "the superiority of the doctrines and principles of the Apostolic Church."<sup>65</sup> Cowan did not stay to find out, but left within the year.

Soon after replacing him with Benjamin Fleet, Spencer spoke of removing him

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<sup>63</sup>C.F. Pascoe, *Two Hundred Years of the S.P.G.: An Historical Account of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1701-1900* (London: The Society's Office, 1901), 857-858. Fleet's presence explains the dramatic increase in Anglicans in the 1845 census, and the slight Methodist decrease. CNS, Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1836, 1845.

<sup>64</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 27, 1842-1845, S.W. Sprague, Burin, November 5, 1845.

<sup>65</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A195, George Baring Cowan to Bishop Spencer, Burin, April 12, 1842.

and sending a clergyman “in full orders” to Burin. Spencer wanted to make Burin the centre of a south coast mission with a clergyman in charge of deacons in key areas extending from Placentia Bay to Cape Ray.<sup>66</sup> However Burin did not receive a clergyman “in full orders” until John Cyrus Gathercole, who arrived in 1847, and was ordained in 1852.<sup>67</sup> Both Gathercole and William Kepple White had studied at Queen’s College in St. John’s under Bishop Feild before their arrival in Placentia Bay in 1847, and Samuel Sprague deemed that both of them were “after the Bishop’s own heart and are very zealous in their endeavour to oppose the Wesleyans.”<sup>68</sup> So too was William Rozier, Feild’s appointee at Lamaline in 1851.<sup>69</sup> With his Tractarian view that only priests of “the Church” had apostolic authority, he rebaptized several people who had already been baptized by Wesleyan ministers. Stephen Olive Pack also accused Rozier of making “bigotted and illiberal attacks” on Wesleyans from the pulpit.<sup>70</sup> Because of this Wesleyans at Lamaline quit attending services of the Church of England and instead, said

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid., A194, Journal of Bishop Spencer’s visit to Placentia Bay, July 3, 1843.

<sup>67</sup>*Public Ledger*, June 11, 1852.

<sup>68</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 28, 1846-1848, Samuel W. Sprague, Burin, November 10, 1847.

<sup>69</sup>Pascoe, *Two Hundred Years of the S.P.G.*, 859.

<sup>70</sup>PANL GN2/2 1851 Box 37 Letter Stephen Olive Pack to Colonial Secretary, July 30, 1851.

Pack, "spend their Sundays in walking about or in their boats."<sup>71</sup>

A new era began among Protestants in the Burin region with Methodism and Tractarian Anglicanism each vying for the minds and hearts of the people, convinced that their perceptions of Christianity were mutually exclusive and that ultimate truth hung in the balance. Gathercole entered the battle disadvantaged in that he had to inculcate a new brand of Anglicanism and convince those who had attended both meeting house and church of the new exclusivity. The Methodists, on the other hand, had a tradition built up in Burin since the arrival of their first missionary in 1817, and part of that tradition was an openness and respect for each other which people demonstrated by attending each other's services. It was this openness and respect which Gathercole wanted to end. Not that the Methodist missionary intended business as usual in their relationship. Thinking of his coming appointment to Burin, John Brewster was already bracing himself to face "a thoroughgoing Puseyite."<sup>72</sup>

However, it was not primarily Brewster who brought a substantial increase in numbers and a heightening of passion to Methodism at Burin. In the spring of 1849 he spoke of a moderate increase in the various communities making up Burin, "a few" joining the society here and there, and "a gracious influence" upon the people generally.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid. See also, Pack to Christopher Ayre, Acting Colonial Secretary, October 7, 1851.

<sup>72</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 28, 1846-1848, John Brewster, St. John's, December 10, 1847.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., Reel 29, 1849-1852, John Brewster, Burin, April 13, 1849.

Brewster continued to do his weekly round with nothing out of the ordinary happening until, in the fall, "a few pious fishermen" arrived fresh from a Grand Bank revival:

While their boats were moored at Great Burin, they held prayer meetings every night. God poured His Spirit upon the supplicants, and there was a great cry among sinners. The whole circuit now seemed in a flame! Every little fishing settlement awoke up to inquire after God. In every instance it was hard to distinguish between the cries of penitents in distress and the shouts of joy from believers. 'The cloud covered the tabernacle,' and 'the glory of the Lord was revealed'!

Three class meetings were immediately formed at Great Burin, led by "brothers of a pious family." A woman led the class at Foot's Cove.<sup>74</sup> Thus not only was this a lay-initiated revival but the people continued to shoulder responsibility for their Methodism long after. Membership in the circuit increased by over 50 percent, a growth even more pronounced since it was the first time there had been an increase in circuit members since 1838.<sup>75</sup>

The lay revival also contributed to a significantly more robust Methodism in the Burin and Grand Bank circuits on the eve of the expiration of the seven-year 1843 Education Act. Bishop Feild wanted Anglicans to have the same educational privileges as Roman Catholics, who had separate schools. Hence his request in 1850 that "a proportionate part of the yearly grant according to population, may be awarded for the support of schools in connection with the Church of England, to be placed under the

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid., March 9, 1850.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, 1838, 1840-1849, 1851; UC Archive, WY 100, Box 1, 1829-1873, "Minutes, Newfoundland District, Wesleyan Methodist Church, England, 1829-1850." Minutes, 1839, 1850. The 1857 census shows also an over fifty per cent increase in adherents from 519 to 780. CNS, Census of Newfoundland, 1845, 1857.

direction of the clergy and other members of that Church only.”<sup>76</sup> Wesleyans, however, did not want their own separate schools because they did not have sufficient numbers to support them. Their response in general was that of the Wesleyans of Sound Island, namely, that subdivision was “most prejudicial to the interests of Education, generally, in this island.” What was needed was money for additional schools and teachers, instead of dividing denominationally what already existed.<sup>77</sup> The issue played into the larger battle over obtaining responsible government.

On the south coast and in the Burin Circuit in particular there was much communication with the Methodists of Halifax. Brewster himself travelled back and forth, “a great trade being carried on with Halifax,” and met his wife there.<sup>78</sup> He established a link between the Burin circuit and the Wesleyan Sabbath School at Halifax. The children of the school sent books to Methodist Sunday-school children at Sound Island and Burin. The communications were quite personal. Brewster sent them a letter, for instance, describing the conversion of Betsy Hollett, age 12, during the revival of 1849, who died shortly after: “When my brothers are at the hay, and my mother and

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<sup>76</sup>CNS, *Journal of the House of Assembly*, 1850, 23-24.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 1851, 19.

<sup>78</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 29, 1849-1852, John Brewster, Burin, December 9, 1849; John Brewster, St. John's, June 3, 1850. A significant part of this trade was barter in herring for which the fishermen received “provisions, coals, clothes, and other necessities.” CNS, *Journal of the House of Assembly*, 1848/1849, Appendix, “Report of the Select Committee on the Pickled Fish Act” and “Evidence taken by the Select Committee on the Pickled Fish Act,” 671-678.

sisters are at work with the fish, and when I have not one to talk with, then I feel lonely. But then I pray that I may feel Jesus with me, and my loneliness leaves me, and then I feel so happy, that I like to be alone.' She was first on the list to receive some of your books." The letter was read to the children at the Argyle Street Sabbath School, Halifax, "with much interest and feeling," and it was proposed to issue it in a small pamphlet for sale, the proceeds being used to buy more books for the children of the Burin circuit.<sup>79</sup>

The late 1840s was a time of extreme distress in the Burin circuit, and around the island at large. Letters of excruciating need were sent to the papers from all over Newfoundland in 1847.<sup>80</sup> The *Royal Gazette* reported that it continued to receive "from various parts of the Colony, painful accounts of destitution among a considerable portion of the inhabitants. From Placentia Bay, St. Mary's Bay, Ferryland District, Conception Bay, Trinity Bay, and Notre Dame Bay, appeals are being poured in upon the Government."<sup>81</sup> A letter from Oderin, Placentia Bay, in 1847 stated that people were "in a state threatening actual death from famine."<sup>82</sup> The Burin Circuit endured "unprecedented

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<sup>79</sup>*Wesleyan*, March 16, 1850, "Sabbath School" Letter from J. Brewster, Burin, Newfoundland, to the Wesley Sabbath School Children, Halifax."

<sup>80</sup>*Times*, Bonavista, Apr. 7; Merasheen, September 15; Conception Bay, October 13, 23. *Public Ledger*, Burin, August 27; Fogo and Twillingate, September 14; Harbour Grace, September 24. *Patriot*, Oderin, October 20.

<sup>81</sup>*Royal Gazette*, November 2, 1847.

<sup>82</sup>*Patriot*, October 20, 1847.

calamity, destitution, and bereavement.”<sup>83</sup> Two causes were a lack of fish and potatoes. In 1848 Philip Tocque reported from Burin that potato disease had appeared in “almost every place” he visited.<sup>84</sup> The potato disease and failure of the fishery continued so extensively in Burin in the fall of 1848 and winter of 1849 that “nearly 1000” people were dependent on government Indian meal, fish, and molasses. Still, “many deaths were accelerated for want of food, and one man died of actual starvation. Many families once in prosperous circumstances are at this day reduced to a most abject state of want.”<sup>85</sup> This was unlike further west, at Lamaline, for example, where fishermen were able to partially alleviate their poverty by “illegally supplying the French with bait.”<sup>86</sup> After three years of nearly unmitigated misery, because of the Methodist view of Providence, Brewster could still report from Burin that “like Moses’s bush our church has flourished unconsumed in fire.”<sup>87</sup> At such times people were drawn away from the distractions of this world with its fleeting pleasures, particularly evident in a time of prosperity. But Methodists were

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<sup>83</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, 1847 Burin circuit report.

<sup>84</sup>PANL GN 2/2, Box 34, 746-748. Tocque to Crowdy, September 20, 1848.

<sup>85</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 29, 1849-1852, John Brewster, Burin, April 13, 1849; Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, 1849 Burin circuit report. See also CNS, *Journal of the House of Assembly*, 1848/1849, Appendix, “Report of the Joint Committee on Burin Relief,” 650-653.

<sup>86</sup>PANL GN 2/2, Box 35, 1849, 359-360. Pack to Crowdy, September 6, 1849.

<sup>87</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, 1847, 1849 Burin circuit reports.

ambivalent towards destitution and its effects. John S. Peach, for instance, apologized to the Committee for the low number of conversions in his circuit and then attributed it to “destitution, hunger, embarrassment and distressing amenities” to which the people were subjected.<sup>88</sup>

Methodism in Burin benefitted from an immense Anglican setback in 1858, centred on the local clergyman. After serving the district for a decade, Gathercole, came under suspicion regarding “some improprieties,” one of which was “intimacy with an unmarried woman” who had moved to Fredericton, had a child and then lived in Boston. As a result of the clergyman’s suspected moral failure, the majority of the “most respectable and other inhabitants” deserted the Church of England.<sup>89</sup> Bishop Feild appointed an inquiry made up of three clergymen, who cleared Gathercole’s name.<sup>90</sup> However when Dinah Vey returned from Boston without her child, and Gathercole - who was believed to have visited her in Boston - resigned, Bishop Feild himself went to Burin in an attempt to rescue such “an important mission.” The parish was in disarray. Some progress was made, however, for the fifteen or sixteen heads of families, including the

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<sup>88</sup>Ibid., Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, 1854.

<sup>89</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A217, C.F. Bennett to Bishop Feild, St. John’s, July 5, 1858. The 1869 census showed a dramatic increase of over 300 Methodist adherents, and a decline of over 200 members of the Church of England. This resulted in the Methodists nearly tripling the Anglicans in Burin, compared to an Anglican majority in 1845. Census of Newfoundland, 1845, 1847, 1869; Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1874.

<sup>90</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A217, Report to Bishop Feild from William Kepple White, Joseph Francis Phelps, William Frederick Meek, Burin, July 16, 1858; Bishop Feild to Burin Churchwardens, St. John’s, October 2, 1858.

Stipendiary Magistrate and Custom House Officer, who had been attending the Methodist meeting house, wanted to return. But they wanted their pews back, and the friends of Gathercole who had taken them did not want to give them up. What was more, neither group liked William Rozier whom Feild decided to transfer from Lamaline. Instead, one part of the congregation wanted the magistrate's son, George Hooper, transferred from La Poile. Another party, however, would "never pay a farthing" to the church if he did. As Feild stated, the congregation was "in such a tangle of disputes and jealousies, that pull which string you will, you seem only to make the knot tighter." So the Church of England, surrounded by a majority of Methodists and Roman Catholics, was divided "instead of being united against both or either."<sup>91</sup> Neither was Rozier able to untie the knot. He assessed the mission as being in a poor state seven years after the Gathercole debacle, which he described as a time when "things and feelings of the people went into collision with each other." Many had given up church altogether, "not a few" had become Methodist, and only "a few, and very few" continued to attend regular Church of England services.<sup>92</sup> The division may have been a factor in the conversion of "more than a score of souls" during Thomas Gaetz's visit from Grand Bank to Burin in February, 1858.<sup>93</sup> The division benefitted the Methodists in that it increased their attendance, and possibly their

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid., A218, Bishop Feild to Ernest Hawkins, St. John's, September 13, 1860; Bishop Feild to Ernest Hawkins, Burin, October 5, 1860.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., A233, William Rozier, Burin, December 31, 1865.

<sup>93</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, June 17, 1858, "Newfoundland Correspondence, Grand Bank, April 20, 1858."

funds, if not their membership. It is difficult to determine how "Methodist" Sunday attenders were. What proportion were merely nominal Methodists? Did many believe in the religion of experience but not want to be subject to some aspect of the Methodist discipline? The proportion of attenders to members in Methodism was high - in 1870 in Burin it was nearly seven to one.<sup>94</sup>

Soon after the transfer of unpopular William Rozier from Lamaline to Burin, the Church of England was faced with another Methodist revival in Burin in 1863. John Pike, a teacher and local preacher from Flat Islands, joined John S. Phinney for New Year's services and the people "melted before the word like wax before the fire." Special services continued for six to eight weeks and often there were "as many as sixty and seventy of a night, at the communion rail, and in the aisles of the church, kneeling before God, begging for mercy." The revival was not age specific, and 200 were converted among whom were those who had been attending chapel for life and those who were "very wicked and profane persons." Phinney said he had never seen anything like it in his ministry.<sup>95</sup> The revival was also extensive, occurring in Grand Bank and Fortune at the same time.<sup>96</sup>

Revivals continued in Burin Methodism throughout the 1860s and 1870s and by

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<sup>94</sup>UC Archive, WY 100, Box 1, 1829-1873, "Newfoundland District Journal, 1859- 1873," Annual District Meeting, Carbonear, May 25, 1870.

<sup>95</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, May 6, 1863, Letter from Burin, J.S. Phinney, April 2, 1863.

<sup>96</sup>*Ibid.*, May 20, 1863, Letter from Grand Bank, J. Winterbotham, April, 1863.

1874 Methodists outnumbered Anglicans by nearly three to one.<sup>97</sup> But it was a Methodism which was changing from a thirst for the Spirit of feeling to an aspiration for the settled order of middle-class respectability. No longer heard were the “cries of penitents in distress and the shouts of joy from believers.”<sup>98</sup> The new desire was for revivals which were “singularly free from excitement” and conducted with “the utmost decorum,” and for a church life of “ease and regularity.” In an era when the new arbiter for Methodism was to be proper and to be seen to be proper, surely it was in an effort to convince himself that George Forsey asserted, “We firmly believe in old fashioned Methodist revival.”<sup>99</sup> The past was eschewed. “Artistic” singing and the organ replaced the robust vernacular singing of the heart and the violin. Tallow candles were no longer acceptable and were replaced by “respectable looking kerosene lamps.”<sup>100</sup> In the midst of his keenness for all things modern, George Forsey stated that a new church was about to be built. It was new indeed, and maybe more than he realized.

## 9.2

## Placentia Bay

John Lewis noted in 1819 that Burin was the only place that he was having any

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<sup>97</sup>Ibid., March 29, 1865; April 9, 1873; *Wesleyan*, April 5, 1879. Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1874.

<sup>98</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 29, 1849-1852, John Brewster, Burin, March 9, 1850.

<sup>99</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, April 9, 1873.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., March 29, 1865, George Forsey, Burin Circuit.

success, "except one island about 7 leagues off."<sup>101</sup> Oderin continued to have a barely registrable Methodist presence under the leadership of the agent for Christopher Spurrier, Stephen Lawlor, converted under his ministry. He read prayers to a small congregation every Sunday and met as a class of two with his wife.<sup>102</sup> They never made much headway among the people, possibly because of a status barrier, unlike the evangelism among neighbours at Burin. When John Smithies visited in 1832 after the Spurrier bankruptcy, he met only a small gathering.<sup>103</sup>

John Lewis saw himself as "a pioneer" and did not intend to limit himself to Burin, but to widen his mission to "other places, for there are several harbours on my right and left, situated three to 16 leagues distance."<sup>104</sup> Lewis made his first visit into Placentia Bay in the fall of 1818, noting that the people lived "chiefly on islands for the convenience of fishing." In addition to preaching, he baptized 44 children, 39 of them

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<sup>101</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence Box 2, 1819/20-1823/25, File 51, John Lewis to Joseph Taylor, Burin, December 17, 1819.

<sup>102</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 20, 1825-1828, William Wilson, Burin, October 5, 1826; Reel 19, 1824-1825, William Ellis, Burin & Placentia Bay, September, 1824. SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence Box 2, 1819/20-1823/25, File 51, Stephen Lawlor to Jabez Bunting, Oderin, July 15, 1820.

<sup>103</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 4, 1828/29-1833/34, File 182, John Smithies, Burin, November 19, 1832.

<sup>104</sup>*Methodist Magazine*, 1817, Vol. 2, 873. John Lewis to G. Marsden, Burin, Placentia Bay, July 7, 1817.

were on three islands - Sound Island, Burgeo or Chambers Island, and Isle Valen.<sup>105</sup> Thus, it appears that no Church of England clergyman had visited the head of Placentia Bay for twenty years, since John Evans left Placentia in 1798.<sup>106</sup> Stephen Lawlor said that he had not seen a Protestant clergyman for twenty years before Lewis's arrival.<sup>107</sup> The low number of baptisms in Burin may also be due to a reluctance on the part of some in Burin to have their children baptized by a Methodist missionary. Lewis said that when he first arrived many would not come to hear him because he was not a Church of England clergyman, and, furthermore, thought he must be inferior since he did not wear a gown.<sup>108</sup>

Lewis visited the islands "up the Bay" again in July 1819, but did not receive much encouragement. Out of inexperience he went at the height of the fishing season and thus could only gain a congregation on Sundays. During the week on Sound Island fish was "all their talk and all their thought." He had a similar reception at Isle Valen where, to his surprise, he came across two tracts published by the SPCK, *Dialogue between a Churchman and a Methodist* and *An Ernest and Affectionate Address to the People called Methodists*. He was not amused, concluding that "the author under the cloak of friendship

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<sup>105</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 26, John Lewis, Burin, September 14, 1818. UC Archive, WY 200 Burin Box 1, "Register of Baptisms in the District of Burin 1817-1818," John Lewis - Methodist Missionary.

<sup>106</sup>Pascoe, *Two Hundred Years of the S.P.G.*, 857.

<sup>107</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence Box 2, 1819/20-1823/25, File 51, Stephen Lawlor to Jabez Bunting, Oderin, July 15, 1820.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 23, John Lewis, Burin, July 7, 1817.

conveys many artful insinuations as to the principles and motives of the Methodist Preachers.”<sup>109</sup> The former tract was indeed “artful” in its affirmations. There was piety and spiritual power within Anglicanism, it was not mere “outward form and shell,” as some Methodists may have said. Anglicans believe in “the conversion of the heart” (which is spiritual regeneration versus baptismal regeneration), justification, and the operation of the Spirit. These occur in an ordinary manner and are not marked by “sensible impulses, impressions, ardors, ecstasies, which we feel within us.” Prayer should be said according to the liturgy not according to “extempore effusions.” Do not listen to Methodist preachers who “run about the country ... without any orders or authority, learning or judgment.” Do not be misled because of their “great zeal.”<sup>110</sup> The tract was a clear appeal to quiet, humble piety and order and warned against the danger of Methodist desire for feeling and experience. There had been little of the latter at the head of Placentia Bay up to that time, unless the distribution of these tracts was a preemptive strike against the Methodists. They may have been brought to Isle Valen by an immigrant. They may have been sent from England in one of Spurrier’s vessels.

The first indication of Methodist experience at the head of Placentia Bay came with William Ellis’s visit in the fall of 1824. He held services at Isle Valen and Barren Island which all the Protestants, twelve and nine, attended. It was a service at Sound

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<sup>109</sup>Ibid., File 49, John Lewis to Joseph Taylor, Secretary of Wesleyan Missions, Burin, October 11, 1819.

<sup>110</sup>A.B., *An Earnest and Affectionate Address to the People Called Methodists*. 16<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: F.C and J. Rivington, 1815), 1-38, “Booksellers to the SPCK.”

Island, however, that evinced Methodist feeling when people came “from the neighbouring islands,” and at the Sunday evening service Ellis was touched to see “almost every face bathed in tears.” He met the class and then preached to a small group, “several of whom wept aloud.”<sup>111</sup> Sound Island became a central gathering place for Methodists in inner Placentia Bay.

In 1825, the Church of England made another showing when Charles Blackman from Ferryland visited the islands in the bay. At Barren Island Blackman held service twice, and people attended from other islands. At Woody Island the Protestants showed a “strong predilection” for the Church of England service. Blackman administered the sacrament at Oderin where the people were “most anxious” for an occasional visit from a clergyman. He did not say that he held a service at Sound Island, but mentioned that John Hollett assembled the people there weekly and read “the prayers of the church.”<sup>112</sup> It is difficult to discern how Methodist this leader on Sound Island was. The previous year William Ellis simply stated “he reads prayers on the Lord’s day.”<sup>113</sup> This, of course, was a common Methodist practice, either from *The Book of Common Prayer* or Wesley’s *Abridgement*. He welcomed Methodist preachers, but he also welcomed Archdeacon

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<sup>111</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 19, 1824-1825, William Ellis, Burin & Placentia Bay, September, 1824.

<sup>112</sup>*A Sermon Preached ... together with The Report of the Society for the Year 1825*, 50-52.

<sup>113</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 19, 1824-1825, William Ellis, Burin & Placentia Bay, September, 1824.

