Swept into the Abyss: A Family History of Cornish Methodism, Missionary Networks and the British Empire, 1789-1885

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of History in the Graduate School of Duke University

2012
ABSTRACT

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Abstract

On Christmas Day in 1788, on the eve of a year which was to see the entire Atlantic world once more convulsed with revolution and war, a struggling farmer and occasional fisherman from the village of Mousehole in western Cornwall turned his back on the sea. William Carvosso had never found maritime life to his liking, and for some time been looking for an opportunity to, in his words, support himself and his family “wholly on the land.” So when that opportunity finally did arise Carvosso was quick to move his young family to a rented farm near the inland village of Ponsanooth. With a little capital and zealous stewardship Carvosso began to thrive in his new home. The move, which at first glance seemed to take the family from cosmopolitan littoral to parochial isolation, was actually the first step of an intergenerational journey that saw Carvosso’s children and grandchildren witness convict hangings in Van Diemen’s Land, the Tai-ping Rebellion in Shanghai, Blackfoot and Plains Cree horse raids on the Great Plains, and the trafficking of indentured labor from India to the Caribbean. The vehicle which transported the Carvossos about the globe – and which facilitated their rise as a family from the laboring classes to the lower reaches of respectability and beyond – was the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion and its ancillary Missionary Society. The following dissertation is concerned with the Carvossos’ movements, and the ideology by which they encouraged, made sense of, and justified their imperial adventures.
To my parents. Thank you.
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A gloomy cloud of infidelity chilled me. There was a pause – all was dark and silent – God seemed inexorable: I was just sinking when a sound broke from the highest heavens on my ear, as if Jesus himself spoke in an audible voice across the gloomy profound, – “ARE NOT FIVE SPARROWS SOLD FOR TWO FARTHINGS, AND NOT ONE OF THEM IS FORGOTTED? FEAR NOT, THOU ART OF MORE VALUE THAN MANY SPARROWS!! The effect was electrical. I was in a moment overwhelmed… Oh! The unutterable bliss of that hour! All the clouds, shades, and films of modern Atheism were swept into the abyss of love. All the struggle was sanctified.

Benjamin Carvosso, 1854
1. Introduction

On Christmas Day in 1788, on the eve of a year which was to see the entire Atlantic world once more convulsed with revolution and war, a struggling farmer and occasional fisherman from the village of Mousehole in western Cornwall turned his back on the sea. William Carvosso had never found maritime life to his liking, and for some time been looking for an opportunity to, in his words, support himself and his family "wholly on the land." So when that opportunity finally did arise Carvosso was quick to move his young family to a rented farm near the village of Ponsanooth. This new home was in the parish of St. Gluvial and, with a little capital and zealous stewardship, Carvosso began to thrive. The move, which at first glance seemed to take the family from cosmopolitan littoral to parochial isolation, was actually the first step of an intergenerational journey that saw Carvosso’s children and grandchildren witness convict hangings in Van Diemen’s Land, the Tai-ping Rebellion in Shanghai, Blackfoot and Plains Cree horse raids on the Great Plains, and the trafficking of indentured labor from India to the Caribbean. The vehicle which transported the Carvossos about the globe – and which facilitated their rise as a family from the laboring classes to the lower reaches of respectability and beyond – was the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion and its

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2 Carvosso, The Efficacy, 39.
ancillary Missionary Society. The following dissertation is concerned with the Carvossos’ movements, and the ideology by which they encouraged, made sense of, and justified their imperial adventures.

This is not so much a family history or biography, however, as it is a study of the relations between revivalist evangelicalism and the British Empire in the first half of the long nineteenth century. As middling Methodist provincials, the Carvossos were driven by different motivations than the political and bureaucratic decision-makers most frequently studied by historians of the British Empire. What they provide us with is an outstanding example of how unofficial systems of exchange and mobility cut across the political, social, and cultural units used by metropolitan theorists to organize the Empire’s vast expanse. The managerial logic which divided the territory geographically by region, and chronologically by administrations, failed to account for the manner in which people, commodities, and ideas actually moved about. And families like the Carvossos allow us to attend to not just the empire and the nation, but the provincial, the local, and the global as well. I will briefly address four of the historiographical revaluations the Carvossos required of me during my research, and how those in turn have shaped my reconstruction of their world.

1.1 Mission History as Provincial History

As an undergraduate and master’s degree student at the University of Manitoba I was preoccupied with a nineteenth-century millenarian movement among the James
Bay Cree of what is now subarctic Northern Ontario and Manitoba. I imagined that movement primarily as an act of subaltern resistance against the forces of British imperialism in particular and Atlantic capitalism in general. As a PhD student at Duke University I began following the networks which connected the Cree to the band of British Wesleyan missionaries whose arrival coincided with the religious ferment. But I did not end up where I expected. Instead of the London of gentlemanly capitalism and the official mind of empire, I found myself in a provincial Methodist community bursting with reformist energies and global ambitions.³

Robert Rundle, one of those missionaries, had led me to western Cornwall and his grandfather William Carvosso. And in my efforts to understand the relations of the Protestant missionary project to the British Empire I have been returning to both that place and that individual ever since. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries Cornwall was stubbornly resistant to the claims of the British State to tax trade, the English Church to collect tithes, and Metropolitan Wesleyans to control local

Methodist practices. One could go so far as to characterize the county as a colonial space in its own right, and it certainly had a reputation in England for barbarism and savagery.  It also had a reputation as a hotbed of a riotous, revivalist Methodism. In the period between the death of Wesley in 1791, and a massive schism in the early 1850s, Cornwall was one of the chief battlegrounds of a fractious struggle for control of the conference between metropolitan bureaucrats and lay-enthusiasts. It was the Carvossos participation in this contentious Methodism which provided both the means by which they travelled about the Empire, and the mode through which they imagined it. And this necessitates close attention to the issue of provincialism.

The Carvossos were members of a community that operated with little regard to the expectations of Wesleyan elites or the functionaries of the Imperial government. Their example made it clear to me that just as Methodism was primarily a provincial

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phenomenon in Britain, so to was a great deal of British missionary activity – both official and unofficial. Missionaries like the Carvossos were often as self-confidently intransigent towards state officials, metropolitan administrators, and Church of England competitors out in the Empire, as they were to the same class of people when at home in Britain. And not only that, they frequently fraternized and identified more strongly with the ruled then the ruler. This meant it became problematic to organize Cree reactions to Methodist missionaries into the efficient binary of colonial subaltern and metropolitan imperialist because at least one element of that pair was radically fractured.

As a consequence I found myself inclined to rethink my assumptions that imperial history could best be understood as a projection of metropolitan power into the colonies. I began to imagine it instead as a field which could be understood in terms of networks, or circuits of movement, which did not all originate in, or even intersect with, London. Provincial missionaries and their families and friends could operate independently, and even in opposition to, metropolitan power. I was, at least in the case of Cornwall, forced by my subjects to reconsider mission history not simply as a subset of imperial history, but a form of provincial.

1.2 Provincial History as Imperial History

And provincial history in turn, was no longer the quiet, even boring, country cousin of the national, but could be recalibrated as imperial. The centrality of the city of
London to accounts of the Empire has often diminished the complexity of British history, and the various relations of its constituent parts to imperial history. That Whitehall and the City exert a substantial influence on historians of the Empire is not surprising, given both their disproportionate political and economic power, and the vast, well-organized, and accessible body of official documents that have been produced, collected, and organized in their archives. With the significant exception of Catherine Hall’s study of the mid-nineteenth connections linking Birmingham to Jamaica, the tendency in the historiography of the Empire is for London to either stand in for the nation, or for England to be represented as a largely undifferentiated whole.6

But as I have already suggested in the pursuit of the Carvossos as imperial careerists it is impossible to avoid the issue of their Cornishness.7 My point is not that

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7 The history of Scotland and the British Empire is a burgeoning industry at the moment, and Irish historians have certainly been thinking about the empire for some time, and now even Wales has a book, but the various provinces have yet to produce their own imperial historians. See H.V. Bowen, ed., Wales and the British Overseas Empire: Interactions and Influences, 1650 -1830, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012); Esther Breitenbach, Empire and Scottish Society: The Impact of Foreign Missions at Home, 1790 to 1914 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009); Nicholas Canny, Making Ireland British: 1580-1650 (Oxford University Press, 2001); Thomas Devine, Scotland’s Empire: 1600-1815 (London: Penguin Books, 2004);
there is some essential or fixed Cornish identity that stands in automatic opposition to
the English, and which was exported wholesale to the colonies, or necessarily in conflict
with metropolitan authority – quite the contrary. The very construction of Cornishness
was shaped by the impact on local conditions of imperial politics, colonial adventures,
transatlantic evangelical culture, and an increasingly global economy, as well as
domestic or national exigencies.

Cornwall’s location, at the end of the long claw of land pointing across the
Atlantic to the Caribbean has meant it has occupied a position not only on the periphery
of national history, but in the very midst of the flows of capital, commodities and people
that connected Britain to its Empire. Tea, sugar, tobacco, timber, textiles and brandy
were illicitly landed on or gathered from Cornish beaches by the locals, America was
known as the next parish over, and the Cornish were such enthusiasts for migration that
by the end of the nineteenth century there was actual population decline in the western
part of the county.

The Cornish newspapers were filled with news from the colonies, and
advertisements for cheap colonial goods and cheap berths abroad. Cornish popular
culture is filled with anecdotes that illustrate the contrast between their reputation with

Michael Fry, The Scottish Empire (Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd, 2001); Stephen Howe, Ireland and Empire: Colonial
legacies in Irish History and Culture (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2002); Keith Jeffrey, ed. “An Irish
Empire?”: Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996).
the English as backward pre-modern primitives, and their actual experiences as participants in the imperial economy. Such as the story of the old Cornish miner, long returned from the mines of South Australia who told an English tourist boasting of his worldliness that “If you haven’t been to Moonta, you haven’t travelled.” For many of the Cornish the empire, the colonies, and the former colonies, were all as critical to their sense of self and history as were the other parts of Britain.

For Cornish Methodists this was even more the case, for they imagined themselves as members of a universal rather than a national church. The Carvossos’ global journeys were driven not by English expansiveness, but that of transatlantic religious revival. Missionaries and migrants carried the discursive and ritual practices of an aggressively evangelical Methodism from province to colony and back again, even as schism and factionalism were shattering the national and imperial unities of British Wesleyanism. Provincial Methodism, so often isolated in local histories, was part of a movement that did not simply expand from a national center with the British Empire after the Napoleonic Wars. It had originated on the margins of respectable society and rapidly exceeded the official boundaries of the imperial state. Having only just been carried to Cornish and Mancunian archives by Robert Rundle, I was propelled by his

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8 Moonta is, or was, a mining town in South Australia. Philip Payton, The Cornish Overseas, (Fowey: Cornwall Editions, 2005), 16.
Uncle Benjamin Carvosso, and his cousins Joseph, Baker, David and Louisa, back out to the farthest reaches of British influence.

1.3 Imperial History as Local History

The third shift in in historiographical perspective I am concerned with here was determined by surprising indifference of the Carvossos to the role of metropolitan power in the constitution of the Empire. That the massive political, cultural, and economic bulk of London played a minor role in their various narratives did not mean that it was without effect. Yet for the most part the Carvossos lived among people who were unlikely to have anything to do with the empyrean heights of British parliament, the Queen’s audience chamber, and London banks. Imperial history belongs where ever we find it, be that the muskeg of the Hudson Bay Lowlands, the fishing and mining villages of western Cornwall, the pastoral landscapes of New South Wales, or in the backwoods of Van Diemen’s Land. However distant the hand that pulls the bureaucratic levers, writes the warrants, and dispatches the troops, imperial power is manifested in the arrangement and rearrangement of local relationships, and so it was these local relationships to which I attended to as best I could.9

I have tried very hard to always emphasize the continuity of relations between the missionaries and these various local communities. They did not simply travel back and forth between two worlds – like a diver who is either above the water’s surface or below it – but remained at all times participants in a variety of local if scattered, networks. Letters and other personal and professional communiques; books, newspaper and magazine articles; visitors and travelers; colleagues returning to the field or leaving it; these all ensured the Carvossos remained entangled in the histories of Cornwall, England, and the wider evangelical world, even when they felt most isolated. And not only did those modes of communication draw their colonial contacts into metropolitan social circuits, and vice versa, they ultimately spilled across the official boundaries of the British Empire.

The analysis of the Carvossos transimperial and transnational evangelical social field is a project that can too easily be constrained by religious and theological categories, by the institutional and bureaucratic jealousies of missionary societies and churches, and by the organization of imperial and colonial governance, all of which

make of the missionaries a special case. Rather than imagining the missionary as an idealized type, or a the cutting edge of imperialist or colonial power, or even as someone who occupies a liminal or marginal space between social worlds, my project has been to follow these men and women in and out of official archives, and into the world they were purporting to reform, and which gave them their living. I have, in short, attempted to discover that social world in which they actually lived.

1.4 Local History as Global History

Most studies of missions and empire have focused on a single mission field – Jeffery Cox on India, the Comaroffs on the Tswana, and Hall on Jamaica – but the Carvossos provide us with an opportunity to engage a number of such fields. We can see their interactions not just across a single cultural or social frontier, but with a wide

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variety of people: miners, fishermen, smugglers, fellow ministers, and an emerging middle class in Cornwall; convicts, free settlers, government officials, and Aboriginals in the Antipodes; fur traders, voyageurs, adventurers, other missionaries, and a proliferation of First Nations and Métis peoples in British North America. One of the results of mapping out the relations between the Carvossos and all these various populations subject to the rule of the British Crown is that it becomes clear the conceptual and social barriers and distinctions which divide them all from each other – and indeed from the Carvossos – are by no means fixed but in a state of constant negotiation.

At first glance such an observation may seem unremarkable, since the missionary has the express purpose, after all, of trying to convince people to exchange one particular label and set of practices, for another. That conflict in the colonies can be parsed out into a contest between the colonized and the colonizer, and that the missionary tried to stand in the middle of this conflict, is a simple and fundamental historical fact. But the sheer volume and variety of identities up for grabs in the Carvossos’ world complicates such a view of the situation. They are by turn missionaries (both lay and professional); settlers; colonial functionaries; rebels and dissidents; social activists and reformers; and apologists for British imperialism. Like all missionaries the Carvossos inevitably formed social, economic, and political ties to other members of the communities in which they moved, and like many they had an eye
towards business and marital opportunities, and the possibility of permanent settlement. The range of their engagements with a multiplicity of colonial and metropolitan groups helps us see that the missionaries were not merely the thin end of the imperial wedge, nor were they simply gatekeepers and border guards. They were active participants in a whole variety of local histories, even as they participated in a self-consciously global project to unite all of humanity into a single body of Christian believers.

1.5 A Multi-Racial and Christian Commonwealth

The breadth and complexity of the nineteenth-century networks in which the Carvossos were members is not likely to surprise anyone familiar with the recent historiography of the British Empire. Nor is the claim that the analysis of such networks can help us better understand how ideas about race and the colonial frontier changed in that century going to strike anyone as particularly provocative or new.

There is a tendency in existing studies however, to frame global networks and discursive

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shifts on the grand scale; to look for the emergence of dominant, or even hegemonic, systems of racial or racist discourse. This particular study is not directly concerned with the arenas in which such macro-historical forces as an emergent biological essentialism and a declining Enlightenment humanism do battle over the global future – although it depends heavily on, and is informed by the debates on such issues. What I am interested in here are the ideological productions occurring in the corners, cracks, and crevasses of British imperial history, but which are connected to each other nonetheless. My subjects are for the most part messengers from distant provinces, actors from places that seem peripheral to those metropolitan players who spend their days striding purposefully about the corridors of power. Even when they had escaped England to the colonies and mission fields they were often persecuted and bullied by those with closer ties to the state. They belong to what the Comaroffs, quoting Bourdieu, have called “the dominated fraction of the dominating class.”

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The British Empire was of course fraught with conflict, but by viewing it via the circumnavigations of a single family over three generations, we can begin to see the magnificent, fractured complexity of the tensions that ran through it. The Carvossos interests often cut across, or avoided altogether, the straight-forward polarities of colonized and colonizer, metropole and colony, European and Native. Such polarities, which are so easy to pick out when one views imperial history from the perspective of either the official archives, or a single colonial location, are certainly not false – quite the opposite. Their value as explanatory devices is what has made them attractive to both the participants of British imperial history and to later historians and anthropologists. But they do not illuminate anything like the whole picture of the past. The experience the Carvossos had of human difference depended on polarities of its own – the saved and the damned, heathen and Christian, world and church – and was articulated in a language determined by the Carvossos’ membership in an international or transnational evangelical community.

The presence of that community in any particular site might range from minute (Rundle in Rupert’s Land and Louisa and Henry Reeves in Shanghai), to significant (Benjamin Carvosso in New South Wales), to overwhelming (William Carvosso in Cornwall and his grandsons in Australia). But it was always embedded in social, economic, and political contexts that are local, even as missionary and evangelical networks provided it with connections to more distant places. By tracing the Carvossos’
movements across geopolitical and analytic boundaries we can see how these presences were nodes of a densely woven global network that was not entirely coextensive with the British Empire, but rather exceeded it. The Carvossos were inhabitants of a social world that could not be constrained by the bureaucrats and politicians of Whitehall; by the autocratic ministers who controlled the metropolitan institutions of the Wesleyan Methodism; by subconsuls and colonial governors; by theological and denominational designations; or even entirely by the categories of race, class, and gender. The Comaroffs once described the nineteenth-century missionary goal of transforming the world into a multi-racial and Christian commonwealth as a dream. Working as they did in South Africa, and paying such close to attention to local particularities and unidirectional colonial interventions, they could scarcely describe it otherwise. But the Carvossos show us, with their restless movement about, and occasionally beyond the British Empire, through their small acts of resistance against institutional and state control, and in their journals, correspondence, and publications, that there was a sizeable population of people who lived just as if such a commonwealth already existed, and in so doing they made it so.

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14 Comaroffs, Of Revelation and Revolution, Vol. 1, 32.
1.6 Chapter Outline

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries Cornwall was not infrequently represented by outsiders (and some insiders) as savage place not entirely English. It was also a site of intense resource extraction, and a crossroads of imperial, and indeed global traffic. In many ways its was a colonial situation, and certainly in generic histories of Methodism its role is as often as a place to which missionaries went, as it was from whence they came. Yet it is also a place in which Methodism, and even Christianity, was made. The second chapter is a biographical sketch of William Carvosso in which the complexities of Methodism’s relations to its Cornish and national contexts are explored. In particular the way it acted as both a solvent on existent cultural, social, and political practices in the county, and an agent in the construction of new ones.

The third chapter follows the export of these processes to the colonies. In the 1820s the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS) was invited to the penal colony of New South Wales by a handful of free settlers. The first wave of missionaries included William’s son Benjamin, and Benjamin’s friend, colleague and fellow Cornish revivalist Walter Lawry. They immediately launched themselves into an effort to reproduce in the colony the same pentecostal energies that were invigorating Cornish
Methodism. They clashed repeatedly with the WMMS secretaries in London who thought their methods too aggressive. Lawry was eventually recalled to England, and Carvosso transferred to Van Diemen’s Land.

At the heart of their conflict with the WMMS secretaries was the young missionaries’ attitude to the authority of the Church of England in the colony, and their willingness to challenge its sacramental monopoly. This chapter is concerned with the efforts of Lawry and Carvosso to instigate a spiritual revival that would transform all the peoples of the antipodes into a single Christian body. This vision of the potentialities of colonial Christianity stands in stark contrast to that of the colonial chaplain Samuel Marsden. Marsden, a member of the Anglican Evangelical party, had a very different idea of what constituted a properly pious and peaceful Christian Empire than did the Methodist mission’s “Cornish Brethren.” Marsden’s Empire was predicated on the authority of the state church, a paternalistic rule of law, and a hierarchical social organization – the very things against which so many Methodists at

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15 Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001). Here, and throughout this text, I will be using the term “pentecostal” to describe the claim that God, or more specifically the Holy Spirit, continues to act in history through the medium of individuals, congregations and communities. I do not mean by it the Pentecostal or Holiness movements of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but something more like what Grant Wacker has described as a pentecostal culture or temperament which preceded formal institutions and theology.

home, Cornish and otherwise, had for so long been struggling to maintain their autonomy.

In the fourth chapter we follow Benjamin Carvosso to Van Diemen’s Land where he came under the influence of another powerful Evangelical. He arrived in the colony just as the Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur was attempting to rationalize colonial rule on the island. Together with the Church of England chaplain William Bedford, Carvosso became involved with the numerous societies and committees which sought to reform Vandemonian society. Although he was never drawn into open conflict with other evangelicals in the colony, Carvosso’s inclusive revivalism can again be seen as quite different from the racial, gendered, and legal delineations with which both Arthur and Bedford sought to divide the island’s inhabitants from each other. This fourth chapter is concerned with relations of these two types of evangelical ideology to the emergence of a formal colonial bureaucracy on the island.

In the 1840s Robert Rundle, William Carvosso’s grandson and Benjamin’s nephew, was one of the first generation of missionaries to receive formal training at the brand new Wesleyan college near London. Despite being an early example of the professionalized Methodist missionary he was unprepared for the complexities he found waiting for him in Rupert’s Land. Rundle and his colleagues soon found themselves in conflict with the fur trade elite, despite having been invited there by the Hudson’s Bay Company, a corporation which ostensibly ruled the territory.
The fifth chapter is concerned with how the missionaries’ efforts to transform the whole of fur trade society into a pious Christian society led to confrontations with Governor George Simpson and his lieutenants, and ultimately the dissolution of the English mission. Rundle’s sojourn in Rupert’s Land was characterized by his itinerant revivalism, his willingness to teach literacy, and the promise of metropolitan connections, did attract some interest from locals. Especially those people alienated from both the fur trade economy of the parkland and subarctic, and the buffalo and horse economy of the plains. Through an examination of Rundle’s relationship with a Cree band leader named Maskepetoon, this chapter examines the variety of imperialist interests and ideologies against which Methodism could potentially be deployed by those seeking to establish a new way of life in the territory.

On his return to Cornwall Rundle found British Methodism in turmoil. Rundle’s Uncle Benjamin Carvosso, Walter Lawry, and other Cornish ministers such as family friend Samuel Dunn, continued to justify revivalist practices in the face of Conference disapproval, even as the conflict between the supporters of lay leadership and those of the professionalization and centralization heated up. By the 1850s the Conference had been shattered by schism and Benjamin’s three sons left England for the new settler colonies being established in Australia – the continent on which they had been born. Like their sister, who had married a Church of England missionary to Shanghai, they did not have professional affiliations with the WMMS, but remained committed to the
idea of a multiracial Christian commonwealth. The elder two, Baker Banks and Joseph Hobart Carvosso, quickly established themselves in the vigorous colonial Methodist community. This period was a golden age of Methodism in Australia, and coincided with mass migration from Cornwall. Many thousands of miners and farmers left England for the gold fields, cheap land, and perceived freedoms of the southern colonies. As a consequence of their departures Cornwall’s rough revivalism was finally tamed by the metropolitan ministers. And in Australia the Rev. Marsden’s vision of Empire in the Antipodes began to lose ground to its nonconformist competition. This last chapter is concerned with those two reversals.

1.7 Some Brief Comments on Methodism and Methodist Theology

The early history of Methodism is well known.\textsuperscript{17} It began as a society of students at Oxford in the 1720s. The young men were inspired by the writings of Anglican divines to begin practicing the pieties despised by their more worldly contemporaries.\textsuperscript{18} Mocked for their measured and gentle asceticism as “Methodists,” two of their number, the brothers John and Charles Wesley, went on to found what they called a “connexion.” This connexion was a network of voluntary religious societies scattered through out


England, the British Empire, and ultimately beyond, which accepted Wesleyan leadership, rules, and standards. The members of these societies would meet together outside of regular church hours to pray, talk, and sing about the problems of pious living. The Wesleys established these communities by travelling about and preaching: sometimes in friendly parish churches, sometimes in private homes, and sometimes in the open air. Often they sought out those populations that the traditional parish organization of the English church had failed to accommodate. It was amongst such populations that they had their greatest success.

Much to their dismay the Wesleys inspired mistrust and hostility among members of their own class. In part this antagonism was because of their “enthusiasm,” and that of the plebeian crowds who flocked to hear them. This was a very different sort of Christianity than the clear-eyed rationality and pragmatism typical of the clergy at the time. And in part the hostility was because their itinerant wanderings seemed to challenge the established geo-political organization of the Church into parishes. The Wesleys, who imagined themselves as High Church Tories, tried to depoliticize their revival as much as possible, but it was very difficult to do so in a society and culture in which Church of England was identified so closely with the state.\(^{19}\) It was during this

\(^{19}\) On John Wesley’s struggle to prove his political respectability see J.C.D. Clarke, *English Society*, 285-295.
period when Britain was in the middle of its long transition from a confessional state, to one in which religious practice was primarily a matter of voluntary choice, and Wesleyanism had an important role to play in this process.

In its initial stages Methodism occupied a middle ground between a Church deemed too worldly, and Dissent. Protestant dissenters had achieved a degree of religious liberty in England since the Act of Toleration in 1689, but they were still constrained by some key legal limitations. The various religious dissidents – Baptists, Independents, Presbyterians, and Quakers – were permitted the freedom to worship as they pleased. But the cost of that freedom was varying degrees of exclusion from public office and the compromise was a relatively peaceful one. Isaac Watt’s described Dissent as “a garden wall’d around/Chosen and made peculiar ground/A little spot enclosed by grace/Out of the world’s wide wilderness.” But the early Wesleyans were


21 Jeffrey Cox, The British Missionary Enterprise since 1700 (New York: Routledge, 2008), 22-51. See also R. Po-Chia Hsia Social Discipline in the Reformation: Central Europe, 150-1750 (New York: Routledge, 1989). In the settlements that followed the bloody conflicts of the Reformation the religious practices of the people had become a matter of intense interest to social and political elites in Europe. When Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, and the Protestant princes agreed to the Peace of Augsburg in 1530 it was famously determined that “cuius region, eius religio” (“his the realm, his the religion”). The principle of secular sovereignty over the Church was determined in legal language and so began the so-called “Age of Confessionalism.” “Confessionalism” was the process by which religious ideologies and institutions were constructed in conjunction with the consolidation of the early modern state.

22 Clarke, English Society, 64.

uninterested in joining that cloistered retreat. They imagined their voluntary societies not as refuges from the world, but as avenues to it. The Wesleys hoped to bring the people of England closer to their Church, and by doing so to reinvigorate and revitalize what they perceived to be the spiritual desert of Georgian England. Nonetheless by the time of John Wesley’s death in 1791 his connexion and its innumerable societies were well the way to becoming a separate and independent denomination.

The first Wesleyan societies had been established in 1738 simply as a haven for anyone “who wished to flee from the wrath to come.” The earliest requirements for membership included little more than regular attendance and frank honesty about personal triumphs and tribulations. As the societies spread Wesley extended the rules to include attendance at church services, the regular practice of private praying and fasting, and the eschewal of a wide range of popular social sins. Each society was part of a circuit managed by an itinerant minister or travelling preacher who was assigned to it for a term of generally not more than three years. That minster’s living was paid for not by a central institution, but by the community of Methodists to whom he preached. It was the local Methodists who were also responsible for the rent of the rooms in which


they met, and the expense of building chapels. The minister was assisted by local
preachers, class leaders, and stewards with whom he would meet at a quarterly circuit
conference. There was also the annual conference in which all the travelling ministers
would participate and debate matters of ecclesiological and theological policy. While
Wesley was still alive this ministerial conference was a non-voting affair, and after his
death it became one of the battlegrounds of the power struggle between the advocates of
lay autonomy and the proponents of conference control.

Along with circuit-itinerancy, and all its attendant meetings and conferences, the
chief ecclesiological innovation of Wesleyanism was the class-meeting. Class-meetings
first emerged as a lay response to the expense for ministers’ upkeep and infrastructure
costs. In 1742 the Society in Bristol, under the leadership of a Captain Foy, had built a
new meeting room. In order to pay it off he proposed that every member who could
should contribute a penny a week. He would meet with those who could not afford the
expense once a week, they would contribute what they could, and he would make up
the difference. Other well-to-do members made the same offer. These groups rapidly
began to do much more than fund-raise. The leaders were recognized by Wesley not
only as those who receive contributions, but those who “watch over the souls of their

27 Heitzenrater, Wesley and the People, 152.

28 John Wigger, American Saint: Francis Asbury and the Methodists (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 34
brethren,” and Wesley divided the whole of the Bristol Society into class-meetings. With Wesley’s encouragement the system, which he called “this little prudential regulation,” quickly spread and ultimately became one of the central institutions of Methodism. The class often preceded the arrival of an itinerant preacher in a region, functioned as a training grounder for exhorters and lay preachers, and provided the critical link between Methodists and their local and circuit preachers. Anyone pursuing salvation with sufficient effort and piety would be granted a class-ticket and permitted to join, and the class-ticket became one of the important symbols of Methodist identity. It also became something one was required to purchase, and importantly, although the circuit minister could withhold a ticket, within the class discipline was maintained by local lay leadership.

In addition to these organizational innovations Wesleyanism’s chief contributions to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theology were twofold. The first was Wesley’s commitment to what was called Arminianism. The second was his belief

31 Semple, The Lord’s Dominion, 19. Semple calls the class-meeting the “the essential and distinguishing institution of Methodism.”
32 Semple, The Lord’s Dominion, 19.
in what he called Christian Perfection or Entire Sanctification. Arminianism was a doctrinal position named for the sixteenth century Dutch theologian Arminius. Arminius had insisted that grace was not limited to an elect and predestined few (as orthodox Calvinists argued), but dependent on free will and available to all who had faith.\(^{34}\) Thanks largely to Wesley the disagreement between Calvinists and Arminians once again become a matter of controversy and debate in eighteenth-century Britain – at least among evangelicals. The connexional journal was even called *The Arminian Magazine*, but although he repudiated some of their doctrines Wesley had no real animus against Calvinism.\(^{35}\) What is critical to our purposes here is the Arminian emphasis on the universal accessibility of atonement and salvation to all who might hear the gospel message and believe.

The other distinctive theological doctrine of the Wesleyans was that of Christian Perfection or Entire Sanctification. It was a concept that emerged from Wesley’s religious experimentation, rather than being an abstract idea which shaped practice, an ordering of events typical of what he called “experimental religion.” The asceticism of the early Wesleyans was driven by the desire to become holy. Their goal was to achieve


a state of Christian perfection in which one no longer suffered from evil thoughts and tempers. And many Methodists, including William Carvosso but not John Wesley, claimed they were living it.

One more relevant theological definition is that of “evangelicalism.” It can be construed in narrow terms as that particular party within the Church of England to which the Wesleys belonged. But the word, like the movement it purports to describe, has long since escaped such ecclesiological constraints. David Bebbington’s famous and inclusive definition of evangelicalism identifies its operations by four conceptual elements: the belief that people need to be saved from eternal death (or worse); that it is incumbent on those already saved to pursue the salvation of others; that it is only through Christ’s crucifixion salvation is achieved; and that our knowledge of these things depends on the Bible. Bebbington is well aware that such concision can obscure a bewildering variety of theological and ritual differences, but it certainly does the work of allowing one to proceed regardless. And for that I, and countless other graduate students, thank him.

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36 Bebbington, Evangelicalism in Modern Britain, 153.


38 Bebbington, Evangelicalism in Modern Britain, 3-4.
2. The Transfiguration of William Carvosso: Methodism in Cornwall, 1750 to 1820

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century the discursive and ritual practices of Methodism provided the people of West Cornwall a means to rationalize a radical reorganization of their social, political, economic and psychic lives.¹ The often agonizing experience of alienation that accompanied the transformation of Cornwall’s interior from a relatively self-contained and agrarian society, into one which was fully integrated into the global reach of Atlantic capitalism, meant that many of the Cornish were open to new ways of conceptualizing the world and their place in it.² The Wesleyan project was nothing less than an attempt to manufacture such a world view, to forge a new and Christian society out of the moral waste and wreckage of Georgian England. Lay preachers, class leaders and exhorters such as William Carvosso stoked the furnaces of the crucible in which the dross was separated from the ore.


² John Rowe, Cornwall in an Age of Industrial Revolution, (Liverpool: University Press, 1953).
In this chapter we will pursue William Carvosso from his childhood and youth, to his conversion to Methodism, his achievement of yeoman respectability, and finally his career as a soft-spoken itinerant revivalist. William Carvosso, while an occasional lay preacher, was celebrated by his son and his readers above all as an exemplary class leader. In his conclusion to *The Great Efficacy of Faith in the Atonement of Christ*, the memoirs Benjamin Carvosso edited and published for his father, he wrote,
[The subordinate, but important, office of class-leader was assigned to him. This was his place. In the service of sixty years he never rose above it, or rendered himself unworthy of it. And in conformity to the genius of Christianity, and the aggressive principle of the rules of the body, he exhorted, reproved, or instructed all with whom he had intercourse. Methodism is one, in every town, in every village.]

From this perspective, one which emphasizes his subordination, Carvosso functioned as a middleman between the poorer Wesleyans who comprised the bulk of the membership in Cornwall, but whose membership waxed and waned under the influence of larger social and economic forces, and the permanent lay and ministerial leadership of the Wesleyan Connexion. It tempts one to think of him as a collaborator or native informant, a man convenient to institutionally well-ensconced metropolitan elites and the circulating ministers as they tried to discipline an unruly local population. But that temptation leads to the sort of teleology which might obscure the radically destabilizing nature of his work as a revivalist. Carvosso preached what he called an “old Methodism – proved Methodism.” He meant by this the universal salvation of Arminianism and the possibility of Christian perfection. Carvosso taught that anyone might be saved at any moment in time, and that salvation was “instantaneous, complete,

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4 Carvosso, The Efficacy, 208.
and permanent.”5 It was precisely the sort of attitude that generated the millenarian enthusiasms of the revival.

The former Methodist Joanna Southcott, transatlantic revivalists like the Painite Lorenzo Dow, cottage prophets and prophetesses like “the Old Man of the Forest,” James Crawfoot, and Praying Nanny Cutler who instigated the Yorkshire Revival of the 1792, are all examples of what could happen if the Conference of Wesleyan ministers lost control of its evangelical message.6 The danger of challenging the established authority of the Church of England by recourse to the divine was that such challenges could be co-opted by unscrupulous leaders, or untutored enthusiasts, and rapidly slide into the chaos of antinomianism and immorality. In the Carvossos’ Cornwall, Methodist success depended on the revival, and for metropolitan leaders from the Wesleys to Bunting the revival was the very manifestation of this troubling contradiction. It was a social phenomenon which occurred in the chapel, under the watch of the ministers, and with their encouragement, but whose excesses by definition exceeded institutional controls. One of the solutions to the problem was Wesley’s ingenious improvisation of the class.7

5 Carvosso, The Efficacy, 102.

6 For Crawfoot see Valenze, Prophetic Sons and Daughters, 77; for Ann Cutler see Pamela Walker, Pulling the Devil’s Kingdom Down: The Salvation Army in Victorian Britain (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001) 12.

7 Semple, The Lord’s Dominion, 18-20.
We will proceed in four parts, the first of which is concerned with the cliché of Cornwall as West Barbary, and John and Charles Wesley as its missionaries. William Carvosso was born into a community that at times seemed to lie beyond the control of the British crown. Cornwall in the Eighteenth Century could be, and has been, characterized as “a colonial situation.” The huge crowds of miners that greeted the Wesleys and their lay preachers, and the intense opposition of local elites, make it one of the inspirational success stories of not just early Methodism, but of early Methodist missions. And that so many Cornish enthusiastically accepted the Wesleys’ theological message while rejecting of their institutional authoritarianism and quietist political ideology also make it an interesting and early, or even proto-, case study of the relations between the British ruling classes, Protestant missionaries and colonial subjects – which is not to say Methodism was something imported wholesale into Cornwall.

It is certainly the case that the class-meeting, the hymnody, and a great deal of the other ritual and institutional paraphernalia associated with Wesleyan Methodism arrived with the brothers. But it is also the case that a great deal preceded them, and some key institutions, such as the local preacher, were produced in their wake. In the second part of this chapter we will see how the Wesleys came in response to rumors of

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clerical and popular revival, and found that for all their enthusiasm and affection the Cornish were difficult subjects to rule.

The third section is a quick study of Cornish Methodism’s emerging moneyed elite. While not as spectacularly wealthy as that other hotbed of Methodism in the northwest of England, Cornwall’s mining and ancillary industries also generated an ambitious and self-confident Wesleyan middle class. We shall see how at the end of the Eighteenth Century industrialization in Cornwall had produced a body of farmers, mine managers, and businessmen who wanted more control over the chapels, itinerancy, and other institutions of Wesleyan Methodism than the circuit and conference ministers were willing to give them.

In the fourth part I will describe how the revivalism associated with Cornwall was not a strictly indigenous but part of a larger transatlantic phenomenon. It was evidence of both a tendency among the Cornish to look across the ocean and to the other provinces rather than to London for religious inspiration, and an incentive to continue doing so. The attempt by some Conference ministers to define revivalism as an example of local barbarity and ignorance can be read as part of a larger attempt to reconfigure an ever expansive, and rather anarchic, early nineteenth-century Methodism around a national control center.
2.1 West Barbary: Methodism in Cornwall

Shortly after the birth of William Carvosso on March 11th, 1750, his father left the village of Mousehole and went to sea. His father passed through Plymouth in the early Sixties when the lad had already left home and was living and working with the family of a “respectable” farmer somewhere within walking distance of Mousehole. The farmer, “being earnest about his indenture,” made the considerable trip up the coast to meet with the father and have William formally bound to him until he was eighteen. Carvosso had only marginally more than that to say of his mother. She regularly attended the parish church of Paul, and he trusted that she feared God and found her way to heaven. It was she who taught him to read before, at the age of ten, he left her to earn his living. And in the 1770s he and his siblings were still gathering in her kitchen on Sundays.

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9 Carvosso, Efficacy, 29-30.

10 Carvosso, The Efficacy, 29-30. This was not uncommon in Cornwall: “The practice of binding pauper children as apprentices to husbandry meant that many farm houses were overcrowded with youthful apprentices, and this, too, lessened the demand for able-bodied labour.” Rowe, Cornwall in the Age of the Industrial Revolution, 239.

11 Carvosso, Efficacy, 35.
Of this period prior to his conversion William wrote that although like his mother he attended the parish church regularly, he reached twenty never having heard a Methodist sermon. He recorded that he “was borne down by the prevailing sins of the age; such as cock-fighting, wrestling, card-playing, and Sabbath-breaking.” The British state, it seems, lay somewhere near the horizon of his childhood and youth; it was there, certainly, and its agents capable of sudden and unpredictable violence, but it was a distant and impersonal power. In its fiscal-military aspect the state stole his father, in its confessional it was ineffectual, and in its legal it formalized the dispersal of his birth-family, and bound him to that of an employer.

William’s son, Benjamin, wrote in the preface of his father’s 1835 memoir that Mousehole was once a town of considerable notoriety. Like his father he looked back at the village from across the Jordan of nineteenth-century Wesleyan Methodism to an era when the poor folk of western Cornwall were seen by metropolitan observers and no-small number of pious locals as only nominally Christian, and on the verge of savagery.

It is also likely Benjamin was referring to a significantly longer list of prevailing sins

12 Carvosso, Efficacy, 29-30.

13 Carvosso, Efficacy, xx.

14 Rev. Francis Truscott, a friend of the Carvossos and a long time circuit-minister in Cornwall submitted a clergyman’s account of Cornwall from 1803 to the Conference magazine. The traveler described the miners of Cornwall prior to the influence of Methodism as in a “state little better than savages.” Their wrestling led to death and mutilation, their cock-fights dehumanized and indebted them, and they lived a violent and riotous existence in which “the gains of labour were dissipated in the most brutal debauchery.” Thanks to the religious revival in the county that existence was now, according to the touring cleric, a thing of the past.
than those to which his father had confessed; practices of decidedly greater interest to a jealous state than Cornish wrestling and youthful Sabbath breaking. While William and Benjamin were collaborating on his memoirs in the 1830s it was still a popular commonplace that bands of miners pillaged ships which wrecked on Cornish coasts, robbing or even murdering survivors while the hapless authorities looked on.\(^\text{15}\) “Free traders” carried on a brisk commerce with their Celtic cousins in Brittany right under the noses of the under-manned and out-gunned ships of the Treasury.\(^\text{16}\) There was a vigorous untaxed trade with the crew and officers of the East and West Indian merchantmen that paused to catch their breath before finishing their arduous journeys home to the London docks. And the moral economy of the food riot was still very much


\(^\text{16}\) Mousehole’s connections with smuggling are so taken for granted that when Wesleyan historian Samuel Drew relates the story of a village resident who in 1730 could communicate with the inhabitants of France more effectively in Cornish than in English, he mentions only in passing that the fellow was there for the purpose of smuggling. Samuel Drew and Richard Fortescue, \textit{The History of Cornwall, From the Earliest Records and Traditions to the Present Time}, Vol. 1. (London: William Penaluna, 1824), 230.
in operation as late as the mid-century, with bands of miners imposing price controls on bread in 1831 and again in 1847.  

The Carvossos’ patch of Cornwall was a rough and intemperate place in the imagination of contemporary Britons. Its inhabitants were fiercely independent subjects of a distant crown who wrenched their living from the ocean and the rocks as miners, fishermen and sailors. Their lives were ruled by the rhythms of the Atlantic and the temper of the earth rather than the dispensations of a faraway government. And like many other Britons they resented the increasing intrusiveness of the revenue man, the tithing of absentee clerics, and the predations of Royal Navy press gangs. And in

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18 In the winter of 1831 for instance, a vicar’s agent who arrived in Mousehole to collect the fish tithe, had his pistols thrown into the harbor and was driven out of the village in a hail of snowballs. When he arrived in Newlyn the fishermen hurried him on his journey with the same weapons, and erected a sign complete with skull and crossbones which declared “No Tithe, One and All, 1831.” Annual Report, Volumes 46 to 48: Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society, (Falmouth: Lake and Co. and R.C. Richards, 1878) 89. Joseph Livesay and William Cobbett both provide analysis of that incident. Cobbett’s is secular and reformist, Livesay quoting The West Briton story in which the fisherman are reported to have condemned tithing as an ancient and Catholic superstition. Cobbett, Selections from Cobbett’s Political Works, Volume VI, (London: Ann Cobbett, 1835) 594; Livesay The Moral Reformer and Protestor of the Vices, Abuses, and Corruptions, of the Age, Vol. I, (London: Sherwood and Co., 1831), 123. “This demand for the fish tithe it is said, arose of a free-will offering made in the days of Catholic superstition, to purchase the prayers of monks, but it has been tenaciously retained after Protestantism has banished the superstitions of the Church of Rome,” West Briton, March 7, 1833.

19 On press gangs John Bottrell recounts the story of women armed with red-hot pokers driving a press gang out of the village in the late Eighteenth Century, Stories and Folk-tales of West Cornwall (Penzance: F. Rodda, 1880), 133. Bottrell’s informer also claims the women were led by one Ann Pentreath, who shares the surname of Mousehole’s Richard. The revenue men at Penzance described Richard Pentreath in 1771 as a notorious smuggler but otherwise honest man. Cornish Seafarers: The Smuggling, Wrecking and Seafaring Life of Cornwall, (-: J.M. Dent, 1932), 33. John Hutchinson, in, quotes an admiralty report from 1805 in which Mousehole is named as a stronghold of deserters, smugglers and fugitive seamen that the press-gangs were
Carvosso’s memoirs this unreliability of the paternalistic state was reflected in the constitution of his own family, and in particular the absence of the abducted father.

In the early spring of 1771 William went to Mousehole on one of his Sunday visits and to his astonishment found his mother, his sister, and his brothers, kneeling on his mother’s kitchen floor and praying. His sister had just experienced a conversion at a Methodist meeting and walked the twelve miles from the town of Gwinear to share the happy news with her family and warn them to flee the wrath to come. The good news and fair warning did its work on Carvosso and, after his sister encouraged him to attend to the preaching of the Methodists, that evening he went to Newlyn to do just that. The impression one gets from Carvosso’s memoirs is that this was the first time Methodism impinged on his consciousness. This was almost certainly not the case.

The Methodists had been in Cornwall for almost thirty years prior to Carvosso’s momentous decision to go to Newlyn and hear the preaching. It had been there from a little earlier in fact, than the date of the Wesleys’ first visit to the county. And evangelical revival had been there even longer. In the spring of 1743 John Wesley had sent his brother Charles to the county after hearing from frequent reports that there were so reluctant to visit the men were as safe as if they were in Labrador. The Press Gang Afloat and Ashore (London: Eveleigh Nash, 1913), 69.

20 Carvosso, Efficacy, 31.
many in Cornwall who feared not man but God, and who desired to be saved. Of his own arrival at St. Ives in late summer he wrote “they admitted me into the society and not I them.”

Wesley had been alerted to the presence of the revival in the county by a Methodist ship’s captain from Bristol named Turner. Turner had discovered a small band of pious enthusiasts in St. Ives. They were organized according to the rules of the seventeenth-century Church of England divine Josiah Woodward and led by a woman named Catherine Quick. Mr. Shepherd, one of Wesley’s lay preachers and also from Bristol, brought Methodism proper to the town shortly afterwards. A local named Williams, another ship’s captain involved like Turner in the Bristol-St. Ives trade, was said to be propagating Methodism even further afield. He was being called “the mad priest” by the people living down the coast, for his habit of preaching to them in the open air and without a book.

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24 Pearse, “Early Methodism,” 26. This may have been Thomas Williams, and early and controversial lay preacher who quarreled with the Wesleys and was expelled, readmitted, and expelled again from the Society. John Pearse, *The Wesley’s in Cornwall: Extracts from the Journals of Charles and John Wesley and John Nelson* (London: D.B. Barton, 1964), 37.
There was also a small conglery of Church of England Evangelicals in the county as well. Farther east on the north coast the Rev. Thomson of St. Gennys (near Tintangel) had become something of an Evangelical himself. After a conversion experience in 1732, Thomson had become acquainted with James Hervey, a former member of the Wesley’s “Holy Club” at Oxford in the Thirties. Other pre-Wesleyan Evangelicals included Thomson’s neighbour the aged Rev. Bennett, and the Rev. Walker of Truro who had organized his own small voluntary society.

In his 1880 account of early Cornish Methodism, Mark Guy Pearse argued that in addition to the St. Ives’ Society, a small Evangelical presence in the clerical literati, and itinerating ship’s captains, the news of the Wesleys work in other places had preceded them among the common people of West Cornwall. Revival, if not already begun, was primed. “Stories of the strange scenes at the field preaching in Moorfields and Bristol,” Pearse wrote, “were current amongst the people with such additions as rolling stories always acquire.”

The Wesleys’ journals certainly support the notion that rumors of their revivalism had found its way to Cornwall before them. Whenever they left their base in

25 John Hayman, A History of the Methodist Revival of the last century, in its relations to Devon (London: T. Woolmer, 1885), 19

26 Rowe, Cornwall in the Age of the Industrial Revolution, 67.20-27.

St. Ives for the interior they found crowds of miners waiting for them. And even in the town itself there were people who had travelled substantial distances to hear them. Just four days after arriving in St. Ives John Wesley reported preaching to two or three hundred miners on a down ten miles to the east of the town, and then stopping on the way back to preach to another five or six hundred people. That evening he preached to a further one thousand listeners. And later, while he was meeting with the Society in St. Ives, two women who had made the ten-mile journey from Penzance to see and hear him “fell down as dead, and soon after cried out, in the bitterness of their souls.”28 Their distress continued until after much prayer on their behalf from Wesley and his companions, God put “a new song in their mouths.”29

The lively responses of the miners and villagers of west Cornwall are intriguing and suggest a fair degree of common ground between clerical and popular evangelicalism. The two women from Penzance were familiar with the grammar of revivalism, but there is in Wesley’s quick response to their spectacular reaction the hint of a discontinuity between the priestly leadership of the Evangelicals, and the boisterous attitudes and practices of the crowds who first welcomed them to the provinces. John’s brother and colleague Charles Wesley, for example, who had been in Newcastle before


his brother dispatched him as a missionary to Cornwall, was more explicit about his
efforts to manage the extravagancies of worship in the far north-east:

Many counterfeits I have already detected. Today one who came from
the alehouse drunk was pleased to fall into a fit for my entertainment,
and beat himself heartily. I thought it a pity to hinder him; so instead of
singing over him, as had often been done, we left him to carry on at his
leisure. A girl, as she began her cry, I ordered to be carried out. Her
convulsion was so violent as to take away the use of her limbs, till they
laid and left her without the door. Then immediately she found her legs,
and walked off. Some very unstill sisters, who always took care to stand
near me, and try which should cry the loudest, since I had them removed
out of my sight, have been as quiet as lambs. The first night I preached
here, half my words were lost through their outcries. Last night, before I
began, I gave public notice, that whosoever cried, so as to drown my
voice, should, without any man’s hurt, or judging them, be gently carried
to the furthest corner of the room.  

A few days later he observed that “in Newcastle that many of the gentry come now that
the stumbling-block of the fits is taken out of their way; and I am more and more
convinced it was a device of Satan, to stop the course of the gospel.” In Sunderland he
complained that “the freedom of the heart,” which was so popular in the region, was an
invention of the Devil meant to supersede the word. He later boasted of how he
preached to a crowd of “a thousand wild people” on the subject and calmed them
considerably.  

30 Thomas Jackson, The Life of the Rev. Charles Wesley, (New York: Lane and Sanford, 1849), 267
Such journal entries illuminate two closely-related preoccupations with the behavior of their congregations that were to haunt Methodism’s metropolitan leadership for well over the next century. The first is concerned with the monopoly of power within the Methodist community, and the second the relations of community elites to power without. From the beginning the Wesleys jealously guarded the authority of the pulpit, trying to tame what they represented as eruptions of irrational and ostentatious display with their own thoughtful and measured self-control. That their ministry was frequently drowned out by the din of their audiences suggests evangelical ritual was as much a site of contestation as it was a means to overcome or diminish it, and that its rituals were often negotiated and improvised between parties rather than simply imposed by one onto the other.

The second preoccupation was with the troubled relationship of Wesleyanism and the confessional state. Neither Charles nor John Wesley were anything close to political radicals yet their itinerancy, field preaching, and leveling theology could hardly be construed by other political conservatives as anything but a challenge to the Established Church. When large and unruly crowds gathered to listen to the Wesleys local authorities often perceived the meeting as a threat to public order. And there was no shortage of metropolitan opinion-makers who already thought the Evangelicals troublemakers. The wild scenes of plebeian ecstasy such as those at Moorfields in London, and among the colliers of Bristol, were as repulsive to the gentry as they were
attractive to the people.\textsuperscript{32} Revival was well and good from the Wesleys view, it was the goal after all, but it would be politic if it was orderly.

Given that context it is not surprising some of the rumors which anticipated the Wesleys’ arrival in Cornwall were unfriendly. They were, so some tales told, Jesuits sent to bring the Inquisition back, or Jacobite agents of the Pretender, and even that Charles Stuart himself was in their train, disguised as a lay preacher.\textsuperscript{33} Charles Wesley was welcomed to St. Ives by stone-throwing boys. A local curate, a Mr. Hoblin, called the Methodists “enemies of the Church, seducers, troublers, Scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites” and warned that such false prophets needed to “be driven away by blows not arguments.”\textsuperscript{34} And members were beaten and the rooms destroyed when the town clerk led a Church-and-King mob into the Society’s meeting-place.\textsuperscript{35}

Outside the town the Wesleys encountered similar opposition. At nearby Pool onlookers threw eggs and stones. A hostile crowd had anticipated him, paid for with beer, as the famous entry in the Illogan parish suggests: “Expences at Ann Gatrell’s on driving the Methodist, nine shillings.”\textsuperscript{36} When John arrived on the scene the

\textsuperscript{32} Bernd Krysmanski, “We See a Ghost: Hogarth’s Satire on Methodists and Connoisseurs,” \textit{The Art Bulletin}, 80 (June, 1988), 310n85.

\textsuperscript{33} Pearse, “Early Methodism in Cornwall,” 25.

\textsuperscript{34} Jackson, \textit{The Life of Charles Wesley}, 271.

\textsuperscript{35} Jackson, \textit{The Life of Charles Wesley}, 273.

intimidation continued apace. His first evening in town the mob serenaded him as he
stood at his window, singing a ditty about his brother composed for them by a local
gentlewoman, “Charles Wesley is come to town, to try if he can pull the churches
down.”37 A few days later John Wesley recorded how “Satan began to fight for his
Kingdom” and the mob stormed the meeting-rooms. “Roaring and striking those that
stood in their way,” Wesley wrote in his journal, “as though Legion himself possessed
them.”38 Wesley’s choice of analogy is as telling as it is evocative. The hostility towards
the Wesleys may have been the result of political and social anxieties but it was
understood by the brothers in gloriously cosmological terms.

Charles Wesley’s headlong 800 mile ride from Newcastle at the very top of
England to St. Ives at its toe had taken him about a month. He had careened southward
through a landscape alive with angry crowds, mobs stirred up by suspicious parsons
and petty officials. And if his journey began among the devices and inventions of Satan
in the northeast, it ended in the southwest with “the devil’s children” pursuing him
“like men out of the tombs.”39 Derisive youths had followed him from the mining
districts in the hills down to the little seaside town where he was given another “rough

38 John Wesley, Journal, 413.
39 Jackson, The Life of Charles Wesley, 270.
salute” by the boys there. In St. Ives he competed with the local vicar in a battle for men’s souls, his beleaguered little band on the one side, and hosts of rioters complete with horns and drums on the other. Charles Wesley’s narrative of his first journey to Cornwall reads almost like a ride through hell – Belial, Satan, and the Devil occupy almost every page – and the lurid light of eternal fire illuminates not just the desperate condition of the human soul but that of society as well.

The chief obstacle facing the Methodists in Cornwall was not the ignorance of the common folk but the wickedness of their betters; people like the gentlewoman who composed the anti-Wesleyan ditty the mob at St. Ives sang, the curate Hoblin, and Dr. William Borlase, an antiquarian, cleric and magistrate who lived across the Bay from Mousehole and had a fearsome reputation for his efforts to imprison and impress Methodists.

Borlase (1695-1772) is a particularly useful example. He was the rector of Ludvgan-Lees and the Vicar of St. Just, which made him a “pluralist” and a non-resident

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40 Jackson, The Life of Charles Wesley, 338


cleric – that symbol for so many reformers of a degraded Church.\textsuperscript{43} He also presided on the bench in Penzance, and oversaw the persecution of Methodist tanners and itinerant preachers. And he was a farmer and a husbandman, “spending,” as even a sympathetic biographer would have it, “the larger portion of his energies, property, and time, on the earthly rather than the heavenly.”\textsuperscript{44} He fits rather neatly into the role of the Georgian Churchman who has been described as “an indispensable agent” of a social order.\textsuperscript{45}

The second half of the eighteenth century saw the rural poor increasingly hostile towards a clergy that benefited at their expense from the maintenance of age-old tithes, new acts of enclosure, and an unprecedented prominence as magisterial bench.\textsuperscript{46} In that sense the bond of Church and State seemed stronger in England than it had at any time since before the Civil War, even if the lower orders were unconvinced either institution was in sympathy with their interests.\textsuperscript{47} The active hostility a representative of the state like Borlase evinced towards the Methodists shows us the dilemma facing the Wesleys. Their system proved highly attractive to provincial communities already inclined towards anti-clericalism, and that only fed the cycle of persecution and resentment that

\textsuperscript{43} “Cornish Genius,” 389.

\textsuperscript{44} “Cornish Genius,” 392.


\textsuperscript{46} Rule, \textit{The Labouring Classes}, 163.

\textsuperscript{47} Rule, \textit{The Labouring Classes}, 163.
Methodists faced. That the Wesleys were not only great lovers of social order, but loathe to leave the shelter of the Established Church, seemed to have little influence on the behaviour of either their plebeian followers or their patrician tormentors.

The hostility of the Cornish gentry and clergy continued into the next century largely unabated. After Borlase died the Rev. Richard Polwhele (1760-1838), the Vicar of Newlyn East right next door to Penzance and also an antiquarian, picked up the anti-Methodist standard.\textsuperscript{48} In 1800 he published his \textit{Anecdotes of Methodism}, which was the chief vehicle of his vitriol, but he also railed against the sect in his \textit{Letter to Dr. Hawker} and his introduction to Bishop Lavington’s \textit{The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared}.\textsuperscript{49} Polwhele, like Borlase was appalled by itinerancy, thinking it little better than vagrancy, and he claimed among other things that Methodism “plunged its votaries into vice,” made them “ripe for rebellion,” and “from its first rising to its present state of insolent boasting has been injurious to the community.”\textsuperscript{50}


\textsuperscript{49} Richard Polwhele, \textit{Anecdotes of Methodism} (London: T. Crowder, 1800); Polwhele, \textit{Letter to Dr. Hawker} (Helston: Flindell, 1789); Polwhele, “Introduction,” in George Lavington’s \textit{The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared} (London: 1820)

Clerical resistance to Methodism in Penzance led Charles Wesley to describe the town as the place “where Satan keeps his seat.” Such a description likely resonated with the smugglers, wreckers, and deserters who found shelter in the coves and crannies of the coast for reasons of which the Wesleys would scarcely approve. It was, after all, the most western English outpost of an increasing intrusive metropolitan state and functioned as something of a border post. And continuing clerical opposition meant that Methodists in the vicinity could represent themselves as oppositional, as an alternative to the world rather than the world itself. It was a mode of self-representation that was to prove amenable to the surges and ebbs of Cornish revivalism but which also led to fractiousness within Cornish Methodism itself.

In 1746 Charles Wesley commented on the “exhorters” that had appeared in the Cornish societies. They were the first example of Methodist local preachers. He had

(accessed September 7, 2012). In 1815 Polwhele published a sermon excoriating the Wesleyans and the revival raging throughout the west of Cornwall. C. Val Le Grice, The Proofs of the Spirit, or Considerations of Revivalism, a Sermon Preached at St. Mary’s Chapel, Penzance, on Sunday, April 24th, 1814 (London: J. Rivington, 1814). “From this pulpit of the Established Church I lift my voice,” he wrote of revivalism, “because the danger is coming to our very doors.” Its Pentecostal claims were but a pretense, and “blasphemy of the most horrid sort.” Quoted in “Remarks on the Sermon of Mr. Le Grice,” The Methodist Magazine, Vol. 38 (1815) 844

51 Jackson, Life of Charles Wesley, 396.

52 John Rule, Albion’s People: English Society, 1714-1815 (London: Longmans, 1992), 152
found four at work in the parish of Gwennap alone. Having “talked closely to them” Charles gave them some tentative encouragement:

I advised and charged them not to stretch themselves beyond their line, by speaking out of the society, or by fancying themselves public teachers. If they keep within their bounds as they promise, they may be useful in the church.53

A few days later Charles recorded that he had heard “sad accounts” of the St. Just society; “that, being scattered by persecution, they had wandered into the by-paths of error and sin, and been confirmed therein by their covetous, proud Exhorter, J. Bennett.”54 And in 1747 John Wesley recorded his own concerns, writing that at Sithney he had met the stewards of all the Cornish societies and found that of the eighteen exhorters in the county three had no gift at all for the work – either natural or supernatural; a fourth was dull and conceited; and a fifth had gifts but had “made a shipwreck of the grace of God.”55 Of the remaining thirteen Wesley said they should be allowed to preach when no other option was available but “that they take no step without the advice of those who had more experience than themselves.”56

Wesley was also frustrated at the continuing refusal of the Cornish to give up the economic practices of smuggling and wrecking. As a rather unimaginative Tory he

53 Jackson, Life of Charles Wesley, 438; Rule, Albion’s People, 152
54 Jackson, Life of Charles Wesley, 440
55 John Wesley, The Life of John Wesley (London: Jackson, 1856), 156.
56 Wesley, The Life of John Wesley, 156.
could not understand such activities except as an insult to the king. On a visit to St. Ives, the oldest and by then one of the most peaceable societies in Cornwall, Wesley discovered “well nigh one and all bought and sold ‘uncustomed’ goods.” He was outraged and told them that either they put away this “abomination” and “accursed thing,” or they would see his face no more. His continuing pique can be measured by a letter sent to poor John Trembath, a local preacher in Cornwall in 1775, in which he accused the man of countenancing, and perhaps even participating in “that wickedness for which Cornwall stinks in the nostrils of all who fear God, or love King George, I mean that of Smuggling.” Cornish Methodists were also slow to give up wrecking. There are nineteenth-century reports of them waiting patiently for the Sabbath to end before heading down to the shore to loot, and the Royal Cornwall Gazette reported that in 1846 there were wreckers who also would “stand up in the pulpit to preach the word of God.”

57 Wesley, Journals, 251.
58 Wesley, Journals, 252.
60 Rule, “Wrecking and Coastal Plunder,” 185; see also Cathryn Pearce, Cornish Wrecking.
John Wesley later wrote of the Methodists in Redruth that “they were apt to despise and very willing to govern their preachers.”61 And after his death in 1790 one of the earliest of the lay rebellions against conference rule occurred in town, where a group of local leaders and trustees, a group including William Carvosso and his brother Benedict, signed a document demanding that significant constraints be put on ministerial power. In 1813 the Rev. Francis Truscott noted there were still “symptoms” of disaffection breaking out over ministerial attempts to settle the chapels on the Conference Plan.”62 What alarmed Truscott most about the state of affairs was the willingness of the local preachers to continue speaking in rebellious Chapels where Wesleyanism’s official agents, the circuit ministers sent by the Conference, would refuse to go. The very aspects of their society and history that made the Cornish amenable to evangelization – relative isolation from the English culture and economic self-reliance – will have contributed to the difficulty with which the Connexion had in controlling them as the sect became a church.

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62 Truscott to James Allen, January 4, 1814, 107.8.42, John Rylands University Library, Methodist Archives Research Center, (Hereafter MARC). The Conference plan meant that the chapels could not be the private property of the trustees. That is, they would not have the right to sell them or hand them over to some other denomination. Nor did the Conference have the right to claim them as property or benefit from seat-rents. Jonathon Crowther, A True and Complete Portraiture of Methodism (New York: Totten, 1813) 258; Adam Clarke’s letter to the Wesleyan Methodist Magazine, Vol. 7, (1828), 668.
In his memoirs Carvosso makes it quite clear that Methodism belonged to local Methodists. The ministers sent from distant provinces to temporarily oversee the Cornish are a barely visible presence. Only Francis Truscott, who was Cornish himself, makes repeat appearances. Even John Wesley, who had preached in Mousehole on a number of occasions, calling it one of the liveliest societies in Cornwall, and knew several members by sight, is pushed into the margins of The Efficacy. He is an entirely offstage hero. It is a striking absence. His theological import pervades the book, as does the poetry of his brother’s hymns, but both men nonetheless remain distant and impersonal figures. The incentives driving action in the text are all local or divine. In the Efficacy Cornish religiosity is not dependent on ministerial, let alone priestly approval in the least, but on the interventions of a Pentecostal spirit.

2.2 Invisible Realities: Theological Categories and the Experience of the Sacred in Cornwall

In recent years historians have made a great deal has been made of Wesley’s debt to Enlightenment thought and to the rationality and pragmatism of his system. Such interpretations reflect in part an ongoing scholarly reaction against the influential analysis of E.P. Thompson. The Thompsonian narrative stressed the chiliasm, despair

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and frustration of the Methodist working people in industrializing Britain. And Carvosso’s record of his conversion is certainly a textbook example of how key intellectual aspects of Wesleyan ideology, so carefully delineated by contemporary scholarship on nineteenth-century evangelicalism, were important to often semi-literate laypeople. Wesley’s Arminianism and his doctrine of Entire Sanctification are the theological lenses through which William, and his editor and son the Rev. Benjamin Carvosso, considered those events some sixty years later, and we will consider them in some detail here. But for the Methodists, from the Wesleys to the Carvossos, far more important than theological clarity and sophistication was the efficacy of religious practice in the experience of their life. The terrifying world of the Devil and his demons; malevolent forces we have already seen glimpses of in the Wesleys’ journals, and which could burst with frightening power into the lives of Wesleyan preachers and their audiences alike. It was a world whose shadows could only be purged by the holy fire of Christian revival and it is to this world of darkness and light which we will look first.

In one of Benjamin Carvosso’s editorial interjections in The Efficacy he tells the story of how a particularly pious and aged member of the Mousehole congregation heard heavenly music in the chapel one evening while worshipping alone. This “supernatural music of the most melodious kind” proceeded from near the pew which William Carvosso’s brother Benedict, and their mutual friend Richard Trewavas Sr.

(another early and influential member of the Mousehole society), had occupied almost every Sabbath until their deaths. 66 “This was a fact,” Benjamin informs the reader, “which highly accorded with my father’s strong views of invisible realities.”67 William also reminisced about how fifty years prior when a neighbour woman died in his Brother Benedict’s arms she cried out “They are come! They are come!” William, working in the adjoining field simultaneously heard the most delightful music in the air.68 This sensible empiricism of Carvosso in matters spiritual – dependent as it was on the physical experience of the sacred and on reliable eyewitnesses – is very much at the heart of Wesley’s “experimental religion” and seems typical of the period and place.69

John Rules has argued that far from transforming or modernizing the Cornish worldview Wesleyan theology was integrated with it rather neatly. The Cornish common folk were responsive to Wesley’s message wrote Rule, “not because he demanded a new and rational view of the world, but because he did not.”70 Referring to Carvosso, The Efficacy, 247.

67 Carvosso, The Efficacy, 247.

68 Carvosso, The Efficacy, 249.

69 The term was coined by Jonathon Edwards but used by Wesley and the Methodists. According to Ann Taves the term “vital and experimental religion” could be used synonymously with “Christian Experience” and “heart religion” that depended not on formal ritualism or doctrinal rigor but on the actual experience of God’s grace in penitents’ lives. Wesley himself also used the phrase “perceptible inspiration,” by which he meant the perception of the Holy Spirit’s inspiration in as clear a manner as one perceives the sun. Ann Taves, Fits, Trances, & Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experiencefrom Wesley to James (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 48-52.

70 John Rule, “Methodism, Popular Beliefs and Village Culture in Cornwall, 1800-1850,” 64.
Obelkevich’s work on Lincolnshire he points out that the Devil and God – so critical to Methodist preaching and ritual – were already important and concrete figures in English folk culture and that Cornwall was no exception. It is Rule’s view the integration of Wesleyan theology and Cornish folk-beliefs was further facilitated because the primary mediators between the two were local preachers and class leaders rather than educated men. But however important local leadership and culture was to the success of Methodism, the degree to which Wesley was also imbedded in a “pre-modern” worldview should not be underestimated. His theology was only a stone’s throw away from folk-religion.

When Richard Rodda, a lay preacher from Newlyn wrote to Wesley to tell him the story of his life, he mentioned in passing how his mother suffered terribly from consumption until she dug a hole in the ground and breathed into it every morning for fifteen minutes. It is the sort of anecdote with which Wesley’s journals are peppered, and quite resonates with his own speculations on medicine, science and the ineffable. To the contemporary reader Wesley’s attitude towards stories of things passing strange often makes him seem overly credulous. And so to he may have seemed to ironic

71 John Rule, “Methodism, Popular Beliefs and Village Culture in Cornwall, 1800-1850,” 66
observers like the clerics Borlase, Polwhele and Le Grice – men John Rowe described as “rationalist churchmen” – who were inclined to deride, mock and scorn faith in miracles. Wesley on the other hand, writes matter-of-factly of water spouts on the Newlyn coast that stank of sulphur, of a dead man whose right arm burst into flame because he had broken an oath, and of two sensible men from St. Just who out for a walk saw vast troops of horseman sweeping through the firmament and great fleets of mysterious ships rounding the peninsula. For Wesley and his followers, experiences of glorious visitations, palpable angelic presences, witches, demons, and other “invisible realities,” were not superstitious eccentricities of the sort that plagued the Papists, but aspects of the world they shared with many, if not all, of the people they hoped to convert.