Edward Wix in 1835 who read from Hollett's copy of *The Book of Common Prayer*, not the *Abridgement*. Wix mentioned that he particularly enjoyed "the style of singing."<sup>114</sup>

In 1824 Ellis took note of Hollett's family prayer:

I admire the simple manner in which they worship God in this family. A Hymn is sung by all present. Then his four daughters jointly offer up prayer to God, next his three sons join in the same exercise, and then the Patriarchal man concludes with a short prayer and solemn benediction.<sup>115</sup>

This family prayer time speaks more of "order" than it does "experience." It is possible they were reading from the Prayer Book, "Forms of Prayer to be used in Families," but they could have been praying extemporaneously. There is no indication of loudness as when Mr. Elson complained of overhearing Philip Henry Gosse in his bedroom and joked with the captains that he was "practicing" for church.<sup>116</sup> The Methodist preachers' visits to the bay once a year were often enough to explain any Methodist tone and gesture. Lewis, in 1817, remarked that many Protestants had become Catholics there "not from choice, but because they thought it is better to have some form than none at all," and people often made a similar choice in attending the services of Methodist preachers

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<sup>114</sup>Wix, *Six Months of a Newfoundland Missionary's Journal*, 47-48. There is a hint of difference in Blackman's response to Woody Island where he commented that "it was pleasing to witness the strong predilection they entertained for the Service of the Church." Sound Island received no such mention. *A Sermon Preached ... together with The Report of the Society for the Year 1825*, 51.

<sup>115</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 19, 1824-1825, William Ellis, Burin & Placentia Bay, September, 1824.

<sup>116</sup>Rompkey, "Philip Henry Gosse's account of his years in Newfoundland, 1827-1835," 257.

because they were Protestant, not because they were Methodist.<sup>117</sup> To what degree individuals like John Hollett actually became Methodist as a result of their preaching of repentance and salvation is open to question. There is no record of his conversion, for instance. On Lewis's first visit in 1818 Hollett accompanied him as he visited from house to house, and he held a service in his kitchen which "all the people attended and were very attentive ... one half of them never before assembled to worship under any form."<sup>118</sup> On his second visit, Lewis wrote in his journal that Hollett "reads prayers on Sunday and also a sermon or a tract, and this he does first as he says, to impress their mind with seriousness before he begins the Prayers." He also stated that Hollett had "clearer views of the Plan of Salvation than any of his neighbours."<sup>119</sup> With these views he could still be an evangelical Anglican. A class began meeting on Sound Island in 1824 or 1825.<sup>120</sup>

When William Wilson came by in 1826 he found the class had discontinued meeting in the summer of 1825 because of a difference between the leader and "some

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<sup>117</sup>*Methodist Magazine*, 1817, Vol. 2, 873-874. John Lewis to G. Marsden, Burin, Placentia Bay, July 7, 1817. George Ellidge said later of nearby Burgeo of Chambers Island, "the only religious distinction here are the two of Protestants and Catholics." PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 21, 1828 - 1831, George Ellidge, Burin, Journal, October 18, 1830.

<sup>118</sup>"Journal of John Lewis," 1.07, July 26, 1818.

<sup>119</sup>*Ibid.*, 1.08, August 14, 1819.

<sup>120</sup>UC Archive, WY 200, Burin, Box 1, "Account Book 1821-1835."

person out of Society.” In 1827 he found the same situation.<sup>121</sup> It may have been a dispute over a difference between Anglicanism and Methodism since it was in the summer of 1825 that Charles Blackman visited the area. Whether it was in reaction to Blackman’s visit, or the development of a Methodist practice already formed, Wilson on his 1827 itineration suggested building a chapel on Sound Island to accommodate the people there as well as those visiting from Woody Island and North Harbour. The people agreed and promised to cut a frame the coming winter, having already requested him to acquire a preacher for “some central location” in the area.<sup>122</sup> Thus in the 1820s, despite the class setback, Sound Island was the mainstay of Methodism at the northern extremity of the Burin circuit. Approaching the end of the decade, 1827, there were no members listed from any of the other islands at the head of Placentia Bay.<sup>123</sup> After a decade of annual visits, Methodism at Sound Island, despite its shaky structure, was all the missionaries could enter into their books. Even Stephen and Elizabeth Lawlor at Oderin disappeared from the record.

In 1828, however, there was development of promise. John Hollett agreed to lead the class again at Sound Island, two members from Barren Island joined, and a new class was formed at Haystack on Long Island, the second class to be formed in inner Placentia

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<sup>121</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 20, 1825-1828, William Wilson, Burin, Journal, September 24, 1826; October 7, 1827.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid., October 7, 1827.

<sup>123</sup>UC Archive, WY 200, Burin, Box 1, “Account Book 1821-1835.”

Bay. When Wilson arrived at Haystack, the first clergyman to visit, he was surprised at the settlers' knowledge and "consistency of deportment." One led a service in his house and the three others who attended made "earnest enquiries after salvation." While Wilson preached there was "the silent tear which occasionally stole down their cheeks." He formed the four into a class "having understood that their moral conduct has been for a considerable time been correct," and Thomas Bugden agreed to be its leader.<sup>124</sup> That there were then classes at Sound Island and Haystack is significant, given the high standard set for the leader and the requisite zeal of the members.

Haystack is thus an example of lay religion, people taking an initiative spiritually and doing well without the service of a clergyman, though they desired such access. Although Methodist missionaries often wrote of the great need to combat immorality as a reason for Methodism in Newfoundland, it is clear that Haystack does not fit that profile. Methodism was primarily a religion of experience, and this is what Wilson was bringing to Haystack, which they welcomed. The class made up of the Bugdens and Bendles came "from the Burin area" and thus had a familiarity with Methodism.<sup>125</sup>

John Lewis had called on the Bendles when they were living at Rock Harbour and

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<sup>124</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 21, 1828-1831, William Wilson, Burin, Journal, October 18-20, 1828. The Newfoundland 1836 census is misleading in recording no Methodists at Haystack, or anywhere in Placentia Bay north of Paradise, as is the census of 1845. There were five members in class in Haystack in 1836, not to speak of adherents. UC Archive, WY 200, Burin, Box 1, Circuit Book, Board of Trustees 1836-1847. Members for 1835-1836, 1844.

<sup>125</sup>*Haystack Reflections* (Haystack Reunion Committee, 1997), 2.

had talked with Bridget, who had been “solicited to embrace Popery.”<sup>126</sup> Their lives showed a pattern of mobility which was the norm for many in the first half of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Newfoundland. George Ellidge wrote in 1831 that because of difficult times, some in Burin had moved “to distant parts of the Circuit,” probably meaning inner Placentia Bay. While some Methodist missionaries were frustrated by the mobility of the population, Ellidge saw this phenomenon more favourably, hoping that as others moved and joined those who had migrated before, they would “become flourishing little Churches.”<sup>127</sup> Haystack is thus an example of the spread of Methodism through resettlement, a prominent feature in the spread of Methodism in Newfoundland, far more significant than the occasional visit of the missionary. Rather than going to places and preaching where no Methodist had gone before, the missionary visited and attempted to found churches in places where Methodists already had migrated. Settlers in Newfoundland were a mobile people. Even when they did not relocate their primary summer residence, they were still involved in what John Smithies called “migratory callings and pursuits.”<sup>128</sup> The various regrouping of Methodists, whether to various fishing stations in Newfoundland and Labrador during the summer, or to wood production stations in the winter, provided new

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<sup>126</sup>“Journal of John Lewis,” 1.08, March 26, 1819.

<sup>127</sup>UC Archive, WY 100, Box 1, 1829-1873, “Minutes, Newfoundland District, Wesleyan Methodist Church, England, 1829-1850.” Minutes, George Ellidge, Burin, 1831.

<sup>128</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 22, 1831-1833, John Smithies, Burin, November 19, 1832.

social situations for the communication of vernacular Methodism.

After George Ellidge returned from his 1829 visit he concluded “the attachment of the inhabitants of Placentia Bay to us ... is far from being small ... I found several walking, if not in the Comforts of the Holy Ghost, yet in the fear of God.”<sup>129</sup> This predilection also appears in the 1830 subscription list, for while there were donors from Sound Island and Haystack, there was an equal number from Isle Valen, Burgeo, and Woody Island.<sup>130</sup> But by 1832 there was still no church built anywhere at the head of the bay, though in 1831 the record states that chapels had apparently been started at both Woody and Sound islands.<sup>131</sup> Yet there were hopeful signs. Every member of the four families on Flat Island attended John Smithies’ service, and at Haystack “twas a breaking, weeping, praying season to all present.” Smithies could not help but think how it was “like times of old in the mother country.”<sup>132</sup> In 1832 he noted that while the missionary only visited the bay once annually, twelve members held regular services throughout the year “among themselves.” An irony was that he was reluctant to leave the large congregation at Burin to make this visit because they did not meet in his absence.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>129</sup>Ibid., Reel 21, 1828-1831, George Ellidge, Burin, December 9, 1829.

<sup>130</sup>UC Archive, WY 200, Burin, Box 1, “Account Book 1821-1835.”

<sup>131</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS, Reel 22, 1831-1833, Journal of John Smithies, Burin, September 18, 1831.

<sup>132</sup>Ibid., October 1, 17, 1831.

<sup>133</sup>UC Archive, WY 100, Box 1, 1829-1873, “Minutes, Newfoundland District, Wesleyan Methodist Church, England, 1829-1850.” Minutes, John Smithies, Burin,

In Placentia Bay Methodism operated in a Protestant and Roman Catholic competition. The one was continually seeking proselytes from the other, with the Catholics appearing to be more successful. Many Anglicans in frontier areas like Placentia Bay supported Methodists within this larger Protestant dynamic, but had no intention of leaving their church, though they had no church or clergyman. Part of this strong attachment to the Church of England was due to the longing of the exile for associations with one's native land. George Cubit perceived that "the Protestant inhabitants, recollecting their British descent, profess to be strongly attached to the Church of England."<sup>134</sup> The SPG missionary Philip Musgrave noted that, because of this, however negligent of the church people were back in England, they would walk for miles in Canada to have a child baptized or have a clergyman visit a relative who was sick, or even to attend service.<sup>135</sup> Methodist missionaries, who read service from the *Book of Common Prayer* were able to claim that they were not teaching doctrine contrary to the Church of England, and this helped people attend their services and ministrations. Anglican missionaries appealed to native longing in calling themselves the church of their

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1832.

<sup>134</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 47, File 47, "Observations on the island of Newfoundland," March, 1819; For its authorship by George Cubit see File 25, George Cubit to George Marsden, St. John's, May 21, 1818, and a quotation of "Observations" in File 22, "Notices of the Commencement of the Methodist mission in Newfoundland."

<sup>135</sup>J. Abbot, ed., *Philip Musgrave; or Memoirs of a Church of England Missionary in the North American Colonies* (London: John Murray, 1846), 21, 22.

forefathers, and Methodists in claiming not to preach contrary to it, were able to enlist the same yearning an exile has for his native land.<sup>136</sup> In pressing for conversion and religion of the heart they maintained they were indeed the authentic version of the religion of the homeland.

Many subscribed to the Methodist mission and attended meetings as a result of this commingling with Anglicanism, but not all. When John Lewis visited John de Bay in 1818 and spoke to John and Robert Jarvis because only they and their families did not attend the service, "John took all in good part but Robert blew in a rage and hove the fish about, told me that he was a Church of England man and that he would never be a meetiner and if I preached 700 and 70 times he never would come and hear me as I did not read all his prayers and a church minister would, and that I could not preach. He recalled the pound he gave for the Burin church, as he said he never would give anything to a meeting house - so he went on."<sup>137</sup>

While in early 19<sup>th</sup>-century Placentia Bay there were rare instances of alternate world views, such as Socinianism and Materialism, it was to counteract Methodism and Roman Catholicism that Archdeacon Edward Wix visited inner Placentia Bay in the

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<sup>136</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A194, Bishop Spencer to Campbell, Twillingate, August 1, 1841; A195, Memorial to Bishop Spencer, Harbour Buffett, Placentia Bay, 1843.

<sup>137</sup>"Journal of John Lewis," 1.07, August 10, 1818. "Meetiner" ie, attended Methodist meetings.

winter of 1835.<sup>138</sup> He had a plan. Many Anglicans were scattered about in danger of becoming proselytized by one or the other, so as he visited he “persuaded them to select some commodious harbour where a number of families might be located, and there build a church and a school.” The place chosen was Harbour Buffett. John Haddon, later a Newfoundland School Society teacher in the settlement, stated that “in the summer of 1836, several families, who had been living some years by themselves in little creeks and coves in the vicinity of Harbour Beaufette, and had felt all the disadvantages of living in seclusion from society, removed here all at once.”<sup>139</sup> The strategy was a success. William Frederick Meek, the Church of England clergyman for inner Placentia Bay, was able to write from Harbour Buffett 25 years after the founding of the settlement, “Now we have more than 300 inhabitants, chiefly members of the Church.”<sup>140</sup> When James Hennigar, the Methodist missionary from Burin visited Harbour Buffett in the fall of 1836, he found the people carrying out Wix’s plan. He noted the population was rapidly increasing and

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<sup>138</sup>At Burin a man named Moore was a Socinian, denying the divinity of Christ. At Merasheen, William Wilson was stormbound for “a week of misery” with a host who was “a professed Materialist ... a decided infidel, with him the Bible is a fabrication; the Mosaic account of the Creation a romance; Christianity a fable; and man has no soul.” SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 5, 1833/34-1837/38, Files 204-205, William Wilson, Trinity, December 4, 1833. PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 20, 1825-1828, William Wilson, Burin, Journal, October 20, 1827.

<sup>139</sup>PANL MG 595 P-15 Colonial and Continental Church Society, 1824-1853. *Proceedings of the Church of England School Society for Newfoundland and the Colonies, Twenty-sixth year, 1848-1849*, 14.

<sup>140</sup>PANL MG 598 A225, W.F. Meek to Ernest Hawkins, Harbour Buffett, Michaelmas, 1859.

that they intended to build a structure to be used as a church and a school. Hennigar, however, was not about to concede the place to the Church of England. He noted, "I trust that measures will soon be adopted to furnish them into a greater portion of Missionary labour."<sup>141</sup> This new community was founded not because of the fishery and economics, but as a centre for religion and education, and the Methodists wanted to be part of the venture.

In 1837, as at Grand Bank next door, the language of revival was heard once again in the Burin circuit. Hennigar reported that the "outpouring of his Holy Spirit" was evidenced by many giving themselves to God and his church, especially the young, and crowds at the weekly meetings. Moreover during his visit into the bay "a gracious influence attended many of the religious services" and several sought salvation. Although this spiritual desire can be seen in the journal of his visit to such places at Rock Harbour, Sound Island, Harbour Buffett, and especially Haystack, there was only a single conversion, at Woody Island.<sup>142</sup> This revival coincided with distress. William Harding of Burin Bay Arm who fitted out a boat for Cape St. Mary's, for example, found at the end of the season that "a very poor voyage was killed and the price of fish was low." He did "a great deal of work" in the forge in the fall, but because of the poor voyage he could not

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<sup>141</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 24, 1835-1837, Journal of James G. Hennigar, Burin, October 19, 1836.

<sup>142</sup>Ibid., Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, 1837 Circuit Reports of "the work of God," James G. Hennigar, Burin. Reel 24, 1835-1837, James G. Hennigar, Journal of visit to Placentia Bay, Burin, December 22, 1836.

collect payments from the fishermen. Distress was not limited to these years. In 1829, for instance, smallpox broke out in Burin. Such an epidemic was devastating to people who had a narrow window to pursue the fishery. Harding's relatives were put behind in the fishing voyage and owed so much to the merchant that the boat was sold, the family separated to live with relatives, and the fishing room divided.<sup>143</sup>

The Methodists were not able to capitalize on the revival. Their membership declined and they did not surpass their revival numbers for another decade.<sup>144</sup> One reason was that the Church of England, led by Bishop Spencer, came with a determination and resources never seen before, to take over Protestant Placentia Bay. His stated purpose was "to revive the interests of the Church" in the bay and he saw himself as exerting "great efforts" to that end.<sup>145</sup> He appointed George B. Cowan to the Mission of Burin, made up of Rock Harbour, Burin, Flat Island and Lamaline.<sup>146</sup> William Jeynes was appointed to the Mission of Harbour Buffett, chosen by Bishop Spencer as the residence of the Mission because there "the people are willing to make great exertions for his

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<sup>143</sup>"William Harding Diary, 1793-1877," 1836, 1829.

<sup>144</sup>UC Archive, WY 100, Box 1, 1829-1873, "Minutes, Newfoundland District," Numbers in Society, 1838-1851.

<sup>145</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A194, Bishop Spencer to Campbell, St. John's, November 7, 1840.

<sup>146</sup>Pascoe, *Two Hundred Years of the S.P.G.*, 857. PANL MG 598 SPG A194, Spencer to Campbell, March 5, 1841.

accommodation, and whence he may easily visit the surrounding settlements.”<sup>147</sup> By 1841 five churches were planned or in progress at Harbour Buffett, Sound Island, Woody Island, Isle Valen and Oderin. Each community, in addition to building a church, was also responsible for building a parsonage.<sup>148</sup> An SPG grant of £500 provided a major part of the funding.<sup>149</sup> Spencer looked forward with confidence. “The result I trust, will be that I shall be enabled to consecrate the five churches on Mr. Jeynes’ Mission before the end of the ensuing summer.”<sup>150</sup>

James England, the single Methodist missionary in the area, immediately felt the new initiative of the Church of England. He wrote rather despondently from Burin:

Our Subscriptions this year [1841] have fallen far below their usual amount, owing partly to the bad fishery, but principally to a division among the people. Last summer a Church Missionary came to establish himself here, who holds service in the Court House and is soliciting subscriptions from the people whom we alone have served for more than twenty years, to build a New Church and Parsonage - and in Placentia Bay where part of our subscriptions has been formerly raised, another Church Missionary has been sent, who is putting four or five small Churches; consequently that which used to be paid toward our support is now given unto others.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>147</sup>Ibid.

<sup>148</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A194, Spencer to Campbell, November 16, 1841.

<sup>149</sup>Ibid., March 3, 5, 1841.

<sup>150</sup>Ibid., March 5, 1841.

<sup>151</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, 1842 Condensed Reports of the Work of God in the Newfoundland District, James England, Burin. Reel 26, 1841-1842, James England, Burin, December 4, 1841.

He estimated that he had formerly collected £30 or £40 in Placentia Bay; now he received nothing.<sup>152</sup>

This may be an exaggeration, since there were at least three Methodist societies in the bay, whose members would normally continue to support the missionary. However, the decrease in financial support does raise the question of how Methodist the Protestants in Placentia Bay actually were.<sup>153</sup> Part of the answer can be found in distinguishing the terms 'subscribers' and 'members.' Subscribers were sympathetic to Methodism - Protestants who paid the preacher on his annual visit, possibly attended his meeting, and received such services as baptism and marriage. Even C.F. Bennett and Co., whose owner was an ardent member of the Church of England, was a Methodist subscriber at Isle Valen.<sup>154</sup> Many of these would immediately transfer their primary allegiance to the Church of England. Membership in the local Methodist society denoted much more of a commitment. Members attended the class meeting and subjected themselves to its discipline.<sup>155</sup> The societies were "the heart and strength of the Methodist movement."<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>152</sup>Ibid., Reel 26, 1841-1842, James England, Burin, December 4, 1841.

<sup>153</sup>In 1848 there was still "a strong prejudice in favor of Methodism" at Oderin. PANL MG 598 SPG A197, W.K. White to Bishop Feild. Harbour Buffett, May 25, [1848].

<sup>154</sup>UC Archive, WY 200, Burin, Box 1, Circuit Book, Board of Trustees 1836-1847. 1839-1840.

<sup>155</sup>Davies and Rupp, *A History of the Methodist Church in Britain*, 223-225.

<sup>156</sup>Winsor, *Hearts Strangely Warmed*, 11. See also, Winsor, "Methodism in Newfoundland 1855-1884," 4-5, 143-145.

But still, one has to ask how distinct from the Church of England members of such societies regarded themselves.<sup>157</sup> Glen Lucas, Archivist-Historian of the United Church of Canada, concluded that “the ambivalent relationship between Wesleyan Methodism and Anglicanism found in England in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century continued in Newfoundland until the episcopate of Bishop Feild.”<sup>158</sup> When Feild visited Woody Island, Placentia Bay in 1849 he noted that “there was the usual exhibition of sobbing and crying” at the Communion service because of the influence of Methodists who “work up their feelings and exhibit them.”<sup>159</sup>

There is evidence that some residents continued as members of the local Methodist society even when they gave primary allegiance to the Church of England after William Jeynes arrived in Harbour Buffett as resident clergyman in 1841. As evangelical Protestants they were less likely to see a problem with this than their clergy. A Methodist class was formed at Harbour Buffett in 1838, and continued until at least 1844, long after Jeynes’ arrival. While the class leader, Thomas Bendle, was an ardent Methodist who had arrived from Haystack, other members, such as Thomas Hann and Thomas E. Collett,

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<sup>157</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, April, 1890, 59, “Church membership” by James Lumsden, Trinity.

<sup>158</sup>Winsor, *Hearts Strangely Warmed*, “Foreword.”

<sup>159</sup>[Feild], *Journal of the Bishop of Newfoundland’s Voyage of Visitation and Discovery on the South and West Coasts of Newfoundland and on the Labrador ... in the year 1848*, 110.

clearly had a primary Church of England allegiance.<sup>160</sup> Despite his participation in and financial support for Methodism as a member, Collett avowed that he never ceased being a member of the Church of England.<sup>161</sup> All three signed a memorial as “members of Saint Paul’s Church” thanking Bishop Spencer for the spiritual benefits he had brought to Harbour Buffett through a resident minister and his financial support towards building the church.<sup>162</sup>

This blending of allegiance was soon to end. The Church of England clergy in Placentia Bay became more vocal in wanting their members to separate themselves from the Methodists. Samuel Sprague claimed that Jeynes preached more “against dissent than against sin.”<sup>163</sup> James England reported in 1844 that they were exhorting them in their public addresses, “we want Churchmen out and outers,” and were requesting rebaptism of their children if they had received the “unlawful” baptism of Methodist missionaries.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>160</sup>UC Archive, WY 200, Burin, Box 1, Circuit Book, Board of Trustees 1836-1847. It is likely that Mary and Thomas Bendle are among those referenced in White’s SPG report, “at convenient intervals a man and woman of the class called Ranters are resident.” PANL MG 598 SPG A197, Quarterly Report of W. Kepple White, Harbour Buffett, Christmas, 1853.

<sup>161</sup>Thomas E. Collett, *The Church of England in Newfoundland* (St. John’s: Joseph Woods, 1853), 15.

<sup>162</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A195, Harbour Beaufet Memorial from the Inhabitants to the Bishop of the Diocese, 1843.

<sup>163</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 27, 1842-1845, S.W. Sprague, Burin, November 5, 1845.