In 1783 Wesley published his sermon “On Evil Angels” in which he laid out in some detail his thoughts on cosmological order. For Wesley “legions of dire, malicious fiends” were continually warring against humanity, keeping a close watch on every individual, waiting for signs of weakness. The devils would “disturb and sully the soul” by “touching the springs of the animal machine” in which it is contained. And those they could not entice to sin they tormented with “innumerable accidents,” such as “the

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74 Rowe, Cornwall in the Age of the Industrial Revolution, 67.18

unaccountable fright or falling of horses; the overturning of carriages; the breaking or dislocating of bones; the hurt done by the falling or burning of houses – by storms of wind, snow, rain, or hail – by lightning or earthquakes.” Wesley also attributed all manner of disease to diabolical agency and quoted an “eminent doctor” in support of his claim that most lunatics were really “demoniacs.”

Possession was a common occurrence in his journals, often climaxing on the cusp of conversion. He tells the story of John Haydon for instance, who had argued that Methodist conversions were inspired by the Devil until the day when he himself was possessed. Wesley was called to Haydon’s home shortly after a debate with him and found a crowd watching as the man screamed and beat himself. Wesley said Haydon looked at him and said “Aye, this is he I said deceived the people; but God hath overtaken me. I said, it was a delusion of the Devil; but this is no delusion.” Then, according to Wesley, Haydon roared aloud that he was possessed by a legion of devils, and began to beat himself again, groaning, and moaning until with the aid of Wesley’s prayers “God put a new song in his mouth.” In 1755 near Penzance he describes the three day exorcism of a young attorney (“Mr. K.”) who fell raving mad. “Lord how

76 Wesley, The Works of John Wesley, 469.


78 Wesley, Journal, 294.
long?” Mr. K. called out between the cursing and the screaming, “Wilt thou hide thy face forever? All my bones are broken. Thy wrath lieth heavy upon me: I am in the lowest darkness and in the deep. But the Lord will hear; he will rebuke thee, thou unclean spirit. He will deliver me out of thy hands.”

There is also Wesley’s account of a young woman near Kingswood, near Bristol, worth quoting in some detail,

She was nineteen or twenty years old; but, it seems, could not write or read. I found her on the bed, two or three persons holding her. It was a terrible sight. Anguish, horror, and despair, above all description, appeared in her pale face. The thousand distortions of her whole body, showed how the dogs of hell were gnawing her heart. The shrieks intermixed were scarce to be endured. But her stony eyes could not weep. She screamed out, as soon as words could find their way, “I am damned, damned; lost forever. Six days ago you might have helped me. But it is past. I am the devil’s now. I have given myself to him. His I am. Him I must serve. With him I must go to hell. I will be his. I will serve him. I will go to hell. I cannot be saved. I will not be saved. I must, I will, I will be damned.” She then began praying to the devil.

Wesley, with aid of his brother, prayed and sang over her as well, and she, like John Haydon was eventually saved. When one pays attention to such events conversion to Methodism begins to look less and less like an intellectual exercise, and more and more like an exorcism – and not just of individuals, but of an entire society. But the young woman’s cry that she “will not be saved,” and her declaration of personal commitment

80 Tyerman, Life and Times, 261.
to evil, also illustrates the centrality of ideas of predestination and free will to a manifestly physical experience of the religious.

When William Carvosso heard his first Methodist sermon at the age of twenty-one it was not written on a blank slate, but heard by someone who already knew what he had to fear of worlds both seen and unseen. The middle-class Mr. Haydon, the young attorney Mr. K., the collier’s daughter in Bristol, the young farmhand Carvosso, and the Rev. John Wesley had a great deal of common ground in their understanding of the body as a site of cosmological contestation. Carvosso will have heard few new “facts” in the sermon at Newlyn. Hell and Heaven were familiar enough, as was sin, and Christ on the cross, and judgement. But his evening among the Wesleyans agitated him nonetheless. He felt the “world would swallow him up,” and when he went home he spent the night in terror, convinced he was going to hell. The Devil “appeared as if he were beside me,” Carvosso wrote in his memoirs and with no one he knew to instruct him he suffered the “pains of hell” for long lonely days afterwards. He was terrified above all that it was too late for him. That like the collier’s daughter he had no hope, that his damnation was already written. Until in a fit of inspired intransigence he said to the devil,

“I am determined whether I am saved or lost, that, while I have breath, I will never cease crying for mercy.” The very moment I formed this resolution in my heart Christ appeared to me, and God pardoned all my sins, and set my soul at liberty. The Spirit itself now bore witness with my
spirit that I was a child of God. This was about nine o’clock at night, May 7, 1771; and never shall I forget that happy hour.\textsuperscript{81}

In his representation of these events, as was the case in Wesley’s various accounts of possessions and their denouements, what is critical is the interplay of grace and an act of free will. It is a choice that is the passport to salvation or the fires of hell. It was not only the invisible reality of the Devil who is overcome Carvosso’s recollection of his conversion, but the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. That challenge to Calvinism is one of the key themes of Carvosso’s memoirs and crops up repeatedly in his son Benjamin’s papers as well.\textsuperscript{82} In William Carvosso’s conversion stories the obstacle against which he personally struggled, and which he worked so hard to help so many around him overcome, was what appears to be the commonly held notion that even after hearing the message, and desiring conversion, one could already be beyond the reach of grace and destined to burn despite any change of heart. Such a pessimistic view of things stands in stark contrast to a Wesleyan Arminianism.

Largely thanks to Wesley, in eighteenth-century Britain the disagreement between Calvinists and Arminians had once again become a matter of controversy and

\textsuperscript{81} Carvosso, Efficacy, 38.

\textsuperscript{82} When visiting Samuel Dunn’s father, the ship-owner and former smuggler James, in Mevagissey, William Carvosso saw a seven week revival begin. Several converts had previously attended a “Calvinist chapel” and when their former minister complained of their denominational switch one of them told him that Carvosso had shown her the way to Christ and happiness in five minutes – something he had failed to do even after years of effort. Carvosso, The Efficacy, 224-226.
debate – although this time around and in this place the losers were less likely to be excommunicated, banished, decapitated or, like Hugo Grotius, driven from theology into less dangerous geopolitical and legal speculations. The sermons of John Wesley and the hymns of his brother Charles are so shot through with such disputations that even literate and semi-literate practitioners such as the Carvosso siblings could have quickly become familiar with subtle theological distinctions. Conversion in these stories was not the result of an argument or new information but the illuminating flash of Wesley’s “divine inspiration.” Benjamin related a story, for example, of how watching a poor man working on a fire to prepare a meal his father said, “John, if you had half as much faith in Jesus Christ as you have in those bellows, you would be set at liberty in a moment.” Here was his father’s method, continued Benjamin:

This at once brought the subject of faith in Christ within the man’s reach; in an instant he saw – he felt – he believed – and was saved from all his sins and sorrows. It was in this way he [William Carvosso] would seize on any thing open to the senses, and in one way or other render it subservient to his great object, the bringing of the soul to Jesus.  

Other techniques aimed at achieving this realization included asking a penitent to read and reread the same biblical or hymnal verse over and over again until it helped “the poor mourner over the bar of unbelief.” He would also ask those seeking forgiveness why they did not believe Christ when he told them their debt was

83 Carvosso, Efficacy, xii.

84 Carvosso, Efficacy, xiii.
already forgiven. According to the *Efficacy* this is Wesleyan Arminianism at its most basic, “old Methodism,” not theological lessons but vital demonstrations that the “liberty” so many people so ardently sought was already theirs.

However intense and personal the conversion experience in Carvosso’s memoirs it was always portrayed in terms of the individuals relations to a larger community. He wrote how even after his experience of salvation the Devil continued to put obstacles in his way, the most significant of which was his desire for secrecy and isolation. Even though he knew his brother Benedict was struggling with the same issues as he was, William was convinced that if he were to speak of what he had experienced he would once again fall into “contamination.” It was only after overhearing two friends from Mousehole discussing the subject of sanctification after a class meeting that he was drawn into their conversation and made public his conversion. It was a critical moment in Carvosso’s autobiography, the moment when he finally understood what he called “God’s method.”

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87 Carvosso, *Efficacy*, 33
88 Carvosso, *Efficacy*, 34
Religious revival was effected through constant movement and conversation. Carvosso, and then his brother Benedict, joined the small society because his sister had hiked the twelve miles from Gwinear to share her news with her family; William had walked to Newlyn to hear an itinerant minister preach; and it was through friends that he was introduced to the Wesleyan system of the class and was drawn into Methodist society. Nor did it stop there. His friend, neighbor, and now co-religionist, Richard Wright, was to soon leave Mousehole to become a travelling preacher. He had been selected by Wesley as “one of the first who went to America” with Francis Asbury.\footnote{Carvosso, \textit{Efficacy},} Carvosso himself was to one day become famous as a touring revivalist and letter-writer. And his children and grandchildren became missionaries on a global stage. This ever widening gyre of Christianization depended, in Carvosso’s view, on intimate and close exchanges between individuals who trusted and cared for each other. The evidence of Carvosso’s memoirs suggests those exchanges were much more likely to occur in informal than formal settings: at the work bench and the kitchen table rather than the ranked-order of the chapel pew. It was in the face-to-face confines of the cottage where spiritual authority was vested; not in institutions, offices or conferences.

In 1771 Carvosso’s spiritual travails were by no means over. Even after joining a Methodist class he longed to achieve a sense of peace he imagined as “inward
holiness."\textsuperscript{90} It seemed to him as if his sins were a tree that had been cut to the ground but whose stump – “an evil heart of unbelief” – remained as his black and sinful “inward nature.”\textsuperscript{91} He had yet to read any of Wesley’s own writings, or to develop a relationship with a Methodist who had achieved the equanimity he desired, and so he began to read the Bible voraciously. He became convinced through his reading that he could not be saved from damnation unless he achieved holiness; what he later came to call entire sanctification or perfection.\textsuperscript{92} He was troubled by this for almost a full year until, while attending an evening prayer-meeting, he began to exercise his faith by telling himself “I shall have the blessing now.”\textsuperscript{93} “Just at that moment,” he wrote years later, “a heavenly influence filled the room.” A “refining fire” swept through his heart, illuminating his soul, and sanctifying the whole,

> I then received the full witness of the Spirit that the blood of Jesus had cleansed me from sin. I cried out, “This is what I wanted! I have a new heart.” I was emptied of self and sin and filled with God,”\textsuperscript{94}

It was only after this public expression of his transformation that someone gave him Mr. Wesley’s pamphlet on Christian Perfection. On reading that pamphlet Carvosso

\textsuperscript{90} Carvosso, \textit{Efficacy}, 36.

\textsuperscript{91} Carvosso, \textit{Efficacy}, 35.

\textsuperscript{92} Carvosso, \textit{Efficacy}, 41.

\textsuperscript{93} Carvosso, \textit{Efficacy}, 37.

\textsuperscript{94} Carvosso, \textit{Efficacy}, 38.
declared himself amazed that a man he had never met could “read my heart in such a manner.”95

The concepts of Arminianism and Sanctification were used by all Wesleyans as markers of their difference from themselves and other evangelical groups, but they had a meaning that fluctuated depending on the circumstances. In Cornwall both concepts could be mobilized to shore up local authority, and William complained the circuit preachers did not preach Christian perfection enough.96 The doctrine of Sanctification, or Christian perfection, meant quite literally that some believers, no matter how poorly educated, uncultured or disrespectful, could claim something like a living sainthood as the justification for their proclamations. And Arminianism meant that no one was beyond the pale of salvation – no matter how degraded and sinful. There were to be no limits placed on the size of the salvaged Christian community or on the nature of its membership. That spiritual egalitarianism resonated dramatically with contemporary anxieties about social relations.

The Duchess of Buckingham famously said of Methodist preachers that “their doctrines were repulsive, and strongly tinctured with impertinence and disrespect towards their superiors, in perpetually endeavouring to level all ranks, and do away with all distinctions.” “It is monstrous to be told,” wrote the offended aristocrat to the

95 Carvosso, Efficacy, 35.

96 Carvosso, Efficacy, 16.
Methodist Lady Huntingdon, “That you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl on the earth.”

And Wesley recounts the story of a middle-aged tinner in St. Just jailed by Dr. Borlase,

I asked a little gentleman at St. Just what objection there was to Edward Greenfield: He said, “Why, the man is well enough in other things; but his impudence the gentlemen cannot bear. Why, sir, he says. He knows his sins are forgiven.”

Arminianism and Perfectionism were not just ideological solvents however, they were also binding agents. They may have had egalitarian and democratic potentialities but they also created fundamental doctrinal boundaries between Methodists and other evangelicals. Theological self-identification created real communities. No matter how muddy the distinction between Arminianism and Calvinism became in practice they could still function as shibboleths.

The concept of Sanctification or was also fundamental to the authority of lay revivalists like Carvosso. It critically destabilized theological and ministerial authority by moving holiness out of formal institutions, and into the lived experience of Methodists. Sanctification was not limited to the learned or the respectable. If anything too much intellectualism and worldliness functioned as a constraint on its achievement.

In the view of many of Wesley’s followers it was neither his Oxford education nor

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98 John Wesley, _The Journal_, 433.
clerical robes that made Wesley into a hero of the Great Awakening but his final submission to God’s purpose and his slow turning away, however reluctantly, from the confessional church. And when Carvosso achieved sanctification, a half-literate laborer and part-time fisherman from a village well beyond the pale of respectability, he made of himself a personality equal in holiness to the founder of the Methodist movement. But the Duchess of Buckingham was mistaken if she thought the chief effect of such doctrines was simply levelling. The Methodists were not simply trying to gain equal-opportunity access to institutions held by the English ruling classes but creating new forms of religious authority that would produce their own hierarchies.

Wesley had hoped the chapel and the class-meeting would supplement the church and its sacraments, not replace them, and in this he was perhaps naïve.

Carvosso’s memoirs make it clear that for many Wesleyans in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Cornwall such traditional, state sanctioned modes of interaction with the divine had been entirely overwhelmed by the unpredictable Pentecostal energies of revival. The regular ringing of the parish bells may have once ordered human relations with the sacred in the county, but for many Methodists they did so no more. In the cottages and meeting-rooms of western Cornwall their melodies were drowned out by the hymns, shouts, and cries of men and women whose experience of God was no longer mediated by gentlemen and university graduates. William Carvosso mentions the established church only in passing, as a reminder of how dissatisfying life had been
in the parish of Paul before Methodism broke the state’s monopoly on religion. Then the Church of England recedes entirely into the background of his accounting of life as he gets on with the business of holiness.

In 1775 three years after his sanctification Carvosso became a class leader, and Methodism in Mousehole had begun to thrive. The society moved from a home, to a fish curing cellar, to a purpose built room, until finally in 1783 a chapel. 99 By that time Carvosso had a family of his own and was living on the outskirts of Mousehole in a little cottage where he and his wife sometimes hosted the preachers that passed through on their circuits through western Cornwall. He farmed a piece of land near the village but had to supplement his income by working on the seine nets during the pilchard season. 100 Pilchards were the backbone of the Cornish fishing industry and were critical to Mousehole’s economic prosperity, and that of its Methodists as well. A room for drying pilchards was one of the society’s earliest, and most unpleasant, meeting places and fishermen figured prominently in its early history.

William’s brother Benedict, and his friend and business partner Richard Trewavas, were recognized by Wesley in Newlyn as his “Mousehole friends,” and were both fishermen and sailors101. They were exemplary enough of Mousehole’s Methodism

99 Carvosso, Efficacy, xx-xxi.

100 Carvosso, Efficacy, xx-xxi.

that both the very orthodox Rev. Richard Treffry, and the dissident Rev. Samuel Dunn wrote up their obituaries for the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* and the *Wesley Banner and Revival Record* respectively. Treffry even wrote up Trewavas’s memoirs. The trustees and stewards required for chapel construction were men with access to at least small amounts of capital, and who had expertise in the acquisition and sale of private property. As the chapel culture of Methodism began to replace that of the cottage, it was these individuals who would be best positioned to challenge the metropolitan leadership of the Connexion for power.

The society in Mousehole had certainly become more affluent during the first ten years or so of William’s membership – even if he had not. His brother Benedict and friend Richard Trewavas may have been happy as fishermen and pilots, and his friend the local preacher Harry Carter from across the Bay was a merchant, smuggler, and privateer, but Carvosso had little desire to make a haphazard living from the sea.102

102 *The Autobiography of a Cornish Smuggler: Captain Harry Carter of Prussia Cove*, ed. J. B. Cornish, 2nd edn (London: William Byles and Son, 1900); On fishing in the region see, W. J. Bennett, “A Century of Change on the Coast of Cornwall: Seaborne Trade, Fishing and the Tourist Industry in the Mid-19th and 20th Centuries,” *Geography*, 37, no. 4 (November, 1952), pp. 214-224; see also Maryanne Kowaleski, “The Expansion of the South-Western Fisheries in Late Medieval England” *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 53, No. 4, (Aug., 2000). Traditionally pilchard fishing was a communal industry that occurred in the summer when large shoals of the fish would approach the shores. Spotters or “huers” on the cliffs and rocks would watch for the schools and alert the teams of fishermen waiting below. Each team consisted of three or four boats manned by a crew of four to six. They would use seine nets to encircle the pilchards and haul them to shore. Once landed the pilchards would be dry salted in a fish cellar for a month; then packed into barrels and pressed to drain out the valuable oil; finally packed for export – primarily to the Mediterranean and, according to no less a journalistic authority than Charles Dickens, the slave-owners and free blacks of the “new continent.” The number of boats and the large crews meant seine fishing came to be dominated by men with capital and was in Cornwall protected by acts of parliament from the incursions of fishermen using drift nets. In drift netting larger boats would put out into deeper water and lay their nets out to drift
When that unasked for opportunity to lease a farm in the heart of the mining district arose, he leapt at it.\textsuperscript{103} When he got there he found neither the land nor the community promising. He described the latter as barren and desert, and his son Benjamin described the hill on which their farm was perched in similar terms.\textsuperscript{104}

The Carvosso’s rented property had long been sold from landowner to landowner, and farmed by tenants. Its oldest extant lease is from 1396.\textsuperscript{105} The nearby village of Ponsanooth was nestled into the rolling countryside between the parishes of Gluvias, Perranarworthal and Stithians, and had never warranted a church of its own.\textsuperscript{106} The characterization by the Carvossos of their new home as a frontier of Christian civilization however, is more useful to the myth of Cornish backwardness so beloved by evangelists and reformers, than it is accurate. The region to which the family moved was as much a laboratory of modernity as a site of resistance to it, and was also close to

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with tide and so doing, according to the seine operators, intercept the shoals before they reached the shore. The drift nets can be laid by a single boat and a crew of three or four men.

\textsuperscript{103} For a short history of the farm see John C. Carbis, \textit{Cosawes Barton, Ponsanooth, Cornwall} (Chelsea: In-Pensioner, 2004).

\textsuperscript{104} Carvosso, \textit{The Efficacy}, 5.

\textsuperscript{105} Carbis, \textit{Cosawes Barton}, 13.

\textsuperscript{106} Carbis, \textit{Cosawes Barton}, 23.
the very center of the societies and chapels that were to become famous in the next century as the “mob of Methodism.”

2.3 The Redruth Putsch: The Industrial Revolution and the Moral Economy of a Cornish Farmer

Cornwall had a long and active participation in both legal and illegal forms of Atlantic commerce and also played a central role in the eighteenth-century revolution of mining technologies. The old forms of streaming for tin in the rivers and scraping it out of the hillsides were little more than memories by the beginning of the nineteenth century. In 1712 the steam engine Thomas Newcomen had invented in neighboring Devon began pumping subterranean water out of shafts faster than it could collect in them, making possible mines of previously unimaginable depth. Such machines were massive and required large pools of capital to purchase, maintain, and operate – an expense that led Cornish businessmen to tinker almost as much with corporate forms as the engineers did with the steam engines. The result of almost constant technological and institutional experimentation was a business culture more attractive to small-time

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107 Jabez Bunting was so frustrated with their stubborn lay independence he was reputed to have said of the Cornish that “they are the mob of Methodism, they have always been rude and refractory.” Samuel Drew’s son cited a conversation between his father and “a Wesleyan minister who was a strenuous defender of ecclesiastical domination.” Jacob Halls Drew, The Life, Character, and Literary Labours of Samuel Drew, A.M. (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Green and Longman, 1834), 491. See also Thomas Shaw, A History of Cornish Methodism (Truro: Barton, 1967), 81-82.
local players than to metropolitan (or so-called “foreign”) investors unfamiliar with the Cornish cost-book method of financing big industrial undertakings.108

By the time the Carvossos arrived in the parish of St. Gluvial there were dozens of mines or wheals in operation in the region, and the landscape was already acquiring the classic look of industrial Cornwall – of rustic horizons broken here and there by the brick fortresses of the engine houses. Since the early 1700s some thirty shafts had been sunk in the Gwennap mining district just north of Ponsanooth, a place famously called the richest square mile on earth and where mining magnate Sir William Lemon’s agent could earn the nickname “Guinea-a-minute” Daniell.109 Great sums of money were to be made by those with the capital to spare and the courage to risk it – and almost equal amounts lost. The water mills which ground and stamped the ore, and the smelting houses which refined it, had begun transforming the landscape as early as the Tudor period and had recently been joined by ancillary industries such as arsenic and gunpowder factories. In 1748 construction had begun on the massive Great County Adit, an underground drainage system that eventually served some sixty mines, and as early as 1809 the first Cornish (non-steam) railway had been built – horse-drawn trams hauled ore from the in-land mines to the newly renovated harbor at Portreath from

108 See Rowe The Industrial Revolution in Cornwall.

whence they were shipped to the smelters of south Wales. In 1815 a traveler described
the industrial vistas of west Cornwall as a source of terror: “I perceived myself in a land
of sounding pits, and frightful chasms, marked with the vestiges of unconquerable
sterility, and traversed by hordes of apparently earth-born men, from whom I was
happy to keep at the greatest distance.” The traditional parish map of the landscape
no longer neatly matched the territory. And while the church yard and the farmer’s
field were not really about to be swallowed entirely up, there were certainly locations
where they had been all but overwhelmed by the necessities of resource extraction and
transportation. It was in these locations, places like Ponsanooth, where Methodism
flourished.

By the end of the eighteenth century West Cornwall was not just a society of
people who might try their hand at tinning, fishing, smuggling or wrecking as the
opportunity presented itself. It was also populated by the “Captains” of Cornish mining
culture. A new and prosperous body of managers and engineers who ploughed their
earnings back into the industry. But it was also home to an ever-growing landless


112 John Rule, “The Labouring Miner in Cornwall, 1740-1870: A Study in Social History” (PhD diss.
University of Warwick 1971); Rex Pope, Atlas of British Social and Economic History since 1700 (London:
Routledge, 2001) 216.
proletariat who spent their days underground and their nights in hastily built and company-owned row housing.

Mortality among the Cornish miners was more than two and half times higher than that of coal miners elsewhere in Britain and three times that of fishermen.\textsuperscript{113} They were not only killed, crippled and blinded in accidents but destroyed by debilitating lung-ailments. In 1847 the parish of Gwennap reported of the 240 poor families receiving its charity, 200 were miners’ families. Of those 200, 15 of the fathers had been killed in the mines; 40 permanently disabled; 63 died from lingering disease; 15 were too ill from lung ailments to work. One in five miners, a Gwennap parish doctor estimated, would be killed at work. It is no wonder the miners were a notoriously hard-living, hard-drinking, and superstitious lot. They believed the mines were haunted by the faeries that used to live in the forests and on the moors, and tommyknockers, the ghosts of Jews who demanded constant propitiation.\textsuperscript{114} They knew that they were digging ever closer to the black pit of hell, and when men like the celebrated hymn-singing miner Billy Bray promised them a salvation from an eternity spent in the same darkness in which they had lived, many were inclined to listen. But William Carvosso, who also sought to save them, was not, of course, a miner – he was a farmer.

\textsuperscript{113} Rule, “Risky Business,” 160.

Farmers as a whole, however pious, were not the most beloved figures of Georgian Britain and that was certainly the case amongst the miners of western Cornwall as well. Tinners regularly organized corn riots against price-fixing merchants and farmers; they did so in 1789, 1793, 1795-96, 1801-03 and 1812. They would march about the town and countryside searching for corn and carrying nooses as an encouragement for farmers to sign a promise to keep prices at a moderate level. There was enough unrest and discontent that in 1793 the gentry were nervous about the wisdom of letting working men into the armed associations that were formed to resist French invasion. The Vicar of Veryan wrote to a correspondent that the “volunteers may turn their arms more against the farmers and the gentry, than against any invading French,” and Sir Francis Bassett recalled that in 1796 the corn dealers were so terrorized by the miners that he was forced to swear in fifty special constables, arrest the ring leaders, and hang one unfortunate as an example to the people. And in the celebrations that followed the end of the Napoleonic Wars the newspapers of Cornwall

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117 Rowe, *Cornwall in the Age of the Industrial Revolution* 104.

118 Quoted in Rowe, *Cornwall in the Age of the Industrial Revolution*, 104.
nervously reported that along with effigies of Bonaparte those of farmers and millers were being thrown into fires.\(^{119}\)

Not only were the farmers hated by many on whom they looked down from their middling perches, they were at times despised by those to whom they looked up. John Rule quotes a parson calling them “Jews” and “sneaking fellows;” another that they were “too avaricious;” Arthur Young declared that when he saw a piano forte in a farmer’s house he wished it burned; and in 1800 \textit{The Times} declared “a farmer ought not to be a rich man.”\(^{120}\) The dislike was often mutual. Tithing in particular was an irritant. William Carvosso’s eldest son, also named William, for example, appeared as one of a number of farmers involved in a relatively well-tempered dispute with the Vicar at Mylor over various payments in 1825.\(^{121}\) And while that was the decade when the Cornish yeomanry began any activity resembling full blown “tithe warfare” such protests, legal and otherwise, were preceded by years of frustration and resentment.\(^{122}\)

When the effigies of farmers were burned in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars a letter appeared in the \textit{West Briton} complaining about public perception. “The ignorant blame them for the high prices and profiteering,” the correspondent wrote,

\(^{119}\) \textit{West Briton}, May, March 29, 1814.

\(^{120}\) John Rule, \textit{Albion’s People}, 55-60.


\(^{122}\) Rowe, \textit{Cornwall in the Age of the Industrial Revolution}, 243
“but like all businessmen” farmers simply sought the best price in the best market.\textsuperscript{123} It is thanks to them the writer continued, that where twenty years ago there was heath, now there was wheat, clover and smiling cottagers. Even the poor were looked after better by the generous farmers than they had been previously. It was a letter that could have been written for the Carvossos. And William Carvosso the younger appears again in the historical record with his brother-in-law Robert Rundle, another yeoman, on leases held by the Lemon family for land on which the Mylor Methodist chapel and a work house were to be built.\textsuperscript{124} Here were opportunities for men who imagined themselves as self-made to help reconstruct the social world in their own image – one in which the struggle against the vagaries of the market determined one’s position in the world, not the accidents of birth.

William Carvosso the elder did not indulge in soft-lit nostalgia in recollecting his 1814 retirement from farming – no matter how ideal a profession he thought it. He reflected on the hard work and risks involved, how “the prices of all articles of produce being in a very fluctuating state” led to constant anxiety.\textsuperscript{125} His son Benjamin, in a brief sketch of his father’s life in business, is also hard-nosed and unromantic about the

\textsuperscript{123} \textit{West Briton}, March 21, 1814.

\textsuperscript{124} Lease for chapel land, August 19, 1818, Cornwall Record Office (Hereafter CRO), WH/1/650; Lease for a workhouse land, September 27, CRO, WH/1/723.

\textsuperscript{125} Carvosso, \textit{Efficacy}, 54
agricultural industry. “It was a mere desert,” wrote Benjamin of the land to which his father had moved his family, “on which his neighbours prophesied he would soon starve.” Nor could William stock his new concern without going into debt, a moral and fiscal burden which weighed heavily on him. It was “a burden and grief unto his soul,” and a great deal of his prayer in the early years at Ponsanooth were concerned with his desire to “owe no man anything,” and to own his “little stock” outright.

And in a business culture organized around the speculative adventure, and in a religious community where the one mode of gambling permitted was in the market, William Carvosso was the very image of staid conservatism. “In his views and habits,” his son wrote, “He was unambitious and anti-speculative...[A]nd no one could ever draw him aside to embark either in vain politics, or in airy schemes to advance his worldly interests.” Even in the gold-rush atmosphere of industrializing Gwennap he could not be induced to take a share in a mine. When some friends brought a mining agent around to convince him to join a venture he refused, saying “it was not his

126 Carvosso, Efficacy, 57.
127 Carvosso, Efficacy, 60.
128 Carvosso, Efficacy, 60.
129 Carvosso, Efficacy, 58.
130 Just to give a sense of the industries volatility in 1835 an original share in the Caradon South mine cost £1, by 1836 they worth £2000. From Denys Bradford Barton, A Historical Survey of the Mines and Railways of East Cornwall and West Devon, (Truro: Bradford Barton, 1964) 32-39, quoted in Rule, “A Risky Business,” 157,
business to venture beyond ‘a plough deep.’”

Inevitably that scheme collapsed and on his death bed he included his providential escape from aged penury in his grateful enumerations of God’s mercy. “What a number of Christian families,” Benjamin could not resist reflecting, “Would have been saved from the ruinous snares of riches; and how many more from the overwhelming trials and disappointments and failures, had there been the same stern adherence to the path of duty.”

“He could bear sloth neither in himself or others,” wrote his son of William, “and hence, as a master, when occasion required, he would, with stinging, stirring words, move on those around him.”

His punctuality deserved imitation as well, Benjamin continued, whether in payment of a debt or in performance of a duty he would no more rob another of his time, than his money. But for William Carvosso work always ceased for the Sabbath and the class meeting. Benjamin Carvosso on his father,

In his attention to the means of grace, he moved with the regularity of clockwork. Seldom could either company or fatigue, or employment keep him from visiting the place of public worship, from five to seven times a week; though the distance was about a mile from his residence to the chapel. By pushing on the work a little in the former part of the day, he would find time even in the bustle of the harvest, to break off from labour, so that all hands, if they were inclined, might attend preaching or meeting at night.

131 Carvosso, Efficacy, 59

132 Carvosso, Efficacy, 59

133 Carvosso, Efficacy, 61.

134 Carvosso, Efficacy, 61.
By the end of William Carvosso’s career as a farmer, whatever his success in the business of farming, the region was a hotbed of enthusiastic Methodism. Many of the managers and stock-holders of the great mines worshipped in the same social spaces as the men who risked their lives in the shafts, and few of either group were, in the parlance of the day, “respecters of persons.” To the horror of the metropolitan conference if the ministers they sent to shepherd these flocks proved unpopular, they would be harassed and harangued, even barred from connexional chapels. And if revival frequently swelled the congregations, schism just as often divided and scattered them. They were critics of the older agrarian order dominated by the squire and the vicar, and were eager to reform social and economic relations in Cornwall in the image of the Chapel and the Class Meeting. Their attitude towards English foreigners was often obstreperous, a sort of resistance to metropolitan interference in local affairs. And that attitude also led to problems within Methodism itself, and in particular between the businessmen, managers and farmers who paid for the chapels and the circuit ministers, and the Conference to which they belonged.


Within mere months of Wesley’s death a group of fifty leading Cornish Methodists met in Redruth, on June 14th, 1791, to draft a manifesto on the future course of Wesleyan Methodism in Britain. A large portion were drawn from an industrial middle class which included Richard Trevithick Sr., the famous inventor’s father and a mining captain, the engineer John Budge, Paul Penrose another captain, and John Martyn an associate of the merchant and the mining speculator Thomas Daniell. But the group also included a Dr. Boase, Benedict Carvosso, the fisherman from Mousehole, and his brother William. In that document they made the demands that henceforth class leaders should not be chosen by the minister but elected by their class, that no one could join or be expelled from a class except by vote, that lay stewards could investigate the conduct of ministers and expel them from a circuit, that every new minister arrive with the references from the stewards of his previous circuit, and that lay preachers have an equal voice in local issues as the ministers sent by the conference. The annual Conference of the ministers would have none of such Jacobinism and rejected it outright. It was the opening volley of a connexional battle between lay advocates and metropolitan institutional men that would last over a half century.

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137 See George Smith, History of Wesleyan Methodism, 87, 702; Rowe, Cornwall in the Age of the Industrial Revolution, 261.2.

138 Rowe, Cornwall in the Age of the Industrial Revolution, 261.2.
The British Conference as a whole was torn with schism and discontent during the years following Wesley’ s death. It was polarized by the conflict between the “High Church” Methodists who wanted to stay within the Anglican fold, and democrats like Alexander Kilham who had a similar view of Weseyan constitution as the Carvossos and their ilk. By 1799 the moderates had won, Kilham and his followers had seceded and the “High Church” party was defeated.139 Radicalism was constrained but at the cost of a final breach with the Church of England.