<sup>164</sup>*Ibid.*, Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, 1844 Circuit Report, James England, Burin. This was a pre-Bishop Feild sentiment

It is noteworthy, however, that 1844 is the final year of nominal Methodist membership lists in Placentia Bay and nominal subscriptions became few and infrequent. In Harbour Buffett in 1846, for example, the only Methodist subscribers were Thomas E. Collett and John Haddon, the Newfoundland School Society teacher.<sup>165</sup> Feild's visit in the summer of 1845 intensified the resistance to blending Anglican and Methodist membership, a process started before his arrival.<sup>166</sup> Sprague noted that he was shown a SPCK tract "full of Puseyism bigotry and falsehood" which had been "left by a certain Episcopal Missionary."<sup>167</sup>

When Feild's first clergyman arrived in 1847, the division became even more marked. One of the reasons that William Kepple White gave for refusing Collett and others Holy Communion was that they had "received the sacrament at the hands of the

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since the circuit reports were presented at the District Meeting in May of 1844 and Bishop Feild, although he was consecrated at Lambeth Palace in April, did not arrive in Newfoundland until July 4. UC Archive, WY 100, Box 1, 1829-1873, "Minutes, Newfoundland District, Wesleyan Methodist Church, England, 1829-1850." 1844 District Minutes, St. John's, May 23. Tucker, *Memoir of the Life and Episcopate of Edward Feild*, 32-33.

<sup>165</sup>UC Archive, WY 200, Burin, Box 1, Circuit Book, Board of Trustees 1836-1847.

<sup>166</sup>[Feild], *A Journal of the Bishop's Visitation of the Missions on the Western and Southern Coasts, 1845*, 16-17.

<sup>167</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 27, 1842-1845, S.W. Sprague, Burin, November 5, 1845.

Wesleyan Minister.”<sup>168</sup> When John Brewster returned from Placentia Bay in 1848, he reported that in one of the harbours the Anglican clergyman told him his services were ““a solemn mockery to God”” and that he would call all the Protestants to a meeting and record ““the names of those who would steadfastly adhere to him and ‘promise never to enter again the doors of a Methodist meeting house.’” He would have nothing to do with the others, that is, he would not baptize their children, marry them, or bury their dead. However, Brewster went on to say that in spite of the clergyman’s “sectarian intolerance,” many Anglicans in the bay continued to show gratitude to him as a Wesleyan minister. One such Anglican told his clergyman passionately,

‘Sir,’ he said, ‘I remember the time when those fishing rooms were occupied by labourers on the Sabbath, and business was carried on as regularly on the Lord’s Day as on any other day. Indeed there was no difference between days, save that on the Sabbath drunkenness and quarreling were more flagrant. The Sabbath scenes were truly awful. I have seen the stones of that beach red with the blood of drunken men who fought desperately in liquor. In those days I have known instances in which wicked men have gone to a house, taken away by force a female, dragged her into the woods and abused her shamefully. We had then no gospel, no ministers, ‘no man cared for our souls.’ But the Wesleyan Ministers came and preached the gospel of Christ. At first they were much afraid, but God was with them, and soon happy effects were seen. First one and then another left off Sabbath breaking, drunkards were made sober, and some of the greatest sinners were reclaimed from vice.’<sup>169</sup>

However, over time both the zeal of Tractarian clergymen and the opposition of

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<sup>168</sup>Letter of William Kepple White to Collett, Parsonage, Christmas Eve, 1852, in Collett, *The Church of England in Newfoundland*, 14.

<sup>169</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 28, 1846-1848, John Brewster, Burin, October 12, 1848. See also, PANL MG 598 SPG A225, W.K. White, Harbour Breton, December 31, 1858.

Tractarianism and Methodism to each other, accomplished a separation in what had been a Protestant ecumenism.

Yet, most fishermen and their families continued their spirituality in Placentia Bay without the help of any clergy, Anglican or Methodist. Because their passing visits to most settlements were so infrequent, in most instances they discovered evidence of a vernacular religion and piety that had taken root in their absence, rather than produced it. A singular example of such discovery of a fisherman's conversion was reported by Samuel Sprague on his visit to Placentia Bay in the fall of 1846:

At one of these places a remarkable conversion took place since I last visited it.... One evening at an hour before the intended time of preaching, I wandered out among the trees and bushes to meditate on my intended discourse. But this poor man followed me.... His heart was full, and he evidently longed to make known its feelings.... "Oh Sir, I have long wished for this day.... God only knows what I passed through since you saw me last. But blessed be the Lord I have found the happy change. Many of the people tell me that I am deceived and thought I was getting mad, but ... the Bible tells me I am not deceived. I have two other blessed books, *The Saints' Rest* and *The Pilgrim's Progress*. They tell me I am not deceived. The men that wrote them wrote them from their own experience and feelings and I feel just like them. 'Tis all true. I feel it. Yes, blessed be God, I feel it. I cannot be deceived when the Bible tells me it is so." I enquired what had led to the great change in his views and feelings. He told me he was first convinced of sin by witnessing the horrible death of a poor Catholic woman. He saw her going out of the world blaspheming and in despair. There was no one to advise or pray with her. At last he said he was constrained, wicked as he was, to speak and tell her of Christ and his willingness to save sinners. The words he said went to his own heart and at length when he left the house, meditating on her condition and on his own, he got much in the same state as the poor expiring woman - despair seemed to linger upon him. He felt himself as in hell and actually thought to that hour that for several days he was accompanied with a horrible smell which he could only compare to the smoke of the bottomless pit. His neighbour got alarmed and reasoned on his folly and madness, but all to no purpose. Still he was miserable. He took not rest day or night, nor could he eat or drink and his pipe which he had been at the habit of using was laid aside.... His more religious neighbours visited him, prayed with him and talked with him. They urged him

also to eat but he said he could not. The table was laid and they invited him to come. He resisted their solicitation for a while but at last (said he) he said to himself, "in the name of God I will eat and I will take it as the Sacrament looking to Christ. That moment," he added, "my doubt left me. I believed on the Saviour and my Soul was filled with rejoicing. I could do nothing but praise God and I thank his holy name I have felt the same, more or less, ever since." Then turning to me, he asked, "Do you think, Sir, I am deceived?" I certainly could not think so and from all I afterwards heard from others, I had no reason to think so. He showed me particular passages in the Bible and the *Pilgrims Progress* that had been blessed to him and that were descriptive of his past and present experience. He said it was wonderful how he understood and could read the Bible and those other good Books, particularly after he felt the change. Being, he said, a very poor reader and scholar - but it was the blessed Lord's doing. He gave me this recitation in the presence of his wife and family and nothing in his person, manner or habitation seemed to me to indicate madness.... He followed me to all the services in the neighbourhood while there and whether disposed or otherwise I was compelled by his and the peoples importuning to be constantly employed keeping service.<sup>170</sup>

It is evident from this fisherman's rare personal account that the missionary provided no significant agency in his conversion. Instead it was his "more religious neighbours" who came to his side. The account also cautions us against stereotyping fishermen as ignorant and illiterate. This fisherman was clearly a thinking person, though in his own estimation "a very poor reader and scholar," as he wrestled with the Bible, John Bunyan's *Pilgrims Progress*, and Richard Baxter's *The Saints Everlasting Rest*. Although these writings were not particularly Methodist, the reader's approach to them was distinctly that of the religion of the heart. So too was the extended time of awakening and conviction before conversion, "the happy change," so prevalent in Methodism.

When a Church of England clergyman took up residence in Placentia Bay in 1841

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<sup>170</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 28, 1846-1848, Samuel W. Sprague, Burin, December 14, 1846.

there appeared to be an openness to Anglicanism even on Sound Island, that mainstay of Methodism for the past two decades. On his first trip there in 1840 William Jeynes reported that all was well. The people were “most attentive” at the service and “a resolution was entered into” that the men would go into the woods to cut timber for a church, and “subscriptions toward the building” were promised.<sup>171</sup> He had been “heartily received by the old Patriarch of this place – Mr. Hollett,” baptized several people and married one couple. They stalled, however, when it came to building the church planned for the island by Bishop Spencer. Jeynes said this was due to their being formerly disappointed by the Wesleyans in such a venture, but George Cowan, a Missionary at Burin, found “the people tho’ hospitable and kind appear to be, many of them, thoroughly prejudiced in favour of the Wesleyans, and consequently deficient in zeal in completing the building.” Cowan noted that he and Jeynes held three services during their visit but “had no communicants.”<sup>172</sup>

Jeynes told Bishop Spencer at Harbour Buffett in 1843 that “an unpleasant dispute as to the property and use of the church” had broken out on Sound Island “which prevented further progress.” Spencer sent Mr. Addison, his assistant, to inquire into the

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<sup>171</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A194, William Jeynes to Bishop Spencer, October 12, 1840.

<sup>172</sup>Ibid., William Jeynes to Rev. T.F.H. Bridge, December 21, 1840. A195, George Cowan to Bishop Spencer, May 16, 1842.

matter.<sup>173</sup> He reported back, rather over-optimistically, that “he had happily cleared away all misunderstanding, and engaged the people to finish their churches by the end of the present year.”<sup>174</sup> That was not to be. Samuel Sprague reported in 1846 regarding the church on Sound Island, “Other parties, I believe, with no other intention than excluding us, have endeavoured to get this place into their hands, but hitherto the people have held out, declaring their intention not to turn their backs ungratefully on those to whom they feel themselves deeply indebted for thinking on them when no others did.”<sup>175</sup>

William Kepple White, the new clergyman at Harbour Buffett, did not give up on Sound Island. He offered £35 for the building and promised if at all possible to send an assistant missionary. They refused the offer, as they also refused to have him baptize their children, since they expected the Methodist missionary from Burin in the fall. White was displeased and “warned them of the sin of keeping their children from him, a regularly ordained Minister and reserving them for one that was not.” He said he would visit once more and after that would “wipe the dust off his feet against them.”<sup>176</sup> The people

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<sup>173</sup>Addison offered himself as Deacon in 1839 while at Cambridge. PANL MG SPG A193, Clergy of Essex to Bishop Spencer, September 7, 1839. He served as a missionary in Newfoundland for three years, Pascoe, *Two Hundred Years of the S.P.G.*, 856.

<sup>174</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A194, Journal “Bishop Spencer’s visit, Placentia Bay, 1843,” July 14, 15.

<sup>175</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 28, 1846-1848, Samuel W. Sprague, Burin, December 14, 1846.

<sup>176</sup>*Ibid.*, November 10, 1847.

ignored him. By 1857 there were only two members of the Church of England left on Sound Island, where there had been 118 in 1836. The Protestants there had become almost totally Methodist and the church envisioned by Bishop Spencer was never built.<sup>177</sup>

Sound Island became the centre of Methodism in inner Placentia Bay, as Harbour Buffett became the center for the Church of England. William Wilson reported as early as 1826 that the people "around the head of Placentia Bay" wanted a preacher. The following year he repeated "the universal request of the people ... to have a preacher stationed in some central situation." Wilson proposed that Sound Island should be that location and that a chapel be built there which would also serve the people of Woody Island and North Harbour, to which the people agreed.<sup>178</sup> They actually began two chapels, at Sound Island and Woody Island, to show their earnest desire for a missionary, which John Smithies requested again in 1831.<sup>179</sup> William Faulkner suggested the combination of a "school master and preacher of the Gospel," which was the eventual solution. It was not implemented by the District Meeting or the Committee in London, but by John Brewster.<sup>180</sup> He reported in 1850 that he had found a layman for Sound Island

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<sup>177</sup>CNS, Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1836, 1857.

<sup>178</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 20, 1825-1828, William Wilson, Journal of visit to Placentia Bay, Barren Island, September 25, 1826; William Wilson, Burin, November 2 1827.

<sup>179</sup>Ibid., Reel 22, 1831-1833, John Smithies, Burin, November 19, 1832, Journal of visit to Placentia Bay, December 13, 1831.

<sup>180</sup>Ibid., Reel 23, 1832-1835, William Faulkner, Burin, January 10, 1834; December 1, 1834; Reel 24, 1835-1837 James G. Hennigar, Burin, December, 1835; Reel

in St. John's, hired him as his assistant for a year, and took personal responsibility for his salary of £35. To his surprise £20 was supplied to Charles Downes by the Board of Education, chaired by William Kepple White, "a most zealous Tractarian, and with whom I have fought many a hard battle," and the remainder by the people.<sup>181</sup> Downes, a devout layman, became a pillar of Methodism in inner Placentia Bay for 25 years. He taught school and preached on Sound Island, and also visited other islands and coves in inner Placentia Bay. He was helped in his ministry by being equipped with a license to baptize by the chairman of the District, and with a license to celebrate marriages by Governor Bannerman, "at the instance of Lady Bannerman."<sup>182</sup> Despite his work as a missionary and minister, Downes was not given the title of either by the District Meeting, and he never appeared on the missionary roster. To maintain the distinction he was called a

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25, 1838-1840, Thomas Angwin, Burin, November 27, 1838; Reel 25, 1838-1840, William Faulkner, St. John's, August 14, 1839; Thomas Angwin, Burin, September 10, 1839; Reel 27, 1842-1845, Samuel W. Sprague, Burin, November 5, 1845; Reel 28, 1846-1848, Samuel W. Sprague, Burin, December 14, 1846; SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 6, 1837/38-1841/42, File 252, James G. Hennigar, Burin, December 14, 1837.

<sup>181</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 29, 1849-1852, John Brewster, Burin, March 9, 1850. *Journal of the House of Assembly*, Appendix, Education, "Statement of Accounts Presented at the Meeting of Protestant Board of Education for Placentia Bay," July 3, 1850, 83. It is likely that Charles and Martha Downes are among those referenced in White's SPG report, "at convenient intervals a man and woman of the class called Ranters are resident." PANL MG 598 SPG A197, Quarterly Report of W. Kepple White, Harbour Buffett, Christmas, 1853.

<sup>182</sup>Smith, *History of the Methodist Church Eastern ... of British America*, 373.

“Local Agent.”<sup>183</sup> Martha Downes, his wife, who taught with him at the day school on Sound Island, and the only Methodist woman acknowledged to be a regular preacher, was not even given that title.

On Sabbath mornings, Brother Downes ordinarily preached, and with some acceptance, but his wife whose turn came at night, was much the more popular preacher. The little Church was usually thronged when this mother in Israel declaimed. She had a wonderful faculty of investing Gospel narratives, a thousand times told, with interest. Attention was rivetted and impressions made, that were not always ‘as the morning cloud and the early dew.’<sup>184</sup>

It is remarkable that long after the Wesleyan Methodist Conference ban on women preaching in 1803, Martha Downes was allowed to be a regular preacher side by side with her husband, the only known instance. There are a number of factors which contributed to this freedom. Sound Island and the other islands and settlements at the head of Placentia Bay were a frontier environment. Thus it was open to female leadership to a degree which would not have been possible in traditional centres of Methodism such as Carbonear, a frontier phenomenon which Deborah Valenze noted in England.<sup>185</sup> It was also on the margin of the Burin circuit. For decades, the missionary at Burin was able to visit only once a year, and it is unlikely that such freedom would have been given in Burin

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<sup>183</sup>UC Archive, WY 103, Box 1, “Newfoundland District Spiritual State Reports 1840 - 1857,” 1852, 1853.

<sup>184</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, November 1891, 62, “Obituary of Martha Downes, Sound Island.” *Courier*, June 8, 1859.

<sup>185</sup>Valenze, *Prophetic Sons And Daughters*, 11, 52.

itself.<sup>186</sup> That she took advantage of such freedom speaks much of her personal passion, talent and independence. It also speaks to Charles Downes' theology and personality, to be comfortable with his wife preaching, and having the greater reputation. Then again, in not being official "missionaries" of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference they were to some degree outside its rules. They were even outside the District Meeting organizational framework since they went to Sound Island not by its decision, but as an arrangement with John Brewster. They were also independent of Conference and local Auxiliary Missionary Society funding. Downes received an income from the school board and local offerings.<sup>187</sup> Martha Downes received an allowance from persons in England to the end of her life.<sup>188</sup> Another factor was support from Governor and Lady Bannerman. Lady Bannerman was herself actively involved as a woman, and both took an avid interest in Methodism and, it would appear, in the mission, not only of Charles but also of Martha Downes.<sup>189</sup>

There were two other centres of Methodism in inner Placentia Bay, Haystack and

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<sup>186</sup>While one can agree with Linda Gordon in her critique of Carrol Smith-Rosenberg that most everything in 19<sup>th</sup>-century history was "liminal," still, some people and areas were more marginal than others. See Linda Gordon, *The Journal of American History* 73, 2 (September 1986), 477-8, a review of Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*.

<sup>187</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, November 14, 1866.

<sup>188</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, November 1891, 62, "Obituary of Martha Downes, Sound Island."

<sup>189</sup>*Wesleyan*, July 29, 1876. Smith, *History of the Methodist Church ... of Eastern British America*, Vol. II, 373.

Flat Islands. Methodism at Haystack continued to thrive long after William Wilson's passing visit in the fall of 1828 when the people "continued singing and praying until midnight."<sup>190</sup> When James England came by over a decade later he found that

On approaching the door of an old house we heard a voice in earnest prayer. We stood till it ceased and then knocked; the door was opened by a poor but good man called Thos. Bugden. He said 'we little thought that help was near, we were offering up our family prayer.' He is a widower and his little girl attends to their house affairs.<sup>191</sup>

Thomas Bugden's religion of the heart was at full tide as he, self-directed, without external aid of clergyman and chapel, called out in prayer on an early Saturday morning.

In 1873 Thomas H. James reported that while names of missionaries such as Smithies and Angwin were cherished in the Placentia Bay Mission, the success of Methodism in the region was primarily due to "Godly day-school teachers. Mr. Downes at Sound Island, and Messrs. Parsons and Stowe at Flat Islands, with their devoted wives."<sup>192</sup> Wilson began his annual visit to Placentia Bay in the fall of 1826 by travelling directly to Flat Islands from Burin since a boat happened to be departing for that place, and was received "with every mark of affection and kindness" by the nine families

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<sup>190</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 21, 1828-1831, William Wilson, Burin, Journal, October 21, 1828.

<sup>191</sup>"A Journal kept by James England, 1837-1841," October 16, 1841.

<sup>192</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, January 19, 1874, Report from Burin Circuit by J.H.J., December 24, 1873. J.H.J. should be T.H.J. [Thomas H. James].

resident there.<sup>193</sup> Mobility must have been prevalent, however, for in 1832 on John Smithies' visit, there were only 40 individuals making up four families, all of whom came to hear his preaching.<sup>194</sup> By 1854 Flat Islands had a school teacher who was also a class leader, and who preached and led prayer meetings weekly.<sup>195</sup> There were 21 members, making its Methodist society second only to Sound Island. In contrast Oderin had one member and Haystack seven.<sup>196</sup> The number of Methodists on Flat Islands surpassed Sound Island in the 1869 census, and grew by 100 more by 1874. Unlike Sound Island it had a growing population. While some may have been converted upon arrival, it is also likely that Methodists resettled there.

The censuses show Methodists moving about, for instance none remained at John de Bay by 1845, nor at Little and Great St. Lawrence and Lawn. By 1857, none remained at Petticoat Island, near Oderin, nor at Rock Harbour.<sup>197</sup> Flat Islands did have an attraction for Methodist resettlement. William Wilson stated in 1824 that he had "always considered that the principal design of our Mission Schools is to instruct the rising

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<sup>193</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 20, 1825-1828, William Wilson, Burin, Journal of visit to Placentia Bay, September 14, 1826.

<sup>194</sup>Ibid., Reel 22, 1831-1833, John Smithies, Burin, November 19, 1832, Journal of visit to Placentia Bay, October 1, 1832.

<sup>195</sup>Ibid., Reel 35, 1823-1855. Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, John S. Peach, Burin Circuit Report, 1854.

<sup>196</sup>UC Archive, WY 200, Burin, Box 1, Circuit Book, 1854.

<sup>197</sup>CNS, Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1836, 1845, 1857, 1869; Census of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1874.

generation in the doctrines and truths of the Gospel, that they may become wise unto salvation: while teaching them to read, spell, write is only a subordinate consideration, in a means designed to lead to this important end."<sup>198</sup> It would appear that while Flat Islands may have benefitted from the latter, having a day school contributed substantially to Methodism on Flat Islands, as it did on Sound Island, the two main centres of Methodism in inner Placentia Bay. Of course, teaching the children was just one aspect of the year-round ministry of the official teachers and their wives. These settled ministries had benefits beyond the comings and goings of the itinerant missionaries in the larger centers.

In conclusion, while John Lewis was instrumental in planting Methodism in Burin, it was the social network of the Goddards which became the primary means for the spread of Methodism in the area. Despite a lack of Church of England clergy for two decades, the Methodist missionaries made only a little progress. They singled out transhumance as a cause for their lack of success. Burin experienced a high degree of seasonal mobility, so that with the exception of Wilson, who once moved to winter quarters with a portion of the people, the missionaries had few people to minister to during the winter months. The mobility, however, could have been a greater force for the spread of Methodism had it been more successful in Burin. The missionaries also ran into difficulty preaching against the Sabbath, since the fishery involved two trips to Cape St. Mary's that required seven days to complete. The fishermen articulated a defence of their

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<sup>198</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 19, 1824-1825, Grand Bank, William Wilson, Journal, April 7, 1824.

practice from both the Bible and tradition.

It was not until fishermen brought a revival to Burin from Grand Bank 30 years later that Methodism made great strides, more than doubling its membership. The revival occurred at a critical time, for Bishop Feild had just resupplied the Church of England in Burin, sending a clergyman there in 1847. With its new Tractarian emphasis and its new minister being suspected of "improprieties," the Church of England had a difficult time recovering lost ground. The Methodists instead became well established in Burin. Communication with Nova Scotian Methodists by way of trade also aided their cause.

Beginning with John Lewis, Methodist missionaries from Burin visited Placentia Bay in the fall of each year. Their primary role was to minister to Protestants in a predominantly Catholic region, and as such, they read the Church of England service, preached, baptized and married. They also encouraged Methodists who had moved into the bay from the Burin area, for example at Sound Island and Haystack. There is not much evidence that their annual visits actually produced Methodists in inner Placentia Bay. It seemed that the Methodist cause might be seriously damaged with Bishop Spencer's plan of expansion in 1840. His strategy was to build churches on several islands and to centralize services in Harbour Buffett in the centre of the bay, and to enlist help from the Newfoundland School Society. The Methodists held their ground, however, and then Bishop Feild's Tractarianism possibly worked to their advantage. Methodists were also strengthened by vigorous lay ministries on Sound Island, the Flat Islands, and at Haystack on Long Island. The near absence from official Methodist records of the life-

long ministry of William Harding in Placentia Bay is an example of how weighted they are towards the less significant contribution of the clergy.

As soon as I got in, who should I see and hear a praying but an old mate! He roared out most terrible for mercy! I stood astonished to see the big tears roll down his cheeks, and to see his clenched hands uplifted as he cried to God for pardon!<sup>1</sup>

## Chapter Ten: Grand Bank, Fortune, and the South Coast

This chapter examines the role of the people in the beginning and growth of Methodism in Grand Bank and Fortune, and the influence of the two towns upon Methodism elsewhere, particularly westward through migration and the seasonal mobility of fishermen. It is shown that vernacular Methodism was energized through revivals, although there was a change to respectability in the latter decades of the century. It also considers the organizational effort of the Methodist District in sending missionaries to the region, and the territorial competition of the Church of England through the Newfoundland School Society and the administrative competence and passion of Bishop Edward Feild.

There may have been more Methodists in Fortune Bay than Richard Knight, the first Methodist missionary to the south coast, allowed in his first report after his arrival at Grand Bank in the fall of 1816. He found in Fortune Bay “with only a few exceptions” an unconverted people and much intemperance due to the availability of cheap liquor. Two exceptions were John Authoine and his wife, agent at Jersey Harbour for the merchant

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<sup>1</sup>*Wesleyan*, December 1, 1849.

Nicolle of Jersey, who “consider themselves belonging to us ... a well wisher to religion.”<sup>2</sup>

Knight did not mention John Lake, the first settler in Fortune, a Methodist who moved there from Placentia Bay in the early 1800s. Dinah L. King, who in 1905 obtained her information “from the oldest people now living and from the Church records,” stated that of the first eleven families, “nearly all” were Methodists, and Lake held services in his house. Knight preached his first sermon at Fortune in John Lake’s house.<sup>3</sup> Thus when Knight arrived at Fortune there was a nucleus of Methodists there to greet him.

Garfield Fizzard suggested there may have been Methodists in Grand Bank, as early as 1811. In that year Charles Cramer, the doctor and magistrate at Harbour Breton, “likely” a member of the Church of England, ordered Jonathan Hickman, constable at Grand Bank, to not allow the hoisting of a flag calling the people to assemble for service in a home in the town. In a letter to the lay reader Thomas Higgins, 39 men said they would continue to meet. Fizzard reasoned that Cramer was upset because while the people were using the Church of England order of service, they may have been following

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<sup>2</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 24, Richard Knight to Missionary Committee, Grand Bank, April 14, 1817. His first letter from Grand Bank to the WMMS was the account of his voyage immediately upon his arrival, Files 20-21, Richard Knight to Missionary Committee, Grand Bank, Fortune Bay, Richard Knight to Committee, November 11, 1816.

<sup>3</sup>UC Archive, UCC Fortune Pastoral Charge Fond, Dinah L. King, “The History of Methodism in Fortune.” Handwritten copy signed and dated May 22, 1905. Printed in *Methodist Monthly Greeting*, March, 1906, 14.

“the practices of the Wesleyans.”<sup>4</sup> It would appear, then, that there were more Methodists in the circuit upon Knight’s arrival than the “few exceptions” he allowed for. Thus Charles Lench was incorrect in focusing wholly on Knight and the Missionary Committee in “How and when Methodism came to Grand Bank.”<sup>5</sup>

In 1816 the people at Grand Bank were already earnest about their Christianity; they had a Sunday school of 65 students and had built a church for 300 people at their own expense by giving “large and liberal contributions.”<sup>6</sup> They were indeed generous. Charles Lench had access to a subscription document at William Evans’s store, dated December, 1816, of 41 donors, seventeen of whom gave over £1, and eight over £5.<sup>7</sup> This was only a month after Knight’s arrival. One has to question, also, William Wilson’s gloss on Richard Knight’s time in Grand Bank:

Was I competent to devise a fair contrast between the present moral state of this people, and what it was previous to Mr. Knight coming here, I should exhibit a striking picture of Missionary success; and hold out a powerful motive to future zeal and activity in the Missionary course. At that time, drunkenness, swearing, and Sabbath breaking, with every kindred vice was, I am informed, generally practiced through the harbour. While religion was unknown, consequently unregarded and universally despised. But with a few exceptions those vices are

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<sup>4</sup>Garfield Fizzard, *Unto the Sea: A History of Grand Bank* (St. John’s: Dicks and Company, 1987), 74-75.

<sup>5</sup>Charles Lench, *An Account of the Rise and Progress of Methodism on the Grand Bank and Fortune Circuits from 1816 to 1916* (Barnes & Company, 1916), 21f.

<sup>6</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 24, Richard Knight to Missionary Committee, Grand Bank, April 14, 1817.

<sup>7</sup>Lench, *An Account of the Rise and Progress of Methodism on the Grand Bank and Fortune Circuits*, 57-58.

now unknown in this place, the Sabbath is regarded, the house of the Lord frequented, the children are instructed, and blessed be God, many are brought from darkness to light.<sup>8</sup>

It is obvious that Wilson was writing to heighten the profile and cause of the missionary and was thus overzealous in painting the contrast before and after Knight's arrival to Grand Bank. The portrayal of "drunkenness, swearing, and Sabbath breaking, with every kindred vice" is hardly a balanced description of a people who sought a missionary and, upon his arrival, built a church, contributing labour and money, and founded and supported a Sunday school. It would be more accurate to say that the missionary simply lent his shoulder to a spiritual effort already underway. After all, it was the people who invited the missionary, as Wilson later noted.<sup>9</sup>

Knight came to Fortune Bay looking for conversions and did not report a great change because of his ministry. After a year, he stated with regret that while most attended the church, the Gospel's progress was slow and only a few were converted.<sup>10</sup> John Haigh in 1819 had an even less confident outlook for the circuit. He mentioned no conversions and believed that the return of men to England and the nine-month pursuit of the fishery by Fortune Bay fishermen held out little hope for "the work of God," that is, the progress of Methodism through conversions. Unlike the northeast coast fishermen,

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<sup>8</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 18, 1822-1823, William Wilson, Grand Bank, Journal, August 12, 1823.

<sup>9</sup>Wilson, *Newfoundland and its Missionaries*, 227.

<sup>10</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 25, Richard Knight, Grand Bank, April 14, 1818.

those of Fortune Bay pursued a spring fishery beginning in late March or early April and a fall fishery which lasted until Christmas, in addition to the summer fishery. With extended absences from the missionary and church, religious "impressions" which were made during the winter months "wear away."<sup>11</sup> Unlike at Burin, there was little migration to winter quarters.

John Lewis suggested in his journal another reason for Haigh's lack of success in creating lasting "impressions." While Haigh was a moral man he seemed to be "wanting for zeal ... too trifling and wanting for piety."<sup>12</sup> Yet, whether he was zealous or not, numbers did not increase in Grand Bank and Fortune not only during his itinerancy, but for another decade when, during the winters of 1829 and 1830, membership grew from 36 to 61.<sup>13</sup> At the District Meeting May, 1829 Adam Nightingale reported a small revival in the typical language of Methodist writers, "the work of God on this station is in a state of growing prosperity ... Some persons have been deeply awakened."<sup>14</sup> In the late summer of that year William Bullock, the Church of England clergyman at Trinity, visited Grand Bank and Fortune, having been invited by Governor Cochrane to circumnavigate the

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<sup>11</sup>*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1820, 78.

<sup>12</sup>"Journal of John Lewis," 1.08, February 14, 1819.

<sup>13</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, 1823-1828. UC Archive, WY 100, Box 1, 1829-1873, "Minutes, Newfoundland District, Wesleyan Methodist Church, England, 1829-1850." Minutes for 1829-1832.

<sup>14</sup>UC Archive, WY 100, Box 1, 1829-1873, "Minutes, Newfoundland District, Wesleyan Methodist Church, England, 1829-1850." Circuit report, Grand Bank, 1829.

island with him on the governor's yacht. The governor gave him "every means of carrying the benevolent designs of the Society into effect," prolonging his time in Fortune and Hermitage bays where "all, with very few exceptions" of the Protestants adhered to the Church of England. Bullock gave the Methodist missionary presence at Grand Bank "great credit" for the good it had done. However, he said that in spite of this, "the great majority "continue their attachment to the Established Church and, and are anxious for our assistance."<sup>15</sup> This seems unlikely, due to the Methodist clerical presence since 1817, and especially in light of the revival the previous winter. The following year James Robertson, a Church of England clergyman sent on a tour of the south coast, reported that he found Grand Bank to be predominantly Wesleyan, "most of the inhabitants seem to be deeply imbued with the tenets of that sect."<sup>16</sup> Although Grand Bank and Fortune had only about 60 Methodist members, the 1836 census showed it had nearly 300 adherents out of a population of slightly over 450. While Fortune was equally divided, in Grand Bank the Methodists outnumbered the Anglicans by two to one.<sup>17</sup>

Numbers alone do not tell the whole story of Methodism. When William Wilson arrived in Grand Bank in the summer of 1823 he was struck with the fact that though the

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<sup>15</sup>*A Sermon Preached ... together with The Report of the Society for the Year 1830*, William Bullock to Archdeacon Coster, Trinity, October 21, 1829, 115-116.

<sup>16</sup>*A Sermon Preached ... together with The Report of the Society for the Year 1831*, James Robertson, Journal, August 12, 1830, 114.

<sup>17</sup>The 1845 census showed that with a combined proportion of the population of over eleven to one, Grand Bank and Fortune had acquired identities as Methodist towns. Census of Newfoundland, 1836, 1845.

people had not had a missionary for a year and a half, “the members have maintained their steadfastness and kept up the regular services which had been established amongst them.” Women were “indefatigable” as school teachers.<sup>18</sup> This means that through local initiative the people held Sunday church services, preached, led prayer meetings, gave pastoral supervision in class meetings, taught school, visited the sick, and buried their dead, and showed a vernacular Methodism which was vigorous and healthy. Moreover, the fishermen were not as fickle as Haigh portrayed them. John Oliver had an entirely different view, asserting that “wherever our young men go a fishing they are esteemed for their piety and good conduct.”<sup>19</sup> And they went quite far, along the whole south coast, from the Burin Peninsula to Port aux Basques.<sup>20</sup>

The first missionary, Richard Knight, did not limit himself to Grand Bank and Fortune, but also visited other settlements in Fortune Bay. He envisioned a circuit which would include Harbour Breton, Little Harbour and Riverhead, in addition to Jersey Harbour.<sup>21</sup> However, it was the fishermen themselves who were the true missionaries of

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<sup>18</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 18, 1822-1823, William Wilson, Grand Bank, Journal, August 12, 1823.

<sup>19</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 2, 1819/20-1823/25, File 70, John Oliver to Joseph Taylor, St. John's, June 8, 1821.

<sup>20</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 18, 1822-1823, William Wilson, Grand Bank, Journal, November 18, 1823.

<sup>21</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 25, Richard Knight, Grand Bank, April 14, 1818. So also, John Oliver, Box 2, 1819/20-1823/25, File 72, John Oliver to Joseph Taylor, Grand Bank, October 18, 1821.

Methodism on the south coast, for they carried their Methodism with them as they lived and worked among other fishermen and their families; and not just among the rare breed of foreign merchant agents, like the Authoines at Jersey Harbour. As George Ellidge was the first to note the potential of migrants forming new Methodist churches through resettlement, so William Wilson was the first to articulate the vision of transhumant Methodism, that is fishermen and their families as missionaries in their "migratory callings and pursuits."<sup>22</sup> Said Wilson:

The great cruising which our friends have in this part of the Island after fish, which is 40 or 50, and frequently 70 or 80 leagues, and their long absence from the means of grace in consequence, is certainly detrimental to their progress in knowledge and holiness. But though their long absence is to be regretted, yet I believe they do most conscientiously make the best use of their time they possibly can. As two or three boats generally cruise together whenever it is practicable, on a Sabbath Day our friends assemble together; and hold their regular meetings in their boats, and sometimes hold prayer meetings ashore, and distribute tracts amongst the inhabitants. And thus almost every private member in the Grand Bank Society does in a certain sense become a missionary.<sup>23</sup>

As a vernacular Methodism it would have had a special attraction to fellow fishermen and their families of the same social class. In addition it had the appeal of singing, already a popular aspect of the culture. Richard Knight introduced Methodist hymns to Grand

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<sup>22</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS, Reel 22, 1831-1833, John Smithies, Burin, November 19, 1832.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., Reel 18, 1822-1823, William Wilson, Grand Bank, Journal, November 18, 1823. *Provincial Wesleyan*, August 3, 1864, William Wilson, "The Newfoundland Mission and its Missionaries No. 28."

Bank and Fortune, and singing became popular in the circuit and elsewhere.<sup>24</sup> “The visiting “Fortune Bay singers” received acclaim in Burin, for example.<sup>25</sup>

In 1831 we glimpse an illustration of the expansion of Methodism through resettlement. Richard Shepherd reported that the lack of success in the fishery the previous year “induced a few families to emigrate to the distance of 50 leagues from Grand Bank.”<sup>26</sup> This represents a significant occurrence of Methodist migration along the south coast, possibly to Petites, or even to Channel. Thus very early we have the predominant feature of the expansion of Methodism from Grand Bank and Fortune. It was not the occasional visit of the missionary, but the migratory habits of the people in both their work and residence which accounted for a Methodist presence along what was called “the western shore.”<sup>27</sup> The missionary’s main contribution was his impact on the two main towns of the Fortune Bay circuit.

A strategic error for the south coast mission resulted from an agreement at the

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<sup>24</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 24, Richard Knight, Grand Bank, April 14, 1817; Box 2, 1819/20-1823/25, File 70, John Oliver to Joseph Taylor, St. John’s, June 8, 1821.

<sup>25</sup>“Journal of John Lewis,” 1.07, August 30, 1818; September 6, 13, 1818; October 25, 1818.

<sup>26</sup>UC Archive, WY 100, Box 1, 1829-1873, “Minutes, Newfoundland District, Wesleyan Methodist Church, England, 1829-1850.” Minutes for 1831.

<sup>27</sup>There were also Methodist immigrants from England. William Marshall visited William Rideout at Pass Island who “was brought up in connection with a Wesleyan family in Dorsetshire.” Marshall commented, “many there are on this shore who have previous to their leaving England been similarly circumstanced.” “William Marshall, Diary, 1839-1842,” July 17, 1841.

1844 District Meeting. John Pickavant returned from England where he had been to restore his health, told the District Meeting that if he became sick again, "he had authority to call in one of the single Brethren to assist him" at Brigus.<sup>28</sup> Because the Church of England had appointed a clergyman to Brigus in 1842 it was imperative that the circuit not be left vacant. Pickavant did call for assistant, and the person chosen was Jabez Ingham from Grand Bank, whose position in turn was filled by John S. Peach who was recalled from Hermitage Bay, having been there for only five months. Peach saw this as an egregious error in judgement, and was even "suspicious" of the reason for it.<sup>29</sup> While it was unsettling to the people of Grand Bank to have an unexpected change of missionaries in December, it was devastating to the fledgling mission in Hermitage Bay.

William Marshall had wintered at Hermitage Cove arriving in the summer of 1839, the first Methodist missionary stationed west of Grand Bank. The residents built "the shell of a new Wesleyan chapel" in which Marshall held Easter services in 1841. Marshall served as a "visiting missionary," but Peach, who replaced him in 1842, determined that Marshall's ministry was too thin and wide-ranging and did not visit the western shore.<sup>30</sup> He was just settling in to Hermitage Cove to focus on the immediate area

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<sup>28</sup>UC Archive, WY 100, Box 1, 1829-1873, "Minutes, Newfoundland District, Wesleyan Methodist Church, England, 1829-1850." St. John's, May 23, 1844.

<sup>29</sup>"John S. Peach Diaries, 1841-1855," November 14, 1842.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., "William Marshall, Diary, 1839-1842," June 1, 1840. PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 25, 1838-1840, William Marshall, Gaultois, Hermitage Bay, July 30, 1839; Reel 26, 1841-1842, William Marshall, Hermitage Cove, July 21, 1841.

when he was recalled to Grand Bank, and never replaced.<sup>31</sup> Four years later the chapel was made over to the Church of England and Samuel Sprague concluded that the people of Hermitage Bay were “irrevocably lost” to the Methodists.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, Newman, Hunt, and Company built an Anglican church of stone and brick at Hermitage, “the best in the island” outside of St. John’s.<sup>33</sup> The Church of England was not challenged again by a Methodist missionary stationed west of Grand Bank until Charles Comben was appointed to “the Western Shore” in 1856 or 1857.<sup>34</sup>

The Auxiliary Missionary Society to the WMMS and the District Meeting had determined in 1837 that the south coast was a region in great danger of succumbing to Catholicism and therefore needed a “visiting” missionary immediately.<sup>35</sup> But, actually, the south coast circuit of Grand Bank was the brightest spot in the Newfoundland District in 1837. Although the total membership for the District remained the same as the

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<sup>31</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 27, 1842-1845, John S. Peach, Hermitage Cove, September 30, 1842. “John S. Peach Diaries, 1841-1855,” June 20 - November 30, 1842.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., Reel 28, 1846-1848, Adam Nightingale, Grand Bank, December 10, 1846; S.W. Sprague, Burin, November 10, 1847.

<sup>33</sup>PANL MG 595 P-10, Colonial and Continental Church Society, 1851-1856. *The Annual Report of the Colonial Church and School Society for the year 1853-1854*, (London: Society’s Offices, 1854), 67.

<sup>34</sup>*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1857, 945. SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 10, 1852/54-1858/6, S.W. Sprague, Chairman to Secretaries, Brigus, October 29, 1856.

<sup>35</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, John Pickavant, Chairman, Official District letter to Secretaries, May 29, 1837.

preceding year, the Grand Bank circuit which had hovered at a membership of 30 for the past four years nearly tripled to a membership of 80 in 1837.<sup>36</sup> John S. Addy found a spiritual sensitivity in the town upon his arrival in the summer of 1836.<sup>37</sup> The following summer he reported to the District Meeting that a revival had occurred in Grand Bank. Several backsliders were restored, many were awakened, some were rejoicing in conversion and some were seeking entire sanctification. There was anomie in that in the previous year several fishermen drowned "and left behind them weeping widows and fatherless children without the prospects of even the necessities of life."<sup>38</sup> Addy summarized the revival with the typical language of the religion of experience: "There is evidently a deepening of the work of God in the hearts of the members of Society. They are experiencing more of the vitalizing influence of the religion of Jesus Christ."<sup>39</sup> Although the record of this revival is sparse, we may assume that it was similar to the 1823 revival in Grand Bank described by William Wilson.<sup>40</sup> Thus while the elite in St.

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, Numbers in Society, 1833-1837.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., Reel 24, 1835-1837, John Addy, Grand Bank, August 30, 1836. Extract published in SOAS., *Missionary Notices*, Vol. VIII, 374-375.

<sup>38</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, Circuit Report, Grand Bank, 1836.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 1837. Another smaller revival had taken place in the winter of 1829. See UC Archive, WY 100, Box 1, 1829-1873, "Minutes, Newfoundland District, Wesleyan Methodist Church, England, 1829-1850." Minutes and Circuit report, Grand Bank, 1829.

<sup>40</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 18, 1822-1823, William Wilson, Grand Bank, Journal, November 18, 1823. *Provincial Wesleyan*, August 3, 1864, William Wilson,

John's were wringing their hands over a perceived threat to Protestantism, and the Methodist clerical leadership was attempting to come up with a single visiting missionary for the south coast, the fishermen themselves, stirred by a revival, were already carrying their Methodism with them, holding prayer meetings in harbours and distributing tracts as they fished "the western shore," at least as far as Port aux Basques.

It was the fishermen who continued to spread Methodism on the south coast after the failure of the Hermitage mission. A notable example of the fishermen as missionaries occurred in 1848 when a revival of extraordinary proportion and intensity broke out in Grand Bank. The British missionaries had tended to see the Grand Bank circuit as being on the edge of the frontier and were not fond of being stationed there. They much preferred Conception Bay and St. John's. Richard Shepperd while stationed in Grand Bank felt he was in an "obscure corner" where he was cut off from seeing his fellow missionaries.<sup>41</sup> The highest praise Adam Nightingale could give it when he was stationed there was that it was "perhaps not the least in importance."<sup>42</sup> Often it was the new recruits

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"The Newfoundland Mission and its Missionaries No. 28."

<sup>41</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 4, 1828/29-1833/34, File 179, Richard Shepperd, Grand Bank, September 30, 1831; File 180, December 5, 1831.

<sup>42</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 27, 1842-1845, Adam Nightingale, Grand Bank, September 12, 1845. Carbonear, the largest station, was seen as the "the most important." Reel 24, 1835-1837, George Ellidge, Carbonear, June 23, 1836; Reel 27, 1842-1845 John S. Addy, Carbonear, January 19, 1844.

who were sent to Grand Bank.<sup>43</sup> At times it was not even supplied with a missionary at all, or the last to be supplied.<sup>44</sup> Thus in 1848 the District Meeting decided not to send a missionary, but to send Thomas Fox, a local preacher. It directed the missionary John Brewster at Burin to visit him "as often as possible" to oversee his ministry. But Brewster was not able to visit Fox until several months later, when the winter was nearly over, in March 1849.<sup>45</sup>

After travelling the 40 mile journey overland from Burin, Brewster happened upon a winter tilt of a resident of Grand Bank, where a woman informed him that an extraordinary revival, "as never was known," had been taking place in Grand Bank and Fortune since the fall. She emphasized the extent, thoroughness, and vernacular nature of this revival, "The Lord has visited every house for ten miles on the shore; and though its seldom a preacher comes to see us, yet we walk four or five miles to have a prayer

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<sup>43</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 19, 1824-1825, George Ellidge, Jersey Harbour, November 18, 1824; SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 4, 1828/29-1833/34, File 182, Thomas Angwin, Grand Bank, October 30, 1832; Box 5, 1833/34-1837/38, File 208, Ingham Sutcliffe, Grand Bank, August 29, 1834; File 228, John S. Addy, St. John's, June 11, 1836. PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 24, 1835-1837, John S. Addy, Grand Bank, August 30, 1836.

<sup>44</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 2, 1819/20-1823/25, File 52, Pickavant to Joseph Taylor, St. John's, December 29, 1820; Box 5, 1833/34-1837/38, File 207, John Pickavant, Brigus, July 14, 1834; Box 6, 1837/38-1841/42, File 252, W. Faulkner, St. John's, December 30, 1837.