1799 was also the year of the revival in Cornwall to which Polwhele had been responding when he published his Anecdotes of Methodism (under the imprint of the Anti-Jacobian Press).140 Anecdotes was a collection of gossip and slander in which the Vicar of Manaccan (and Rector of St. Anthony in Meneage) described the Wesleyans as a “fraternity compounded of hypocrites and enthusiasts.”141 In the controversy that followed, and in particular in the thorough response of the Cornish Methodist, philosopher and shoe maker Samuel Drew, it became clear that for many of the more respectable Methodists – even in Cornwall – that the boisterous revivalism so popular

139 Benjamin Gregory, Sidelights on the Conflicts of Methodism during the Second Quarter of the Nineteenth Century, 1827-1852 (London: Cassell, 1898) 44. Gregory writes that in response that in response to “young Kilham’s agitation, and his furtive and impatient mode of rushing on the changes” the Conference came up with the “wise and truly statesmanly and pastoral Plan of Pacification and Leeds Regulations in 1795-1797.” And that program which produced “the most sedative and satisfactory results, and were followed by twice seven years of matchless quiet.”

140 Rowe, Cornwall in the Age of the Industrial Revolution 261.5.

141 Polwhele, Anecdotes of Methodism, 7.
among the laboring classes might have to be pruned from the main body.\textsuperscript{142} It was too much of a lightning rod for criticism and controversy. For the Carvossos however, both father and son, the revival and revivalism were to remain of the utmost importance, and was central to the next half century of the family’s religious life.

\textbf{2.4 The Hound of God: Revivalism, Missions and the Conference Party}

Early in 1814, shortly after the death of his wife, Carvosso recorded that a revival broke out in nearby Redruth, and had spread to various parts of Cornwall. “It was such a revival as my eyes never saw before,” he wrote, “I call it “a glorious revival,” for such it proved to my own soul; my faith was so increased to see the mighty power of God displayed in convincing and converting such vast multitudes.”\textsuperscript{143} William’s son Benjamin, who was by that time a local preacher and soon to go out on trial as a circuit preacher for the Conference, went to the town to see what was happening with his own eyes. He was astounded by the depths of “penitential pain” the people of the town were experiencing, and the beaming countenances of the many young converts.\textsuperscript{144} It had begun with a handful of conversions in a prayer-meeting in February and in the course of a week “deep distress” over “spiritual interests” had become general in the town.

\textsuperscript{142} Rowe, \textit{Cornwall in the Age of the Industrial Revolution} 261.7.

\textsuperscript{143} Carvosso, \textit{Efficacy}, 46-47.

\textsuperscript{144} Carvosso, \textit{Efficacy}, 48.
itself, and the “heavenly flame” had been carried through out the district. “More than five thousand of the ignorant, trifling, and immoral world became seriously concerned about eternal things” wrote Benjamin, and “united themselves to religious society.” 145 And while it was true that many soon drifted back into their old practices it was also true, he continued, “that to this day, multitudes of them are found steadfast in the ways of God, and that hundreds, if not thousands, of them have “died in faith.” “Of all the various revivals of religion, of which Cornwall has been so remarkably a scene since Methodism was first planted in it,” he wrote, “the revival of which my father speaks is the most striking and interesting. It is therefore now generally distinguished by the epiphnet of “the great revival.” 146 And “in promoting this great and “glorious work,”” his father was not only an active and energetic agent, but was transformed himself: from a pious farmer to a full-time revivalist.

As was frequently the case this revival did not begin in the chapels but only moved there from a domestic space: the home of a long-standing Methodist the so-called Roundhouse in lower Redruth. 147 The intensity and drama of the affair, and a sense of why it so disturbed some respectable and middle-class Wesleyans, is made clear by the following description of the initial nine-day burst of activity:

145 Carvosso, Efficacy, 48.
146 Carvosso, Efficacy, 47.
147 S. W. Christophers, Poets of Methodism (London: Hoddon and Stoughton, 1877), 207.
Hundreds were crying for mercy at once. Some remained in great
distress of the soul for one hour, some for 2, some 6, some 9, 12, and some
for 15 hours before the Lord spoke peace to their souls – then they would
rise, extend their arms, & proclaim the wonderful works of God, with
such energy, that bystanders would be struck in a moment, & fall to the
ground & roar for the distress of their souls.148

The tumult was so great and the participation so universal that even the marketplace
shut down. Cornish historian Hamilton Jenkin described how this “extraordinary
agitation” not only continued in Redruth but spread westward away from the
agricultural land and deeper into mining country. It reached its most violent intensity at
the Hayle Copper Works, the Wheal Alfred mine, and in their attendant villages. Jenkin,

At the mine about 800 labourers at the surface (male and female), chiefly
young people, where the torrent bore down everything that stood in its
way. Were I to attempt to describe it I could no find words sufficient to
draw in colours strong enough. All labour for some days was suspended,
and the underground labourers (equally as numerous as those on the
surface) seemed to be struck with the same power – but being more
advanced in years I think they appeared to have a greater mastery over
their passions than the others had.149

Many Cornish Methodists had begun to think that there something to be feared in these
powerful events. It was not just vicars like Polwhele who were suspicious of revivalist
extravagance. Polwhele’s Wesleyan interlocutor Samuel Drew said of revivals that good

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148 Quoted in W.R. Ward, “Popular Religion and the Problem of Social Control,” in Popular Belief and Practice, 

may come of the noise and excitement of the revival he worried that “such methods of saving souls are included in the definition of fanaticism.”  

“I fear,” Drew said,  

There is an artifice with some preachers and people to light up this contagious fire. I have been behind the curtain and seen a little of it; and am filled with disgust in proportion to the discovery. If the work be of God he does not want the tricks I have witnessed. The question of permanency, too, presents itself…The history of the past years teaches us that their apostasy has been nearly as extensive as their reformation. The benefit of such cases is lost, while the disgust excited in the minds of sober persons still remains. In many instances, I conceive, these things have created and confirmed prejudices which an age will hardly wipe.

And Joseph Benson, the editor of the Wesleyan Methodist Magazine, the Conference organ, and a veteran of the Cornish revival of 1795, was so suspicious of the “unpleasant” events of the revival, that the Rev. Francis Truscott, wrote a defensive letter to him in London. “‘Disorder’ is something like a relative term and what would be pronounced disorder in some places might be deemed very good order in others,” wrote Truscott, “I will not give what I relate a name but leave you to judge them as you please.” Truscott, who was a Carvosso family friend, then admitted his fondness for


151 Drew, The Life, 487.


Cornwall, and went on to describe how there was very little simple “imitation” except among children, and that many of the people who came just to mock frequently found their derision turned to despair. Young women made humbling confessions of sin, he told Benson, and destroyed their baubles and combs, and even cut off their curls. This was all, in Truscott’s view, the work of the Holy Spirit.

For William Carvosso the experience of the Great Revival marked his transition from yeoman farmer to full-time revivalist and itinerant exhorter. He reports that it saw the Wesleyan Society in Ponsanoth balloon from “one small and feeble class.” to two hundred members divided into eleven classes.\(^{154}\) His wife had just died, his children had all moved out, and he had begun to withdraw from his role as a leader in the small community.\(^ {155}\) He gave up the world and retired to Mylor, just down the road, where he lived with his daughter’s family.\(^ {156}\) From Mylor he could not only continue to provide guidance to his Ponsanoth classes but begin travelling the whole of west Cornwall in the constant perambulations that would only end with his death in 1834.

As to the causes of Cornish revivals there has been much speculation over the years, particularly during the heyday of social history. W.R. Ward, John Rule and David

\(^{154}\) Carvosso, *Efficacy*, 47.


\(^{156}\) Carvosso, *Efficacy*, 62.
Luker all explain the phenomenon not as exceptional events but as cyclical. Luker in particular has developed a conceptual apparatus in which the revival is understood as a locally delimited form of a popular religion, one in which periodic outbursts of “joyous exultation” met the particular needs of Cornish mining and fishing communities better than did Wesleyan Methodism proper.

Ward contrasts the Cornish volkskirche (informal people’s church) with the Anglican landeskirche (formal national church), the latter an institution imposed on the people by the confessional state, and the former an organic product of a local culture. In his view the Cornish people, “under native impulses,” were making Methodism into a popular and local movement rather than an import. Cornish society was free and disorderly relative to the rest of England, as were its Methodist practices, and its revivals were too explosive to be constrained by metropolitan machinery.

For John Rule as well, enthusiastic revivalism was typical of a sort of a popular and local religion produced by the interplay of metropolitan Wesleyanism and an indigenous Cornish culture. Like Ward and Luker he used the word volkskirche to

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157 Luker, “Revivalism in Theory and Practice,” 603-619
describe it. Cornish Methodism in Rule’s view was controlled by local laymen, preachers, and class leaders to unprecedented degree not just because of the regions remoteness but “the special affinity” of Methodism to “a traditional culture.” Revivalism in Cornwall was an internally driven phenomenon, a stage of renewal in the life cycle of the local religious community in which a new generation was incorporated into the societies.

As we have already seen, the evidence of the Wesleys’ journals certainly suggests that familiarity with revivalistic practices in eighteenth century Britain was not only widespread but even preceded the Wesleyan Revival itself. In communities as presumably isolated from each other as Yorkshire and Cornwall, people expressed their despair at the thought of damnation, and their joy at escaping it, in similar ways; weeping, throwing themselves to the ground, convulsive fits, disruptive shouting during sermons, bursts of laughter, and song. In 1771 when Francis Asbury and his English preachers, whose numbers included Richard Wright, Carvosso’s companion from Mousehole, arrived in the New World as Wesley’s official emissaries they found such behaviour already there, waiting for them. Revival of considerable breadth and


163 John Wigger, Taking Heaven By Storm: Enthusiasm and Early American Methodism, 1770-1820, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 178-179. Since Richard Carwardine’s classic Transatlantic Revivalism: Popular Evangelicalism in Britain and America, 1790-1865 there has been a plethora of studies on evangelical revivals and revivalism in which its larger cultural and social milieu is explored. Wigger even suggests that it was the Methodist accommodation of dreams, visions, supernaturals impressions, miraculous healings, speaking in tongues and other revivalist enthusiasms, rather than a theological abstraction like Arminianism, that
variety had been an element of colonial religious practice since at least the end of the seventeenth century: the “singing Quakers” of Long Island had been active in the 1680s; there was a revival among French Huguenots in the 1690s; Dutch revivals in New Jersey in the 1720s; German and Presbyterian attempts at revival in Pennsylvania during the 1740s; and in the same decade Boston saw examples of “enthusiasm” critics claimed were modelled on that of London’s “French Prophets.” The Great Awakening associated with the Church of England Evangelical George Whitfield’s visit to New England in the 1740s had plenty of precedent in such episodic phenomena.

Revivalism, however typical of the Cornish, was certainly not unique to them, or to Yorkshire, or to the colonies, or even British territory. It was a set of ritual and discursive practices that was circulated about the North Atlantic with the demographic currents and ideological winds that moved its diverse peoples. The camp-meeting for which American Methodism became so famous, for example, may well have originated in the backwoods of Kentucky in the late eighteenth century. But Scots Presbyterian colonists had been celebrating similar sacramental revivals for generations. Asbury was the typical characteristic of early American Methodism. Wigger, *Taking Hevaen By Storm*, 173. For a similar take on Britain see Phyllis Mack, *Heart Religion*.

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and the American Methodists were quick to invigorate this old ritual form imported from Calvinist Scotland with their Arminian enthusiasms. The English Divine became one of its great proponents. In his journals Asbury celebrated how much louder and long lasting were the shouts glorying God at “our camp-meetings,” than the worldly celebrations over the bottle and the still.\textsuperscript{166} He called attention to the fact that blacks, whites and “half breeds” worshipped at them together;\textsuperscript{167} how it was necessary to preach in English and German;\textsuperscript{168} and how their scope was universal. Writing of a meeting in New York where he preached over a few days to some six thousand people, he said “the world seemed to make a surrender.” At that single meeting he claimed some two hundred souls were made subject grace “in its various operations of conviction, conversion, sanctification and reclamation.”\textsuperscript{169} “Camp meetings! Camp meetings!” Asbury is reputed to have said, “are the battle axe and the weapon of war – it will breakdown the walls of wickedness, the forts of Hell!”\textsuperscript{170}

Even after the War of Independence and the separation of the British and American churches into national organizations revivalist ideas and practices continued

\textsuperscript{166} The Journal of the Rev. Francis Asbury, Vol. 3, (New York: Lane & Scott, 1852), 135

\textsuperscript{167} Asbury, 137, 145, 374

\textsuperscript{168} Asbury, 341

\textsuperscript{169} Asbury, 224

to weave a transnational and transatlantic web between the subjects of the British Empire and the citizens of the new republic. The American Methodist circuit–rider and missionary Nathan Bangs said it was proverbial in New York that “northern Preachers brought the Canada fire with them,” and sparked the conflagration that raged across the burned-over district of upstate New York for almost half a century.171 The British Methodist William Black was converted in Yorkshire in the 1770s before he travelled to Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and became a revivalist in his own right. In the 1780s the American Methodist Freeborn Garretson arrived in Halifax and quickly overshadowed Black to spend a few years preaching the “New Light” message.172 The infamous American Methodist revivalist Lorenzo “Crazy” Dow spent time visiting “Whispering” Wooster in Upper Canada before at the turn of the century he carried his long dark locks, prophetic energy, Painite rhetoric and Jeffersonian Republicanism to Ireland and Britain. Once in the old country he drove the Wesleyan ministers to horrified distraction with his New World vulgarities, his antics and his popularity.173

The Conference leaders were already familiar with the problem of the revival and its challenge to ministerial authority. On their side of the Atlantic the Yorkshire


172 Rawlyk, Canada Fire, 44.

173 On Dow and Wooster see Rawlyk, Canada Fire, 111; on Dow’s politics see David Hempton, The Religion of the People: Methodism and Popular Religion, 1750-1900 (London: Routledge, 1996), 137.
Revival of the 1790s included no-small number of women preachers: Ann Cutler (“Praying Nanny”), who the Wesleyan circuit preacher William Bramwell credited with triggering the revival, the nineteen-year old Elizabeth Dickenson who would go into trance’s during open air meetings, and Mary Barritt who not only prayed and exhorted her audience but even preached on biblical texts. That revival spread from the countryside to Leeds and other rapidly industrializing towns and its perceived lack of discipline appalled many conservative Wesleyans. The Yorkshire Revival was followed by the emergence of the Quaker Methodists of Warrington, who broke with the “conference-made Methodism” in 1795 under the leadership of the chair-maker Peter Phillips. Warrington was just on the northern side of the Mersey, which ran between Lancashire and Cheshire. On its south bank at High Legh there was a Wesleyan Society which had begun in the dairy of Betty Okell. Shortly after its formation it joined with the Quaker Methodists to become the first Independent Methodist Connexion. It was while attending the Okell’s congregation that David Livingstone’s future father-in-law, a young Robert Moffat was converted in 1814. And it was on a trip to Warrington where Moffat decided on his vocation after seeing a Methodist placard for a missionary.

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175 Valenze, *Prophetic Sons and Daughters*, 76

In 1800 the Magic Methodists of Delamere Forest, also on the Cheshire side of the Mersey, began to meet in the home of the Wesleyan local preacher James Crawfoot – “the Old Man of the Forest.” Crawfoot was a correspondent of Dow and dabbled in prophecy as did his followers. The women who worshipped with him spoke in trances and had visions of a “celestial pecking order.” “The Head of the Church,” they proclaimed, “now stands as follows James Crawfoot 1, Lorenzo Dow 2, Mary Dunnel 3.” The third on the list was a female local-preacher from the nearby mill-town of Macclesfield.

The leaders of these various northwestern sects were examples of what Deborah Valenze has called “cottage evangelicals.” They were preachers who emerged from a rural religious culture organized around the domicile or the working space rather than the chapel. And to Valenze’s list of homes, barns, dye-houses, sheds, and fields, all alternative sites of worship, we could add the pilchard-drying facilities of Mousehole.


178 *A Short History of Independent Methodism*, 77.


182 Lloyd, 701-71; Valenze, *Prophetic Sons and Daughters*, 95.

In places where circuit-ministers sent by the Conference were infrequent visitors, and there was no strong Church of England presence, ritual life was dominated by local preachers and exhorters, many of whom, as we have seen, were women. Some of them were already familiar with American-style camp-meetings from Methodist periodicals, and when Lorenzo Dow made his transatlantic trips a remarkable synergy was achieved. But from the view of an increasingly professionalized Methodist clergy they all belonged to the same party; and that party was “Ranterism.”

During his second visit to Britain, Dow encouraged Hugh Bourne, a lay leader of a vibrant Methodist community in the Potteries (a collection of six factory towns in north Staffordshire) to hold England’s first camp-meeting on Mow Cop, a hill straddling the boundary between Staffordshire and Cheshire. On May 31st, 1807 somewhere between 2000 and 4000 people spent the day there singing, praying and listening to Dow and others preach. At the next conference the Wesleyan ministers published on a ban on the meetings,

It is our judgement, that even supposing such meetings to be allowed in America, they are highly improper in England, and likely to be

184 Valenze, Prophetic Sons and Daughters, 22-27.
187 Lloyd, Persistent Preachers, 69.
productive of considerable mischief: and we disclaim all connexion with them.  

Bourne, the leader of the “Camp Meeting Methodists” was expelled by the Wesleyans and in 1811 he, his brother, and another dissident William Clowes, built their own chapel and shortly after founded the Primitive Methodist Connexion. They had no shortage of allies. James Crawfoot was briefly a preacher for the new Connexion, as was Mary Dunnel. In Leeds James Sigson and three hundred of his followers were expelled by the Wesleyans, built a chapel and became known as the “Kirkgate Screamers.”  

And in Lancashire there was a whole cluster of revivalist groups who had been inspired not just by Dow but by Dorothy Ripley. Ripley, an erstwhile Quaker and the daughter of a Methodist family from Yorkshire, began preaching while on an abolitionist tour of the United States where she had met and been encouraged by Asbury. There were also the Band Room Methodist from Manchester, and the Christian Revivalists from Macclesfield. In 1817 the Tent Methodists were attracting large crowds to their

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188 Quoted in Valenze, Prophetic Sons and Daughter,.


190 Lloyd, Persistent Preachers, 68.


192 Warner, Saving Women,
outdoor services in the vicinity of Bristol.\textsuperscript{193} And in the 1820s Ann Carr founded the Female Revivalist Society in Leeds.\textsuperscript{194}

During the same period in which Bourne and his friends were organizing Primitive Methodism in the mill-towns and artisanal villages of the north east, and holding their camp-meetings in the liminal spaces between the provinces, another local preacher was operating with impudent autonomy on another internal English border. William O’Bryan was the son of a well-to-do Cornish farmer and grew up in an environment typical of cottage religion.\textsuperscript{195} After managing the agricultural concerns and tin-mining concessions he had inherited from his Methodist father, O’Bryan took up preaching in 1801.\textsuperscript{196} In 1810, after numerous clashes with the Wesleyan authorities, he was expelled for operating independently of the circuit-administrators.\textsuperscript{197} The Wesleyans kept control of the chapel for which he had paid and donated the land but he took some of his classes with him.\textsuperscript{198} The year after the Great Revival, when a number of

\textsuperscript{193} Lloyd, \textit{Persistent Preachers}, 63.

\textsuperscript{194} Valenze, \textit{Prophetic Sons and Daughter}, 193.

\textsuperscript{195} Valenze, \textit{Prophetic Sons and Daughter}, 143.

\textsuperscript{196} Lloyd, \textit{Persistent Preachers}, 72.

\textsuperscript{197} Lloyd, \textit{Persistent Preachers}, 72.

\textsuperscript{198} Lloyd, \textit{Persistent Preachers}, 72.
other local preachers seceded with their classes, O’Bryan moved across the Tamar to Devon and began evangelizing in the border lands.  

In Devon O’Bryan met the Thorne family, wealthy farmers from Shebbear, and together they formed the Arminian Bible Christians (or just Bible Christians). The new society flourished and soon they were drawing adherents from the tin-mining communities of Cornwall as well as the more agrarian surroundings of Devon, and venturing as far afield as the United States and Atlantic Canada in their search for new members. Like northern counterparts such as the Quaker Methodists and the Magic Methodists, they allowed women to preach and challenged the growing power of the Wesleyan autocracy. Smaller groups in Cornwall included Dr. Boase’s Connexion, which broke with the Wesleyan’s in Redruth over the construction of a chapel that was to rent private pews to its wealthiest members. A Boyle’s Connexion appeared in the same year, started by a Wesleyan itinerant. And in the aftermath of the Great Revival of 1814 two sisters, the Downs, formed a group whose prophetic and visionary practices led them to be called “the Shouters” or “the Trumpeters.”

199 Lloyd, Persistent Preachers, 73.

200 I Lloyd, Persistent Preachers, 72.

201 Wolfe, Expansion, 65-66


Transatlantic revivalism was made possible by myriad interactions and communications that cut across not just parish lines but county boundaries, national borders, and even oceans. For the growing alliance between a plutocratic Methodist elite, and a party of ministers interested in centralizing power in the Conference, the marriage of cottage religion and transatlantic revivalism was not just an embarrassment but a threat to their ambitions. It would probably be useful to remind ourselves at this stage that the problem of religious revival for more conservative Methodists was not revival itself, which they earnestly prayed for and desired. The problem of revivalism was how to stifle it when it exceeded institutional controls, and how to diminish the forces producing such excesses.

One solution was to isolate its most radical and committed practitioners by expulsion and so limit collaboration, improvisation and cross-pollination. As early as 1800 Dow was barred from Wesleyan Chapels, O’Bryan was expelled in 1810 and Bourne in 1811. Women were banned from the pulpit in 1803 and camp-meetings were banned in 1807. Another option was to organize and centralize the practice, to professionalize it with training and salaries and so put the boot of institutional authority on its neck. In 1818 ministers were given permission by the Conference to call themselves “Reverend,” in 1834 a theological training college had been established, and


205 See Valenze, Prophetic Sons and Daughters, 54, 91-3.
by 1836 ordination included the suspiciously High Church ritual of laying on hands.\textsuperscript{206} All of these measures led to protest and resentment, and in the case of the college an actual schism, but the majority of ministers were won through in the end by due diligence and to good effect. The one innovation which was largely immune from protest, and was achieved by the Conference Party with almost universal acclaim was the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS).

The year before the Great Revival, in the faraway wool town of Leeds, a young and ambitious Jabez Bunting and his friend Richard Watson were laying the groundwork for the establishment of a Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society.\textsuperscript{207} Leeds at the time was on the cusp of industrial and demographic explosion, had been one of the centers of Kilhamite unrest in 1797, and was a site of much Methodist enthusiasm.\textsuperscript{208} At the time of his first appointment as Conference President in 1820 Bunting was only thirty-four but had already established his anti-revivalist and anti-radical credentials and was the very picture of ministerial orthodoxy. Just as importantly he had already formed his association with “the little knot of intermarried Woods, Marsdens and Burtons” at the very heart of a Wesleyan plutocracy.\textsuperscript{209}

\textsuperscript{206} Richard Brown, \textit{Church and State in Modern Britain, 1700 to 1850} (New York: Routledge, 1991), 458. See also Gregory, \textit{Sidelights}.

\textsuperscript{207} Brown, \textit{Church and State}, 458; Hempton, \textit{Empire of the Spirit}, 104, 222.

\textsuperscript{208} Derek Fraser \textit{A History of Modern Leeds} (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), 264

\textsuperscript{209} Ward, “Popular Religion,” 242
In 1803, only his second year as an itinerant minister, Bunting had been assigned to a London circuit. It was there where he started many of the relationships that were to be the foundation of his career. He joined the circle of metropolitan Wesleyan elites that included such lay luminaries as the MP Joseph Butterworth and the Connexion’s lawyer Thomas Allen.210 Through them he met Wilberforce and other members of the Clapham Sect. It was a period when he participated in ecumenical experiments, patronizing the Eclectic Society, the Society for the Suppression of the Slave Trade, and the London Missionary Society. He even wrote for the Eclectic Journal before being cut by the editor’s anti-Arminian snobbery and forced to recognize respectable society’s dismissive attitude towards Methodism. It was also during these years Bunting was also first exposed to the complex and often tendentious relations of institutional Wesleyanism to the Church and State. He became involved in the struggles to prevent the persecution of Methodist soldiers by the Army, of missionaries in Jamaica by the slave interest, and of Methodists by bigoted magistrates.211 It was a period when the attitude of nonconformist and dissenting evangelicals to the empire and the British state was ambiguous – the critique of slavery, coercive violence and intoleration led many of them to represent their pious vision of the body politic as an enlightened and liberal

210 Hempton, Religion of the People, 102-103
211 Hempton, Religion of the People, 99-100.
alternative to the ancient regime. Yet if there was the faintest whiff of Whiggishness and Reform about his public activities in these years, Bunting was already an arch conservative in regards to Connexional organization and discipline.

Bunting was hostile to most of the popular causes within Wesleyanism, and seems to have considered them to have resulted from the social instability and intellectual liabilities of the English working classes. “So few of the people of Sheffield,” he wrote in regards to the successes and failures of revivalism there, “have attained any degree of mental improvement, or possess much general intelligence.” He opposed female preaching with great success, the teaching of writing in Sunday schools with less, and achieved notoriety for his long war against radicalism within the connexion. During his itinerancy in Halifax in 1812 he so opposed Luddism he received death threats. And when it was found that six of the Luddites hung at York in 1813 were the children of Methodists, he wrote that the fact confirmed his conviction that the progress of Methodism was too often “more swift than solid; more extensive than deep;” precisely the sort of language he used in his condemnations of revivalism.

212 Susan Thorne, Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture in Nineteenth-Century England (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 154

213 Hempton, Religion of the People, 99.

214 Hempton, Religion of the People, 94.

215 Hempton, Religion of the People, 95.

216 Ward, “Popular Religion,” 247; Hempton, Religion of the People, 100
Bunting’s first station had been in Macclesfield, a town we already know to have been rife with revivalists, and when they had first raised the threat of secession Bunting had been unconcerned.  

He wrote to a friend of “the rant and extravagancies of what is called revivalism” and argued that the threatened division of the party from the church was certainly awful, but not so awful as divisions within the church. In 1806 he was sent to Manchester and saw the secession of the Band Room Methodists. In both cases, that of radicalism and of revivalism, Bunting was willing to lose great swaths of members if that was to be the cost of establishing respectable order. Not because such sacrifices would mean peace within the connection, but because the troublemakers were invariably poor and unimportant, and those who chose respectability were monied and influential.

If the threat of internal dissent to Wesleyan Methodism sharpened the Buntingite scalpel, the suspicions of the ruling classes led to its increasingly enthusiastic application to the Connexional body. In 1811 Lord Sidmouth proposed a Bill which was meant to update the 1689 Act of Toleration. The old Act, according to Sidmouth and his allies, was inadequate to contemporary circumstances. In an age in which sectarians gathered

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217 Hempton, Religion of the People, 93

218 Jabez Bunting to George Marsden, 10 June 1803, MARC. Quoted in both Ward, “Popular Religion,” 243; and Hempton. Religion of the People, 93.

219 Ward, “Popular Religion,” 244.
in barns, fields and cottages to hear “the wild effusions” of teen-aged plough-boys (and “cobblers, tailors, pig-drovers, and chimney sweeps”) the magistrates needed to be provided with the legal tools to control itinerancy. The Methodists were horrified at the effect government interference in Connexional structure might have and swiftly began to mobilize opposition to the bill. It was in the aftermath of Sidmouth’s proposal that two key aspects of Bunting’s personality – his pragmatic accommodation of the State and the Church, and his desire for iron-fisted autocracy within the Connexion – were welded together into what was to be both his abiding public persona and the guiding principle of the metropolitan Wesleyans known as “the Conference party.”

The fight against the Bill was spearheaded by Bunting’s friends, the MP Joseph Butterworth and the lawyer Thomas Allen, and included a cautious alliance with Dissent. Bunting played a key part in the intense metropolitan politicking and a massive petition campaign which they pursued. The Bill was defeated with relative ease but continuing persecution in some quarters led Allen to set his sights higher. He aimed to rewrite the laws on toleration in the Wesleyan’s favor. A chief element of his argument was that Methodism was a key factor in maintaining religious order. In an early and forceful articulation of the Halévy thesis Allan argued to Prime Minister

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220 Hempton, Religion of the People, 110-11.
222 Hempton, Religion of the People, 113.
Perceval that “in times of scarcity and distress we may safely say that among colliers, miners and mechanics, Methodism has been the grand instrument of preserving subordination.”

By 1812 Allen had succeeded in helping the New Toleration Act to pass, and Methodism had reached new heights of respectability in the country. But part-and-parcel of the social climbing was the increasing tensions within the Connexion between metropolitan and provincial parties, and between preachers and laymen.

It was Bunting’s genius to see how the formation of a Wesleyan Methodist Mission Society (WMMS) could also contribute to the concentration of power with the Connexion in ministerial hands. Such a society could be run by the Conference independently of the lay trustees and local interests in their chapels. Circuits and circuit ministers were paid for directly by the lay community, but missions collections would flow directly to the WMMS coffers from which it would be dispensed by ministers under direct orders from the Conference. Not only would this create a source of wealth over which lay activists had no control, it would draw on a larger body of contributors than did Connexional finances. It would be not just be paying Society members responding to the evangelical call but casual Methodists and even the public at large.

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223 Hempton, Religion of the People, 113.

224 Hempton, Religion of the People, 114.


226 Hempton, Empire of Spirit, 117.
The benefits of such a Society for Bunting’s party were manifold: they helped finalize the Methodist breach with the Church of England by emphasizing the organizational autonomy and distinctiveness of their “church”; mission fundraising could be carried out under the auspices of the Conference but funded without recourse to its meagre treasury; it could help channel the dangerous revivalist enthusiasms of lay Methodists into something profitable and practical; it provided the Conference with a means to show its usefulness to the imperial state; it was a means to reign in revivalist expansionism by professionalizing the practice; and not least it created new sites of institutional power through which the Buntingites could extend their influence. And the chaotic state of informal Methodist missions was all the justification Bunting needed to put his and Watson’s plans into motion.

During the tumultuous period of Revolution that had engulfed the Atlantic between the 1770s and the end of the wars with France, Methodist missions had been conducted in a haphazard and improvisational manner. Their chief agent was Thomas Coke, who, like Wesley had attended Oxford, been ordained, and retained a nostalgia and fondness for the Established Church. Coke was as paternalistic and self-confident a leader as Wesley, and operated with a considerable degree of autonomy from the

\footnote{He not only had close ties to the Clapham sect, on the eve of his trip to India he went so far in his willingness to reconcile with the Church that he wrote to Liverpool, then Prime Minister of England, in the hope of obtaining the Indian Bishopric. Warren Candler, \textit{Life of Thomas Coke}, 371. Many Methodists were suspicious of his style and ambitions. Tyerman for example suspects him of having wanted to reunite the American Methodists with the English Church. \textit{Life and Times of Wesley}, 434.}
conference. His missions to the American and Caribbean colonies were organized by himself, and largely dependent for funding on his personal networks and private resources.\textsuperscript{228} Missions were very much his “private domain” and the finances of those were, in the words of David Hempton, “in a state of suspended benign chaos.”\textsuperscript{229} Coke had long managed to elude any sort of regular institutional control and as early as 1810 Allen and Bunting were deeply concerned by the discontinuities between his fund-raising and his field-work.

In 1813 when Coke proposed his mission to India, Bunting, Watson and Allen saw the opportunity to intervene.\textsuperscript{230} At the time the London Missionary Society was doing its own fundraising in Wesleyan chapels, and Bunting and his colleagues argued that the Conference would be better served by collecting and spending those monies by themselves. Without the permission of the Conference Bunting, Watson, and other key ministers and laymen in Leeds organized a society dedicated to generating revenues strictly for exclusively Wesleyan purposes. Shortly after the establishment of the Missionary Society in Leeds, similar organizations were established in Sheffield, Newcastle, Halifax, York and Cornwall.\textsuperscript{231} In 1818 the Conference recognized the rules

\textsuperscript{228} Hempton, Empire of Spirit, 116.

\textsuperscript{229} Hempton, Religion of the People, 103.

\textsuperscript{230} Hempton, Religion of the People, 103.

\textsuperscript{231} Smith, History of Methodism, 549.
and regulations written up by Bunting and Watson as the constitution of what was called a Missionary Society, but was technically a department of the Methodist Church managed directly by those ministers appointed by the Conference.

The contrast between this carefully managed (and fiscally responsible) style of evangelism with the Great Revival in western Cornwall is telling. By establishing close connections to metropolitan powerbrokers, wealthy lay patrons, and a clique of assertive preachers, Bunting had put himself in a position from which he could bring considerable influence to bear on the future formations of Methodism. The battle for the soul of the Connexion was not yet won, but the Buntingite party with its insistence on fiscal responsibility, social and political quietism, its reinforcement and justification of growing class differentials, and its drive towards rigid centralization, had put itself in position to do just that. And the WMMS was the perfect vehicle with which to smuggle their agenda into the provincial societies.