<sup>45</sup>UC Archive, WY 100, Box 1, 1829-1873, "Minutes, Newfoundland District, Wesleyan Methodist Church, England, 1829 - 1850," 1848 District Meeting, St. John's. PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 29, 1849-1852, John Brewster, Burin, April 13, 1849.

meeting together.”<sup>46</sup> Upon arriving in the community Brewster was given further detail about what had been happening all winter without his oversight. The revival was not limited to the young or the old, but rather “whole families became alarmed for their souls.”<sup>47</sup> Thomas Fox noted “there was hardly one, either man, woman or child, but was convinced of sin.”<sup>48</sup> Fishermen in particular were prominent in this revival:

Stout-hearted sinners were seized with fear and trembling while at work in their boats or on the wharves: these, in some instances, fled to the nearest house of a pious man, requesting, with earnestness in their hearts and faces, that prayer might be made for them. Many of these sons of the ocean obtained great joy in the forgiveness of sins, and are now adorning their Christian profession. Several persons who had been at enmity with each other for years, were constrained under the hallowed influence of love divine to forgive and embrace each other in the house of prayer. On the spot where they obtained peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, there they made peace with each other.<sup>49</sup>

John Brewster’s writing is an uncommon reference to vernacular religion and its formation, in that he focused on the people around him. Most missionaries, Methodist or Church of England, wrote home to defend their worth to the missionary committee, or to their own consciences. Brewster, however, seemed to delight in shining the spotlight on the people themselves. Rare indeed is the vignette of a fisherman speaking of his faith experience in the first person:

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<sup>46</sup>*Wesleyan*, November 17, 1849.

<sup>47</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 29, 1849-1852, John Brewster, Burin, April 13, 1849.

<sup>48</sup>“Journal of Thomas Fox, 1851-1877,” December 14, 1850.

<sup>49</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 29, 1849-1852, John Brewster, Burin, April 13, 1849.

During the revival of religion in Grand Bank last winter, the boats' crews returned from the Western fishery. They had gone out as usual without the fear of God, and had returned no way improved in morals by their long absence from the means of grace. 'I was surprised and alarmed,' said one to me, 'when I dropped my anchor in the harbour, to see a light in the chapel, for it was near upon twelve o'clock at night when we reached home. What in the world are they doing till this time o' night, I asked. As soon as I had moored the boat, I went up to see, and lo there was a chapel full of folks all a praying. I felt vexed and went home, wondering that folks should make such a to do about religion. I went away to bed, and the next day, most of the boats coming home, the men were astonished to hear their fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters and wives talk to them about their souls. We'd never seen the like, and asked what had happened to them since we left. As there was to be a prayer meeting at night, I went to look on for myself; but they shouted so terrible I got out as quick as I could, and came home 'sured it was all a delusion. On Sunday I wouldn't go near the Chapel, but strolled on the beach and in the woods all day. At night conscience hit hard at me saying, 'You've been a Sabbath breaking.' I felt troubled and went to the prayer meeting. But I didn't like it at all, and came home to my supper. When I sat down to it, I couldn't eat! I felt my heart rise up to condemn me, and I started off to the prayer meeting again. As soon as I got in, who should I see and hear a praying but an old mate! He roared out most terrible for mercy! I stood astonished to see the big tears roll down his cheeks, and to see his clenched hands uplifted as he cried to God for pardon! I'd never seen him roar before. He was the man who was never frightened at a storm at sea. I'd seen him in the storm when we all expected death as cheerful as if he cared for naught! And while I looked at him, I heard him, I heard him a saying, 'O Lord, if thou hast cut me off in my sins I should have been damned! I have called upon Thee to damn me; even in the storm when thy hand shook death over me, I blasphemed Thee! I have broken thy Sabbaths.' Here I dropped! 'O Lord,' I said, as I fell on my knees, 'I have been as bad as he! I have broke the Sabbath today.' And I began to pray in earnest. I did not care who heard me, or who see'd me, nor I didn't mind other folk making noise, for I made bigger than them all. And I couldn't rest till God spoke peace to my soul.' The whole of the boats' crews were brought to seek for mercy at the throne of grace.<sup>50</sup>

While Fox played a significant part in this revival, it is clear that it was at the prayer meeting, that most vernacular of the various Methodist meetings, that people were being converted as they saw, heard, and felt each other's prayers.

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<sup>50</sup>*Wesleyan*, December 1, 1849.

Brewster was slightly apologetic about the emotional aspect of this revival, either because of his own penchant for respectability, or for that of his readers. Yet emotion there was. People were moved in the very essence of their being and did not just cry and shout, weep and wail, but “roared” as they gave audible expression of their religion of experience. “So loud were the cries of sinners in distress that the neighbours in distant houses heard them and came to see the matter.” Others in the meeting fell prostrate. Some of the people in the community itself were startled at this uncommon event and asked if it was not fanaticism. Others came to look and mock but were “seized with conviction” on the way home or when they got there. Brewster himself, a man used to “decorum” was clearly out of his element. He confessed:

To see upward of 70 of these hardy sons of the ocean who had feared no man, dreaded no danger, but had been accustomed to dare the Almighty’s wrath in the midst of the tempest at sea, to see them prostrate before him in deep penitential sorrow, was truly alarming to the timid Christian. I was in the midst of such a scene, and I confessed it overwhelmed me.<sup>51</sup>

He did not understand it, but because of its good effects concluded “what is confusion with man is order with God.”<sup>52</sup>

The Methodists were fortunate at this turn of events at Grand Bank. They likely did not realize that Bishop Feild had his eye on Grand Bank and Fortune the summer before the revival broke out. As he viewed the communities, passing by on his yacht in July, 1848, he lamented that “the Wesleyan Methodists, through the default of the

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., December 1, 1849.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., November 24, 1849.

ministrations of the Church, have wholly occupied them.” He could not complain that the Methodists had supplied a vacancy that the Church of England had not filled, but still he had “the wish and prayer, that the Church may fulfil her allotted duty, and occupy her rightful place.”<sup>53</sup> When he returned to St. John’s he wrote Ernest Hawkins, the secretary of the SPG, informing him that the Methodists had left the circuit vacant and that it might be “recovered” if a clergyman of sufficient “discretion and zeal” could be found to take up residence there.<sup>54</sup> Feild regarded the two settlements as originally belonging to the Church of England, and thought that they had become Methodist, to the extent that they were, “more of necessity than choice, having and knowing no better way.” He believed that many there were still “attached to the Church.”<sup>55</sup> Feild was accurate as to the former denominational allegiance of some of the people of Grand Bank. An older resident recalled to John Brewster the town’s response to Richard Knight, its first Methodist missionary:

‘We were convinced deeply enough of the truth, but the fact is we looked upon ourselves as Old English Church folks, and did not like the thought of a Methodist parson teaching us. And it was only out of consideration of our own clergy not visiting us, that we went to hear him at all. When he first landed among us, it made great talk, and many declared they would hear no Methodist preach. I went,’ observed my informant, ‘he preached about our Lord sending forth his Apostles, I never heard the like! He seemed to explain it so wonderfully ... I felt my

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<sup>53</sup>[Feild], *Journal of the Bishop of Newfoundland’s Voyage of Visitation and Discovery on the South and West Coasts of Newfoundland and on the Labrador ... in the year 1848*, 14.

<sup>54</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A195, Feild to Hawkins, St. John’s, June 20, 1848.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, Bishop Edward Feild, November, 1845.

prejudices remove, and determined to hear him again. But others were offended, many kept aloof altogether, and those who were convinced of the truth as it is in Jesus, still held out stoutly against it.<sup>56</sup>

By the following summer there was little hope that the revivalist Methodists of Grand Bank would revert to their former Anglicanism, and certainly not to the Tractarian variety. They had become accustomed to leading in prayer extemporaneously, preaching and exhorting spontaneously, and witnessing to others evangelistically. It was unlikely that they would submit to the enclosure of the sacred, in which the clergy appropriated unto themselves the right of approach to God via the Tractarian ritual.

It was also a strategic error for the Methodist District Meeting to have chosen Hermitage Bay as the central location for a new circuit. The migratory Methodist fishermen of Grand Bank fished further west at Ramea, Burgeo and other settlements as far as Cape Ray.<sup>57</sup> William Marshall, after his visit along the shore in 1841, could find little that was positive for his report to the Committee in London. He noted, "conversions are rare," but he singled out Burgeo as an exception. He was struck with the "very powerful and divine influence" which attended his preaching there. Not only that, but despite the poverty of the residents, during his stay they contributed over £100 for a church building and the mission. He went on to advise the Committee that a missionary should be stationed there since "several of the people have sat under our ministry in

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<sup>56</sup>*Wesleyan*, November 24, 1849.

<sup>57</sup>For instance, in 1821 when John Haigh said he sent tracts to these places, it would have been the fishermen who were the messengers. *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1821, 637.

Grand Bank and Fortune.” In addition to being able to build on a foundation of resettlement Methodism at Burgeo, the missionary would not have to contend with “that prejudice against Methodism” which prevailed in Hermitage Cove and the surrounding area.<sup>58</sup> The previous year he had spent two weeks in Burgeo and recommended that it be a station for a missionary, in addition to one at Hermitage Bay. The circuit would extend from Ramea in the east to Cape Ray in the west, or even to Bay St. George. Marshall’s advice was not followed for 40 years. The Methodist Conference did not pass a resolution to make Burgeo a mission with a minister until 1880.<sup>59</sup>

While the Methodist administration made these strategic errors, the Church of England had begun to take steps to lead the Protestant vanguard on the south coast. Its clerical presence became even more critical as an increasing population began to fill up the harbours and coves in the 1830s.<sup>60</sup> Methodist missionaries had been visiting Fortune Bay and Hermitage Bay since 1816, but it was not until 1824 that there was talk of a

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<sup>58</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 26, 1841-1842, William Marshall, Hermitage Cove, November 1, 1841. In his diary he noted that as he visited the western shore at Upper Burgeo, Lower Burgeo, and Eastern Point in La Poile Bay, Methodists in these settlements who formerly resided at Grand Bank or Fortune gave him a hearty welcome. “William Marshall, Diary, 1839-1842,” August 18, 20, 25, September 24, 1839; August 8, 12, 1841.

<sup>59</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 6, 1837/38-1841/42, File 288, William Marshall, Jersey Harbour, October 15, 1840. *Wesleyan*, June 23, 1880. He also visited to a large welcome in 1839, “William Marshall, Diary, 1839-1842,” August 18-22, September 19-30, 1839.

<sup>60</sup>Handcock, “English Migration to Newfoundland,” 30-37; Michael Staveley, “Population Dynamics in Newfoundland: The Regional Patterns,” 56-57.

Church of England visitation to “the Southern and Western Shores” and this resulted in a visit to Placentia Bay only.<sup>61</sup> Neither did Bishop John Inglis go further west than Burin during his episcopal visit of 1827.<sup>62</sup> In that year the Church of England could only boast a single schoolteacher on the south coast, who also served as a lay reader, William Tulk at St. Lawrence, who had formerly been at Burin.<sup>63</sup> There was another effort in 1830 to consider how to situate a clerical presence on the coast. Archdeacon Wix and James Robertson visited the coast and gave particular attention to the SPG-favoured site of Harbour Breton and Hermitage Bay as the location for a clergyman.<sup>64</sup> Nothing was done as a result of either “professional cruize.” The SPG continued to seek a missionary without success, despite the publication of these visitations in the SPG annual reports, and in 1835 Wix made another visit to the coast.<sup>65</sup> Wix published an account of his visit to

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<sup>61</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A192, Charles Blackman to A. Hamilton, Ferryland, October 24, 1824; *A Sermon Preached ... together with The Report of the Society for the Year 1825*, 50-54.

<sup>62</sup>*A Sermon Preached ... together with The Report of the Society for the Year 1827*, Bishop John Inglis, Journal, August 14, 15, 1827, 101-102.

<sup>63</sup>*An Account of the State of the Schools in the Island of Newfoundland Established and Assisted by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts* (London: C. and J. Rivington, 1827), 10. PANL MG 598 SPG A192, William Tulk to Anthony Hamilton, Great St. Lawrence, November 17, 1827.

<sup>64</sup>*A Sermon Preached ... together with The Report of the Society for the Year 1830*, 88. *A Sermon Preached ... together with The Report of the Society for the Year 1831*, 96-106, 115.

<sup>65</sup>*A Sermon Preached Before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts ... together with The Report of the Society for the Year 1836* (London: J. and F. Rivington, 1836), 29-30.

the south coast as *Six Months of a Newfoundland Missionary's Journal*.<sup>66</sup> It was republished within the year and excerpts were printed in other periodicals.<sup>67</sup> However, there was a fervent appeal to Protestants in the second edition in 1836 which expressed alarm at the perceived ascendancy of Roman Catholicism in St. John's, and called for £2000 to build an Anglican church there to help fend off Catholic aggression.<sup>68</sup> This alarm and the appeal for such a large sum of money was counterproductive to the purpose of the volume, since it drew attention away from the south coast and its need for missionaries, and placed the focus of urgent need back in St. John's.

Meanwhile the Methodist missionary at Grand Bank and Fortune Bay was disturbed by Wix's disregard for the work of Methodists. He complained that Wix had rebaptized persons who had already been baptized and "properly registered" by Methodist missionaries. Wix had "endeavoured to lessen our influence and usefulness in more ways than the above."<sup>69</sup> Thus began an intensification of competition between them. The

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<sup>66</sup>Wix, *Six Months of a Newfoundland Missionary's Journal*.

<sup>67</sup>Edward Wix, *Six Months of a Newfoundland Missionary's Journal from February to August, 1835* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1836). "Three Weeks of a Missionary's Life in Newfoundland," in T.K. Arnold, ed., *The Poor Churchman's Quarterly Magazine*, Vol. 1, 1836-7 (London: J. and F. Rivington, 1837), 71-85. "Missionary Travels in the Interior of Newfoundland," in *The Saturday Magazine*, March 26, 1836, 117-118.

<sup>68</sup>"An Appeal on behalf of the Protestant Episcopalians of the Town of St. John's, Newfoundland," in Wix, *Six Months of a Newfoundland Missionary's Journal*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ix-xi. See also, 193-195, 200-201.

<sup>69</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 5, 1833/34-1837/38, File 227, Ingham Sutcliffe, Grand Bank, July 6, 1835. After his return Wix straightway sent

Church of England had begun in earnest to establish its presence in an area where the Methodists seldom had competition. Wix's visitation was an announcement of that intention which the Methodists heard quite clearly. At the District Meeting in the spring of 1836 the missionaries assured themselves that it was they who were "the grand Bulwark against the inroads of Popery," but at the same time defended themselves to the London Committee for not appointing a visiting missionary to the south and northeast coasts. They told the Committee that the reason for their lack of action was not lethargy, but because in Newfoundland such a way of proceeding would be "in a great degree impracticable," yet they did admit that the District would benefit from the "the more extended itinerancy" of the new visiting missionary sent from London. Speaking out of both sides of their mouth, they appointed John Addy to Grand Bank with the instruction "to visit more extensively ... the remote parts of Fortune Bay, as also the Western Shore ... between Fortune Bay and Cape Ray."<sup>70</sup> In this way he would trace the ground covered the previous year by Wix. Thomas Angwin made a cogent argument for a visiting missionary, who should not be a novice from Britain, but a seasoned missionary already in Newfoundland. "They know the manners and habits of the people. They are known by

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Thomas Wood on a visitation to Fortune Bay in the fall of 1835, PANL MG 598 SPG A192, Petty Harbour, T.M. Wood, January 1, 1836. John Pickavant called Wix "a bitter enemy to Methodism," SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 5, 1833/34-1837/38, File 207, John Pickavant, Brigus, July 14, 1834.

<sup>70</sup>UC Archive, WY 100, Box 1, 1829-1873, "Minutes, Newfoundland District, Wesleyan Methodist Church, England, 1829-1850." 1836 Newfoundland District Meeting, Carbonear, May 28, 1836 Official Letter to Committee.

some individuals from the length and breadth of the land. They are acquainted with the localities of the country, and with the methods of travelling." All they had to do was "make the sacrifice."<sup>71</sup>

However, the Methodists had rested on their laurels as resident ministers for too long. John Pickavant continued to call for visiting missionaries to fight Catholicism, believing that "Methodism must do it, if it is ever to be done, now is the time to do it."<sup>72</sup> William Faulkner, too, believed that Methodism was "especially adapted" to counter Catholicism in frontier Newfoundland and called for visiting missionaries to do just that.<sup>73</sup> But the Church of England quickly recovered under Bishop Aubrey George Spencer. The Methodists had sent a second missionary to Hermitage Bay and the western shore in 1839, the first addition to the area since Richard Knight was sent to Grand Bank and Fortune Bay in 1816. Spencer met this expansion by sending Thomas Boone to Harbour Breton in 1841. After a year he concluded that the area was so attached to William Marshall of the Methodists that it was "lost to the Church." In a poetic and desperate manner, he exclaimed, "Alas! My Brothers. It is a dreary waste, it is a howling wilderness! ... it is the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision. It may be asked, can they live? Awake O North Wind! and

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<sup>71</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 24, 1835-1837, Thomas Angwin, Port de Grave, December 21, 1836.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., Reel 25, 1838-1840, Carbonear, John Pickavant to the WMMS, Carbonear, September 12, 1838.

<sup>73</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 6, 1837/38-1841/42, File 251, William Faulkner, Blackhead, January 5, 1837.

come thou South Wind, and blow upon these bones, that they may live.”<sup>74</sup> However, Marshall was not so sure. In reporting that the people had built “the shell” of a chapel, he also felt that they had only “the shell” of Methodism, for although there was less Sabbath-breaking and people had “listened attentively” to his preaching, still there were “no conversions,” that is, no religion of the heart. Marshall told the London Committee, “I feel sorry that I cannot furnish a more cheering account.”<sup>75</sup> John S. Peach also was not hopeful. Leaving in November, 1842, having been recalled to Grand Bank, he thought that his local preacher replacement would never arrive at that time of year and all the work at the new mission would be in vain. It would only have prepared the way of an ordained schoolmaster of Bishop Spencer.<sup>76</sup>

In analyzing the potential for success for Methodism in Hermitage Bay he identified factors “working like an under current” against his efforts. The largest was the merchant house of Newman and Company whose main premises were at Harbour Breton and Gaultois. Although the agent, William Gallop, was respectful to him, this was not the case with the clerks who took every opportunity they could “in poisoning the minds of the people” against his message. In addition, the “youngsters,” or young men straight from England who were indentured by the company, made it a point to tell the residents that it

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<sup>74</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A194, Thomas Boone to T.F.H. Bridge, Harbour Breton, March 8, 1842.

<sup>75</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 26, 1841-1842, William Marshall, Hermitage Cove, July 21, 1841.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., Reel 27, 1842-1845, John S. Peach, Hermitage Cove, November 22, 1842.

was "Clergymen of the Establishment," and not Methodist missionaries, who were true ministers. Many people listened to them because some had a modicum of literacy, and possibly because they had so recently arrived from the home country. They had such an effect that one fisherman told Peach to his face that his "ordination was not valid, seeing that it was not performed by a Bishop." A third factor was the Newfoundland School Society which Bishop Spencer had recently called on to send a teacher to Grole, who would also read services there. The teacher was hospitable, but Peach could no longer gather a congregation or even find someone to provide passage for him on his last visit to Grole.<sup>77</sup>

It would appear that the desire of the settlers on the south coast to have regular services was so acute that they would pass over fine distinctions of theology in order to have them. Most of the English, apart from those who had migrated along the shore from Grand Bank and Fortune, simply saw themselves as Protestants of the Church of England persuasion who were quite willing to tolerate Methodism if it meant they could have services. On numerous occasions they welcomed Methodist missionaries and often requested regular services from them.<sup>78</sup> They did the same for missionaries from the

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<sup>77</sup>Ibid., September 30, 1842.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., Reel 25, 1838-1840, John S. Addy, Old Perlican, August 15, 1837; William Marshall, Gaultois, December 4, 1839; Reel 26, 1841-1842, William Marshall, Gaultois, November 1, 1841; Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, Circuit Reports, Hermitage Cove, 1841; SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 6, 1837/38-1841/42, File 288, William Marshall, Jersey Harbour, October 15, 1840.

Church of England, for example Archdeacon Wix and Jacob George Mountain.<sup>79</sup> William Kepple White observed at a later date after being four years stationed in Harbour Breton, that whoever were the first to minister to the people with regular services would retain their loyalty, whether Methodist or Church of England:

I cannot too strongly impress upon those who love our Church and her work that the feeling of the people on this shore is just now open. Whatever form of religion displays a care for them first will be received with open arms. And they will turn away at a later period without inquiry, even with contempt, from any other form however strongly it may be pressed upon them. It is by caring for the people first that the Methodists have such a hold upon many of the wealthy and industrious settlements on this island. I have often been told in other places, 'They loved the Wesleyans because they have brought us the word of God first.'<sup>80</sup>

An example of this axiom was Harbour Breton itself. The Methodist missionary stationed at Grand Bank had been visiting there intermittently and had been kindly received since 1817.<sup>81</sup> Yet when Thomas Boone was placed there in 1841 and Jacob George Mountain in 1847, the place became Church of England. Similarly at Hermitage Cove, which John Peach had to leave so quickly after being ordered to Grand Bank by the District authority in 1842. The people's expectation for a regular ministry had been high, especially with

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<sup>79</sup>Wix, *Six Months of a Newfoundland Missionary's Journal*, 46-86, 111-153, 219; "Memoir of the Reverend Jacob George Mountain" in *Lives of Missionaries: North America*, 206-238.

<sup>80</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A225, W.K. White, Harbour Breton, December 31, 1858.

<sup>81</sup>SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 1, 1791-1819/20, File 24, Richard Knight to Committee, Grand Bank, April 14, 1817; File 48, John Haigh, Grand Bank, July 19, 1819; *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1828, Simeon Noall, Grand Bank, 1827, 206-207; SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 6, 1837/38-1841/42, File 288 William Marshall, Jersey Harbour, October 15, 1840.

the arrival of a new Methodist missionary that summer and the frame of a Methodist chapel already standing. One can sense their disappointment on the news of his abandoning them in their remarks, "One Gentleman says 'I think it very strange.' Another of our friends 'It seems very queer.'"<sup>82</sup> It is not surprising that after being so unceremoniously dropped by the Methodist District, they would receive with open arms, John Marshall, "a sensible and pious, painstaking man," who was a teacher and lay reader of the Church of England, supported by the Newfoundland School Society.<sup>83</sup>

Similarly, although the Methodists had the most positive prospects on the south coast west of Grand Bank at Burgeo, it was not they, but the Church of England who sent a resident missionary there in 1842. Martin Blackmore informed Bishop Spencer just after his arrival that the people had plans to build two churches, two schools and two teachers' houses.<sup>84</sup> Blackmore's journal is written as if Burgeo were completely Church of England. There is not a single reference to Methodists in Upper or Lower Burgeo in the numerous journal entries which span over four years from January, 1845 to April, 1848.<sup>85</sup> Neither did Bishop Feild make any reference to Methodists in his journal,

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<sup>82</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 27, 1842-1845, John S. Peach, Hermitage Cove, November 22, 1842.

<sup>83</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A195, Edward Feild, November, 1845.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., A196, Martin Blackmore to Bishop Spencer, Sand Banks, Upper Burgeo, May 18, 1842.