The years of the Great Revival and Bunting’s institutionalization of the missionary impulse were also the years when William Carvosso had “given up the world” and moved in with his daughter and her family at Mylor on the Fal estuary. This was the beginning of his career as a revivalist and exhorter. In his memoir the pages that follow 1814 are filled with example after example proselytism and conversion.
Carvosso would stop neighbours as they passed by his new home to warn them about eternal death, and as he travelled about western Cornwall visiting his scattered and various friends he would confront strangers with the fact that Christ had already purchased their salvation with his blood. In 1815 for example, while going to visit Benjamin, now a minister assigned to the Liskeard circuit he met a young woman minding the toll between Grampound and St. Austell. She collected Carvosso’s fee and retired before he could address her, but on the way home eleven days later he engaged her in conversation, asking her how she could be happy in such a lonely place. After a brief discussion in which she admitted her misery, she slipped away from him into her house but he followed her in and found her with her family, weeping bitterly. Old William began to weep in commiseration. Her father was a Methodist and a class-leader and they prayed together over her, and begged the girl to go that night to her father’s class. After she had promised to go, and to take her sister with her “to join the people of God,” Carvosso left. Four months later he returned and found both girls saved, “heaven sparkling” in their eyes. A year and a half later the toll-gate keeper died, “in certain hope of heaven,” and Carvosso began to work on her brothers.232

His next story is of the conversion of a friend’s daughter at Bicton Mill who also died shortly after but “in the faith.”233 In Callington he converted the daughter of

232 Carvosso, Efficacy, 64-66.

233 Carvosso, Efficacy,67.
another friend with his simple Arminian message.\textsuperscript{234} “I am happy,” she told him. “I am happy.” And while visiting friends in Camborne he was himself so “overcome with the glory of the Lord” one night that he woke the whole house with his shouting.\textsuperscript{235}

In 1817 he visited Sparnock and a friend took him to visit a sick neighbour. They found the woman on the verge of death and William immediately went to work. He broached the subject of her imminent damnation and potential salvation in his usual manner, by getting the woman to admit she knew Jesus had already died for her sins and she only had to accept that fact. “She was seized strange” he wrote, and he thought she was about to die. Instead she lifted up her hands and eyes to heaven and cried out “Glory be to God, I am healed!” For some time she kept repeating the phrase, long enough for all the neighbours to come rushing over to witness to the miracle.\textsuperscript{236} As Carvosso prayed with the woman, two others in the crowd “were awakened, and began to cry for mercy.” It was four hours before he could leave the place.\textsuperscript{237} It was the beginning of a boisterous local revival that spread from house to house. A few months later he was in Penzance speaking to his friend Mr. Boase’s class and three people “found liberty” – the euphemism for conversion. The next day too many people had

\textsuperscript{234} Carvosso, Efficacy, 69

\textsuperscript{235} Carvosso, Efficacy, 70.

\textsuperscript{236} Carvosso, Efficacy, 74.

\textsuperscript{237} Carvosso, Efficacy, 75.
come for him to be able to get into the meeting-room. At Breage more sinners were convinced and backsliders returned. At Ponsanooth there was a gracious visitation from above, and one woman who had been struggling for years with unbelief found certainty, and two others “entered into the rest of full sanctification.”

For almost twenty years his life consisted of such long rambling tours. They sometimes lasted as long as ten weeks and encompassed the whole of west Cornwall, and some ranged as far east as Plymouth. Revivals and renewals were frequent, but more common were intimate conversations with friends in cottages, and strangers at roadsides – generally with people he perceived to be unhappy and more often than not young women. The conversation itself might take place over quite a stretch of time, Carvosso would frequently stalk his victims for days, observing their misery and encouraging them to have faith. The conversion, when it came, was “instantaneous, complete and permanent.” The converts would become what Carvosso called “his children in the Gospel,” and even Benjamin referred to himself in these terms.

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238 Carvosso, Efficacy, 78.
239 Carvosso, Efficacy, 80.
240 Carvosso, Efficacy, 81.
241 Carvosso, Efficacy, 84.
242 Carvosso, The Efficacy, 108.
One of the most dramatic examples of a relentless William Carvosso pursuing his prey like a hound of God occurred in 1818 at Mousehole, when he came across a young woman he knew. John Rule called that example one of “moral terrorism,” and while his intent was ironic overstatement, the Carvosso himself frequently emphasized the role of fear in instigating conversion. Carvosso,

I have already mentioned my visiting from house to house, during the revival at Mousehole; In my calling on different families, I happened to enter a friend’s house where she was. Desirous of shunning an interview with me, she fled by the back-door. On seeing this, I expressed my regret, and my inclination to follow her. I was told it would be useless, as I could not overtake her; but, on stepping to the front door, I saw her running into a neighbour’s house. Unwilling that Satan should triumph in obtaining a victory that way, I went to the house after her. When she saw me approaching, she ran up the stairs. I did not think it proper to pursue her any farther; but knowing she was within hearing of my voice, though I could not see her, I delivered my message from the foot of the stairs. And having done so, I closed my remarks, by saying, “Remember, God says, ‘Except you repent, you must perish.’ I have now faithfully warned you of your danger, and you must meet me at the bar of God, to give account of the use you have made of it.”

The next day it was reported to him that she was under “the influence of the Spirit of God” and he went to visit her. She was weeping bitterly in her room and in the course of their conversation she converted and became one of “his children,” and a correspondent. Carvosso was not simply aggressive, he was relentless; but it was love that drove him on, and his certainty that those he failed to reach were damned.

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244 John Rule, “The Labouring Miner.”

245 Carvosso, Efficacy, 241.
Like Wesley and an earlier generation of the Cornish, Carvosso and his listeners lived together in a world of “invisible realities;” of demons, spirits, and angel, and one in which the terror of an eternity spent burning in hell was very real. It is striking that the ecstatic experience and later effusive proclamations of sweetness and love are fired by red-hot terror. Yet it is that very intensity of his purpose, and the seriousness with which Carvosso treated every person he pursued, that made him such an attractive a person to so many. Particularly to the marginalized, depressed, and lonely people who were his most frequent interlocutors.

Carvosso was an essentially local character, just as The Efficacy is a local book. The countryside and towns through which Carvosso moves are filled with his friends and families. In both religion and business one can catch a glimpse of the closely knit face-to-face relations on which his success as a businessman and an evangelical are dependent. Carvosso’s circulations about Cornwall are embedded in a way in which itinerant ministers, who not only move about a circuit but are moved over the years from circuit to circuit, cannot easily hope to emulate. It is interesting to note that there is no mention of Cornwall, or Cornishness, in the text – for old William, as for his God, one place is as good as another. Carvosso’s old friend Harry Carter for example, had been a privateer, a smuggler and a laborer in the American cornfields before he had settled
down near Prussian Bay to a quieter life as class-leader and local preacher. And while William’s experience of the wider world was not so exotic or romantic, but he too was a participant in the Atlantic’s turbulent history.

For William Carvosso it was literacy, not the wind, that set him free to cross the ocean. He had learned to write as a surprise for Benjamin, when his son became an itinerant, but he soon found it an invaluable device for maintaining his relationships with his children of the Gospel. Benjamin had once been asked by one of his congregation to help her send a copy of Wesley’s sermons to her brother Stephen Drew, a barrister “dwelling in the darkness and dissipation of Jamaica,” and he did so. On reading the texts Drew had become converted to Methodism and formed a society among the slaves. William soon became his correspondent, guide, and advisor, and Drew went on to become one of the key figures in the Wesleyan mission to Jamaica, and an adversary of the plantocracy. Drew died shortly after attempting to quell an anti-Methodist riot. And before long Carvosso’s letters were crossing the Pacific as well; long, tender missives to his son Benjamin, his daughter-in-law Deborah, and their

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246 Carter, The Autobiography of a Cornish Smuggler. Carter had grown up in poverty as the son of a tin miner and, with his brothers, decided a life at sea was better than that in the pits. They became notorious free traders, not shirking from violence when confronted by the British state, and their leader became famous as “the King of Prussian Bay.” But such a classically Cornish figure had a religious history that was startlingly wide ranging. Carter had discussed religion with Carmelite nuns in a French prison cell in 1794, and was converted to Methodism in New York while on the lam. He lived for Long Island where he “hoed Indian corn” with, and befriended, a black field laborer who also belonged to a New York Methodist society. In Carter’s case neither England nor Cornwall were necessary elements in his spiritual autobiography, but the Atlantic was.
Cornish colleague Walter Lawry, all now missionaries in Australia, in which he urged the same self-analysis and self-discipline he urged on all his many children.

But when William’s son Benjamin was preparing to leave for Australia in 1819, the Rev. Truscott sent him a note congratulating him on his marriage, and teasing him about his desire for gossip, saying “I know you cannot but feel interested in everything that may be denominated ‘Cornish.’” Truscott also comments that while the veteran sinners of Sydney are worth the attempt, Carvosso will likely be more successful with the children. Start schools, he tells the young missionary, and bring Blackstone’s Laws of England he adds as an afterthought. Truscott’s note differentiates the convicts of Australia from the Cornish, children from adults, and observant minister from the lay community. The pained awareness of such distinctions is an ironic by-product of the universalizing educational and legal agenda of an increasingly professionalized Wesleyan ministry. But Benjamin’s decision to become a missionary was, as we shall see, driven by the same fears and desires that drove his father’s Cornish itinerancy, a commitment to overcoming such differences, rather than reproducing them.

2.5 Conclusion

Carvosso’s revivalism, and the community’s encouragement of it, occurred at precisely that moment when Bunting’s Conference party began trying to impose

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247 Truscott to Benjamin Carvosso, Nov 3rd, MARC. 1819 107.8.45.

248 Truscott to Benjamin Carvosso, Nov 3rd, 1819, MARC, 107.8.45.
rigorous institutional and ideological controls on ministers and laity. The professionalization of the ministry, the expulsion of lay revivalists such as Hugh Bourne, the suppression of women preachers, the hostility towards radicalism, and even Bunting’s establishment of a Mission Society, are all evidence of that centralizing intent. They are also evidence of a growing willingness to shatter the raw universalism of Methodism by imposing on it, or at least putting greater emphasis on distinctions determined by gender and class difference, and by provincial and metropolitan identity. In the separation of the mission field into domestic and foreign theatres there is even an opening of the conceptual space in which racial categories could start to flourish.

But while Bunting and the Carvossos may have represented very different parties within the Connexion, they also had a great deal in common. Despite his accommodation of the powers that were, Bunting thought of himself as “a bigoted Methodist.”249 He was certain the voluntaristic organizational principles, and Arminian theology, of Wesley represented the divine will more accurately than did the practices and arguments of Calvinist Dissent, or the Church of England. And like the Carvossos Bunting and his party also wanted a general, indeed a world-wide, religious revival. The members of the Conference party just considered it expedient that such a revival remain tightly controlled by a clique of well-connected ministers.

By pursuing the trajectory of William Carvosso’s life in this chapter we have been able to get a sense of some of the larger historical processes in play in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century British history. It has become clear for instance, that Methodism was not simply a product of John Wesley’s organizational genius. The Wesleys were self-consciously working as agents of the confessional state, trying to adapt its institutions to populations that were largely indifferent to them. It was, in a sense, a form of internal colonialism, and in the short term it failed. Their project was rejected by the vast majority of the ruling elites, and the elements of their ideology that proved the most attractive to the common folk who flocked to hear them speak were the most politically dangerous and destabilizing. Despite their charismatic popularity they were hardly a formidable presence in the cottage religion that was the experience of the first few generations of Cornish Methodists. And after their deaths the ministerial institutions they left behind could not constrain a religious movement whose expansion was driven across geopolitical and natural boundaries by the energy of lay practitioners.

What Bunting and his generation understood so well was the degree to which Methodism had, for most of its practitioners, never been a reform movement within the Church of England. It had been part of an attempt by many thousands of people in the laboring and middling classes to sanctify the whole of the fallen world one soul at a time, and so doing construct a New Jerusalem. The class-meeting and the chapel
remained the beloved heart of popular Methodism, but they were also the sites in which the political struggle for control of the movement was the most apparent. In the new institutions of Wesleyanism, those of the nineteenth century – the Conference, the professional ministry, and the missionary society – Bunting and his colleagues rewrote the parameters of Wesleyanism’s internal struggle. By doing so they brought the full weight of bureaucratic power they had created for themselves to bear on the ministerial proponents of lay activism. In the following chapter we will see how these Buntingite efforts played out in the more overtly colonial situation of New South Wales.
3. Pious Imperialisms: “The Cornish Brethren” and Missionary Conflict in New South Wales, 1820 to 1825

In 1815 the editor of the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, the same Joseph Benson who had been so suspicious of the Great Revival in Cornwall, published a letter from Mr. Squance (1790-1868), a Wesleyan missionary to Ceylon. “We have recently received a letter from Botany Bay,” wrote Squance, “from a local preacher in that place – they have formed two or three classes, and are in great want of Missionaries.”¹ For Squance that letter was an occurrence which was part of a grand interlocking and providential turn in the history of the world. The potential for revival among the convicts and settlers of the Antipodes, the Tamil of Ceylon, and the English at home, was all part of the same marvelous plan. In that letter Squance wrote,

> I almost envy you the happiness you must have enjoyed in England on account of the great revolution which God has wrought among the nations. Bonaparte dethroned! Peace established! And what is better than all, the work of God is reviving! O how did it rejoice my heart to hear of the glorious revival in Cornwall, 3000 joining society in one quarter! Well done: go on and all the earth shall be filled with the glory of God – Praise the Lord, Amen.²

¹ *The Methodist Magazine* Vol. 38, 955. Squance had been one of the missionaries who left with Coke for India in 1813, along with George Erskine who later joined Lawry and Carvosso in Sydney. See also Elijah Hoole, *Madras, Mysore, and South India* (London: John Mason, 1844), xlv.

Figure 2: The Tasman Sea

Squance, it should be noted, was originally from Cornwall and his first circuit was that of Liskeard, where Benjamin Carvosso was posted in 1815, and then again in the late Thirties.3 And the same sorts of connections between British political and Protestant religious ascendancy were being made by the Cornish back home. The

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West Briton, Cornwall’s voice of reformist Methodism declared that “it is truly gratifying that while the thunder of British power shakes the seat of Tyranny, and rolls its dreadful notes along the shore of the Atlantic” there was also an efflorescence of Christianity in England.⁴ And the Rev. Truscott, in a letter written on the back of a poster advertising the founding of the Redruth Missionary Society wrote of “great and growing peace” both in the world and the schismatic west Cornwall Wesleyan societies.⁵

Five years after the Methodists of Sydney had requested missionaries of the Wesleyans, they had arrived. And two of them, Benjamin Carvosso and his friend Walter Lawry, had participated in the revival that so inspired Mr. Squance with such grandiose optimism. The British Methodists clearly saw an opportunity in the improving position of Britain as a geopolitical power for the furtherance of their own missionary project. Yet there were already cracks in the edifice they, and other British evangelicals, had raised to celebrate England’s providential victory over infidelity. A provincial revivalist from Cornwall like Benjamin Carvosso had a very different vision of what relations between imperial state and the missionary project

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⁴ West Briton, March 29, 1814. The West Briton editor, Edward Budd was a Wesleyan local preacher and the former teacher of the reformist revivalist Samuel Dunn.

⁵ Truscott to James Allen, January 4, 1814, MARC 107.8.42
should be than did, say, his Buntingite masters in London, or their powerful friends in the Clapham Sect.

The following chapter is concerned with the conjunction of these very different forms of evangelicalism in the colonial situation of New South Wales. The Cornish missionaries themselves eventually admitted that the theories and practices of a revivalism which had proven so productive in the industrializing regions of Britain, and on the frontiers of British North America, failed in early colonial Australia. A key element of revivalism’s regional successes in the Atlantic theatre was not simply significant social and economic anomie, but the absence of an active and engaged Church of England. In Australia, however, Evangelical Anglican chaplains like the Rev. Samuel Marsden had been sent to the colony by the Clapham Sect as part of their program of moral reform. Active, involved, and influential clergymen men like Marsden could offer the members of the small and anxious middling classes a conservative alternative to the revivalist ideology of missionaries such as Lawry and Carvosso. Where the revivalists sought to dissolve difference, Marsden’s ideology emphasized it.

For Marsden a wide gulf lay between a pious and respectable fragment of free settlers and the much larger body of convicts and Aborigines – a gulf which at the very least would take generations to bridge. For those free settlers with Calvinist inclinations this was an attractive proposition. And as servants of the Crown the colonial chaplains
could back such an ideology up with patronage. They provided positions for pious literates in the proliferating schools, orphanages, and female factories of the colonial state. By contrast in some parts of Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cornwall, and in British North America, where Evangelical Anglicanism had less influence and fewer opportunities for patronage, nonconformist revivalism flourished. It is telling that during the same period Lawry and Carvosso were struggling to attract followers in Australia, Methodist revivalism was such a force in Britain that it became a serious political embarrassment for metropolitan Wesleyans with close ties to the imperial state – in particular the clique of the Conference President and Mission Society Secretary Jabez Bunting. I will contrast here two competing visions of the colonial world; the first the one constructed from the papers of Carvosso and his friend and fellow Cornish revivalist Walter Lawry, the second that of the Tory Evangelical Samuel Marsden. A third part of the chapter will be concerned with situating these ideologies in the context in which they were put into play, and the consequent clash.

3.1 Lawry’s Commonwealth

In 1814 the Rev. Truscott had shepherded young Benjamin into the Methodist ministry. He first appears as a local preacher on the Redruth circuit in January of 1813 – at the height of the Great Revival. It was during this period when the Ponsanooth Wesleyan Society had so spectacularly expanded his father assigned him
to lead one of the new classes. Less than a year later, having been examined by the District Committee, and accepted on trial by the Conference, he was assigned by Adam Clarke, then the President of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, to the Plymouth Dock circuit.

While on trial in that shipbuilding town he depended heavily on letters from Cornwall for emotional support and professional advice – his correspondents included his father, Truscott, Richard Treffry who was later another President of the Conference, and his friend Richard Trewevas, junior, the son of a Mousehole worthy.

In 1815, still on trial, he was transferred back to Liskeard in Cornwall, where he oversaw his first revival as a minister. In 1816 he was moved down the road to the Bodmin circuit, where like his father he made it his practice to stop strangers on the road and young women in their homes with dire warnings and tender promises. There he saw another revival. This one began with the conversion of a farm laborer. The young man, already “deeply wounded for his sin” after listening to a local preacher, began weeping when the wife of the farmer led the harvest crew in hymns

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after their dinner rather than the usual carousing songs.\textsuperscript{11} They kept singing until the lad was overcome with joy and his companions, “though they were all strangers to religion,” began to weep themselves. “The alarm was spread through the village,” wrote Carvosso,

And some of the neighbours rose out of their beds to witness the wonders which the unknown God had wrought. The family were so alarmed at the shouting, praying, and rejoicing of the poor youth, that they sent a man and two horses, post, to St. Columb, one mile and a half distant, to get one of our leading friends to come over, and pray with them and instruct them.\textsuperscript{12}

That the God concerned was unknown to this community is perhaps the rhetorical enthusiasm of a young minister, but it might also refer more specifically to the experiential perception of the divine that we have already seen is at the heart of Methodist practice. These irreligious people were familiar with hymns, the performative aspects of conversion, and the ritual processes of revivalism. And they knew enough to send for a local lay expert to midwife their communal rebirth. In what was to be a recurring theme in Carvosso’s early years, he found that some of the more respectable and regular society members proved much less accommodating towards such ecstatic displays of discovery than he thought they should be.

\textsuperscript{11} Blencowe, The Faithful Pastor, 23-24.

\textsuperscript{12} Blencowe, The Faithful Pastor, 24-25.
At the village of Gunwen for example, Carvosso’s invitation to “hell-deserving sinners to partake of a free and present salvation” was met with the “mighty, rushing wind” of the Pentecostal spirit and the people sobbed, wept, and cried aloud. But not everyone was as well pleased as Benjamin. Nor did everyone appreciate the women “who shrieked for mercy,” during his sermons, or servant girls dissolving into penitential tears while serving breakfast. Lay leaders “in one of the important places of the circuit” complained to him about his “pulpit improprieties.” They accused him of speaking too strongly and too loudly, and of giving “strong meat to babes.”

On the St. Austell circuit in 1817 Carvosso saw evidence of the same conflict between lay elites and popular practice. During a love-feast there “some of the friends” were blessed and spoke out loud, and an elderly man was so “filled with the Spirit” Carvosso thought he might fall to the floor. “One of our oldest leaders stood up, and said,” Carvosso wrote, “the proceedings of the meeting were very inconsistent, and rather resembled the worship of a heathen temple than the house of

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16 Blencowe, The Faithful Pastor, 27.
17 Blencowe, The Faithful Pastor, 34-35
the Lord."\textsuperscript{18} What followed was a week or so of considerable party politicking, and is a reminder that even in Cornish Methodism revivalist practices and claims were frequently challenged on the grounds of their disreputability. And that Carvosso continued his revivalist stylings despite being called to task by local elites while still on trial as a minister, is a measure of his commitment to that particular evangelical mode.

Over the next few years Carvosso’s journals were filled with accounts of weeping and joy and hearts that seemed to be as “melting wax before the fire.”\textsuperscript{19} Yet despite his successes he thought continuously of foreign mission fields. This is something his father never appeared to have done. But Bunting’s WMMS was in full operation and the connexional magazine was filled with “missionary intelligence,” such as the letter of Mr. Squance in Ceylon. In the post-Napoleonic world there were more opportunities for evangelical, as well as commercial enterprise on the global stage than there had been in an age of revolutionary tumult. In 1819 Benjamin recorded that after six years of agitation over the subject he felt a growing sense of resolution. He decided to offer himself up for service and finally became “a willing captive” of the idea.\textsuperscript{20} When an unasked for letter arrived from the secretaries of the

\textsuperscript{18} Blencowe, \textit{The Faithful Pastor}, 34-35.

\textsuperscript{19} Blencowe, \textit{The Faithful Pastor}, 39.

\textsuperscript{20} Blencowe, \textit{The Faithful Pastor}, 46.
WMMS offering precisely that opportunity he leapt at the chance; just as father had
leapt at the unasked for opportunity to move from Mousehole to Ponsanoth some
thirty years earlier. “Had I any longer resisted the call,” Carvosso wrote in his
journal,

I feared the Divine judgements would have overtaken me. In spite of my
natural inclination, and the most obstinate reasonings on the subject, I am
compelled to believe God calls me to go as an ambassador to the heathen; or
if not the heathen, to some distant and dark land, where there is want of
gospel teachers.21

After a successful interview in London with the Secretaries he returned to
Cornwall. He immediately began an exchange of letters with a young woman of
suitable piety he hoped would make a good missionary’s wife – in the manner
typical of missionaries at the time. At the Bristol Conference that summer
Carvosso was received into full connexion by the body of Wesleyan ministers. He
was given a month to say goodbye to his relatives, friends and coreligionists in
western Cornwall.22 Three days before they left for New South Wales by way of
London, Benjamin Carvosso and Deborah Banks, the daughter of a ship owner and
port master from St. Austell, whose family had long been active in the local
Wesleyan society, were married in her parish church.23 In just under a year from

22 Blencowe, *The Faithful Pastor*, 60.
23 Blencowe, *The Faithful Pastor*, 61
the day on which Benjamin had received his letter from the WMMS secretaries, the Carvossos landed in Van Diemen’s Land and began their formal participation in the colonial projects of both the British state and North Atlantic Protestantism – projects that over the previous few decades had become increasingly entangled.24

Australia, at least in the popular perception of the time, certainly met Carvoso’s requirement of a distant and dark land in need of gospel teachers. A letter requesting missionaries sent from Sydney to the WMMS Committee in 1814 by the Methodist schoolteachers Thomas Bowden(1778-1834)25 and John Hosking(1776-1838)26 painted a lurid enough picture of colonial vice to entice any eager proselytizer across the oceans,

The higher ranks of those who were formerly convicts are, in general, either entirely occupied in amassing wealth or rioting in sensuality. The lower orders are, indeed, the filth and offscouring of the world in

24 Blencowe, The Faithful Pastor, 68.

25 V.W.E. Goodin, ‘Bowden, Thomas (1778–1834)’, Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bowden-thomas-1809/text2061, accessed 28 September 2012. Bowden was brought to the colony by Marsden for whom he worked as at two charity schools in Sydney. The first Methodist meeting in the colony was held at his house in Sydney in the rough neighborhood of The Rocks. He also helped found the Philanthropic Society, the Sunday School Institution and the Bible Society. In 1821 he was forced to switch from the Lancastrian system of teaching to the Anglican and his career began to unravel. In 1825 he retired from teaching to farming.

26 Dow, Gwyneth, ‘Terry, Samuel (1776–1838)’, Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/terry-samuel-2721/text3833, accessed 28 September 2012. Hosking was appointed master of the Orphan School in New South Wales in 1809 where he was a member of the first Methodist Society and a member of the New South Wales Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and Behaviour. He returned to England in 1819, likely after quarreling with Marsden, where he worked as an agent for Eagar & Forbes. He died in Truro, Cornwall in 1850. Two of his sons returned to the colony. John set up as a merchant in Sydney in 1825 and married the daughter of the very wealthy Emancipist, Marsden enemy, and Wesleyan trustee Samuel Terry (1776-1838). He later became Sydney’s first mayor and a magistrate. His brother Peter was surgeon and married the daughter of another wealthy Sydney merchant, Reuben Uther.
point of wickedness. Long accustomed to idleness and iniquity of every kind, here they indulge their vicious inclinations without a blush. Drunkenness, adultery, Sabbath-breaking, and blasphemy, are no longer considered even as indecencies. All those ties of moral order, and feelings of propriety, which bind society together, are not only relaxed, but almost extinct. This is the general character of the convicts, high and low; and, excepting the civil and military departments of the Government, there is no other difference than that which wealth creates, in the means which it affords for greater indulgence in vice.  

New South Wales was first settled in 1788 as penal colony. The Revolutionary War in British North America had forced the British government to find a different destination for its convicts and Botany Bay provided both a catchment for convict overflow and a useful naval base in the South Seas. Formal occupation also operated as a brake on French colonial interests in the region. In the three decades since the first fleet had dropped anchor and Benjamin Carvosso was dispatched there by the WMMS, the bay and its hinterland had been dramatically reconfigured. What had begun as a haphazard collection of administrative buildings perched on the edge of a wilderness was now a substantial colony organized around the symbolic center of the Governor’s manse.  

(seventy percent of them convicts) into a substantial town of 12,000 by 1820.\textsuperscript{29} From 1793 the government began giving officers, soldiers and ex-convicts land grants and access to convict labor. A secondary agricultural settlement had been founded at Parramatta in 1788, and by 1800 there were 1500 settlers living there.\textsuperscript{30} In 1794 former convicts had begun settling land along the Hawkesbury River, since 1813 land-hungry pastoralists had been casting acquisitive looks across the Blue Mountains, and shortly after the town of Bathurst was founded on their far side.\textsuperscript{31}

Settler expansion, both formal and informal was guaranteed by the British state, and Aboriginal peoples who resisted it were driven from the new territories by force. The military was hanging them from gibbets as early as 1795.\textsuperscript{32}

While initially dependent on the British treasury for survival, the colonists began commercial improvisations almost immediately. As early as 1792 enterprising officers had formed a cartel and chartered a cargo ship to bring in goods from Cape Town.\textsuperscript{33} They were soon joined in their efforts to get rich by a handful of

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\textsuperscript{30} Stuart Macintyre, \textit{A Concise History of Australia} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 38.

\textsuperscript{31} Macintyre, \textit{A Concise History}, 47.

\textsuperscript{32} Macintyre, \textit{A Concise History}, 40

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emancipated convicts and commercially-minded migrants from elsewhere in the Empire. The ships transporting convicts would whale prior to the long trip home, and seals were being slaughtered in the Bass Straits and their pelts shipped to China.\textsuperscript{34} Pork was being brought into the colony from Tahiti, potatoes from New Zealand; rum from Bengal. Sydney merchants also began trading in the South Pacific for sandalwood, mother-of-pearl and \textit{bèche-de-mer} (sea cucumbers).\textsuperscript{35}

When Carvosso arrived in 1818 Governor Macquarie (1762-1824) had been ruling this outlying department of the British government for eight years. He and his regiment had been sent to restore order in the colony after the unfortunate Governor Bligh attempted to put an end to the liquor trade and suffered the second of his famous mutinies.\textsuperscript{36} The officers who had overthrown the bad-tempered autocrat were a commercially-minded collection of land-owning merchants who had made their fortune selling marked-up imports and boot-leg alcohol to the convicts, ex-convicts, free holders, seamen and soldiers (some historians estimate their trading profits ran upwards of 500 percent).\textsuperscript{37}


\textsuperscript{35} Macintyre, \textit{A Concise History}, 38.

\textsuperscript{36} Macintyre, \textit{A Concise History}, 47.

In addition to his brief to tame this so-called “Rum Corps,” Macquarie’s instructions from the War Office included orders to work at administrative and moral reform. This reformist agenda guaranteed a degree of friendliness on the part of his government towards the newly-arrived missionaries. As part of his program he established a bank, introduced currency, and began building roads, bridges, a hospital and barracks for the soldiers and convicts. Bowden and Hosking, in the same letter describing a dissolute upper class and a vicious and criminal underclass, described his rule as “just, mild, humane, and encouraging.” For pious reformers and provincial enthusiasts seeking to prove the usefulness and efficacy of religious revival to the project of universal redemption it was an attractive situation indeed: a welcoming government, dissolute elites, and an underclass of veteran sinners in dire need of salvation.

The early years of Walter Lawry’s correspondence with the WMMS secretaries from New South Wales are an energetic study in optimism. Lawry was born in Rutheren, Cornwall, in 1793, and like Benjamin Carvosso he was the son of a farmer. He had been converted to Methodism around the time of the Great Revival, became a minister in 1817 and was sent as a missionary to New South Wales in 1818. His

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38 Steven, Merchant Campbell, 36.

39 Steven, Merchant Campbell, 36.

supervisor Samuel Leigh had been there since 1815 and on Lawry’s arrival the two set about converting the locals with considerable gusto, asceticism and sympatico. “He is everything I could wish for in a colleague,” Lawry wrote rather breathlessly to the WMMS secretaries of Leigh’s heroic itinerancy in the Australian wilds, “I need not dwell upon his wanderings in the forest without food, having no shelter by day nor bed by night.”41 And he excitedly hinted at the older missionary’s persecution by influential members of the colonial elite. The two men agreed, Lawry continued, to subsist on two meals a day if that meant the Society could afford to send them another missionary, and that holy grail of Protestant missions, a printing press.42

Lawry, as adept at itinerancy as Leigh, moved constantly about the countryside and had a sharp eye for the economic potential of the landscape.43 In his letters home he described a wilderness bursting with both native and alien life. The flora was plentiful and beautiful, there was a proliferation of birds, and fat feral government cattle roamed through the abundant woods that lay between the settlements.44 The wool industry was

41 Quoted in A. Strachan, The Life of the Rev. Samuel Leigh (London: Wesleyan Mission House1870), 83. Leigh’s circuit extended 150 miles and he would complete in ten days, stopping at fifteen places to preach. A typical Sabbathworkday included a service at ten; a meal and then a seven mile ride to preach at two; a six mile ride to preach at five; and six mile ride to preach at seven. See also George Findlay and William Holdsworth, The History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, Vol. 3 (London: Epworth Press, 1921), 24.


43 Walter Lawry, 22 September 1818, Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, School of Oriental and African Studies, (WMMS/SOAS), MMS/12 Australasia/South Seas Correspondence.

44 Walter Lawry, 22 September 1818, WMMS/SOAS MMS/12 Australasia/South Seas Correspondence.
just beginning to take off. The former army officer (and mutineer) John Macarthur and the colony chaplain Samuel Marsden had been experimenting with various British, Spanish Merino, Cape and Bengal breeds since the 1790s and in 1812 Marsden had sent the first significant cargo of wool home to England. 45 Enterprising farmers were also growing tobacco, oranges, peaches and loquats. 46 The missionary was convinced the poor laborers of England would flock to the colony for work, if they only knew the opportunities that awaited them. Hoskins and Bowden had described it in similar terms: “The climate is uncommonly fine and healthy, and peculiarly favorable to an English constitution. The country is beautiful and exceedingly fertile, and intersected with roads. The necessaries and luxuries of life are abundant, and easily to be obtained.” 47 And if a few good Methodists from the middling classes could be prevailed upon to migrate as well, Lawry wrote, all the better. In Australia such middling folk could, he continued, win souls for God by their example, and fortunes for themselves through their hard work. In his view attorneys, builders, preachers, and surgeons would do the best in the new country, but no profession would do poorly. 48

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46 Walter Lawry 22 September 1818, WMMS/SOAS MMS/12 Australasia/South Seas Correspondence.

47 Strachan, Leigh, 24.

48 Walter Lawry 21 September 1818, WMMS/SOAS MMS/12 Australasia/South Seas Correspondence.
But to his parents he wrote that while to every appearance the colony should be a yeomanry’s paradise it was not. There were no tithes, no rates, and no taxes, yet many farmers were still struggling.49 It was Lawry’s opinion that the soil was too often poor, and the distance to markets too often too great, but by far the greatest obstacle to the transformation of the wilderness into a garden was the organization of its economy. The exploitation of convict labor was simply not conducive to the accumulation of wealth. They could not be punished for indolence by employers because they were already in Botany Bay, and besides, their transportation had proved little more than an encouragement to vice.50 And the letter sent to the WMMS Committee by Bowden and Hosking suggests they had a similar perspective on the relation of economics, social organization and morality in the colony.

For the Cornish Methodist the critical social distinction in the colony was not between convict and free settler, but between the saved and the damned. His critique of colonial society was extended beyond circumspect comments on former convicts made by Hosking and Lawry in their initial letter, to include free settlers and officers as well. “Every kind of immorality pervades among the infidel part of the colonists,” Lawry wrote home.51 New South Wales was as iniquitous as London, but with even fewer

49 Walter Lawry 21 September 1818, WMMS/SOAS MMS/12 Australasia/South Seas Correspondence.
50 Walter Lawry 21 September 1818, WMMS/SOAS MMS/12 Australasia/South Seas Correspondence.
51 Walter Lawry 21 September 1818, WMMS/SOAS MMS/12 Australasia/South Seas Correspondence.
clergy to preach against its sins.\textsuperscript{52} Like Cornwall prior to the arrival of the Wesleys, the colony was a country populated by a sinful and ignorant people, and ruled by irreligious elites. It was not so much a new and empty Eden Lawry described, as it was a land of milk and honey. It was a territory which though fertile was occupied by heathens and sinners, and in dire need of righteous stewardship. Both Lawry with his explicit “middling classes,” and the Wesleyan schoolteachers with their critique of a world organized strictly according to the accumulation of wealth and power, are making the same suggestion. It was the gravitas that could be provided by a moral and pious community of free migrants, building up themselves up with disciplined honesty that would settle this unsettled and polarized society into a Christian and respectably classed community. For Lawry the possibilities for pious colonists willing to work hard stood in sharp contrast with the failure of so many of the current inhabitants to do just that.