<sup>85</sup>Martin Blackmore, "Journal of Rev. Martin Blackmore (1845-1848 at Burgeo)," <<http://ngb.chebucto.org/Articles/blackmore.shtml>>.

mentioning that in 1845 he “consecrated” as the exclusive property of the Church of England the churches in Upper and Lower Burgeo.<sup>86</sup> Neither did he mention the Methodist missionary, William Marshall, who had collected £100 four years previously towards the construction of a Methodist chapel even though that money was “appropriated” for the new Church of England properties.<sup>87</sup> Similarly, in 1847 there were 40 Methodists amidst the 220 Anglicans on the Burgeo Islands, nearly 20 percent of the population, according to Blackmore’s own report, a possible underestimation.<sup>88</sup>

How does one account for their absence in the journal? Blackmore would have nothing to gain by singling out Methodists. It is probable that the Methodists blended in with his congregation as they often did when an Anglican church was available and they had no chapel of their own, or on special occasions even when they had their own chapel. This was particularly so while both saw themselves as Protestants, in a twofold division between Protestant and Catholic. When the Church of England began to turn to

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<sup>86</sup>[Feild], *A Journal of the Bishop’s Visitation of the Missions on the Western and Southern Coasts, 1845*, 12.

<sup>87</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 26, 1841-1842, William Marshall, Hermitage Cove, November 1, 1841. Reel 30, 1852-1853, J.S. Peach, Western Shore, May 15, 1854. Omitting references to other denominations was not unusual in Anglican journals. As John C. Street noted, “When reading works on Newfoundland written by or for Anglicans one too easily forgets that during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Roman Catholics outnumbered Protestants in St. John’s ... and of the Protestants, nearly one-third were Methodists by the time of the 1857 census.” Street, *The Journal of Oliver Rouse*, 265.

<sup>88</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A196, Martin Blackmore, Burgeo Islands, Report, May, 1847.

Tractarianism, a threefold division ensued as Methodists increasingly saw themselves as “other.” Blackmore was a Protestant evangelical Anglican. For example, he held special classes in which he taught the Bible and John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*.<sup>89</sup>

However, the influence of new theology was making its appearance. On the eve of the bishop’s first visit Blackmore made changes in the chancel by carpeting the floor and changing the pulpit stairs. These new arrangements probably had to do with the Tractarian focus on the altar. The following summer Blackmore removed the east window and put “a fine three-lighted Gothic window.” In addition, he took to wearing a surplice. However, the next year he made arrangements to have a gallery built to seat the increased numbers.<sup>90</sup>

It is difficult to discern what continuing influence the Methodists had in the area. Peach reported that while he was at Burgeo in the summer of 1853 he was informed that most of the residents of Upper Burgeo “were wishing to see a Wesleyan Minister” and had talked of building a chapel.<sup>91</sup> The majority of settlers of Upper Burgeo engaged in transhumance to La Poile Bay, and Blackmore did not hold services in Upper Burgeo until

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<sup>89</sup>“Journal of Rev. Martin Blackmore (1845-1848 at Burgeo),” Bible classes - January 30, February 5, 13, 27, March 7, 13, 1845; Bunyan classes - November 26, 31, 1845; January 14, 28, 1846.

<sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*, July 16, 1845; June 26, 1846; March 16, May 18, 1847.

<sup>91</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 30, 1852-1853, J.S. Peach, Western Shore, May 15, 1854.

they returned.<sup>92</sup> It is quite likely that they were bonded together by their Methodism and held prayer meetings, and even class meetings, while in their winter tilts. This is even more likely if they were joined by Methodists from other settlements, Petites and Harbour Le Cou, for example.<sup>93</sup>

The only clear reference to Methodists in Blackmore's journal is that the people of Petites were "accustomed to have prayers amongst themselves."<sup>94</sup> Four years later they were holding class meetings as well, and building a Methodist chapel.<sup>95</sup> Peach found the chapel completed in 1853 and noted that "several inducements have been held out, and attempts made to arrest it out of their hands," obviously referring to the Church of England.<sup>96</sup> John Cunningham, who came to Burgeo in 1849 and who used the building in Petites to hold services, may have been one who did so.<sup>97</sup>

W.W. Le Gallais, the Church of England clergyman at Port aux Basques, stated in

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<sup>92</sup>"Journal of Rev. Martin Blackmore (1845-1848 at Burgeo)," October 26, 1845; April 5, 1846; October 25, 1846; April 25, 1847; October 17, 1847; April 9, 1848.

<sup>93</sup>Smith suggests that "Social interaction between women and children of different outposts was probably more intense in winter than in summer, and this was very likely a time for renewal of kinship ties, alliances, and friendship bonds and for exchange of non-material items (tales, games, proverbs, songs, information, etc.) as well as material ones." "Transhumant Europeans Overseas: The Newfoundland Case," 244.

<sup>94</sup>"Journal of Rev. Martin Blackmore (1845-1848 at Burgeo)," August 2, 1846.

<sup>95</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 28, 1846-1848, John S. Peach, Burin, November 26, 1850.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., Reel 30, 1852-1853, J.S. Peach, Western Shore, May 15, 1854.

<sup>97</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A196, W.W. Le Gallais to Bishop Feild, Port aux Basques, November 6, 1857. Pascoe, *Two Hundred Years of the S.P.G.*, 957.

1857 that the Methodists were not successful in getting converts on the shore from his congregations, but that three families at Habour Le Cou, five families at Garia and “the whole of Petites” had “come from Grand Bank and were Methodists before.”<sup>98</sup> Not only were these communities an example of the extension of Methodism through resettlement, they were also revitalized and empowered by fishermen from Grand Bank and Fortune who in their “migratory callings” continued to visit the area. “At different seasons of the year the fishermen embark on the various fishing grounds between Cape Ray and Cape St. Mary’s. Their last fishing voyage is made from October to Christmas on the western shore. It is also their first voyage in the spring from April to the middle of May.” John Brewster wrote about these fishermen in rare detail showing how robust their vernacular Methodism was, coming out of the 1848 revival:

‘We all have a Bethel flag made, Sir,’ said one to me, ‘and carry it with us. We will hold prayer meetings on the fishing grounds in our boats. And as there are many inhabitants in the place to which we are going, who are ignorant of salvation, we will tell them what the Lord has done for our souls.’ ‘Yes,’ exclaimed another, ‘by the grace of God I will endeavour to undo what I have done. In that very place where they have heard me blaspheme that holy name I now love, I will tell them that it is ‘the only name among men whereby we may be saved.’ And where they have seen me rolling drunk, I will tell them that there is

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<sup>98</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A196, W.W. Le Gallais to Bishop Feild, Port aux Basques, November 6, 1857. John S. Peach writing in 1855 stated that “At Seal Island two miles east, there are 6 families who have access to Petites by land. At Garia three miles further east, there are nineteen or twenty families more the greater part Wesleyan,” PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 31, 1854-1867, John S. Peach to Secretaries, Grand Bank, December 10, 1855. The 1857 census, however, listed Garia as having 75 Church of England and 54 Methodist adherents, and Petites as having 49 Church of England and 120 Methodist adherents. Census of Newfoundland, 1857.

mercy for the vilest sinners.<sup>99</sup>

In this way fishermen demonstrated a total confidence that they did not need a clergyman to help them or speak for them. Their vernacular speech and their thoughts and feelings were a capable vehicle for communicating about God to others.<sup>100</sup>

The Bethel flag, likely made by wives, sisters, daughters, and mothers, was a well-chosen symbol of vernacular migratory Methodism. It demonstrated the depth of both their theological and self understanding. A flag was normally raised for services at chapel. The name "Bethel," literally, "the house of God," was taken from the account of Jacob as he was journeying, away from home, and with only the stars over his head. It was precisely during his migratory pursuit that he received the promise of God, "I am with you ... I will not leave you," (Genesis 28). The fishermen did not have to depend solely upon a religion centered upon missionary and chapel for their experience of God, but could look forward to God's presence wherever they sailed. When they looked up the masthead of their schooners and saw "the large blue flag" flying, they reminded themselves and each other of this presence and their identity as Methodist converts.<sup>101</sup> It was also not coincidental that a flag was the symbol they chose to represent their faith.

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<sup>99</sup>*Wesleyan*, December 1, 1849. So also in Bond's *Skipper George Netman* the Bethel flag on the coast of the Labrador had every Sabbath "spoken out silently yet clearly the principles and practices on board the *Cres'*, and invited all who saw it to come aboard and worship," 118.

<sup>100</sup>Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 10.

<sup>101</sup>*Wesleyan*, December 8, 1849.

James Lumsden, noticed that flags were a pervasive custom in Newfoundland as “neighbours rejoiced with rejoicing friends” in announcing a birth, a marriage, or the arrival of a friend.<sup>102</sup> So the fishermen of Grand Bank announced the joy of their salvation. There are other examples which illustrate the Methodist use of “Bethel” as the presence of God. In an obituary of Benjamin Hollett, a captain of the Grand Banks fishery, it was said that his schooner “may be regarded as a Bethel. From week to week and year to year the voice of prayer and praise was heard ascending to the Maker, Preserver, and Redeemer of us all.”<sup>103</sup> James Hickson said of an unintentional winter’s night outdoors, December 27, 1816, while travelling from Bonavista to Catalina, “although we had nothing but the white snow for our bed, the shaking trees for our curtains, the snowing heavens for our canopy, yet we experienced it to be a Bethel to our souls.”<sup>104</sup> James Lumsden called a sealing schooner at Fox Harbour (Southport) “a floating Bethel” as the crew, newly converted, held prayer meetings and class meetings on board.<sup>105</sup> Similarly, John Waterhouse, recalling the 1860’s, wrote of the sick chamber and the class meeting becoming Bethels by the presence of God.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup>Lumsden, *The Skipper*, 66.

<sup>103</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, December, 1896, 181.

<sup>104</sup>John Rylands Library, PLP53.34.1, James Hickson, Port de Grave, to Joseph Entwisle, Methodist Chapel, City Road, London, August 14, 1817.

<sup>105</sup>Lumsden, *The Skipper Parson*, 82-84.

<sup>106</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, June, 1901, 2; August, 1903, 6.

The fishermen were astute in using the Bible and the *Book of Common Prayer* both to understand and to communicate to Church of England fishermen their Methodist spirituality. To the charge of its users that they were wrong to believe they could know their sins were forgiven by their "feelings," they answered from the Collect, "'Almighty and everlasting God, who art always more ready to hear than we to pray ... that the Spirit may witness with our Spirit that God has forgiven us.'" To the alarm that they "made such a noise" in shouting they replied that the Publican beat upon his breast. To that of entire sanctification they replied from the prayer book, "'Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin.'" Brewster made it a point to state that these theological nuances were made by fishermen in a schooner on the western shore speaking to another fisherman who came on board. He had inquired about the deaths he heard of in Grand Bank, whether any had been his relatives. The fishermen answered his question and then went on to state that "many had been brought to life," and to his inquirer's puzzled response spoke at length of "the New Birth." They were then invited ashore and held a meeting among the settlers.<sup>107</sup>

Fishermen while carrying out their work were able to accomplish that which was beyond the grasp of Marshall and Peach. On a shore where the missionaries were not able to gain even single conversions, the fishermen brought about a revival. Brewster quoted a letter giving details of the revival:

The following is an extract from a letter a neighbour of mine received from his brother. It is dated Petites, May 2, 1849. 'There have been some of the Grand Bank people here this spring and they brought 'good tidings of great joy to us.'

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<sup>107</sup> *Wesleyan*, December 8, 1849.

They have been praying with us, and blessed be God! they have not prayed in vain. Forty-five persons have been truly converted to God. Children of only eight years old, and old men of seventy, all ages have witnessed the power of grace. If you was to visit us you would be surprised to see the change. No Sabbath breaking now, no drunkenness now, no swearing now, but all our families have begun to pray.<sup>108</sup>

The revival was not limited to men. While the fishermen were holding a service in her father's house at Petites, a young Jane Tipple was converted.<sup>109</sup> It is true they were not able to reclaim Harbour Breton and Hermitage Bay for the Methodists, but still the spread of Methodism on the western shore was due largely to the fishermen of Grand Bank and Fortune. When Edward Wix arrived at Port aux Basques on May 5, 1836, he noted that had he reached it on the previous Sunday he might have had a congregation of 200 "there were so many boats and vessels belonging to Fortune Bay, which were bound to the western fishery at anchor there."<sup>110</sup> Some of the boats would have been manned by Methodist fishermen from Grand Bank and Fortune.

In addition to the fishermen from Fortune Bay, Port aux Basques had Methodist influence from Halifax. Warren MacNeill and his brother, sons of "one of our most respectable members" of the Methodist society in Halifax, were stationed in Port aux Basques. Their sister was married to William Webb, a Nova Scotia Methodist missionary. When William Marshall visited Port aux Basques in 1839 and 1840, the

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<sup>108</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>109</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, December, 1903, 10. Obituary of Mrs. Jane Tipple, Burin.

<sup>110</sup>Wix, *Six Months of a Newfoundland Missionary's Journal*, 149.

MacNeills gave him a kind welcome and provided him transportation as far as Cape Ray.<sup>111</sup> When John S. Peach visited a decade later he reported that the 35 families of the place had built a church at their own expense which cost about £400. They also had built a school and hired a teacher. But he noted they were “mostly independent,” which would have meant that a large proportion were Congregationalist or Baptist.<sup>112</sup> This would have made the town unique in Newfoundland, different even from Twillingate, in that its Protestant population was not composed of a majority of Anglicans or Methodists. Le Gallais estimated in 1857 that there were ten Methodist families from Grand Bank residing there, probably an accurate number.<sup>113</sup>

Both Bishop Feild and the Methodists dearly wanted the place for their denominations and competed strenuously for it. In 1850 Peach entreated the Methodist Committee in London to send a missionary to the area since Bishop Feild had “made an effort or two already to get hold of the place of worship” in Port aux Basques.<sup>114</sup> Indeed the bishop had visited the previous summer to do just that. He found that about ten

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<sup>111</sup>“William Marshall, Diary, 1839-1842,” August 26, 30, 1839. SOAS, WMMS, North America, Correspondence, Box 6, 1837/38-1841/42, File 288 William Marshall, Jersey Harbour, October 15, 1840.

<sup>112</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 28, 1846-1848, John S. Peach, Burin, November 26, 1850.

<sup>113</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A196, W.W. Le Gallais to Bishop Feild, Port aux Basques, November 6, 1857. The 1857 Census lists 211 Anglicans, 89 Wesleyans, one Presbyterian, and no Baptists or Congregationalists.

<sup>114</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 28, 1846-1848, John S. Peach, Burin, November 26, 1850.

fishermen had built a church and opened it to “any good man who came along,” whether “Clergyman, Methodist preacher, Baptist, or any other professed Protestant.” Feild asked them to sign it over and he would “consecrate” it as Church of England property from which all other preachers would be excluded, and he would send a resident clergyman. A majority agreed to this proposition, but “A few of the more wealthy planters, who had contributed most largely to the building, were stout Methodists and refused to consent to the consecration and relinquish their rights, without being paid the value of their contributions in work and material.” Because of this stalemate Feild decided to send Thomas Boland, whom the parties agreed could use the building, to make further headway. He had no residence in Port aux Basques, however, so when William Meek vacated Sandy Point in 1852, Feild sent him there. But, said Feild, “No sooner had he gone than the Methodists again made a descent upon the place.”<sup>115</sup>

The Methodists in fact were scrambling, not able to come up with a missionary for Port aux Basques or anywhere else on the western shore. Peach wrote to the Committee pleading again for a missionary to no avail.<sup>116</sup> Bishop Feild found a clergyman for Port aux Basques in 1854 in the person of Joshua Duval. He “so far succeeded with the people” that only two held out against turning over the church as the exclusive property of the Church of England. When Feild arrived in 1855 he was able to buy the church for

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<sup>115</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A216, Bishop Feild to Ernest Hawkins, Burin, The Church Ship, September 26, 1855.

<sup>116</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 31, 1854-1867, John S. Peach to Secretaries, Grand Bank, December 10, 1855.

£50. He consecrated it on the spot and immediately had “Wesley’s Hymn Books expelled.” As he sailed from Port aux Basques he was practically dancing on the deck of his yacht over this “happy termination of a long protracted siege.”

He wrote to Ernest Hawkins, Secretary of the SPG, pointing out the strategic importance of his victory over the Methodists, as “the greatest achievement of my present visitation, by which the whole Western coast has been secured, please God,” to the Church of England - all for £50.<sup>117</sup> Such was the victory that the church was featured in the *Gospel Missionary* and on the front page of the SPG’s *Quarterly Paper*.<sup>118</sup> Feild cemented his hold on Port aux Basques by appointing W.W. Le Gallais there in 1858.<sup>119</sup> Le Gallais had come to Newfoundland as a clerk for Nicolle and Co., Jersey merchants at La Poile. He was influenced by Jacob George Mountain at Harbour Breton, moved there, and was “trained” by him at Harbour Breton and at Queen’s College in St. John’s. A devout Tractarian “resembling his master in zeal and fervour,” he was soon celebrating communion, the sacramental focus of the movement, every Sunday at Port aux Basques.<sup>120</sup> He immediately began the renovation of the church from “what the Bishop

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<sup>117</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A216, Bishop Feild to Ernest Hawkins, Burin, The Church Ship, September 26, 1855; A227, W.W. Le Gallais, Channel, February 18, 1861.

<sup>118</sup>*Gospel Missionary*, September, 1862; March, 1864; SPG *Quarterly Paper*, January, 1863.

<sup>119</sup>The 1869 census showed a doubling of Church of England members at Channel, and only a slight increase in Methodist adherents. Census of Newfoundland, 1857, 1869.

<sup>120</sup>*Mission Field*, March 1858, Letter of Bishop Feild, St. John’s, December 7, 1857, 49-50; January, 1870, 4; March 1, 1870, Letter of Bishop Feild to SPG, December

calls the early Newfoundland style," that is evangelical Protestant, to conform to Tractarian church architecture. The gallery and the high pulpit were "tumbled down" and a chancel installed, at the front of which "the altar covered with a beautiful cloth with embroidered monogram" became the focus. Stone font, lectern, and lancet windows were added. Le Gallais served the mission unstintingly until he drowned while returning from visiting a sick parishioner a decade later.<sup>121</sup>

Meanwhile the Methodists continued to falter. At the first Eastern British America Conference at Halifax in 1855 they talked again of sending a missionary to Port aux Basques, but did not do so.<sup>122</sup> However, in 1857 during the time of Charles Comben, the first Methodist missionary to be assigned to the western shore, a church was built.<sup>123</sup> But it was not until 1861 that there was a revival. Joseph Gaetz noted that the previous year divisions of the Sons of Temperance started in Channel and Petites but then something "more glorious and more noble" happened in Petites. A revival had occurred and about 40 persons had been quickened, reclaimed or saved.<sup>124</sup> The five young people

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15, 1869, 85-87; March, 1874, 88-89.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid., March, 1874, 88-89; PANL MG 598 SPG A227, W.W. Le Gallais, Channel, February 18, 1861.

<sup>122</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A216, Bishop Feild to Ernest Hawkins, Burin, The Church Ship, September 26, 1855.

<sup>123</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, January 9, 1861.

<sup>124</sup>The 1869 census showed a large increase in Methodist adherents at Petites and a dramatic shift toward the Methodists at Garia. Census of Newfoundland, 1857, 1869.

he was bringing back to Port aux Basques were also saved, and the work continued after he left the harbour.<sup>125</sup> Charles Ladner was astounded by the revival among the people calling it “a most powerful work” and observing that there was “a singularity about the revivals both at Petite and Channel for which we can scarcely account” and noting that this was the first revival ever in Port aux Basques.<sup>126</sup>

The temperance movement and the pursuit of holiness became blended. Both the Sons of Temperance and the Band of Hope marched in the town and gathered in the store of A. Waddell, agent of the Halifax Room where the Methodist preachers of Port aux Basques and Petites spoke to the gathered assembly about conversion. In the Band of Hope, young persons pledged to abstain from alcohol, tobacco, and swearing. At Petites which was nearly completely Methodist, temperance was even more full blown with its own Temperance Hall. However, at Port aux Basques these efforts were “disgracefully opposed by the episcopal clergyman,” W.W. Le Gallais, who denounced both temperance and Methodism from the pulpit, collecting and burning the tracts of the London Tract Society that had been dispensed to promote the temperance movement.<sup>127</sup> The opposition did not stop there. On hearing that her son had become a Methodist, his mother from Brigus wrote him to express her grief that he had deserted his church, “the church of

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<sup>125</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, October 9, 1861.

<sup>126</sup>*Ibid.*, April 16, 1862.

<sup>127</sup>*Ibid.*, April 16, 1862; September 17, 1862, “Mission to the Western Shore” by J. Winterbotham, Grand Bank, September 2, 1862.

Jesus Christ in this country,” and committed “the sin of schism.” The sender of the letter concluded, “The style itself is strong presumptive evidence that it was composed by a High Church minister, as indeed it is said to have been.”<sup>128</sup>

Neither was revival limited on the south coast to the western shore. Another extensive revival occurred in Grand Bank in 1857. Thomas Gaetz reported in December, which would have been after the fishermen returned, that over 108 had been converted in Grand Bank, and over 87 at Fortune, the latter in the space of one week. His apologetic portrayal of the resultant religion of emotion and experience is similar to that of the revival of 1848:

The descriptions I might give would be far short of the blessed reality. I confess sticklers for order and propriety, had such been present, might sometimes have been tempted to cry enthusiasm, or to suppose that penitents and professors kneeling by them, were filled with new wine, or even to think unutterable things, but we are here ‘alone in our glory,’ excluded from intercourse with any other people, and we do as we please, so long as we remain true to the Bible, and to Methodism.”<sup>129</sup>

The revival at Grand Bank was a part of an extensive awakening not only in much of Newfoundland, but throughout North America and the British Isles.<sup>130</sup> But Gaetz’s portrayal of the revival in Grand Bank as being true to Methodism was in great contrast

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<sup>128</sup>Ibid., September 29, 1869, “Newfoundland Correspondence,” Petites, September 14, 1869.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid., April 22, 1858, Letter to the editor from Rev. T. Gaetz, December 15, 1857.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid., September 7, 1859; May 6, 1860, “Revival in Newfoundland” by Thomas Harris, Twillingate, January 24; April 15, 1858, “The Revival” from *The NY Christian Advocate and Journal* and the “General Revival of Religion” from *NY Independent*.

with the new respectability which was espoused in the New England trans-denominational revival:

It is not marked by the same intensified enthusiasm and excitement that followed the preaching of Whitfield, or the revivals at the beginning of the present century, in which various physical convulsive demonstrations were witnessed among persons under conviction of sin. On the contrary, the present awakening everywhere gives evidence of calmness and freedom from wild and unregulated excitement. An unusual enthusiasm prevails, but we hear of no violent and extraordinary demonstrations anywhere.<sup>131</sup>

The Grand Bank revival was more like the revival in Ireland to which one writer to the Editor referred in order to call people back to the true Methodism of experience as exhibited in the journal of Wesley, in which “bodily affections, sudden and remarkable conversions, and overwhelming visitations of mental depression and conviction are not novelties” and should not be discarded to conform to “the views and feelings of a fashionable world.” The writer was alarmed that while at one time only those who opposed Methodism disparaged such revivals, now the friends of Methodism were joining them.<sup>132</sup> Of the former, he could have referred to Jacob George Mountain who totally disdained the Methodists’ “paroxysms of (so called) prayer” in the 1848 Grand Bank revival, or to Oliver Rouse’s milder criticism of Methodists “mistaking enthusiasm and frenzy for devotion.”<sup>133</sup> What the writer may not have known was a growing divide

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<sup>131</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, April 15, 1858. “General Revival of Religion” from *NY Independent*.