Both the Aborigines and the convicts figured frequently in Lawry’s early accounts of antipodal life, especially in descriptions of the liminal places through which he travelled to get from one congregation to the next. The Aborigines, he wrote home to the Secretaries, were not plentiful, and largely friendly, “but awfully degraded, in so much as one of the Hindoos.”\textsuperscript{53} “I do not think,” he continued,

\textsuperscript{52} Walter Lawry, 22 September 1818, WMMS/SOAS MMS/12 Australasia/South Seas Correspondence.

\textsuperscript{53} Walter Lawry, 22 September 1818, WMMS/SOAS MMS/12 Australasia/South Seas Correspondence.
[That] any attempt has ever been vigorously made to convert this degraded race of men except to the gin bottle and obscene practices – they have learned the wickedness of Europe but not the virtues – indeed they are dwindling away so fast that another century is likely to sweep them from the earth.\textsuperscript{54}

Lawry went on to describe the Aborigines as superstitious, frightened of the dark, ignorant of God, but nonetheless with the capacity for salvation. His speculations on their impending extinction were not meant as a dismissal, an excuse for metropolitan Christians to forget about them and for locals to brush them aside, they were meant to quicken the pace of the evangelical venture. There was little time to accomplish much, and the sooner their languages were learned, and missionaries sent to share the Gospel, the better God was served.

The Aborigines were also good press it seems. Among the first letters sent back by Benjamin Carvosso to the WMMS secretaries was a clipping from \textit{The Sydney Gazette} which was reprinted in \textit{The Wesleyan Methodist Magazine}. A correspondent named “Philanthropus” called the attention of British Methodists to the condition of the Aborigines. Other then the Government Native Institution, complained Philanthropus, nothing was being done “to meliorate miserable and perishing condition.”\textsuperscript{55} Would not

\textsuperscript{54} Walter Lawry, 22 September 1818, WMMS/SOAS MMS/12 Australasia/South Seas Correspondence.

\textsuperscript{55} \textit{The Methodist Magazine} 44, (1821), 231.
the Wesleyans assist, he asked, “by speech or beneficence, in the pious work of attempting to instruct and Christianize the sable tribes of New Holland?”

For Lawry and Carvosso, as for Philanthropus, the appearance, language and customs the “sable tribes” were superficialities that obscured the singular similarities of the human soul. The Aborigines, for example, were not so different from the Irish Catholics the missionaries found working and living in the same wilderness. In a lengthy reminiscence Lawry described to the WMMS secretaries how he stumbled across some such convicts in the woods, and delivered an impromptu sermon to them in which he proved that all men – Papist and Protestant – would go to the eternal sea of fire if they did not repent. He went on to liken their situation as convicts to the situation of all men who were not saved. If he had authority from the government to emancipate them would they not rejoice? If he had newspapers from Ireland telling of home would they not listen? I have, he told them, greater authority, and better news. “If I ever preached and prayed with my whole heart it was then in the middle of the woods with these Irish Catholics,” he wrote. Lawry:

The way to convince the lower classes of mankind in any country I am persuaded is to set before them plain but weighty truths illustrated by comparisons drawn from things familiar to them.

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56 The Methodist Magazine 44, (1821), 231
57 Walter Lawry, 29 October 1818, WMMS/SOAS MMS/12 Australasia/South Seas Correspondence.
58 Walter Lawry, 29 October 1818, WMMS/SOAS MMS/12 Australasia/South Seas Correspondence.
For Lawry the convicts and the Aborigines alike were ignorant, self-interested, and misguided, but capable of intelligent conversation and debate. The task of the missionary was the effective translation of complex theological ideas into comprehensible terms which could be grasped in a flash. For Lawry and his fellows there were certainly distinctions of class and race between the various peoples of the world, but none so great that they erased a common humanity. The Methodist plea to convert was based on the assumption of a universally shared rationality and emotional life. And of course a shared sense of one’s own sin.\(^{59}\) It was not a different approach from that of William Carvosso in Cornwall.

Sin was in Australia for the same reason it was in Cornwall, simply because humanity was, and the comparison with the infamous Newgate – that “prototype of hell”\(^ {60}\) – came quickly to Lawry. Lawry’s representation of colonial potential was a dream of England as it could have been, not England as it was. It was the romantic and evangelical dream of rural, provincial and pre-or non-Industrial England at the moment of a great spiritual awakening; of Methodist representations of Cornwall on the eve of Wesley’s arrival. The antipodal peoples – both black and white – were as rude,


\(^{60}\) Trevor May, *Victorian and Edwardian Prisons* (Oxford: Shire Publications, 2006) 3. The expression was that of novelist and magistrate Henry Fielding.
irreligious, degraded by sin, and as miserable as the Cornish had once been. And as was the case with Cornish, that misery was due to a lack of knowledge rather than some innate or essential characteristic. If anyone bore the fault of their condition it was the established Church. The Church had, after all, been in both New South Wales and the English provinces, but in both places its servants were so entangled in the worldliness of corrupt society they failed in their pastoral duty. In western Cornwall the literate and worldly vicars Borlase, Polwhele, and Le Grice had been the stumbling blocks with which Methodism had been forced to contend. In Australia the situation was rather different, the Wesleyan missionaries were only there by the grace of the imperial government after all, and a large proportion of the clergy were Evangelicals themselves.\textsuperscript{61} The established church nonetheless became for the mission a source of anxiety, conflict, and frustration.

When Benjamin Carvosso paused in his journey to New South Wales to step off the boat in Hobart Town to preach to the locals he found a vicar, the Rev. Knopwood, who was cheerful, friendly, busy with his sheep, and in the missionary’s view largely indifferent to the state of his parishioners’ souls. Lawry said of him that he was a “minister whose age and infidelities renders him unfit for duty (besides he is a swearing, drunken, debauched infidel).” And worse, “who as a magistrate would oppose a

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[Methodist] missionary with all his might if he [that missionary] had no authority from home.”

In New South Wales the Rev. Samuel Marsden was of a much more Evangelical bent than Knopwood, and in his way quite accommodating, but he too was well pleased with what he imagined to be the natural rightness of traditional British hierarchies. And like his Vandemonian colleague he was a successful and wealthy pastoralist. A magistrate, a landowner, and pillar of colonial society Marsden – “the Flogging Parson” – watched over the prerogatives of the established Church as jealously as he did his property and that of his equals and betters.

Marsden had a very different vision of what it meant for an Empire to be Christian than did Cornish Methodists like Lawry and Carvosso. The historian of early Australian missions J.D. Bollen once contrasted Churchmen like Marsden who hoped to encircle the world in colonial sees, with nonconformist proponents of a “true” Christianity which it was assumed would triumph in locales freed from the various legal and social restrictions of the home country. Such a contrast is certainly apt, but if such fervent young missionaries from the provinces as Lawry and Carvosso did indeed dare to try and found a paradise of dissent in the South Seas, not all Wesleyan missionaries

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were as hostile to the established Church. When the WMMS mission to New South Wales fractured as it did in the middle twenties, it was Marsden and his ally, Lawry’s predecessor, superior, and former itinerant hero, Samuel Leigh, who were in the very middle of it. And the fault lines along which the community split were analogous to those that tore English Methodism apart two decades later and half a world away.

3.2 Marsden’s Empire

It was during this first quarter of the nineteenth century that the group later known as the Clapham Sect was reaching the zenith of their influence in London. And from that great height it seemed as if the whole world could be encompassed in their reformist vision.\(^6^4\) The most well-known member of the Sect was William Wilberforce (1759-1833), the politician and abolitionist. Other members included John Venn (1759-1813) who had been the rector of Clapham from 1792 and was the group’s pastor;\(^6^5\) Henry Thornton (1760-1815) who was a banker and political economist;\(^6^6\) His brother Samuel (1754-1834) succeeded their father as the head of a firm which traded in the

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Baltic, was a director of the Bank of England, and a governor of the Russia Company.\textsuperscript{67} He was also the governor of the Royal Naval Hospital, Greenwich Hospital (where William Carvosso’s father had died), and a president of Guy’s Hospital. John Shore, or Baron Teignmouth (1751-1838), a former governor-general of Bengal was also a member of the group.\textsuperscript{68} As was Charles Grant (1746-1823), a director of the East India Company who while in South Asia in the 1790s converted to evangelical Christianity.\textsuperscript{69} On his return to Britain in the 1790s he became an MP.\textsuperscript{70} James Stephen (1758-1832) was a lawyer who became an avid abolitionist as a result of his experiences in the West Indies.\textsuperscript{71} Zachary Macauley (1768-1838) was another Clapham Sect member who experienced at first hand the horrors of slavery in the West Indies.\textsuperscript{72}


remarkable collection of plutocratic and politically powerful reformers included Hannah More, Granville Sharp, Thomas Babington and Charles Simeon.

The Empire which they believed God had given to the British, and which they sought so fervently to remake according to the most relevant of his ancient pronouncements, was one meant to be commercial, moral, and evangelical.73 As early as 1787 William Wilberforce and Henry Thornton had inveigled an evangelical chaplain (Richard Johnson) into the expedition to Botany Bay.74 In 1788 Wilberforce became involved in the African Association, an organization dedicated to the exploration of that continent.75 In 1792 members of the Clapham Sect had mobilized their considerable political and financial powers to establish the Sierra Leone Company – a trading company and philanthropic enterprise meant to help discourage the slave trade in West Africa and create a settlement for free blacks.76 In 1799 they helped found the Society for Missions to Africa and the East (which in 1812 became the Church Missionary Society (CMS)),77 in 1804 the British and Foreign Bible Society,78 and in 1807 the African

73 Hall, *Macauley and Son*, xii.
In 1813 they led the victorious efforts to breach the East India Company’s defense against missions, a battle that had been ongoing since the 1790s. Even if one set their extensive abolitionist efforts aside – as I have done here – this was a remarkable, one could almost venture heroic, record of transnational interferences.

They were called “the Saints” by their contemporaries and during the 1790s had all lived in the vicinity of the Surrey village of Clapham, a suburb of the grand metropolis. All born roughly around 1750, they belonged to the same generation of British subjects as William Carvosso. Like him they were evangelical in the broadest sense of the word, but they also laid claim to words more precise ecclesiological meaning – Evangelical as a category which described a party within the Church of England. Their attempts at carefully managed moral reform were of a very different order than the Arminian enthusiasms of the Carvossos’ transatlantic revivalism. If any of them had wrestled with the devil at midnight in a Cornish barn they did not boast of


79 Judith Jennings, *The Business of Abolishing the British Slave Trade, 1783 to 1807* (London: Routledge, 1997), 115. The Institute was meant as to serve as both a watchdog of abolition and a vehicle for the civilization of Africans.


it. Their society, in Catherine Hall’s view, was a deliberate attempt to create a new kind of community. It was a carefully managed Evangelical colony from which the men circulated between parliament at Westminster, the banks of the City, and the comfortable domestic circle their wives kept in fine order.\textsuperscript{82} Even as they challenged one of the key economic institutions of the First Empire they remained a deeply conservative group. If they sought to remake the Empire they did not seek to disorder it in the process. In her study of the Macauleys Catherine Hall quotes Henry Thornton as saying, “how beautiful is the order of society when every person adorns the station in which GOD has placed him; when the inferior pays willing honour to the superior; and the superior is diligently occupied in the duties of his trust.”\textsuperscript{83} They exploited, even depended, on the centralization of imperial power in metropolitan London to exert and extend their influence.

Despite the fact that their number include \textit{bona fide} lords the Sect was hardly a \textit{noblesse d’Épée}, and their evangelicalism was frequently an object of derision and disdain from members of their own class. This was not least because those who volunteered for missions were from the perspective of the aristocracy and even of many \textit{haute bourgeoisie},

\textsuperscript{82} Hall, \textit{Macauley and Son}, 56

\textsuperscript{83} Hall, \textit{Macauley and Son}, 12.
largely of a vulgar and disreputable type.\textsuperscript{84} General Isaac Gascoyne, an MP for the slave trading center of Liverpool, said in 1802 the only advantage of the Saints’ mission to Sierra Leone for Britain was that it was “a means of ridding this country of a great number of field preachers who would otherwise be troublesome.”\textsuperscript{85} Such attitudes meant there was widespread suspicion of the CMS, even among churchmen, that took along time to overcome. The notable absence of the Church’s bishops from the CMS until 1814 suggested they were at the very least cautious about endorsing the sorts of enthusiasms which were so popular among dissenters and nonconformists.\textsuperscript{86}

The CMS knew very well that its inability to attract the desired class of personnel was a liability. When Anglican evangelicals formed the CMS in 1799 they did so largely in reaction to the well-publicized efforts of the Baptist and London Societies’ efforts, and of the Wesleyan missionary Thomas Coke – organizations which did not have to answer to the snobbery of aristocrats and gentry.\textsuperscript{87} The problem the CMS was immediately confronted with was that they could not simply load up a boat full of artisanal missionaries as the nonconformist and dissenting societies did and ship them off to some distant port. They wanted ordained ministers who would uphold the dignity and

\textsuperscript{84} On the \textit{haute bourgeois} domination of British politics between the 1780s and 1840s see Hilton, \textit{Age of Atonement}, 7.

\textsuperscript{85} Porter, \textit{Religion versus Empire}, 54.

\textsuperscript{86} Porter, \textit{Religion versus Empire}, 52.

\textsuperscript{87} Porter, \textit{Religion versus Empire}, 75.
authority of the Church and such men generally preferred to settle into a comfortable parish life in England. They did not recruit their first volunteer until 1804 and only three of their first fifteen missionaries were actually English, the rest being German Lutherans. It was, interestingly enough, the evangelical chaplain from New South Wales Samuel Marsden, a man from an artisanal background himself, who finally persuaded the CMS committee to begin sending out working men trained up to be clergy, rather than keep trying to find clergy willing to step down to be missionaries.

It was, interestingly enough, the evangelical chaplain from New South Wales Samuel Marsden, a man from an artisanal background himself, who finally persuaded the CMS committee to begin sending out working men trained up to be clergy, rather than keep trying to find clergy willing to step down to be missionaries.

If in Britain social difference was of enough import that mere association with tinkers, tailors, nonconformists, and dissenters was enough to besmirch a Society’s name circumstances in Australia were rather different. In the antipodal world class distinctions were not erased but they were recalibrated by the dramatic rift that existed between the prisoners and their keepers. Once in New South Wales for example, Marsden, the son of a blacksmith from Leeds whose education had been paid for by a society of evangelically-minded northern clergymen, was given the opportunity to establish himself as a pillar of the confessional state abroad. But even he was no Baptist tinker or Methodist shopkeeper.

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88 Porter, Religion versus Empire, 56.

89 Porter, Religion versus Empire, 88. See also Stuart Piggin, Making Evangelical Missionaries, 1789-1858: The Social Background, Motives and Training of British Protestant Missionaries to India (Abingdon: Sutton Courtanay Press, 1984).
The most contested line of social cleavage in colonial Australia was unique to its origins as a penal colony. It was not the stable, legal distinction between convict and free in the colonies, but that which fell between the ex-convicts and the free settlers. The two factions in which that cleavage found its clearest political expression were the Emancipists and the Exclusives. The Exclusives, also called the Settlers, Emigrants and more colloquially the Pure Merinos, were a bloc of powerful officers, ex-officers, and other servants of the government, such as Marsden, who had managed to acquire vast tracts of land from the colonial state, and whose numbers were being swelled to some degree by the arrival of the wealthiest of a new generation of migrants.90 Many of these pastoralists, and again Marsden who became wealthy raising sheep and trading wool is a good example, were not from particularly good families, and their efforts to reinvent themselves in the colonies were often treated by their critics as little more than a pretentious burlesque.91

Edward Eager, a so called gentleman ex-convict, once described Marsden, his erstwhile benefactor, as “a man descended from the lowest ranks of life brought up to the Trade of a Blacksmith, of a narrow Inferior education, of coarse vulgar habits and manners.” For Eager the chaplain was little more than an ambitious plebeian who had


achieved his wealth and status by mere accident. Macarthur, the leader of Rum
Officers in the mutiny against the ever unpopular Captain Bligh fared no better as a
subject of gossip than the churchman who he hated. Macarthur was the son of a draper,
and mocked by his enemies as “Jack Bodice,” a stay maker’s apprentice. But if
Exclusivist posturing was risible to local observers, their power was real.

Like the squire at home they belonged to a faction that largely controlled the
bench. And like the squire they used it as best they could to ensure their monopoly of
the key civic and commercial rights that had enabled their accumulation of wealth, and
fed their social pretensions. They imagined themselves as put-upon elites, barely
managing to keep control of a dangerous and immoral Australian felonry, an attitude
evoked with splendid and supercilious paranoia as we shall see, by the manner in which
Marsden represented his dealings with Irish and female convicts.

The Emancipists on the other hand, had the ear of the reformist Governor.
Governor Lachlan Macquarie had been sent there in 1809 to restore order after the
mutiny and is often credited with overseeing the transition of Australia from a penal to a
settler colony. Macquarie had been instructed by the Colonial Office “to improve the

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Morals of the Colonists, to encourage Marriage, to provide for Education, to prohibit the use of Spirituous Liquors, [and] to Increase the Agriculture and Stock.”

He was an autocratic reformer, the last of the colony’s military Governors, and blessed with a brief period which meant conflict with vested local interests was inevitable. Given these circumstances it is hardly a surprise that he courted the small class of emancipist merchants, sharecroppers, and townspeople, that was already there.

His first years passed with largely uncontroversial efforts at administrative and commercial reform. In 1813 for instance he introduced coinage and in 1816 he encouraged the establishment of the colony’s first bank – one, it should be noted, in which wealthy ex-convicts played an important, if contentious role. But he also denounced cohabitation without marriage, had his constabulary enforce the Sabbath, made church attendance compulsory for convicts, imposed more stringent licensing controls on public houses, and began to establish schools. To the horror of the Exclusives Macquarie insisted not only on the civic and commercial rights of former convicts, he even made magistrates of some of the richest and most influential. Simeon Lord received an appointment for example, and Andrew Thompson and William McLeachlan, N. D., 'Macquarie, Lachlan (1762–1824)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/macquarie-lachlan-2419/text3211, accessed 28 October 2012.

Redfern. The Governor’s policies were the direct cause of his clashes with the clique of landed elites who had made their wealth on the back of an earlier, more rigidly fixed, organization of colonial society and its economy – an organization to which they remained committed.

In 1810 for example, Marsden refused to serve on the same board as the former convicts Lord and Thompson or to read a gubernatorial proclamation against food speculators from the pulpit and as a consequence he clashed with Governor. The judges and brothers Ellis and Jeffery Hart Bent also resisted the Governor’s efforts to put emancipated lawyers, such as Eagar, back into the courtroom. Marsden, Macarthur, and the Bents, decried such radicalism, and fought to permanently codify in law the social distinctions between convict and free. Their great enemies were not the convicts themselves, but a body of reformers insisting that such distinctions were unnatural, and who equated political capacity with property.

The battle lines were clearly drawn, but while they fell across a social geography largely shaped by the polarities of the convict and the free, individual identities and interests were also determined by economics and, as we shall see, religion. Sandra Blair has argued the importation of British notions of class and political ideology, and the
presence of convicts with valuable clerical and professional skills, subverted the possibility of a genuinely caste-based society developing during the penal era.⁹⁶

Of all the exclusives it is Marsden’s perspective on this colonial situation that is the most interesting. He was not simply a wealthy opportunist after all, but a reformer and a visionary as well, and despite their antagonisms, he had a great deal in common with Macquarie. They shared a similar vision of what Australia should become, and a commitment to the ideal of convict redemption – both social and spiritual.

Marsden’s own life was an illustration of evangelical platitudes on the correlation of piety to personal advancement, but he was nonetheless a conservative. And jealous enough of his political and legal prerogatives, and convinced enough of the Church of England’s moral authority, to refuse direct gubernatorial orders. Over the last two hundred years or so Samuel Marsden’s chief historiographical manifestations have been as “the flogging parson;” a hero of the evangelical mission to the South Seas; and an early pastoralist. It was said of him as magistrate that “he sentences a prisoner on Saturday, admonishes him on Sunday and flogs him on Wednesday,” and he makes an admirable villain in no small number of convict histories – particularly of the popular sort.⁹⁷ A pessimist about the capacity of the convict and the ex-convict to achieve

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⁹⁷ Citation from Allan Grocott, Convicts, Clergymen, and Churches (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1980), 233.
responsible respectability, he was nonetheless a firmer believer in the worth of pious social climbers like himself, and willing to give a leg up to those of the fallen who seemed willing to settle into the appropriate station. Marsden is an easy enough man to lampoon, and when characterizations of him as both cruel and sanctimonious are treated as somehow contradictory, he seems the most shallow, indeed odious of men. Manning Clarke, for instance, calls Marsden “an unctuous hypocrite,” Robert Hughes labels him “a merciless Pharisee.” But those charges of moral duplicity are unfair; there is no necessary contradiction between piety and tyranny. That Marsden, like his God, often ruled that the wages of sin were death, hardly makes him disingenuous.

There was a predominance of Evangelicals in the chaplaincy of the penal colony and despite his fearsome reputation Marsden was one of the most enthusiastic and active. For Marsden, God, again like himself, was not a tender-hearted caregiver but a magistrate who could and would pass awesome and terrible judgments on sinners. Marsden imagined the ideal social world as a divinely-sanctioned hierarchy governed by an exclusive group of propertied pastoral elites. Rebellion against that elite, even those whom he hated, was not simply a crime but an egregious sin, and Marsden felt

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perfectly justified in quelling it with torture and murder. His was a classic Tory paternalism in which the state’s authority was not a distant and impersonal power. It was embodied in stern father-figures, men, who like himself, cared deeply about the moral well-being of the prisoners.\textsuperscript{100}

As did all evangelicals Marsden offered his audience the promise of grace, but in contrast to the Arminian revivalists who preached in the highways and the hedges, his theology was as deterministic as his politics conservative. When Lawry discovered Aborigines and convicts roaming the bush between settlements his reaction was one of an excited optimism that bordered on the ecstatic. The Calvinist Marsden on the other hand had little hope for the salvation of the groups he most despised – in particular Irish Catholics and Aborigines. They could not contribute to the transformation of New South Wales from “Satan’s Kingdom” into an ordered and moral replica of an idealized England. He therefore saw them as populations to be isolated, disciplined, and subjected to close observation. Convicts and ex-convicts who depended on the charity of the Church, the State, and generous Christians were “a hopeless race to reform either externally or internally,” and he was inclined, as we shall see, to work with those communities for whom he could hold out hope.\textsuperscript{101} The Wesleyans on the other

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hand were eager to redeem precisely those groups that seemed the most irredeemable – the more horrific the sin, the more evident the grace, the greater the glory.

British Methodism was despised by many British elites for its enthusiasms; for the wild-eyed optimism and inclusive naivety with which men like Leigh, Lawry, and Carvosso sought to encourage any indigent soul whom they might stumble across in the woods to join the ever-growing circle of their global family. Such enthusiasm, however well-intentioned, threatened the carefully graduated social hierarchies according to which not only infidel aristocrats, but Tory evangelicals like Marsden preferred to organize the world. The very groups that Methodists most hoped to incorporate into the connectional body, were those Marsden thought the most likely to pollute, reject, and even destroy the order of a properly constituted colonial society. His conservatism can be illuminated clearly enough when we consider the chaplain’s attitudes towards the Irish, towards convict women, and towards the Australian Aborigines.

Marsden described the large number of Catholic convicts under his care as the very lowest class of the Irish, and the Irish as “the most wild, ignorant and savage race that were ever favoured with the light of civilization.” The Irish convicts in Australia were familiar with robbery, murder and every other crime from their infancy, “their minds depraved beyond all conception, and their whole thoughts employed in

mischief.”  For Marsden, as for many of his colleagues and superiors, the Irish posed a problem to be managed rather than solved, and a source of constant danger. In 1798 for example Governor John Hunter described the Irish sent to his colony as turbulent, seditious and duplicitous to a man – “so extremely insolent, refractory, and troublesome, it is impossible to receive any labour whatever from them.”  That many of them were veterans of the recent rebellion hardly softened administrative attitudes towards them. Marsden had complained in a letter to Hunter’s successor, Governor King, about the intransigence of an Irish convict he had interrogated while investigating rumours of rebellion in 1800. “They are an unaccountable set of beings,” Marsden wrote to King of the Irish. He had the young Paddy Galvin summarily flogged until his back could take no more and then told the scourger to work over his bottom and legs. “I am sure he will die before he will reveal anything of the business.”

Joseph Holt’s account of Galvin’s flogging gives us a better sense of what the convicts thought of Marsden than the chaplain’s own pithy account. Holt, who had been one of the leaders of the 1798 Rebellion in Ireland, had just witnessed the flogging.

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of another Irish convict Marsden had suspected of withholding information. Although “fifteen yards leeward,” he reminisced, he had felt the flecks of skin, blood, and flesh, as the scourgers shook their cats. Galvin was up next and received the first hundred lashes to his back. He was cut to the bone between the shoulder-blades. The doctor directed the next hundred to be inflicted lower down, “which reduced his flesh to such a jelly,” and he received the remaining hundred on the calves of his legs. In Holt’s memory he neither whimpered nor flinched. “You may hang me if you like,” he recalled the young convict defying Marsden, “but you shall have no music out of my mouth to make others dance.”

Four years later the rebellion the authorities feared occurred, but it was a largely unimpressive affair. After a day or two of sporadic skirmishes the resistance to the Government’s forces petered out and the rebels were defeated. One of their leaders was hung immediately and without trial, and after Marsden had helped prepare their prosecution, eight more were hung, and a further nine given two hundred to five hundred lashes. The ferocity of the response needs to be understood as much in terms Marsden’s, and other the authorities, of anti-Catholic attitudes as a generalized fear of convict rebellion. In the Protestant state to which Marsden was so committed


107 Clarke, Australia, 33.
Catholicism could be represented as a particularly insidious danger. “If the catholic religion was ever allowed to be celebrated by authority,” wrote Marsden, “The colony would be lost in to the British empire in a year.” The freedom to practice their religion would in Marsden’s view provide the Irish a platform on which rebellion could be organized. Marsden,

[The Irish] would assemble together from every quarter not so much from a desire of celebrating mass, as to recite the miseries and grievances of their punishment, the hardships they suffer, and to enflame one another’s minds with wild schemes of revenge.108

If Marsden held out little hope for the salvation of Irish convicts so long as the practice of their Catholicism was permitted by the state, he felt their children could yet be saved. He was certain that if they were educated with Protestant children, and brought up in the same moral and religious environment, they would behave like them. They would become hard-working, honest and sober and so doing contribute with their industry and labor to the economic and moral prosperity of the colony.109

This same preoccupation with the transformation of a rising generation into a parsimonious work force can be found running through his pronouncements about convict women as well.


In 1807 Marsden argued that the high number of illegitimate children in New South Wales was a perpetual source of trouble for the colonial state and a constant drain on the treasury. In his view they were deserted by their parents and grew up to be idle, immoral and dishonest; if left untutored they would become like the Irish and the Aborigines; the boys lazy thieves and the girls concubines and prostitutes. His solution to this problem was to induce the convicts to marry.

“When prisoners marry,” wrote Marsden to Governor Macquarie in 1817, “the very bond itself induces generally a different moral feeling, they then consider their children their own and that they have a legal claim upon them for Protection and support.” In his view the marital couple was the social unit out of which all else was built – without it there was anarchy. Convict women who were not married, and had no such desire or prospect were from this perspective a great danger to the commercial and moral well-being of the colony. Without the universalization of Protestant marital practices he wrote, “no instruction given by schoolmasters, no labours of the clergy, no


112 Quoted in Davidson The Invisible State, 58.
power of the Executive Authority can render any moral or religious advantage to the rising generation.”

Marsden was clearly a social theorist and engineer with eye for the complexities of contemporary social relations, and none of the revivalist’s enthusiasm for dramatic transformations achieved in a single moment of grace. The disordered and promiscuous contact between unmarried male and female convicts on the outskirts of settlements in the evening was therefore a situation which for Marsden was intolerable. In the chaplain’s view such fraternization created a swamp of vice and sin in which only the most abandoned of convicts could thrive. It contributed directly to both the immediate problem of criminality in New South Wales, and the production of children who would inevitably become a burden on the state. The only reasonable solution to the problem of convict gender relations in Marsden’s view was close policing of those who were not married, and the establishment of segregated barracks. This meant the establishment of a female factory in which to contain vagrant and dangerous women. And in the same way boundaries between man and woman had to be carefully maintained, so to those between be the respectable and the unrespectable.

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113 Davidson The Invisible State, 52.

In a pamphlet he published in 1826 he tied the problem of what we could call the colony’s marital economy to Macquarie’s emancipist policies. He was still angered by the Governor’s injudicious “resolution to unite in the free and the convict population in one body.”

In a beautifully conservative turn of phrase, Marsden wrote that to accomplish his misguided plans the Governor would have had to not only alter the established laws, customs, and opinions of society, but overturn the inherent principles of humanity. Marsden believed that convicts and ex-convicts needed to be defined by the State as a discretely bounded and politically inferior social unit.

The land-owning Exclusives occupied their position in society because it was they who had the capital, knowledge and self-discipline to bring a country in a state of nature under cultivation. It was their efforts that kept the colony fed, and their wisdom which governed it. To expect them to perform their duties with men who had deservedly lost their position in society as equals and partners was not only degrading for respectable persons, but politically unwise. For the governor to insist on such repugnant social arrangements would undermine the moral order of good society, just as surely as would the degraded state of relations between male and female convicts.

115 Samuel Marsden, An Answer to Certain Calumnies in the Late Governor Macquaries pamphlet: and the third edition of Mr. Wentworth’s Account of Australia, (London: J. Hatchard & Son, 1826) 3.

116 Samuel Marsden, An Answer to Certain Calumnies, 4.

117 Samuel Marsden, An Answer to Certain Calumnies, 10.
And an instructive example of the difference between a well-ordered society, and one that was anarchic, was at hand in the Maori and the Aborigine.

Marsden’s ambitions certainly extended beyond the regeneration of Britain’s unruly cast-offs. The parson was not merely a chaplain but an agriculturist and a merchant who deserves as much credit for opening up the global connections that were necessary for the Australian wool industries development, as he does for the production of the sheep that were its most fundamental unit. In 1809 he brought the gift of a suit made from Australian wool and in return received five pure-bred merino from the farmer King’s stock, a testament to his knack for navigating the patronage networks of Georgian Britain. He also brought a sample of his wool to a textile mill in Leeds, near to where he had grown up as a boy, and the owner was impressed with its quality.

On his return to the colony he began shipping large volumes of wool back home, and in his enthusiasm wrote to a friend that he was laying the foundation of national economy. The fledgling industry was for Marsden an anticipation of “the greatness and wealth of this country in the future, the civilization of the surrounding savage Nations, and the cultivation of their islands.” His careful homage to imperial authority, his

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118 Keith Robert Binney, Horsemen of the First Frontier (1788-1900) and the Serpent’s Legacy (Neutral Bay, NSW: Volcanic Productions, 2005), 60.


continuing cultivation of metropolitan allies such as Wilberforce and Simeon, and his ties to English textile-mills helped him entrench his position as an important economic player in the colony, and provide him with the political heft necessary to stave off challenges to his authority as the local representative of a pious empire.\textsuperscript{121} That he survived his squabbles with Governor Macquarie over the social organization of New South Wales is evidence enough of that. But an interesting corollary to his vision of the British Empire as hierarchical, commercial, maritime, and Christian, was his interest in Australia as the littoral of a British sea. Marsden hoped to draw the islands of the South Pacific, like moons, into the dominion of New South Wales, a planet that was itself in orbit around the glorious sun of metropolitan Britain. And of course these planets were not entirely uninhabited.

For Marsden part of Christianization was the development of commercial sensibilities, and he was optimistic about his operations in the Tasman Sea because he believed the Maori, Tahitians, and Tongans already had these rudimentary civilizational skills. The Maori especially were “one of the finest Aboriginal races with which the English have come in contact.”\textsuperscript{122} For one thing, unlike the Aborigine “mob,” Maori society was, for Marsden, appealingly stratified, and it flattered him to deal with what

\textsuperscript{121} See Yarwood, \textit{The Great Survivor}.

\textsuperscript{122} Quotation from Angela Middleton, \textit{Te Puna – A New Zealand Mission Station: Historical Archaeology in New Zealand}, (New York: Springer, 2008), 37.
he called men of “high rank and influence,” even if they were heathen.123 Just as important as their station was the fact that such men were not only great traders, but a quick study at European agriculture. The Maori chiefs were anxious, in Marsden’s words, to transform their waste lands into gardens and convinced that their country’s future wealth and happiness depended on the produce of their soil.124 By the 1830s the Maori were exporting flax, potato, and grain to Sydney, and carrying on a lively trade with American, European, and Latin American vessels.125 In his account of the mission Marsden wrote that the more he examined their character of the Maori, the more he thought their minds “like a rich soil that had never been cultivated, and only wanted the proper means of improvement to render them fit to rank with the civilized nations.”126

New Zealand, Marsden he wrote to the secretary of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in a letter justifying his purchase of a ship, is “the great emporium of the South Seas.” It had the potential to be not just a mission, but by becoming self-sufficient, by


124 Marsden, The Letters and Journals, 67


126 Marsden, The Letters and Journals, 60.
trading with the passing whalers, it could be a shining beacon on the hill for all the heathen and infidel peoples of the Pacific.\textsuperscript{127}

His enthusiasm for evangelism to the people of the South Pacific was not matched, however, by his efforts among the Australian Aborigines. In his view the Maori were the “finest and noblest heathens known to the civilized world,” and needed only knowledge of the Christian religion to become a great nation, but the Aborigines were a lost cause.\textsuperscript{128} When the secretaries of the CMS asked him to open up to the Aborigines his planned seminary for the Maori, he wrote them an argumentative letter in which he declared that such an inclusion would be impossible. When those Aborigine children who had been taught in the colony’s schools reached puberty they inevitably fled into the woods. The Aborigines could simply not be induced to live in a regular way, and every year they increased in vice and drunkenness. And even if they could be convinced to stay at the Parramatta seminary Marsden continued, the Maori would refuse to live with a race he described as degraded and disgusting in conduct and appearance. The indigenous Australians were indifferent to agriculture and commerce and therefore, in Marsden’s view, for the time being incapable of either civilization or Christianity.\textsuperscript{129} That the one group were occupying the land on which he wished to raise

\textsuperscript{127} Marsden, \textit{The Letters and Journals}, 133.

\textsuperscript{128} Marsden, \textit{The Letters and Journals}, 79.

\textsuperscript{129} Marsden, \textit{The Letters and Journals}, 231.
his thousands of sheep, and the other represented an opportunity to make money by trade, may well have contributed to the polarization of Marsden’s representations of two groups. But regardless of the origins of his racial logics, they were an important element of the well-ordered commercial empire he wished to found in the Tasman Sea.

3.3 **Missionary Conflict in the Antipodes**

Carvosso and Lawry had been sent by the WMMS to a penal colony, but it was into an evangelical community whose horizons far exceed those of New South Wales that they settled. The restless and expansive perambulations of that community’s members; the self-confidence with which they launched themselves across oceans and seas; the energy with which they threw themselves not just into the business of proselytization, but the business of business; and their disregard for the secularly constituted authority of the Church of England could as easily have described Methodist Cornwall in the early nineteenth century as it did this fragment of colonial Australia. For Carvosso and Lawry the Tasman world was, as we shall see, not the perfect fit, but it was comfortable enough that it became their home. And it is a world to which all their children eventually returned.

The first British attempt to convert the peoples of the Pacific had occurred twenty years before the Wesleyans arrived on the scene. In 1797 when the Methodists were still contentiously struggling to determine the direction they would take after Wesley’s death, the London Missionary Society (LMS) ship *Duff* deposted its ecumenical cargo of
missionaries on Tahitian and Tongan beaches. The missionaries consisted of so called “mechanics” – carpenters, blacksmiths, and the like – men who had the skills to be both largely self-sufficient and the capacity to train the islanders in the most basic arts of civilization. The LMS was a non-denominational missionary society, and the boatload of missionaries was a motley crew of Anglicans and Dissenters that could not have better conformed to the prejudices of the anti-evangelical squad in Britain.

Within a year eleven of the original seventeen missionaries and their families had deserted their posts on Tahiti for Sydney. And the attempt to establish a station on Tonga was a genuine disaster; three of the nine men were killed, one gave up Christianity and began living with locals, and the remaining five were rescued from their destitution by a passing ship five years later. It may not have been an auspicious beginning but more attempts followed in 1788, 1789, and 1800, until quite a community of pious, free and ambitious settlers had been established in the region. And not just in the islands but right across the Tasman Sea, from Australia all the way to New Zealand. Their success has often been attributed to the efforts of Marsden, who had been quick to take advantage of the mission’s early difficulty. His wealth, local influence, and

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131 In addition to Cox see George Vason, *An Authentic Narrative of Four Years’ Residence at Tongataboo, one of the Friendly Islands, in the South-Sea* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1810).
evangelical connections in London, made him an ideal intermediary between the LMS secretaries back in England, the colonial government, and the missionaries themselves.

It did not take long for him to be named the Society’s agent in the Antipodes.132

Samuel Leigh’s biographer quotes a letter from Marsden in which he reveals the scope of his ambitions for the region. “I am happy to inform you that the labors of the missionaries have been greatly blessed at the Society Islands,” he wrote,

The missionaries have begun to translate the scriptures, and have now a printing-press at work. The Society have also sent out materials for manufacturing sugar; and the missionaries will set the natives to grow cotton. I hope, in a little time, we shall have a cargo of sugar at Port Jackson from Taheita, which will lessen the heavy expenses of the mission. The colony will furnish a market for all the sugar that can be made for a long time at the Society Islands. I cannot but entertain the pleasing hope that all the inhabitants of the numerous islands will, in due time, receive the blessings of the gospel. The British settlement in New Holland is a very wonderful circumstance in these eventful times. The islands in the Great Pacific Ocean could not have been settled, unless there had been a settlement formed previously in this country. The missionaries could never have maintained their ground, had they not been encouraged and supported from Port Jackson. How mysterious and wonderful are the ways of God! The exiles of the British nation are sent before to prepare the way of the Lord.133

The movement of missionary families about the Tasman Sea, their deliberate development of commercial ties between mission outposts and the growing economy of

132 Marsden, The Letters and Journals, 8.

133 Strachan, Life of Leigh, 84.
New South Wales, and the ever increasing density of their kinship networks was all, in theory directed all from Marsden’s estate near Parramatta.

The most prominent of these families were the Hassalls. The Congregationalists Rowland and Elizabeth, who had been silk weavers in England and were veterans of the Duff’s original voyage, became one of the leading families of not just an evangelical New South Wales but of the south Pacific.134 Marsden took them under his wing when they first arrived in Sydney and had Hassall installed as the government store-keeper under Governor King. Hassall was soon running his own store, managing other people’s estates, and breeding a growing flock of sheep with that of Marsden. By 1808 he had acquired some 1300 acres, a number that had more than doubled by the time of his death twelve years later, and in 1814 he was made superintendent of the Government stock. He was also a preacher and a leader for New South Wales’ growing population of nonconformists and dissenters.

Two of Hassall’s daughters married the Wesleyan missionaries Walter Lawry and William Walker, and another the son of his Congregationalist colleague from the Duff William Shelley. His eldest son Thomas had been meant to marry Sarah Henry, the daughter of another Duff veteran, William Henry, but she was uninterested in the

match. Instead Marsden raised him out of the swamps of nonconformist resentment and onto the firm ground of respectable Anglicanism. He helped find the young man a place at Cambridge and he became the first Australian to be ordained in the Church of England. When he returned from his education in England in 1822 he married Anne, the eldest daughter of Samuel Marsden, and was himself appointed a colonial chaplain.

Another Duff veteran was William Henry, a carpenter from Sligo in Ireland and a preacher in the Countess of Huntington’s Connexion. In New South Wales he was an itinerant preacher until 1811 when Macquarie appointed him justice of peace for the Society Islands and he returned to Tahiti. After his wife died he briefly visited Sydney to remarry, and was later joined in Tahiti by his new brother-in-law the Methodist Isaac Shepard. Isaac was a participant in the LMS mission to the islands directed by Marsden. That mission was led by John Gyles, a former overseer from Jamaica who introduced sugar cane to the islands, and with the aid of the son of a West Indian merchant named Matthews built a sugar mill.


137 ADB, s.v. “Henry, William.”; see also James Wightman Davidson, Pacific Island Portraits, (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1970)

James Shepherd was also a missionary in Tahiti before being sent by Marsden to his New Zealand settlement.\textsuperscript{139}

Henry’s sons, while not missionaries, were active as businessmen in the region and made good use of their father’s connections. His eldest son was Captain Samuel Pinder Henry, who was King Pomare II’s agent in Sydney and was active in the sandalwood trade.\textsuperscript{140} His daughter Sarah, who had rejected Thomas Hassall’s proposal, married the emancipated surgeon William Bland. Numerous other Henry children and grandchildren were missionaries, planters and traders throughout the region including an adopted Tahitian child Nancy whose daughter Marae married the ex-convict and missionary Thomas Bambridge.\textsuperscript{141}

William Shelley was also one of the original Duff missionaries. He was a Congregationalist cabinet-maker who had been in Tonga and fled to Sydney where he married the daughter of a settler. He attempted to convince the LMS secretaries that future missions should be supported by trade with the islands but failed. He eventually

\textsuperscript{139} ADB, s.v. “Henry, William.”


went into business for himself shipping pork, sandalwood and pearls about the Tasman Sea. Shelley settled in Parramatta where he adopted some Aboriginal children and convinced Macquarie to establish the Native Institute there in 1815. A decade later it was his widow who convinced Lawry that the Methodists should re-establish a mission to the Tongans.142

To continue such a list the missionary families in the region, and to account for all their business and religious relations, their marriages and friendships, would be an intensive project in its own right. Suffice it to say for now that it was extensive, that it included not only new arrivals but old hands and even ex-convicts in its number, and that it was Marsden who found many of them their jobs as teachers, catechists, chaplains, constables and positions as government carpenters, blacksmiths and surgeons. Yet this missionary community was contentious, even fractious, and they formed and broke alliances with each other frequently. Often splits ran along denominational, familial, and class lines, but not always. They all made use of Marsden’s patronage but did not all do his bidding, and the society they formed moved to rhythms that ran independently of the chaplain’s, or anyone else’s, score.

Marsden certainly used his influence to develop a patronage network that extended not only throughout New South Wales, but across the Tasman Sea to Polynesia.

and New Zealand. He stocked an emergent colonial bureaucracy with his beneficiaries, and helped establish a self-consciously evangelical community amongst a new generation of settlers who were not part of the old military aristocracy of the convict settlement. Marsden’s generosity had its limits however, and he expected his clients to understand and respect the asymmetrical nature of their relations to him. He thought some of them rather poor specimens – “profane in their lives and conduct, they are totally ignorant of mankind, they possess no education, they are clowns in their manners” – and he expected them to know their places. But while the missionaries and former missionaries had a healthy respect for imperially constituted authority, and did not support the mutiny against Bligh which Macarthur and his clique had organized in 1808, their frequent clashes with the Chaplain suggested they were not all easily cowed or cheaply bought.

As a group they continued to look beyond Australia to the South Seas as a potential site for evangelical and commercial activity, and moved confidently beyond the official boundaries of Britain’s imperial frontier to pursue their dream of a Christian commonwealth. The Henrys’ and Marsdens’ involvement in Tahiti, the latter’s in New Zealand, and the continuing ambition of many of the Duff veterans to return to the islands from whence they had once fled, set the stage for the WMMS push in Tonga and

143 Marsden to Governor King in 1799, quoted in Anne Salmon, Between Worlds: Early Exchanges between Maori and Europeans, 1773-1815 (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1997) 258.
New Zealand that Lawry spearheaded in 1821. It was the existence of an evangelical community permanently established in New South Wales, and one with extensive commercial contacts such as Eagar, Forbes, Thompson, and Campbell, that provided the logistical and psychological support necessary for both that and later endeavors. The lessons of the Duff expedition included making sure future missionaries were well and regularly supplied. To what degree the missionaries should be involved in transportation and trade was a controversial question, but Marsden for one did not balk at the purchase of a ship (the Active) and the establishment of mercantile as well as mission networks. Together with his business partner the Sydney merchant Robert Campbell he had begun trading with the islands, ostensibly to support the LMS mission, as early as 1804.

This was the situation into which Carvosso and Lawry arrived from Cornwall. They were not the first evangelicals in the colony, let alone the first Christians. Marsden’s various offices as colonial chaplain, agent of the LMS and the CMS, correspondent of Wilberforce and other august metropolitan figures, magistrate, and landowner gave him a self-evident and singular authority over the sprawling antipodal mission field. Or at least so it must have seemed to him.


145 Garrett, To Live Among the Stars, 19.
The WMMS had initially been invited to send missionaries to New South Wales by a group of Methodist school teachers – Edward Eager, Thomas Bowden and John Hosking. These men were ostensibly under the direction of the senior Church of England chaplain in the colony, Samuel Marsden. Bowden and Hosking had both been recruited by Marsden in England but Eagar, the most influential of the three was an ex-convict. An attorney and the son of an Anglo-Irish landowner from Killarney he had a death sentence for forgery commuted to transportation in 1811.146 On hearing of Eagar’s consequent jailhouse conversion Marsden had offered him the position of schoolteacher. In 1815 he had been conditionally pardoned by Macquarie and began to practice law – launching a series of suits against former business partners and competitors so vigorous that he earned from one biographer the sobriquet of “Colonial Litigant Extraordinaire.”147 But in 1818, despite Governor Macquarie’s support for their cause Eagar and the emancipated lawyers of the colony had been barred from the practice of their profession by Marsden and the other Exclusives who controlled the bench.148

Eager, like many other ambitious ex-convicts such as Simeon Lord, Henry Kable, James Underwood, William Hutchinson, Francis Forbes, and Samuel Terry (whose


daughter married Bowden’s son), turned to maritime commerce to make his fortune.
Together with his partner and fellow Methodist and transportee Forbes he tried to
secure a trading monopoly with King Pomare II of Tahiti,\(^\text{149}\) but having failed he clashed
in court with Samuel Henry, the son of the LMS missionary and King’s Sydney agent
over the ownership of a brig and its cargo.\(^\text{150}\) Eagar was one of the earliest, and most
vocal proponents of ex-convicts’ civil and commercial rights, organizing petitions in
1819 and 1821 and carrying the latter to London himself.\(^\text{151}\) And it was Eagar who was
one of the key players in bringing Wesleyan Methodism to the colony in the person of
Samuel Leigh.

Despite Leigh’s ties to Eagar and the Emancipist Party however, the Wesleyan
missionary’s relations with the Church of England chaplain were excellent. Leigh was
also close to two other chaplains; the Rev. William Cowper (1778-1858)\(^\text{152}\) and the Rev.

\(^{149}\) *ADB*, “Eagar, Edmund,”; Forbes, George Allen and the printer Robert Howe were both members of the Wesleyan Missionary South Seas Committee in Sydney, 9/28/June 30 1822 MMS/AOAS; For Allen, Beveridge, Brown Scott, Smith Lee Findly or Lindley see also see 1824 petition from the stewards, MMS/SOAS.

\(^{150}\) The agent was Samuel Pinder Henry, the son of one of *Duff* Missionaries, whose brother George Mathew was a trader, speculator and recruiter in Fiji. See Deryck Scarr, *A History of the Pacific Islands: A Passage through Tropical Time* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001) 112.


\(^{152}\) Cowper like Marsden was the son of a yeoman farmer but did not receive the same … education but was trained and licensed as a curate in Hull. In 1809 Marsden invited him to New South Wales as an assistant chaplain and stationed in Sydney. Pollard, N. S., ‘Cowper, William (1778–1858)’, *Australian Dictionary of
Robert Cartwright (1771-1856) with whom he worked on various philanthropic committees. In their history of the WMMS Findlay and Holdsworth describe Leigh as an old-fashioned Church Methodist, he was a convert of “Wesleyan cottage-services,” but always retained a kindly feeling towards the Church of England. And, according to the two historians, the seeds of contention between him and the Methodist laymen of Sydney were sewn before his departure. “I go as your Missionary,” he declared to the secretaries of the WMMS, “depending upon you and holding myself responsible to you for my conduct, and not as the hired servant of the colonists, of whom I know nothing.” In the light of tensions that existed in Britain between trustees and stewards and the conference this is quite a telling statement of intent. And on his arrival he made his institutional loyalties indubitably clear to his hosts.

For Marsden, who was well connected to metropolitan evangelicalism, Leigh’s arrival will have been welcomed. It was Marsden who donated the land on which Leigh

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154 Findlay and Holdsworth, History, 21.

155 Quoted in Findlay and Holdsworth , History, 22.

had the first Wesleyan Chapel in New South Wales built, and shortly after Lawry’s arrival Leigh accepted Marsden’s invitation to him to visit the lay settlement the Chaplain had just established in New Zealand. \textsuperscript{157} Leigh accepted, and his close relationship with the chaplain made it seem as if he was siding with the Exclusives against the Sydney Methodists who were so sympathetic to the Emancipists. He even warned Lawry on his arrival against the influence of Sydney’s small, but vocal community of lay Methodist. And that group was becoming increasing hostile towards Marsden and the other colonial chaplains.

Marsden’s long interest in South Seas missions as both a parochial and commercial extension of British interests, as well as a field of conversion, had become a point of contention between him and his critics. The emancipist George Howe, the father of Carvosso’s and Lawry’s friend and co-religionist Robert, and then editor of the \textit{Sydney Gazette}, had recently published a satirical letter calling Marsden “a Christian Mahomet,” and which mocked the missionary spirit whose returns included “pigs, pine trees, and New Zealand flax.” \textsuperscript{158} And Bowden and Hosking agreed with this gist of this assessment, writing to the WMMS secretaries that beyond establishing the schools in which they worked, Marsden paid little attention to the spiritual reformation of the


\textsuperscript{158} \textit{The Sydney Gazette}, 4 January 1817.
colony and that he was “much more concerned in increasing the great fortune he has accumulated.”159

When Bowden had first written to the WMMS to broach the possibility that a missionary might be sent, he had emphasized that Methodism in the colony would work “in unison” with the Church,” and that the ideal candidate would not be a radical dissenter but someone, if possible, attached to the Church.160 In the formal request co-signed with Hosking the two men had only kind words about the Governor and the clergy, again emphasizing that local Methodists were in no way interested in setting up an opposition to the Established Church.161 But nor did they wish, it turned out, to be treated as the handmaid to the Church of England in the South Pacific. The same group that had invited the Wesleyans to Australia in the first place was now identified by their first missionary as troublemakers. Bowden and Hosking in particular were dangerous, Lawry wrote home to the Committee, even immoral, but that was in the earliest days of his sojourn, when Leigh was still his hero.162 The relationship of the two men was shortly to become strained – and the marriage of Lawry to Mary Hassall, a woman who

159 Cited from Meredith Lake, “Such Spiritual Acres: Protestantism, the Land, and the Colonisation of Australia, 1788-1850” (PhD Dissertation, University of Sydney, 2008), 147.

160 Findlay and Holdsworth, History, 18.

161 Findlay and Holdsworth, History, 18.

162 See above.
had only recently rejected the older missionary’s proposal will not have helped.\textsuperscript{163} Regardless of the reasons for it, Lawry was soon to change his mind on the potential dangers of Bowden and Hosking.\textsuperscript{164}

Findlay and Holdsworth characterize Lawry as “a Cornish Methodist of uncompromising type,” who came from a county where “the old Church was of comparatively ill-repute,” and in which Methodism had grown up in separation from her.\textsuperscript{165} This was the very opposite of Leigh’s more conservative Church Methodism. Once Leigh was on his way to Marsden’s colony in New Zealand Lawry enthusiasm for his superior began to fade. He reconsidered his initial assumptions about the colonial situation, and apologized to his superiors in London for his misrepresentation of the Sydney Methodists. He had, he told the Committee, “been relying after only two weeks, on the opinion of Mr. Samuel Leigh who states things according to his feelings rather than the facts.”\textsuperscript{166}

With that letter the young and obstreperous missionary had cast the die. Lawry chose to sup with the ambitious emancipists Eagar and Howe, and the fiercely independent laymen Bowden and Hosking, rather than the gathering whatever crumbs


\textsuperscript{164} WMMS/ SOAS MMS/12 Australasia/South Seas Correspondence.

\textsuperscript{165} Findlay and Holdsworth, \textit{History}, 38.

\textsuperscript{166} Walter Lawry, 17 June 1819, WMMS/ SOAS MMS/12 Australasia/South Seas Correspondence.
might fall beneath the table of the Established Church. And he quickly adopted their attitude towards the colonial chaplain as well. “No one would take Mr. Marsden for a clergyman on a week day,” Lawry is reputed to have said. “He rides about from town to town, makes bargains, executes his agencies, looks after his farms, and occasionally gives a ball with as much apparent glee as any other merchant in the Colony. On Sunday he reads the Liturgy like a man half asleep, and then uniformly serves up one of Simeon’s skeletons with very little lean flesh about it.” When his friend Benjamin Carvosso, and another young and idealistic Methodist in the person of the Liverpudlian Ralph Mansfield (1799-1880), arrived in 1820 they also sided with Lawry and his lay allies against Leigh. It is no wonder the older man was to feel so betrayed.

Shortly after Leigh’s departure for New Zealand, and with the encouragement of the lay community, Carvosso, Mansfield, and Lawry began holding meetings during the hours of the Church of England services and to make matters worse they even celebrated the Eucharist. This after Leigh had assured his friend Samuel Marsden that no such activities would occur. Leigh’s friend the Rev. Cowper wrote to him and Leigh in turn denounced “the Cornish Brethern” to the WMMS secretaries.

167 Lake, “Such Spiritual Acres,” 147.

168 Findlay and Holdsworth, History, 40.


170 Findlay and Holdsworth, History, 39.
trio was called to the carpet to answer for their impertinence Mansfield wrote him in protest that it was common practice in Liverpool to preach during Church hours. And Lawry argued that since “the Plan of Pacification” had been adopted by the Conference in 1795 to quell the debate between Church Methodists and Nonconformist Wesleyans, the Connexion’s ministers had been free to hold services whenever it proved expedient.\textsuperscript{171} The secretaries were unimpressed and the young missionaries were told to treat the colonial clergy with due deference.

In 1821 Leigh was transferred permanently to New Zealand and Lawry to the Friendly Islands in 1822, but even without the chief antagonists present in the colony relations between the nonconformist party and the Church Methodists unraveled apace. George Erskine, one of Coke’s companions (and therefore Squance’s), arrived from Ceylon to replace Leigh, but the latter continued his loud protest against the “Dissenting” habits of Lawry, Carvosso and Mansfield.\textsuperscript{172} Erskine was strongly supportive of the younger men, saying that he had known “American, London, Church, Baptist, and Wesleyan missionaries both in Ceylon and continental India but have known few that stand higher in my esteem than brother Carvosso and Mansfield.”\textsuperscript{173} Even Lawry who had “in the spur of the moment said impudent things,” remained an

\textsuperscript{171} Findlay and Holdsworth, History, 39.

\textsuperscript{172} Findlay and Holdsworth, History, 40.

\textsuperscript{173} Erskine 20 January 1823, WMMS/ SOAS MMS/12 Australasia/South Seas Correspondence.
instrument of God. But Erskine found the “exceedingly unpleasant affair” difficult to manage. “Had I known the mission at first as I do now,” he wrote the secretaries, “nothing beneath the heavens would have been an adequate inducement to bring me from Ceylon. I anticipate deliverance from painful trials by a deliverance from this Mission, either by death or whatever seems best to infinite wisdom.”

The WMMS secretaries did their best to impose their will on the small and contentious community but a six-month lag in correspondence made any measure of control difficult to achieve. Carvosso and Mansfield for example, were close to Robert Howe, the editor of the *Sydney Gazette*, the newspaper which had called Marsden “a Christian Mohamet,” and which published anonymous and libelous attacks on the man during his squabbles with Macquarie over the civil and political rights of emancipists. Without waiting for permission from the WMMS the three men began publishing the *Australian Magazine*, a blend of religious and literary articles which the metropolitan committee put an end to as soon as they heard news of it.

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174 Erskine 20 January 1823, WMMS/SOAS MMS/12 Australasia/South Seas Correspondence.
175 Erskine 19 November 1822, WMMS/SOAS MMS/12 Australasia/South Seas Correspondence.
The secretaries in London were also highly critical of Mission expenses, reprimanding Lawry, Carvosso and Mansfield for what they deemed excessive cost-of-living expenditures. The societies in New South Wales were small and poor and the cost of living substantial, so the missionaries were more dependent on WMMS support than the metropolitan accountants had been led to expect. So in 1826 when the missionaries voted themselves a 14 percent increase in allowance the secretaries were outraged. Shortly after that they borrowed £1000 on WMMS credit to build a chapel in Sydney. And finally they not only recruited a local preacher as a missionary to Tonga without WMMS permission but sent London the bill for the vessel they chartered to get him there. Yet despite their concern about expense the metropolitan secretaries were by no means encouraging of any effort on the part of the missionaries to establish any sort of financial autonomy from the committee.

On his immediate arrival Carvosso had also been excited about the possibility of establishing an agricultural settlement among the Aborigines, but Macquarie refused to grant them permission because the Anglican Chaplain Cartwright had just opened one
at Liverpool. In 1823 the WMMS tried again and sent out William Walker (1800-1855) to devote himself to the “Black Natives” of Australia. In 1824 the new Governor Thomas Brisbane put Walker in charge of the Parramatta Native Institute. But Walker, once a protégé of Bunting’s friend and ally Richard Watson, soon fell out of favour with the WMMS secretaries when he married Rowland Hassall’s daughter (Lawry’s sister-in-law) Eliza and so acquired substantial property in land and stock. The WMMS took the opportunity to put a quick end to the possibility that such windfalls might encourage missionary independence. They wrote to the missionaries telling them “that if they expect to be acknowledged as Methodist missionaries they will be required to decline the keeping of all farming and grazing stock and all following of any worldly business whatever.” Walker refused to acquiesce and was dismissed in 1825 for having “improperly entangled himself in the affairs of this life.” Lawry, who dutifully sold off a great deal of his own property, suggested the blame for the failure of the Wesleyan

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183 Findlay and Holdsworth, History, 34.


186 Findlay and Holdsworth, History, 47.
mission to the Aborigines lay elsewhere than Walker’s worldliness. Marsden he claimed, had “completely blocked up” the Wesleyan mission to the Aborigines.187

At one stage or another Erskine, Walker, Mansfield, Carvosso, Lawry, and William Horton (1800-1867), another young missionary sent out by the WMMS in the early 1820s, were all reprimanded by the committee for various forms of insubordination. Finally Lawry was required to return to London for an examination by the secretaries. The issue which they were so concerned with was Lawry’s purchase of a ship. Lawry had been convinced by Shelley’s widow, a woman he was related to through marriage, to re-establish the Protestant mission to the Friendly Islands. Together with his brother-in-law Jonathon Hassall and a merchant Captain Beveridge, a member of the Wesleyan Society in Sydney, he purchased the ship St Michael and in 1822 he set sail with his family for Tonga via New Zealand.188 Like Marsden’s ship the St. Michael was meant to not only transport missionaries and supplies but help support the mission with trade. And the ship and its Captain certainly crop up in the Sydney Gazettes commercial notices with fair regularity; arriving in Sydney over the years with 40 to 50 tonnes of pork from Tonga;189 35 tonnes of pork and a tonne or two of

187 Lawry, 20 November 1823, WMMS/SOAS MMS/12 Australasia/South Seas Correspondence.


189 Sydney Gazette Thursday 13 November 1823.
sinnet(rope); a cargo of sundries; Tasmanian wool; and so on. In 1823 the Lawrys were recalled to England by the WMMS where he was interviewed about Leigh’s charges of insubordination and potential conflicts of interest. He was officially cleared of any wrong doing by the London committee but they sent him back to Cornwall instead of Australia. In 1825 his wife Mary – who had never been to England before – died. Lawry remarried a Cornish widow, Eliza White, and worked in Cornwall for the next twenty years.

**3.4 Conclusion**

For a brief period after their arrival in the colonies Carvosso, Lawry, and Mansfield had operated with an impertinent autonomy from their metropolitan masters; starting newspapers, proposing major projects to the Governor, opening chapels on the back of debt, and acquiring land and business interests. They challenged the authority of Marsden, and their superior Leigh, by preaching as they would have at home, in concordance with the wishes of a Methodist community rather than to please the representatives of the established church.

“The clergy are Calvinist and preach it incessantly,” Carvosso wrote to the Secretaries, “and so long as the missionaries are warned against fomenting controversy

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190 *Sydney Gazette* Thursday 20 January 1825.

191 *Sydney Gazette* Thursday 24 March 1825.

192 *Sydney Gazette* Thursday 4 August 1825.
in the pulpit it would make inroads among the people and carry many of them out of the societies.”

The open conflict with the Church of England in New South Wales over the timing of Sunday services, and the provision of a Mass by Methodist ministers for Methodist practitioners, may have been a dramatic eruption, but it was not an isolated event. It marked the conjunction of numerous lines of fissure – theological, ecclesiological, social, and personal – which were threatening to shatter the solidarity of the local religious community. Nor was it just Marsden and his rigid social and theological determinism the young missionaries were critical of on these grounds, but ultimately the whole of the non-Arminian and non-Methodist evangelical establishment on the Tasman littoral. “At Parramatta the religious people are almost all Calvinist Dissenters,” Lawry wrote home, “My good father-in-law Mr. Hassall used to preach to them and keep them together.” Hassall’s influence even extended to the Methodists of the town, complained Lawry, “Mr. H. has everything his own way, our hymns are not sung, and the place of worship is not on our plan.” And for young Methodist

193 Carvosso, Nov 20, 1823, WMMS/SOAS MMS/12 Australasia/South Seas Correspondence.

194 Lawry May 8 1820, WMMS/SOAS MMS/12 Australasia/South Seas Correspondence.

195 Quoted in Piggin, Evangelical Christianity, 19.
revivalists from the industrializing provinces like Carvosso, Lawry, and Mansfield, were inclined to despise Calvinism as “a yoke of bondage intolerable.”

Carvosso and Lawry came from a community of tithe rioters, smugglers, and lay enthusiasts who not only challenged the authority of the parish priest, but of the increasingly professionalized ministers the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion sent out to watch over them. This was their attitude in the British territories of the South Seas as well as in turbulent English provinces, but it was less successful in the colonies where the legal and political categories of the penal colony meant that social divisions were more profoundly fixed than at home. When Carvosso’s father, who also corresponded with Lawry, wrote letters to his son celebrating Cornish revivals which were so riotous they shook “the trembling gates of hell,” Benjamin wrote back complaining of Calvinist apathy and the absence of a Pentecostal spirit in the colony. And in Van Diemen’s Land he found the colonists suffering from the same complacency and indifference. There too, the various institutions of the penal state were to prove more accommodating to those evangelicals who believed themselves a pious and elite fraction of a degraded society, than to enthusiastic revivalists who wanted to see rich and poor, free and convict, settler and aboriginal alike, weeping at the inevitability of death, and rejoicing at the promise of life.

Findlay and Holdsworth, History, 39.

William Carvosso to Benjamin Carvosso, 15 August 1821, WMMS/SOAS MMS/17/3.
4. An Isthmus between Heaven and Hell: Benjamin Carvosso and the Invention of the Frontier in Van Diemen’s Land, 1825 to 1830

On May 5th 1826 Benjamin Carvosso watched as Thomas Jeffries, a notorious murderer, cannibal, and rapist, climbed the steps of the Hobart Town gallows. Jeffries stood at the drop with five of his fellows and, in the missionary’s awed words “died professing a calm and settled hope in the mercy of God.”¹ The next day Carvosso watched as six more condemned men made the same journey.² A few months later he visited and prayed with 23 more convicts as over the course of a dreadful week they too were “launched into eternity.”³ According to journals Carvosso was present at the hangings of over a hundred men in his few years as the Wesleyan missionary to the penal-colony, and those numbers are confirmed by the newspaper evidence. He had been re-stationed to the island in the aftermath of the dispute between Leigh and the Cornish brethren and his arrival coincided with a flurry of executions that marked the implementation of a more rational and efficient system of governance on the island than those its inhabitants had previously known. This drive towards modernization overlapped with a concerted military campaign to cleanse Tasmania of its Aboriginal

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¹ Benjamin Carvosso, May, 1826, WMMS/SOAS MMS/12 Australasia/South Seas Correspondence.
² Carvosso to WMMS, May, 1826.
³ Carvosso to WMMS, May, 1826.
inhabitants. The surge of state-sponsored violence was part of the attempt by another kind of newly arrived imperial globetrotter to bring order to the anarchy that many perceived to have prevailed on the island since the colony’s establishment. Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur, previously a colonial administrator in the Caribbean, and later in the Canadas and India, was as much an evangelical reformer as Carvosso, but of a different type.

The British had first occupied coastal Van Diemen’s Land in 1804, with a view to keeping out the French and establishing a second penal colony in conjunction with the one at Botany Bay. The island soon acquired a reputation as the home to particularly incorrigible class of convicts. In the early nineteenth century it was described by one visiting clergyman as a cage of dirty birds, and “an isthmus between earth and hell” – a sort of purgatory crowded with lost souls who if left unattended were surely damned.

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4 William Forsyth, Governor Arthur’s Convict System: Van Diemen’s Land, 1824-36, A Study in Colonization (Longmans, Geen & Company: Toronto, 1935), 71. Forsyth calculated 260 executions during Arthur’s twelve years, over half occurring in the first two, then in order from 1828: 11, 19, 30, 4, 13, 12, 13, 12, 5; Colonial Times 5 January 1827, 12 January 1827. A Van Diemen’s Land newspaper, the Times recorded that from January of 1825 to January of 1827 eighty-two men were executed on the six-man Hobart Town gallows. The editor, no friend of the Lieutenant-Governor, pointed out the number, which did not include the thirty or so executions at the island’s other town of Launceston, exceeded by far the five hangings of the previous fifteen months, but the overall tone of the papers reporting was more ambivalent than critical, see. See also Rev. John West, The History of Tasmania (Henry Dowling: Launceston, 1852), 418. West writes that between 1824 and 1826 one hundred and three people were killed by the state; a statistic that suggested to him that not only were the people wicked but the government cruel.


6 James Bonwick, Curious Facts of the Old Colonial Days (London: Sampson Low, Son & Marston, 1870) p. 267. A number of histories an anonymous English clergyman is quoted as describing Van Diemen’s Land as:
When Carvosso had disembarked there for a few days on his way to his first post in New South Wales in 1820 he was just as horrified by what he found. To an evangelical such as Carvosso, in the years when the abolitionist discourse was so very influential, the convicted men in clanking chains on the docks awaiting distribution to free colonists as labor seemed little more than slaves. As the convict colony waited for the number of convicts to fill the new penal settlement, the friendly but unenthusiastic Rev. Knopwood, there were no ministers at work in the colony whatsoever. Carvosso urged the London secretaries of the WMMS to send a permanent missionary to Hobart Town post haste. He also recognized in Van Diemen’s Land the same contradiction Walter Lawry had seen in his early musings on New South Wales. That despite the moral desolation of the place the convict colony had tremendous possibilities for emigrants, and he wrote home in an attempt to encourage Wesleyans who sought new opportunities to make the journey out.