<sup>132</sup>*Ibid.*, September 7, 1859.

<sup>133</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A222, Jacob G. Mountain, Harbour Breton, “Log of the Mission Yacht,” August 23, 1854; A225, Oliver Rouse, Bay de Verde, Christmas, 1858.

within Methodism itself between the clergy and the people on the matter. At the District Meeting of 1866 all the clergy were agreed in leaning toward the “fashionable world” for they associated moderation in revivals with enduring Christian stability and “extravagance” with relapsing to one’s former state.<sup>134</sup>

In 1866 Bishop Feild in his “charge” to his clergy condemned the enthusiasm of revivals reminding them “how unreal revivals are but efforts to recruit and sustain an unreal Church.”<sup>135</sup> By the 1870s the Methodist missionary from Grand Bank, George Forsey, had almost come round to agreeing with him. Forsey was careful to point out that the latest revival meetings “did not assume that wild and ungovernable aspect sometimes seen, when the devil mixes ‘strange fire’ with the true, and when mere animal excitement is mistaken by the simple-minded for the operations of the Spirit of God. Our meetings were conducted with decorum.” And again, a couple of years later, “The revival meetings were singularly free from excitement. The utmost decorum was maintained throughout.”<sup>136</sup> Forsey probably did not think he was discarding the Methodism of the past century, but transcending it instead. Decorum and appearance had become the arbiter of spirituality for Methodist clergy and those of their congregation who were rising in and aspiring to middle-class respectability.

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<sup>134</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, July 4, 1866, Newfoundland District Meeting, Carbonear, J.W. [John Waterhouse].

<sup>135</sup>Quoted in Tucker, *Memoir of the Life and Episcopate of Edward Feild*, 217.

<sup>136</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, February 15, 1871; April 9, 1873.

In conclusion, there appear to have been Methodists at Grand Bank and Fortune before the arrival of the first missionaries. Not only were these communities the centre of Methodism in Fortune Bay, but through transhumance and their migratory fishermen, they were largely responsible for the growth of Methodism on the western shore. It was the fishermen and their families who brought and vigorously maintained Methodism in such places as Burgeo and Petites, an effort greatly invigorated by revivals. The visitation of a Methodist clergyman on the western shore was a rare event during the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century. This was largely due to the ineptitude of the Methodist organization, and in part, possibly to the reluctance of its missionaries to serve in the area. The slight effort exerted was the annual visit of the missionary at Grand Bank and Fortune to settlements of Fortune Bay, and the temporary stationing of a visiting missionary to Hermitage Bay. The latter was a strategic error, for if the single missionary provided had been stationed in Burgeo instead, he would have been able to build upon the migratory Methodism to the settlement, and to visit the Methodists who had migrated from Grand Bank and Fortune to such places on the western shore as Petites and Port aux Basques. The latter was aided by Nova Scotia Methodism through the presence of Halifax merchants.

The Church of England competed successfully against the Methodists on the south coast, an initiative considerably strengthened by the teachers of the Newfoundland School Society stationed there, and then invigorated by the organizational ability, effort, and personal supervision of Bishop Feild. Thus the Church of England provided solid ministry to the region from such centres as Harbour Breton, Hermitage Cove, Burgeo and

at Port aux Basques. Bishop Feild was able to supplant the Methodist effort at Hermitage Cove and Burgeo, and shrewdly took over the community church at Port aux Basques, shutting out the Methodists. It was only in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> that Methodists were able to regain a foothold in these settlements. Petites, composed almost completely of migratory Methodists from Grand Bank and Fortune, was an exception in opposing successfully the strategy of the Church of England. The Methodists remained strong in Fortune and Grand Bank, but migration westward was not sufficiently large for them to have the success they had in Notre Dame Bay. With the change toward Victorian respectability, however, Methodist preachers began to eschew the religion of ecstasy of their past and facilitate a new Methodism in Fortune and Grand Bank.

His Lordship says to his Clergy, 'Never mind what the people think nor say.' But we find that the people consider themselves authorized to think, say and do, and we cannot by any means prevent them. And it is altogether foolish to require them to contribute and allow them no power to think and speak. They will never put up with such things. They will leave the Church and build meeting houses.<sup>1</sup>

## Chapter Eleven:

## Conclusion

Methodism in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Newfoundland was a popular spiritual movement, expedited by the mobility of the population both in resettlement and in vocational pursuits. The dynamic of this voluntary movement was people reaching for spiritual ecstasy. The attainment of this desire, particularly in revivals, provided the energy and zeal which resulted in Methodism becoming a third dimension to the Newfoundland culture.

Newfoundland historiography has focused on the effects of Methodism on politics, particularly its involvement in the 1855 election because of its interest in education. The historiography of Methodism itself has concentrated on the administrative development of the movement with particular emphasis on its clergy, largely due to clergy writing about themselves. The clergy wrote the major portion of Methodist correspondence as required by the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Committee and their contribution was the focus of that correspondence. Later, as church historians, they used these observations, highlighting the role of clergy to such a degree that they were seen to be the impetus of

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<sup>1</sup>PANL MG 598 SPG A196, John Roberts to SPG Secretary, Bay de Verde, November 10, 1846.

the movement. Scholarship followed a similar path with a concentration on administration and a focus on 1815 as a turning point in the history of Methodism. The conceptual formula it used was that of Newfoundland as a desolate land of isolation and degeneracy, which was rescued by the organization and leadership of the clergy. The result has been a top-down historiography which has focused on the shell of Methodism.

It was not the increase in clergy and formation of a district in 1815, but the revival in 1829-1832 which turned central Conception Bay into the mainstay of Methodism that it became. For over a decade the new missionary recruits had laboured to little effect and blamed their lackluster results on the mobility of the population. When the revival came, the missionaries were more its followers than its leaders, for it was a popular movement which took place, not just in chapels, but in prayer and class meetings under lay leadership in many harbours and coves. The historiography has a misdirected emphasis since it has focused on the barrenness of the Harbour Grace and Carbonear region up to 1815, and ignored the major sector of Newfoundland Methodism during the same period to the north in such places as Lower Island Cove, Old Perlican and Bonavista.

The increase in missionaries and administrative framework had even less impact in Bonavista Bay, and still less in Notre Dame Bay. A couple of missionaries to Bonavista were impediments to a work which was quite capably led by such local leaders as the Saints and Cole. Again it was revivals which empowered the work at Bonavista, and even more so at Catalina and Bird Island Cove with the missionary only visiting occasionally. When the District Meeting finally sent a missionary to Greenspond in

Bonavista North in 1862, he was greeted by a popular revival already in progress. There were dramatic population swings to Methodism from the Church of England, most notably at Cape Freels, in a vernacular movement of spiritual earnestness and passion. The missionary joined in wherever he was able. So too, the foundation of Methodism was laid in Notre Dame Bay long before 1842 when the first missionary was stationed in Twillingate. By 1874 the popular religion of experience had encompassed the bay from the east to the west, Fogo alone excepted.

In both Bonavista Bay and Notre Dame Bay the Church of England had strong triangular spheres of authority and power centred in clergy, magistrate and merchant. They arose as one to fight against populist religion in such climactic public clashes as the battle of the flagstaff at Bonavista and the battle of the cemetery in Hart's Cove, Twillingate. In both widely-heralded and drawn-out contests, the powers that be had to withdraw from the field and the Methodists were able to claim that they won the day. In doing so they took a stand for an equal place in society.

The south coast benefitted somewhat from the 1815 expansion of Methodist effort even though it was often served by reluctant missionaries who regarded it as remote. The first missionaries had such little success at the beginning that they spoke of abandoning the effort. At Burin in Placentia Bay the social network of the Goddards became a conduit for John Lewis's preaching. Lewis encountered such extremes of both transhumance and Sabbath-breaking at Burin that he despaired for Methodism in the area. Burin was nearly emptied during the winter, and during the summer the people were

industriously carrying out a two-voyage fishery to Cape St. Mary's weekly which required them to work on Sunday. Although Grand Bank and Fortune was less affected by dual residency, it was not until 1848-1849 that a massive revival, which spilled over into Burin through the migratory fishermen, transformed the region into the Methodist religion of the heart, although there had been conversions and nominal Methodism up to that time.

Methodism spread into inner Placentia Bay and along the western shore not through missionary effort but through migratory Methodists who took up residence there. Their faith was maintained at such places as Sound Island, Flat Islands and Haystack in Placentia Bay by ardent lay ministries which received one visit annually, and sometimes not that, from the missionary at Burin. The absence of the strong lay service of William Harding from official Methodist records, for example, is illustrative of how little attention such ministries received. Were it not for his obituary, and more especially his diary, very little would be known of his life-long contribution to the Methodist cause.

The expansion of Methodism along the western shore from Grand Bank and Fortune to such places as Burgeo and Petites by migratory fishermen and resettlement echoes that of Bonavista Bay and Notre Dame Bay on the northeast coast. The account left by John Brewster of the 1849 revival among the Grand Bank and Fortune migratory fishermen and their virile expansion of the religion of the heart easterly to Burin and westerly to Petites stands out as the most prominent example of such in the Methodist record. Their schooners became floating "Bethels" as they carried their vernacular Methodism to the ports from which they fished.

The Methodist District Meeting was inept in serving the south coast. It finally sent a second missionary in 1839 but it settled on Hermitage Cove as the site of its second work. It would have been more effective to have focused on Burgeo or Petites which received Methodists from resettlement and from migratory fishermen. Moreover, in a second strategic error, its second missionary was abruptly recalled, and for questionable reasons, to keep Conception Bay supplied with a full complement of missionaries. This left the whole of the western shore vacant just as the Church of England was beginning to send both clergy and NSS lay readers into the area. Similarly, in Placentia Bay it was not the District Meeting, but John Brewster who took personal initiative and supplied a missionary to Sound Island in 1850, which the people had been requesting for decades. Charles and Martha Downes arrived just in time, for Bishops Spencer and Feild had determined to retake Placentia Bay for the Church of England with headquarters at Burin and Harbour Buffett.

How the 1815 clerical organization has been an impediment to the growth of Methodism has been overlooked. The exclusion of lay representation from the District Meeting pre-empted a voice from the core of the movement. The dynamic for the growth of Methodism was the people themselves, and the neophyte clergy arriving in Newfoundland with so little knowledge of the country could have benefitted much from the residents' wisdom and knowledge in making decisions at the annual gathering. For instance, locals may have more readily recommended natives as missionaries, increasing the supply. In addition, locals may have pointed out to the British missionaries their keen

desire to remain in Conception Bay and St. John's and their reluctance to expand the work along the south and northeast coasts. In this way they would have been able to work against the tendencies of the District Meeting to act as a professional guild and to provide for a more balanced distribution of missionary service to the district at large.

A change from the administrative conceptual framework of the study of Methodism began with the study of Coughlan and his converts, and a new focus on Methodism as a popular movement of religion of the heart. This thesis continues that study, particularly in the frontier areas of Newfoundland. Methodism did not just add another ecclesiastical institution, for it was primarily a vernacular religion, in which quenching a thirst for the experiential was the essential trait. How Methodism spread in Newfoundland as a popular movement is seen, for instance, in James Lumsden's account of a revival that began at Lee Bight and spread to Northern Bight, and elsewhere in Random Sound among those who had resettled from such places as Hant's Harbour, Old Perlican, and Grates Cove.<sup>2</sup> The missionary ignited the revival, preaching in his host's kitchen, and the people dispersed it among their neighbours.

The mobility of the population for wood, fish and seals facilitated the spread of Methodism. While a sealing schooner waited at Fox Harbour in Random Sound during the revival, one of the crew from Northern Bight returned to the schooner a converted

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<sup>2</sup>*Methodist Monthly Greeting*, May 1926, 5-6, "Early Methodism in Random and Smith's Sound" by J. Leawood; Wilfred B.W. Martin, *Random Island Pioneers* (St. John's: Creative Publishers, 1990); Patricia Small, *Harcourt: A Historical Profile* (St. John's: Jespersen Press, 1996), 8.

man. The crew on board were then converted so that as the schooner sailed north, it became "a floating Bethel" of Methodist prayer and praise, similar to Grand Bank schooners sailing west. Methodism in Newfoundland was a "Bethel" religion since the people found the presence of God not only clustered around chapel and clergy, but in their boats and on their flakes, and in their kitchens and winter tilts. The people themselves were missionaries as they sang and shared their spirituality with their friends and neighbours.

It was enthusiasm, a quest for ecstasy, which was the essence of this vernacular religion. This was its allure and its energy, whether on the south coast it was the people "melted into tears" in the small settlement of Haystack, Placentia Bay, in the 1820s; or the revival "as never was known" spreading along the western shore from Grand Bank and Fortune in 1848 with people proclaiming "We have got him by heart, too;" or whether on the northeast coast it was the "faces beaming with joy" in 1834; or the "transport of joy" in 1855 at Bonavista; or the "tears of joy" at Carbonear, or the person "happy in his love" at Ochre Pit Cove in the 1830-1831 Blackhead-Carbonear revival.<sup>3</sup> Neither did experiential salvation end with conversion. The Methodist view of sanctification was also one of experience, culminating in a state of "perfect love," which often had all the

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<sup>3</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 21, 1828-1831, William Wilson to WMM Committee, Burin, November 5, 1828; *Provincial Wesleyan*, November 17, 1849, "Notices of Newfoundland, No.10," J.B. [John Brewster]; PANL MG 597 WMMS, Reel 23, 1832-1835, William Ellis, Bonavista, August 12, 1834; *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, Vol. II, 1855, 654, 656, Thomas Smith, Bonavista, January 25, 1855; PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 21, 1828 - 1831, Richard Knight, Blackhead, June 25, 1830; Reel 22, 1831-1833, Adam Nightingale, Western Bay, April 27, 1831.

euphoria of conversion.

What role did environment played in Newfoundland Methodism? The most succinct formulation of the concept is that Methodism gave “a vision of man, not in relation to nature or the cruel land in which he lived, but in terms of God.”<sup>4</sup> There is little to substantiate this antithesis as the primary generator of Methodist spirituality. Methodism took root in multiple environments and societies throughout the United Kingdom, North America, the Carribean, and elsewhere. Secondly, while life in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Newfoundland could be harsh, as in North America in general, there is no evidence of a universal response to it as “the cruel land.” A cruel land, isolation, degeneracy, and rescue by Methodism has been fixed upon as the interpretative framework for understanding Newfoundland Methodism, following the lead of the *Newfoundland Royal Commission Report*, by McLintock, Batstone and Beardsall.

The *Commission Report* of 1933 had a vested interest in declaring moral failure in Newfoundland. It wanted to set up a British commission to prevent Newfoundland from defaulting on its debt, but economics alone was not deemed a sufficient reason to suspend democracy. It thus declared Newfoundland to be a degenerate society incapable of democracy. It proffered outport isolation and a severe environment as the primary cause of this deterioration of moral fibre. Newfoundland Methodist historians projected the alleged degraded character of the populace of the 1930s back to the 1800s. Thus moral rescue as an apologetic for Methodism in Newfoundland society became the dominant

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<sup>4</sup>Batstone, “Methodism in Newfoundland: A Study of its Social Impact,” 153, 148.

theme in the historiography. This is misguided, and masks more than it reveals. Newfoundland society was neither particularly isolated nor particularly immoral. Mobility, rather than isolation, was the marked feature of outport society. Furthermore, a relatively moral Church of England populace thirsting for a religion of experience provided the soil in which Methodism took root. Thus it was a popular spiritual movement, not a moral rescue administered by Methodist clergy. It was a free vision of God, in which inhabitants rejected the clerical enclosure of Church of England spirituality with its focus on the sacraments and its attendant assertion of clerical authority through apostolic succession. Thus to rephrase Batstone, Methodism was "a vision of man, not in relation to the mediation of clergy, but in terms of direct access to God."

As a result, Methodism in Newfoundland was not unique in its essence as a religion of the heart. It did have a few local nuances. The credit system interrupted the class-meeting method of raising finances by donating cash on a weekly basis. Although there were sources of cash in the outports, for example from sealing and from selling bait and lumber, there was less money in circulation than in the larger centres in Newfoundland and the rest of North America. This meant smaller donations for quarterly offerings and special projects, for example, missionary work. But demand exceeding supply was a common feature of Methodism, especially in its expansionist phase.

Transhumance, however, was an anomaly among Europeans in North America. It was a large factor in the spread of Methodism in Newfoundland, and it likely advanced local leadership since it led to a more independent way of living. People, separated from

clergy and chapel, shared their spiritual passion in their winter tilts, and were inspired by Methodists from other outposts who came as their neighbours for the winter. Thus the continual mobility, whether from resettlement or dual-residency of families, or from the men pursuing the cod fishery along the south coast and the seal fishery in the north, provided for an enhanced interchange of Methodist ideas, talent, and passion.

Methodism in Newfoundland had more Anglican trappings than elsewhere. Its clergy were called “parsons,” wore gowns, and possibly used Wesley’s *Abridgement* longer than in other parts of North America. However, it was continually informed by the Methodist press. Popular demand for, and use of, the writings of John Wesley and the *Methodist Magazine* and *Missionary Notices* is attested through the century.

By 1874 Methodism had achieved such growth in Newfoundland that it had become the way of life of a critical mass of the population. When the further growth of Methodism in the last quarter of the century is considered, and that members of the Salvation Army were Methodists reaching for the religious experience of a former time (not to speak of 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Pentecostals), the influence of Methodism is even more pronounced.<sup>5</sup> Methodism changed Newfoundland’s binary culture of the Church of England and Roman Catholicism and their entrenched opposition to each other, and added a third option. In doing so, it did far more than simply introduce another option. In adding, specifically, a third alternative it changed the dynamic of the culture from that of

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<sup>5</sup>Moyles, *The Salvation Army in Newfoundland Its History and Essence*, 42-43. It was also the Methodists who were fertile ground of Pentecostalism, Janes, “Floods Upon the Dry Ground: A History of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland, 72-76.

dualism to diversity. Methodism was founded on choice, a free association of individuals, a radical element in religion in Newfoundland. Even more than in Britain and the United States where there already was a variety of denominations, Methodism in Newfoundland did not just contribute to, but actually introduced the concept of “a pluralistic society” by its belief in religion as “a voluntary commitment by free individuals.”<sup>6</sup>

As a popular movement in spirituality, Methodism was particularly significant, given that the leaders of both Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism had turned those churches into thoroughly hierarchical organizations. Bishop Fleming changed Catholicism through ultramontanistism, and Bishop Feild the Church of England through Tractarianism. Both ideologies were centred on the church as an objective saving institution and on the clergy who granted access to God’s grace primarily through the sacraments. Tractarianism “tumbled down” the largely evangelical Church of England and its significant spiritual lay ministry, and set up a clerical sacramental system in which the people’s principal role was to defer, obey and receive. The congregation no longer had the opportunity to make a substantive contribution as agents of spirituality. In many respects the people were silenced, not even having permission to pray extemporaneously. The clergy elevated themselves as the dispensers of “the holy” and the people just shuffled their feet at the entrance to the chancel.<sup>7</sup> In doing so they handed the Methodists a separate identity differentiated from the Church of England.

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<sup>6</sup>Hempton, *The Religion of the People*, 157-158.

<sup>7</sup>Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, 67-68.

Methodism with its lay host exercising religious freedom, reaching for ecstasy, some praying, some exhorting, all speaking extemporaneously, was a distinct alternative. It was the people who constituted the indispensable role, since the sacred was not meted out to them by the clergy but came upon them directly. In this way people were given to realize that they had an access to the divine which was inviolable. No religious personage had the authority to position himself between them and God. They believed that as they exercised this freedom, gathering together in houses, schooners, and chapels, and took responsibility to pray, sing and exhort each other, they would experience the joy of union with the divine. Henry Lewis portrayed this well in his "How Methodism Came to Foxes." When the Anglican clergyman attempted to cow Peter Hudson into silence about God, Hudson refused to be intimidated: "Well, I have enjoyed religion these thirty years and more, and I know by experience that the love of God is shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto me." Having quoted the Bible, he then quoted one of Wesley's hymns, "'What we have felt and seen, With confidence we tell; and publish to the sons of men The signs infallible,'" and told the clergyman point-blank: "Neither priest, pope, nor parson can rob me of my conscience nor my religion. You can do as you please, and I will do the same."<sup>8</sup> His reply aptly demonstrated his conviction that as a fisherman and believer his religious knowledge was equal to or better than that of "his reverence." In this way a large portion of the Newfoundland population acquired the

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<sup>8</sup>Lewis, "How Methodism Came to Foxes," 64. Bible reference: Romans 5:5, KJV. Hymn reference: No. 96, "How can a sinner know his sins on earth forgiven?," in Wesley, *A Collection of Hymns for the use of the people called Methodists*.

confidence to speak, and not be silent, before their supposed betters. Therefore Newfoundland Methodism has given a religious perspective not in contrast to “nature or the cruel land” but in contrast to one of deference to the clergy as the sole deliverers of spirituality. Methodism in Newfoundland, even more than elsewhere in North America and in Britain, brought into existence a spiritual culture in which “the religion of the people no longer depended on clerical mediation.”<sup>9</sup> Through their religion Methodists, both men and women, appropriated an expansive freedom and responsibility in society, giving a third dimension to the culture of Newfoundland.

One wonders how early the effects of that freedom began to take effect in politics. There is a parallel with the freedom of Methodist spirituality and the opting for representative government in 1832. It may be significant that the Conception Bay revival of 1829-1832 culminated in the choice for representative government. While it is difficult to make a precise historical connection between the two, there is a correspondence of the opting for freedom of choice in both religion and politics.<sup>10</sup> The relationship may be more than being one in principle, and beyond being merely sequential. Keith Matthews maintained that the impetus for reform was limited to St. John's, and among a few recent immigrant reformers at that.<sup>11</sup> Patrick O'Flaherty, following Raymond Lahey's lead,

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<sup>9</sup>Hempton, *The Religion of the People*, 10.

<sup>10</sup>See Hempton on “Enlightenment and Enthusiasm,” *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, 32-54.

<sup>11</sup>Keith Matthews, “The Class of ‘32: St. John's Reformers on the Eve of Representative Government,” *Acadiensis* VI, 2 (Spring 1977).

however, drew attention to a large Irish Catholic population that was straining under both the political and religious yoke of the Church of England. O'Flaherty drew attention to major grievances during the economic depression following the Napoleonic wars.<sup>12</sup>

Lahey, however, focused on later Catholic grievances relating to government support for Church of England education, the Marriage Acts, and the exclusion of Catholics from the Legislative Council. He particularly noted accompanying Methodist grievance over being excluded from the Marriage Acts of 1817 and 1824.<sup>13</sup> The significantly enlarged and revived Methodists of Conception Bay chafed even more under the Church of England yoke. And they would have had an opportunity to hear and express the voice of freedom. Gerald Bannister drew attention to the creation of a "public sphere" through the press, which was accessible to the people not only in St. John's, but also in the outports.<sup>14</sup> This would be particularly so with the outports in Conception Bay. Thus, there was not only a harmony in the impetus for freedom in both religion and politics, but the Methodist religious revival in Conception Bay, and also in St. John's, may have contributed significantly to the indigenous voice for political reform.

It is also possible that the immense revivals in Grand Bank and Burin in 1848-

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<sup>12</sup>Lahey, "Religion and Politics in Newfoundland: The Antecedents of the General Election of 1832." Patrick O'Flaherty, "Seeds of Reform: Newfoundland, 1800-18," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 23, 3 (Fall 1988).

<sup>13</sup>Lahey, "Religion and Politics in Newfoundland: The Antecedents of the General Election of 1832," 10-18.

<sup>14</sup>Jerry Bannister, "The Campaign for Representative Government in Newfoundland 1807-1832," *Journal of Canadian Historical Association* 5 (1994).

1849 and in Conception Bay in 1854-1855 had an impact on the Methodist thrust for responsible government in 1855.<sup>15</sup> The latter revival received little attention, even in the Methodist press. The focus of the clergy was on the administrative linking of Newfoundland Methodists to the Conference of Eastern British North America. Yet far more important was the extensive revival which began in Conception Bay at Blackhead in 1854, nearly doubling the membership of the circuit from 274 to 504.<sup>16</sup> It was at the unusual time of the middle of August that "the Spirit of God appeared to be poured out at once on several parts of the Circuit." The local missionary involved himself by calling "a special meeting" where the revival first begun. It was the vernacular prayer meetings, and not missionary led services, which was the primary vehicle of the revival, although Addy is later given the credit for it.<sup>17</sup> How popular-led the revival was is indicated by the fact that people returned from their fishing locales at the height of the season to partake of it, and continued it after they returned to their fishing station:

Tidings of this good work soon reached our people who carry on the summer fishery on the other side of the Bay. These came to see for themselves when convictions seized several of them and some obtained pardon. On going back they held prayer meetings among themselves and the hearer of prayer came down with such power upon the people that for two days they could do nothing but go from house to house praying with the penitents. In this, several persons of all ages have

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<sup>15</sup>J.K. Hiller, "The 1855 Election in Bonavista Bay: An Anglican Perspective." *Newfoundland Studies* 5, 1 (Spring 1989), 70-76.

<sup>16</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 35, 1823-1855, Minutes of Newfoundland District Annual Meetings, 1854, 1855.

<sup>17</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, May 21, 1857.

been brought to God.<sup>18</sup>

The revival resulted in hundreds becoming “connected to God.” Addy, who had been in Newfoundland for two decades, and had witnessed revivals in Sheffield, his home town, and in other parts of the island, said he had never seen “deeper conviction of sin.” So earnest were people that they ceased all daily work and spent days and nights in “tears or agonizing prayer.” After receiving pardon for their sins their newfound joy was commensurate with their previous distress. In Addy’s judgement both the number of converts involved and the magnitude of their ecstasy made the revival “unprecedented” in Newfoundland.<sup>19</sup> A smaller, yet notable revival had also occurred at St. John’s, which Botterell attributed to a new seriousness from fear of death from cholera.<sup>20</sup>

In the *Wesleyan*, the missionaries of the circuits involved were given credit as the initiators of these “signal revivals,” which were seen as “identical in nature and results” with those of William Black and others of “the most successful ministers of Christ.”<sup>21</sup> In this way the clergy took credit for a revival in which they played an incidental role, sometimes helping, sometimes hindering the people as they gathered in their homes and chapel reaching for an ecstatic union with God. Often the missionary did neither as he

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<sup>18</sup>PANL MG 597 WMMS Reel 31, 1854-1867, John S. Addy to General Secretaries, Blackhead, April 11, 1855.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>UC Archive, WY 103, Box 1, “Newfoundland District Spiritual State Reports 1840-1857,” 1855.

<sup>21</sup>*Provincial Wesleyan*, June 21, 1855, “Newfoundland District.”

was not even present at many of the gatherings.

It is clear that for the people this revival, and a one of similar magnitude at Bonavista, were the news event of 1855, not the union of the District with the Conference of Eastern British America, nor the attaining of responsible government. Yet the press at large and the Methodist press in particular largely bypassed this major event of popular religion. The Methodist press showed that its clerical "leaders" were focused on yet another configuration for the administration of Methodism. Caught up with its structure, it is yet another example of how the clergy either ignored or forgot the people and their spiritual euphoria, and in this way focused on the shell instead of on the heart of the movement. It was vigour and zeal of revivals such as these that supplied Methodism in Newfoundland with its energy for the next half-century on both the south and northeast coasts.

At that time there were still tensions within Methodism, for instance, relating to the drinking of alcohol, the public ministry of women, and the popular desire for spiritual ecstasy. By 1874, however, these tensions were largely resolved. This came about through the identification of Methodism with the prevailing culture of Victorian respectability in which teetotalism, the leadership of men, material progress, and the supremacy of decorum became reigning values. The clergy provided leadership in this stuffed sofa of Victorian sentiment. But it was not only the clergy, especially in the larger centres. As a writer to the *Twillingate Sun* stated a decade later:

In those old revival meetings there was too much noise and uproar; all sensible and intelligent people now admit it, many of the ministers also stood by and

permitted the people to behave in a most improper manner in God's house. They restrained them not. Both people and ministers see their error now and are avoiding it.<sup>22</sup>

The chapel phase of Methodism with its Gothic or other "monumental" architecture housed a religion replete with civility, refinement and decorum. The clergy and their train of male leadership determined what was proper in spirituality and fashioned the visage of Methodism into a remarkable likeness of the prevailing culture. Women sought an outlet for their ministry in voluntary societies, but gone were the days of Rebecca Taylor and Mary Anne Pelley. Gone, too, was that "ecstasy" of Methodism from the chapels of most communities. It could no longer be found, except when people turned their kitchens, tilts, and decks of schooners into "Bethels" of God's presence.

The rise of respectability within Methodism despised this popular religion, not wanting to be associated with the way of life of the fishermen, nor with their way of religion. What cannot be denied, however, is that just as the economy of the country depended on seal oil and saltfish, sweet-smelling to some and odorous to others, so Methodism expanded by the passion and ardour of fishermen and their families, especially in revivals. It was this experience of the heart that fueled a lay army of class leaders, lay readers, local preachers, exhorters, and Sunday-school teachers who in just over a century built Methodism to such a degree that it gave a third dimension to the culture of Newfoundland - one in which deference gave way to self-assurance.

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<sup>22</sup>*Twillingate Sun*, November 3, 1888.

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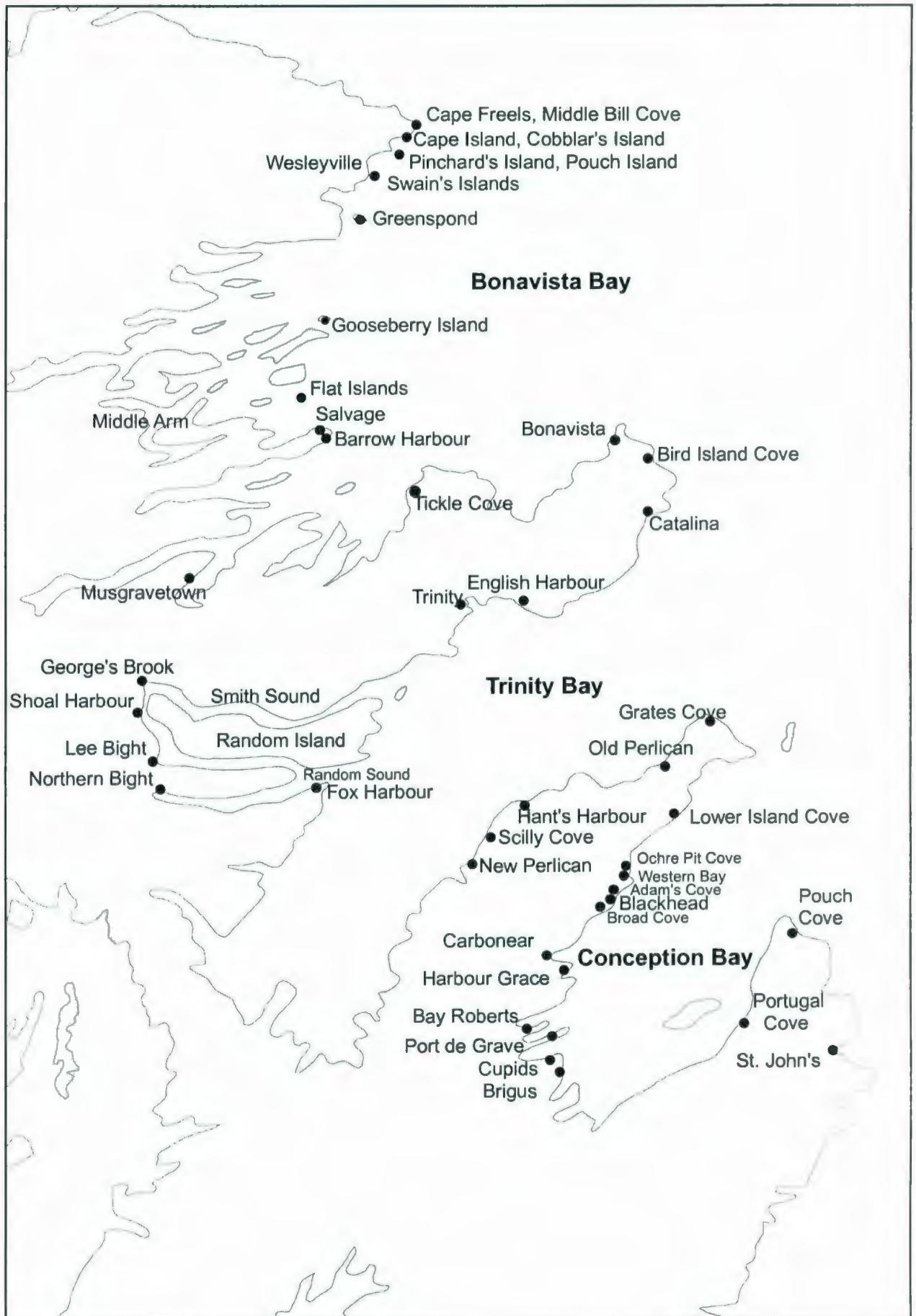
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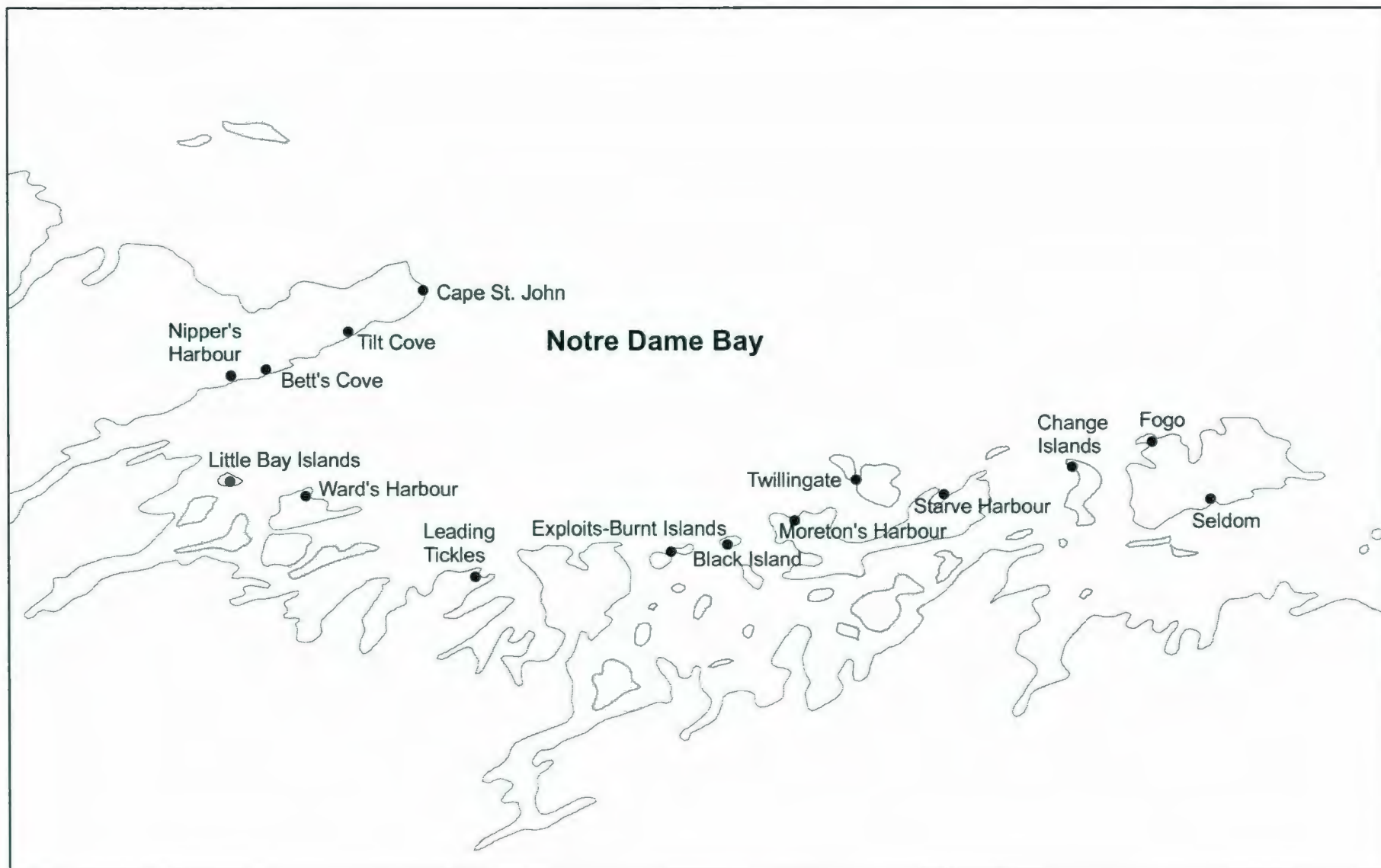
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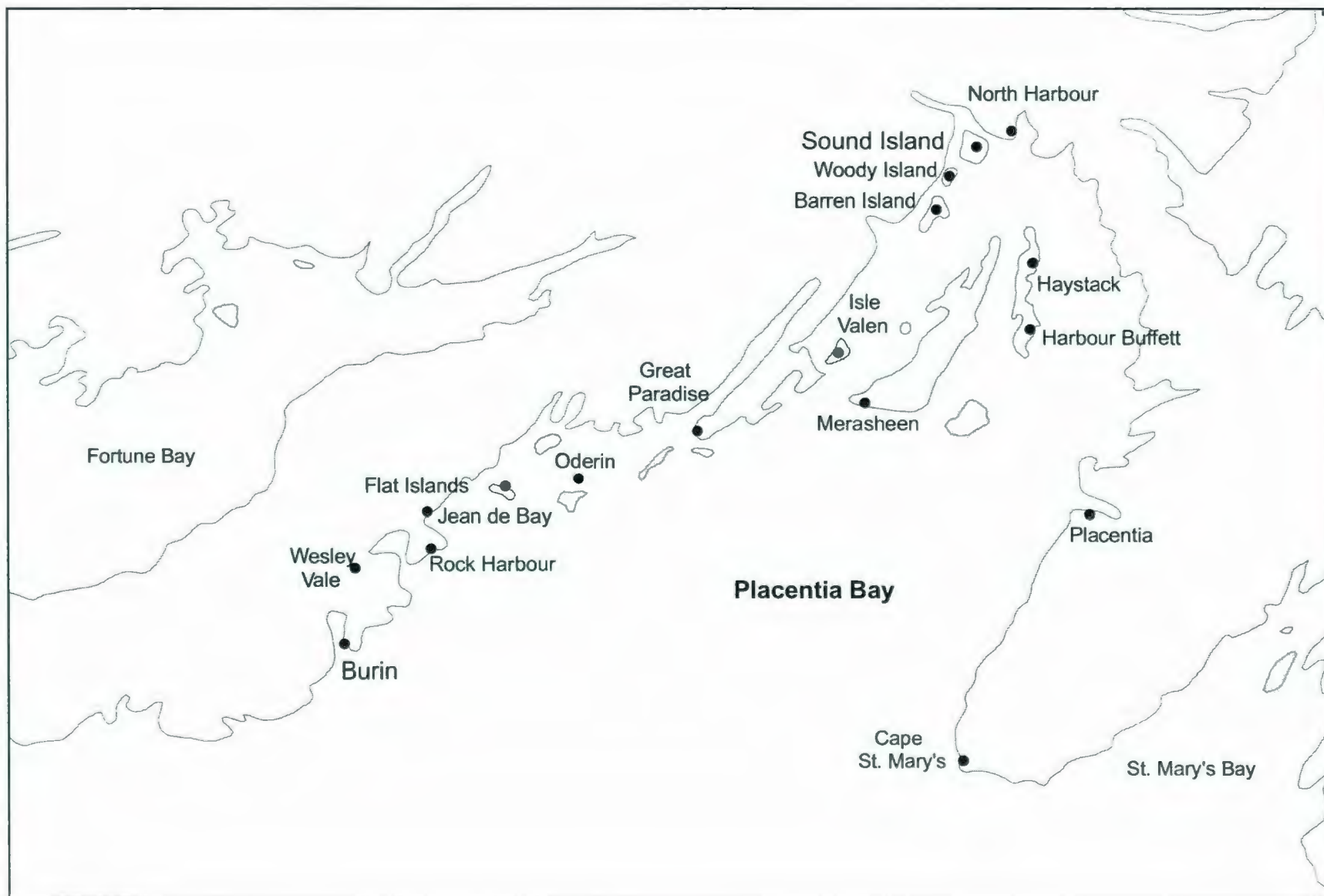
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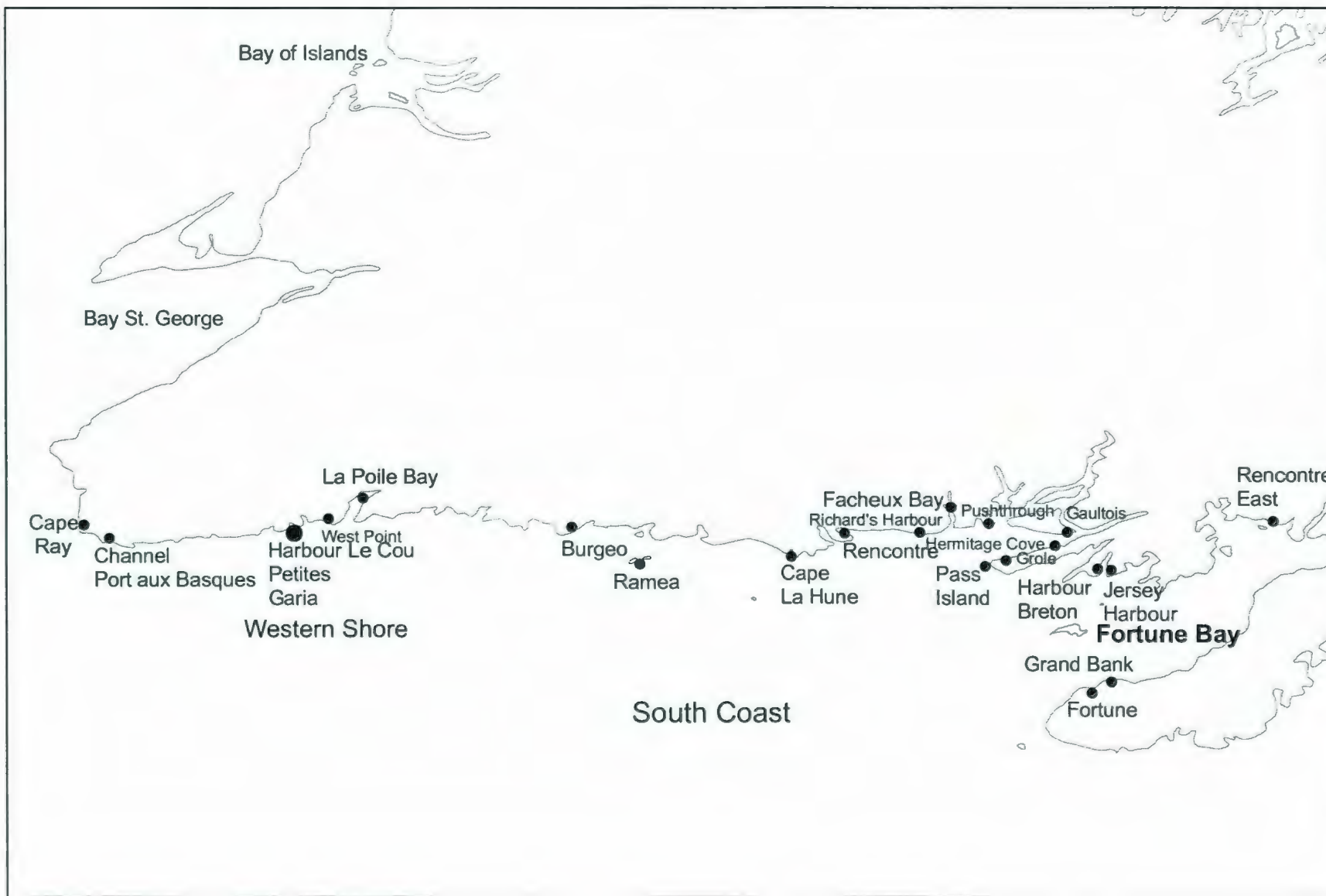




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