“That den of thieves, that cave of robbers, that cage of unclean birds, that isthmus between earth and hell!” Bonwick’s is the oldest source.

7 For the influence of abolitionist discourse on Van Diemen’s Land’s small evangelical community see Patrick Brantlinger, Taming Cannibals: Race and the Victorians (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 55-56.


9 Robert Young, Journal of a Deputation from the Wesleyan Conference to Australia and Tasmania (London: Mason, 1858), 170.

When Carvosso returned to Van Diemen’s Land five years later to replace his colleague William Horton, the steady succession of hangings, the violence in the streets and in the bush, and the general indifference to religion, all suggested that little had changed. But Van Diemen’s Land was already deep in the throes of a transformation from penal to settler colony. Arthur’s oversight of this process meant unruly convicts and Aborigines were increasingly being isolated from the rest of colonial society in state institutions. And this in turn meant there were positions available for pious missionaries – lay and professional alike – whose theologies were compatible with that of an emerging colonial bureaucracy. Benjamin’s relations with Arthur were friendly enough but there were significant ideological and theological differences between the two men. The prisons, factories, and reservations, that Vandemonian evangelicals helped establish and run were workshops in which the intransigent could be ground

responsible for the migration of Robert Mather – who was a trustee of the Hobart Town Wesleyan chapel, Henry Hopkins – Mather’s partner as the first wool exporters in the colony, and John Dunn – who became one of the colonies most powerful banker.

11 On a slightly later stage of institutionalization see Andrew Piper, ““Mind-Forg’s Manacles”: The Mechanics of Control inside Late-Nineteenth Century Tasmanian Charitable Institutions,” *Journal of Social History* 43, 4 (Summer, 2010) 1045-1063.

12 For example Arthur placed Wesleyan missionaries at Macquarie Harbour and Port Arthur, the Wesleyan George Augustus Robinson became his Protector of the Aborigines, and Lovell Esh and his wife, from Carvosso’s congregation, ran the Cascades Female Factory just outside Hobart. See below.
down into civilised imperial subjects; a far cry from the cottages, chapels, and open fields, in which transatlantic revivalism had flourished.

Carvosso’s perspective on the issue of convict management was different from both the cavalier brutality characteristic of earlier Antipodal regimes, and the rigorous autocracy of Arthur’s. It was neither episodic and retributive like the former, nor relentless and reformative like the latter, but millenarian and redemptive. The convicts did not interest Carvosso because he made a fetish of established order, like the “the Flogging Parson” of New South Wales – the Rev. Samuel Marsden. Nor because he sought to regenerate them as civilized subjects and integrate them through intimidation and indoctrination into an imperial economy as did Lt.-Gov. Arthur. Carvosso was interested in them because he feared for the fate of their immortal souls.

In Carvosso’s view the men he watched the state kill in 1826 had become entangled in a wicked system that included not only the criminals themselves but free settlers, landholders, Governors, Kings, and Nations. No one group or individual was free from the influence of satanic power, or safe from the judgments of a jealous God. In 1823 for example, on hearing rumors of an impending war with the French he recorded

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13 For a brief account of the regime change see the introduction in Joy Damousi, *Depraved and Indifferent: Female Convicts, Sexuality and Gender in Colonial Australia*, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1997).

14 And like many such millennial ideologies it had the potential to be politically destabilizing. For a lengthy and influential theoretical excursion on this subject see Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: Collected Works of Karl Mannheim, Vol. One*, (Routledge: New York, 1998), 173-236.

15 See previous chapter.
his anxieties in his journal: “Of politics I know little but this news troubles my soul much.”

Our missions to France are at an end! And other doors will probably be shut. But how can England in her present state start another war! Alas! Alas! Do we still stand in need of divine chastisement?

The power of the British State, and that of Evangelical elites like Arthur, was certainly providential, but it was not guaranteed nor necessarily deserved. Carvosso’s concerns were neither nationalistic nor political, but universalizing and soteriologically. He considered it his duty to help disentangle all of humanity from its moral predicament before they were called – as individuals and nations – to account before what his father called “the bar of God.” For the missionary the lawlessness of the convict and the tyranny of the state were but passing symptoms of a deeper ailment. And for that ailment there were no social or political cures, only the saving blood of Christ.

Jefferies conversion in 1826 was part of a revival that occurred among death row inmates in the few days prior to their execution. It was the only example of such an occurrence in Carvosso’s records of his mission to the Antipodes. And it is striking that it was confined to an isolated cell block, among men already expelled from the social life of the penal-colony, and already resigned to the fact of their deaths. There was little

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16 Carvosso, March 26 1823, WMMS/SOAS MMS/12 Australasia/South Seas Correspondence. This burst of anxiety was likely produced by the diplomatic jockeying that preceded the French intervention in Spain.

17 Carvosso, Efficacy, 241.
likelihood of it spreading among the rest of the colonial population for whose salvation Carvosso was also working.

In this chapter I contrast that death row revival with the reformist practices of two of Carvosso’s other evangelical colleagues. The colonial chaplain, the Rev. William Bedford who participated in the revival with the missionary, and a member of the Methodist Society in Hobart, George Augustus Robinson, the famed conciliator and protector of Tasmanian and Australian Aborigines. For those two men it was not the salvation of individual soul that was the immediate goal of the evangelical project, but the management and rehabilitation of groups to which damned individuals belonged. I will begin the chapter by going into some detail about the nature of Arthur’s own project, which like those of Bedford and Robinson, was concerned above all with the establishment of close control over the imperial subjects whose sinful degradation Van Diemen’s Land was meant to contain.

4.1 The Colonial Situation

The backdrop against which the sad drama of Arthur’s mass executions occurred was one of radical socio-economic change. By 1814 Van Diemen’s Land had in addition to its convicts, guards, and administrators, a small but established population of free, mostly emancipist, settlers. Its agricultural economy was not particularly dynamic or
expansive, but was sustainable.\textsuperscript{18} The majority of these early settlers were “peasant proprietors,” who relied on the penal colonies and associated towns for a market. The increased cultivation and the practice of abducting indigenous children for slaves led to some violence with the locals, but nothing like what was to happen in the 1820s as Arthur oversaw the explosive expansion of both free settlement and wool production.\textsuperscript{19}

The newcomers who flocked to the island in the decades after the end of the Napoleonic Wars were very different from the original emancipist settlers. They consisted primarily of discharged officers, the scions of English, Irish, and Scottish gentry, and the sons of colonial officials.\textsuperscript{20} This new wave of settlers had money to invest, letters of recommendation from the Colonial Office that entitled them to land grants and convict labor, and access to the booming English market for wool. They established themselves as a class of gentlemen pastoralists and by the thirties they had transformed the central plain into a giant sheep run.\textsuperscript{21} Between 1816 and 1830 the sheep population of the island had increased from 50,000 to over one million, briefly surpassing the number in New South Wales.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{18} Lyndall Ryan, \textit{The Aboriginal Tasmanians} (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1981), 78.
\textsuperscript{19} Ryan, \textit{The Aboriginal Tasmanians}, 78.
\textsuperscript{20} Ryan, \textit{The Aboriginal Tasmanians}, 83.
\textsuperscript{21} Ryan, \textit{The Aboriginal Tasmanians}, 83
\textsuperscript{22} Ryan, \textit{The Aboriginal Tasmanians}, 83
The economic ascendance of these pastoral capitalists was accompanied by a concerted newspaper campaign in which their energy and thrift was contrasted with that of their earlier compatriots. Unlike the emancipist cotters content with “narrow grants and wretched homesteads,” the later immigrants were deemed energetic and experimental. The Van Diemen’s Land they arrived in was unfenced and deformed, the inhabitants “idle and uncleanly men, of different civil condition, but of one class.” The island did not have the social and political boundaries that for these new elites defined civilized existence, and their place in it. They longed to reorganize the lives of island’s feral and wild inhabitants, and transform the wilderness into a domesticated, stable, and prosperous paradise, complete with the green hedges and quiet order of an English landscape. Two great obstacles seemed to stand between them and the

23 West, *History of Tasmania*, 38. The former newspaper editor John West had this to say in his history of Tasmania: “[T]he exhilarating influences of youth and vigour, usual in the first steps of colonization, were here unknown, and a civilizing agency rarely counteracted the social evils which prevailed. The transactions in those days were scarcely colonial: charged with debauch and outrage, they denoted a time of social disorganization – the dark ages found in the history of every country, where men have been their own masters, and remote from a public opinion, which cannot be corrupted or controlled.”


26 Hobart Town Gazette, 22 October 1824. “We state most solemnly our confirmed opinion, that to such men this Colony must continue for at least awhile to present benefits, which no other Settlement now in existence can. And we cordially incite the poor labourer, the homely farmer, and their unassuming hose-knitting children and wives, to come here if they are menaced with starvation at home, and we will supply them with food; nay more, we will revere them for the laudable example of industry, perseverance, temperance, and precaution which they will set before our lower orders; we will view their sweat as a dew of consecration to our woodlands, and the morning sound of their axe in the wilderness shall be heard prophetically as the signal of verdant vales to yet be daisied, and of fragrant bowers to yet be blooming. We shall become great as an independent granary, honoured as a noble and magnificent appendage to a
achievement of that vision: the continuing existence of the escaped convicts known as bushrangers, and the Aboriginal Tasmanians who refused to give up their claims to the land.

In later nineteenth-century histories relations between those two groups – the bushrangers and the Aboriginal Tasmanians – have generally been represented as a being of a particularly egregious and brutal nature. Most contain accounts of the same generic, but shocking list of bushranger outrages: Brown and Lemon who used Aborigines for target practice; the infamous Carrots who abducted a woman and forced her carry her murdered husband’s head slung around her neck; kangaroo-hunters who would shoot and butcher Aborigines for dog food; the anarchic bands of sealers in the Bass Straits who would enslave and brutalize women, and so on.27 In all such accounts it is a matter of course that the Aborigines eventually responded to their rough treatment with undiscerning anti-white violence of their own, and had to be suppressed by the state.

Yet despite the frequency of such distressing incidents it was only after Arthur had put down the last of the serious bushranger insurrections that the outbreak of theft, 

arson, and murder that came to be called the Black War occurred. And it was Arthur’s deliberately managed efforts which resulted in the extirpation of both the bushranger and the Aboriginal Tasmanian communities. A preoccupation with the depravity of earlier stock keepers and kangaroo hunters rather distracts from this simple fact. To treat the government’s struggle with the bushrangers and then the Tasmanian Aboriginals as separate processes—the first through the analytics of class, and the second of race—obscures the interesting complexity of colonial relations.

The sealers, for example, were convicts, ex-convicts, and sailors, who were attracted to the islands of the Bass Straits by the easily harvested resources, and the possibility of living there independently of colonial authority. Since the late 1790s the sealers had traded tea, flour, and tobacco with the Aboriginal Tasmanians whose transhumance brought them to the region for the same periods and purposes, and by 1810 the two groups had established permanent rendezvous.28 They began relationships with Tasmanian Aboriginal women as helpmates and sexual partners and further integrated the two groups by providing the Tasmanian Aboriginals with hunting dogs. While often violent, the relations between sealers and the bands on the island’s north coast were not simply a matter of predation but of economic, and therefore social, interaction. Some of the early bushrangers, like the sealers, lived with Tasmanian Aboriginal women as well, and entered into formal political or military arrangements.

with particular bands. One group of sealers for instance, deserted their women and fled the region rather than be drawn into a conflict between their in-laws and a band allied to the notorious bushranger Michael Howe – a cowardice that speaks volumes about the weight of mutual obligations that bound the sealers and the bushrangers to their in-laws.29

Howe, a former sailor in the royal navy had been transported to Van Diemen’s Land in 1812 for highway robbery. On arrival he declared that having served the king he would be no man’s slave, and joined a gang of runaways and Tasmanian Aboriginal women. He was a gifted political actor and soon named himself “the Governor of the Rangers,” and Governor Sorell “the Governor of the Town.”30 His men swore oaths against the colonial state on the prayer book, and practiced rudimentary military discipline. Howe, who had a Tasmanian woman as his partner, refused to countenance the mistreatment of his Aborigine allies by his comrades and is reputed to have flogged members of his gang who broke that rule.31 Howe’s band burned and pillaged the property of the landowners with the blackened faces that so terrorized English lawmakers. And when he was finally killed the constables found a nostalgic journal written in kangaroo blood in his knapsack – it was a record of dreams and memories,

29 Ryan, The Aboriginal Tasmanians, 69.
30 West, History of Tasmania, 133.
31 West, History of Tasmania, 625n26.
and included a list of the English vegetables, fruits, and flowers, he hoped one day to plant in the Tasmanian soil.

An even earlier example of convict-Aborigine relations is that of William Buckley. In 1803 Buckley set off with two companions from the short-lived settlement of Port Phillip, on the south coast of the mainland opposite Van Diemen’s Land. The men hoped, as was not unusual, to find their way to China or Calcutta, but after suffering great privation Buckley left his companions to their fate and attempted a return to Port Phillip. He found it deserted. After months of lonely misery he was adopted in an Aboriginal community and lived with them for 33 years conforming, in one historian’s words “to their barbarous customs and learning their language.” When pastoralists from Van Diemen’s Land re-established the Port Phillip settlement in the 1830s Buckley reintroduced himself into colonial society. The potential value of his language skills and familiarity with the local Aboriginal community won him a pardon from Arthur, but he proved to be a disappointment to the Governor. His refusal or inability to function as an intermediary between the indigenous people of the region and the colonial state meant Buckley was ultimately reduced to an intriguing footnote of Australian history.

Among other things what such examples illustrate is that violence, despite the assumptions of colonial elites, was not an inevitable consequence of contact between

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savage Aborigines and a criminal class of Europeans. Nor was it simply the result of resource competition between discrete groups. Rape, mutilation, and murder were distressingly frequent modes of interaction in early nineteenth century Van Diemen’s Land, but cooperation and negotiation were common enough that it might be useful to talk about various groups interacting in a single social field, rather than of a necessary conflict between the colonizers and the colonized. In the case of Van Diemen’s Land it was industrial sheep ranching that shattered this social field into constituent parts. Pastoralism required vast tracts of land from which competitors like the bushrangers and the Aboriginal Tasmanians had to be expelled. An argument that relations between those two groups were violent and immoral was an invitation for the intervention of imperial officials. Ultimately that representation of the colonial situation justified martial law, abduction, and mass murder, as necessities of economic progress. It also opened up a field for debate between settler elites and government functionaries in which the vigorous arguments about the Aboriginal and Bushranger problems depended on the assumption that what was occurring during colonization was not murder and robbery, but the rational management of a savage and violent frontier.

Critics of colonial policy, philanthropic volunteers, racist reactionaries, and the statesmen themselves, could all agree that relations between the dregs of their convict-labor force, and the indigenous inhabitants of the land, were in desperate need of paternalistic reformation. In Arthur’s model that reformation consisted, as we shall see,
of disengaging the various groups from each other; European from Aborigine, settler from convict, good convict from bad, male convict from female, respectable from disreputable. As a consequence the conceptual distinctions on which propertied white men depended as justifications for their dominant place in a social hierarchy were reinforced. What this meant for people who could not easily be slotted into the appropriate categories can be seen in the case of the disordered career of the man the settlers called Musquito.

Musquito was a Sydney Aboriginal who had been transported to Van Diemen’s Land from an earlier exile on Norfolk Island in 1813. On the island Musquito worked as a stock-keeper for the wealthy ex-convict Edward Lord and helped the colonial state hunt down bushrangers as a tracker, a task at which he was talented enough to receive the nickname of “the Hangman’s Nose.” By the 1820s he was no longer in Lord’s employ, or that of the state, but living with the Oyster Bay band. That band was a “tame mob,” one which circulated through settled territories according to the seasons, begging and scrounging food where and when they could, and hunting and fishing where and when they could not. Musquito met Carvosso’s predecessor William Horton during this period, and told the missionary that he lived a vagrant life because his fellows spurned manual labour and believed that permanent reparations in the form of gifted provisions

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from Europeans were barely sufficient for their dispossession. In 1823 the band began to kill stock-keepers and raid isolated cottages and settlements. Musquito was assumed by the colonists to be a leader, eventually caught and, with another Tasmanian named Black Jack, tried and hanged in February 1825.

The newspapers of the time emphasized Musquito's role as an instigator of anti-white violence – a man whose animus was driven by his dislocation and alienation. The problem of Musquito, for those who would reify the colonial frontier, was that he crossed it with such enthusiastic shamelessness. In the view of the newspapers the cause of the increasing violence on the island could be laid squarely at the feet of sealers, illiterate stockmen, runaway convicts, a degenerate Sydney Aboriginal, and the influence of a handful of half-civilized indigenous Tasmanian Aboriginals. It not surprising that the free settlers should look to what frightened and disturbed them to find the source of the calamitous violence that visited the island. And that they should find it personified in a man who could not be contained by the conceptual apparatus

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36 The Aboriginal Tasmanians, 86-88. Ryan cites The Hobart Town Gazette, 26 March, 2 April, 23 July and 29 October 1824.

37 In sharp contrast to this reading of Musquito as an acculturated criminal is that of later historians who see him as the leader of what amounts to a pan-Aboriginal resistance movement. What is interesting is there common assumption: colonial Tasmania was home to two autonomous cultures that were in conflict. Lyndell Ryan, for example, is trying to establish a fixed historical identity for the Tasmanian Aborigines just as the colonial press did albeit for different ideological reasons. Ryan argues that two discrete societies encountered each other in the Van Diemen's Land and that the political and legal problems which were a consequence of that encounter have yet to be resolved.
they were constructing for themselves. By apportioning blame in such a manner they
ignored the role of the pastoralist landowners in the upheaval, and made more palatable
the suggestion the State had little choice but to hang as many of the irredeemable
scoundrels who refused to accept their various social stations as it could. Carvosso’s
revivalism, which would have incorporated Musquito, like Jeffries, into the body of an
evangelical church, along with Tasmanians, convicts, and pastoralists, was to ultimately
prove unattractive to the majority of free settlers. This is unsurprising, given that
Carvosso’s sojourn on the island occurred at a time when the community of free settlers
were trying to more firmly fix the social distinctions between themselves and the rest of
the population, not destabilize them.

It was precisely such disorderliness as Musquito’s that Arthur was sent to the
island to rectify. His tenure in Van Diemen’s Land ran from 1823 to 1836 and was
sandwiched between putting down piracy, slave revolts, and planter insubordination in
the British Honduras, and policing the aftermath of the Rebellion in Canada with
executions, imprisonment, and transportation.38 The penal-settlement was just one stop
in a brilliant proconsular career as a hard-man and a fixer that reached its apogee in
Bombay, where ill-health ended his career just as he was reaching for the final, glorious

38 A.G.L. Shaw, ’Arthur, Sir George (1784–1854)’, Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of
plum of the Governor-Generalship of British India. Arthur had converted to a Calvinist and Evangelical Anglicanism in the West Indies, and his attempts to limit the outrages of slave owners in the Honduras had attracted the attention of Wilberforce. He despised dancing and frivolity, and scrupulously dedicated himself to what his biographer A.G.L. Shaw has called his ideal of colonial service. As Lieutenant-Governor he railed against corruption and mismanagement of an older order, and identified himself with the forces of moral reform that were attempting to found a peaceful and pious Empire.

When Arthur arrived in Van Diemen’s Land local administration lay largely in the hands of amateur magistrates: landowners who acted as Justices of the Peace in exchange for extra ration allowances for themselves and their assigned servants. From the perspective of property owners with large workforces the situation was ideal. It was common, for instance, to send an obstreperous worker to carry a note to one’s neighbor with instructions that the messenger was to be flogged. An impressive list of additional judicial improprieties included examples of capricious punishments such as a

39 Forsyth, Governor Arthur’s Convict System, 3.

40 West, History of Tasmania, 81. West writes that both Wilberforce and James Stephens considered Arthur a valuable ally and were supposed to have “pardoned the arbitrary spirit of his government for the sake of his philanthropy.”

41 Forsyth, Governor Arthur’s Convict System, 55.

42 West, History of Tasmania, 105.
woman forced to wear a spiked collar for abusive language, a blacksmith flogged for presenting an officer his bill, a witness convicted of perjury condemned to the pillory with his ears nailed to the post and so on. In Arthur’s view the magistrates too frequently had some sort of personal interest in the cases they tried, and as a result tended to excesses of both lenience and discipline. The atmosphere of the courts was, for his tastes, much too informal and unprofessional, and therefore the gentlemen were replaced with stipendiary magistrates and the political geography of the island rearranged into new districts. These new magistrates were also the agents through which the state distributed and managed convict labor, and as such the chief tools through which enabled Arthur to gain leverage over property-owners.

Arthur’s chief goal in the management of the convicts was regularity and so another benefit of a professionalized legal system for him was its predictability. The Lieutenant-Governor thought crime was a kind of sickness in which the criminal suffered from a “mental delirium,” and viewed the world through a “false medium.” His regime was meant to cure the convict of a false world view by showing them the relentless rationality of judgment and punishment. His was a Calvinist system in that it

43 West, History of Tasmania, 51, 53.
44 Forsyth, Governor Arthur’s Convict System, 56.
45 Forsyth, Governor Arthur’s Convict System, 57.
46 Hughes, Fatal Shore, 383.
mirrored, and presaged the eschatological machinations of the divine will, while also diminishing the importance of the individual’s capacity to actually choose righteousness over wickedness. In his pamphlet *Defense of Transportation* Arthur wrote that uniformity of decision was critical to the maintenance of convict discipline and the project of character reform. Convicts needed to know the consequences of any given action with precision. There are obvious resonances here between Arthur’s methods, and the ideas of utilitarian thinkers like Jeremy Bentham. It is another reminder of the difference that existed in the outlook between Evangelicals like Arthur, Marsden, and the Clapham Sect, men and women who were well placed to mobilize the machinery of the State to impose reform on the world, and Arminian revivalists like William and Benjamin Carvosso, who depended on the desire of the individual to choose redemption.

To apply the rule of law with such rigorous exactitude as Arthur thought necessary meant the administration needed to know the patterns of criminal behavior in more detail than the convict themselves. And so under Arthur’s administration government house became the center of great panopticon, what one historian has described as “a conning-tower from which the autocrat saw through a thousand eyes, and heard from hundreds of listening posts.”\(^\text{47}\) The free settlers complained of its oppressiveness, but for the convict it must have been stifling. From the minute they

\(^{47}\) Forsyth, *Governor Arthur’s Convict System*, 55.
arrived on the island they began to be written up.\textsuperscript{48} The Lieutenant-Governor himself received weekly accounts of each court case conducted on the island, and ensured his underlings decisions throughout the nine districts were sufficiently restrained – both in terms of laxity and severity. Thus, wrote Arthur, “the system is made to harmonize more completely in all its parts,” and as a consequence the government acquired a moral influence over the unharmonious minds of the convicts.\textsuperscript{49}

The most spectacular manifestation of Arthur’s project came after Carvosso had left the island. In 1832 Arthur abandoned savage old Macquarie Harbour, and established a new hyper-rational secondary penal settlement at Port Arthur that more neatly matched his theoretical disposition. Situated on a narrow and easily guarded peninsula it was quite close to Hobart Town. A narrow isthmus of some 450 yards was guarded by lights and dogs – an arrangement that was extended into the surf by use of floating platforms. A train hauled by convicts along wooden tracks carried visitors between the mainland and the experimental colony.\textsuperscript{50} The life of the men imprisoned there was organized by a strictly regulated system of rewards and punishments. It had its school for convicted boys and a resident missionary; first a Wesleyan missionary and


\textsuperscript{49} Forsyth, \textit{Governor Arthur’s Convict System}, 58.

\textsuperscript{50} Hughes, \textit{The Fatal Shore}, 400.
then an Anglican.\textsuperscript{51} Christianity’s chief role in Arthur’s correctional system was not as an opiate to soothe and dull the outrage of tortured bodies, but as a device by which discipline was to be internalized by the convict. But if these Foucauldian rigours were only realized after Carvosso’s departure, he was involved in the early negotiations that involved the Wesleyans in their realization.

Arthur’s enthusiasm for evangelical servants is noticeable as early as August of 1824, when he asked the colonial office to send more chaplains and missionaries.\textsuperscript{52} And he recommended the Office look to the Wesleyan Mission to find ministers for duty in the secondary penal settlements. The attractiveness of the Methodists to Colonial administrators such as Arthur, Marsden in New South Wales, and, as we shall see in the next chapter, George Simpson in Rupert’s Land, is intriguing. The quid pro quo of access to the Empire for the WMMS, and cheap and, in theory, deferential Methodist chaplains and teachers to help in the dirty work of colonial governance was evident in Arthur’s request. “Their Services may no doubt be obtained at a very moderate charge,” he writes:

And I should conceive they would be better qualified for the Office than any Gentlemen who have received a liberal University education. I have conversed with the resident Wesleyan Minister in Hobart Town, Mr. Carvosso, upon the subject, who is of the opinion, that the directors in


\textsuperscript{52} Lieutenant-Governor Arthur to Earl Bathurst, April 21, 1826, \textit{Historical Records of Australia}, Vol. V (Sydney: The Library Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament, 1922), 150.
London would not hesitate a moment in appointing two additional Ministers, provided some assistance is afforded on the part of His Majesty’s Government; and this Gentleman further assures me, that an expression of Your Lordship’s wish to Mr. Butterworth would receive immediate attention.53

The response of the WMMS secretaries was, as Carvosso predicted, warm, although, as he could also have predicted, the frugal administrators in London asked that the government supply free passage to their agents as well as continuing pecuniary assistance.54

By this time Carvosso himself was preaching to the Hobart Town chain-gangs and the inmates of the gaol. Arthur had already accommodated the Wesleyan acquisition of valuable urban land on which to build a Sunday school, and the missionary was confident enough of the Governor’s goodwill that he wrote him suggesting a ball was not the appropriate form for official celebrations of the King’s birthday.55 Arthur, who was already imposing new licensing restrictions on publicans and tighter controls over the liquor trade in general, was the sort of serious, pious, and reformist statesman, of whom the Wesleyans could approve. Nonetheless, the Lieutenant-Governor’s Calvinist pessimism about the capacity of the masses for the spiritual transformation stands in stark contrast with the “instantaneous, complete, and

53 Historical Record of Australia, 151.
54 Carvosso, January 13, 1827, WMMS/SOAS MMS/12 Australasia/South Seas Correspondence.
55 Blencowe, The Faithful Pastor, 170.
permanent” conversion on which the missionary’s Cornish revivalism depended. All of which brings us back to Carvosso, Jeffries, and the death row revival.

4.2 Evangelical Christianity and the Colonial State

A murderous cannibal and rapist like Jefferies was a valuable example of revivalist Christianity at work precisely because he represented the monstrous extremity of criminal behavior. He had been an executioner in Scotland, and in Van Diemen’s Land he was a scourger, a convict who volunteered to flog their fellows, and was “thus trained to cruelty.” In January of 1826 he broke out of the Launceston guardhouse with two fellow inmates, Russel and John Perry. They embarked on a short and violent spree which culminated in the murder of a convict-servant named Basham, the attempted murder of a free settler Mr. Tibbs, and the abduction of Mrs. Tibbs and her infant child. When the squalling of the child proved too great irritation for Jeffries he and Russel knocked out its brains against a tree and left it in the woods for the wild animals to devour. According to Carvosso, and hints from some of the newspaper articles, the men then raped Mrs. Tibbs and turned her loose. She made her way home where her neighbors found her. The escapees had meanwhile, having come across and murdered

56 Carvosso, Efficacy, 102.


58 Colonial Times, January, 6, 1826.
a constable, fled further into wilderness where Jefferies killed Russel while he slept, and butchered him for food.59

At the trial the two men expressed little regret at the death of the child, saying simply that it did not likely suffer, and showed utter indifference to the other charges. Perry was so cheerful the magistrate felt obliged to reprimand him for his inappropriate demeanor.60 Even after their sentencing Jeffries continued, according to Carvosso, to behave diabolically.61 To the respectable property owners of Van Diemen’s Land, emancipist freeholders, convicts and even bushrangers, Jeffries was the very epitome of inhuman criminality. When he was being transported from Launceston to Hobart Town for trial the authorities were on their guard against lynch mobs.62 And then ten days before his execution Jeffries and many of the other condemned men with whom he shared his cell were suddenly overcome with terror at the thought of their fate, and turned to the consolations of religion.

What followed was the triumph of Benjamin Carvosso’s sojourn in the Antipodes. Carvosso describes how he, and his Church of England colleague Rev. Bedford, visited the men in prison and soon found themselves presiding over a full-

59 Colonial Times, May, 5, 1826.

60 Carvosso, December 31, 1825, WMMS/SOAS MMS/12 Australasia/South Seas Correspondence.

61 Carvosso, December 31, 1825, WMMS/SOAS MMS/12 Australasia/South Seas Correspondence.

62 West, History of Tasmania, 417.
fledged revival. Carvosso was so impressed by what had happened he sent a lengthy account of the remarkable event to the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society secretaries in London. Carvosso:

I stood in the midst of a dozen of them, and beheld some prostrate on the floor groaning for Redemption in the Savior, others on their knees, lifting up their desires to God in loud voices, others kneeling in secret corners silently pouring out their hearts to him, others sitting down with their eyes fixed upwards as though engaged in prayer and contemplation, and others still walking about with joy depicted in their countenance, conversing with deep interest about spiritual things, or helping their fellow sufferers according to the best of their ability, to trust in him whose blood cleansed from all sin.63

One of the things most striking about this description is that Carvosso makes sure it is the convicts, and not the professional ministers that seem the primary actors. He and Bedford are simply interested observers, waiting for the moment when they are invited to intervene. That they must eventually provide guidance is a given, but they are participants in an event, not its cause, and they must patiently bide their time until the shattered men are ready to be built back up again. Even Jefferies had become “a broken and contrite spirit,” and proved “as gentle and teachable as a child.”64 Carvosso and Bedford accompanied small groups of the men to the scaffold over the next few days, encouraging them to be faithful and to die well. Many shook the ministers’ hands before they mounted the stairs, and ended their lives with pious words: “death is

63 Carvosso, December 31, 1825, WMMS/SAOS MMS/12 Australasia/South Seas Correspondence.

64 Carvosso, December 31, 1825, WMMS/SAOS MMS/12 Australasia/South Seas Correspondence.
swallowed up by victory,” “I am born to die,” “Death? This is not death it is life.” One told Carvosso “you brought the Lord with you into that cell on Thursday,” others sang hymns together as they stood with their necks in the noose.65 Their performances showed a remarkable familiarity with the theatre of conversion, and Carvosso, who was willing to ask hard questions of converts and revivalists, considered them to be sincere.

It was the sort of raw material beloved by the pamphleteer and the journalist, grist for the mills of Christian philanthropy, and the local papers celebrated the success of the Reverend Ministers as the penultimate act in the drama of retributive justice.

For Carvosso the event was a powerful argument in favor of those methods of North Atlantic revivalism to which metropolitan Wesleyans were so rigorously opposed. It reminded him, he wrote to the secretaries, of a conversation he had with a respectable friend who had seen, and objected to a revival over which Carvosso had presided in Cornwall. In the days leading up to his departure for the “distant, dark and sinful regions” in which he now lived, this friend had told him that he would only consent to believe such riotous phenomenon to be the work of God if they were to occur among “the great Transgressors” of the Antipodes.66 For Benjamin Carvosso the sight of rough men in ecstasy at the very edge of the drop was a bittersweet justification of his long, difficult struggles as a minister and a missionary, both in Cornwall and Australia.

65 Carvosso, December 31, 1825, WMMS/SOAS MMS/12 Australasia/South Seas Correspondence.

66 Carvosso, December 31, 1825, WMMS/SOAS MMS/12 Australasia/South Seas Correspondence.
He had found God in the shadow of the gallows, and although he recorded the experience of seeing the lifeless corpses of so many men, and indeed brothers in Christ, as one of the most painful of his career, he was profoundly thankful for the joy that depended on, and preceded that horror.

But Jefferies was not the only famous prisoner to die that May. A gang of bushrangers was awaiting execution in the same cell – some of whom participated in the revival, some of whom did not. The folk-hero Matthew Brady for instance, was hung on the same day as Jeffries, but does not appear in Carvosso’s version of events. Nor for that matter, does Father Connolly, the priest who was sent to minister to Brady and the other Catholic prisoners just as Carvosso and Bedford preached to the Protestants. Carvosso has quite warm words for some Catholic participants in the revival, and seems to assume that so long as they are genuinely contrite they too shall be saved. But Brady’s career did not speak to the degeneracy of fallen humanity, and the saving grace of God, as did that of Jefferies, but of an unrepentant, willful, and popular rebellion begun in England and continued abroad.

Brady was the son of Irish immigrants to Manchester. In 1820 he was convicted for stealing a basket, some butter, bacon, sugar and rice, and sentenced to transportation.

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for seven years. He proved an unruly ward. During his first four years as a convict he received some 350 lashes for attempts to abscond and other misdemeanors. In 1823 Brady was sent to the new penal station for secondary offenders which Arthur’s predecessor George Sorrell had established at Macquarie Harbour. The harbor lies on the west coast of Tasmania and is guarded on the one side by a narrow sea entrance called Hell’s Gates, and on the other by miles of inhospitable bush. Sorrell meant it to be a highly regimented and miserable place, and when he learned men on trial often declared they would rather be hung than return there, the Governor was well pleased.

But while the harbor seemed a formidable prison it proved remarkably leaky. At least a tenth of its inmates disappeared, and although most were believed to have perished in the woods, no small number survived to torment the authorities with their continuing existence. In 1824 Brady was part of one such group of escapees who, having made off with a whaling boat, managed to acquire horses and fire-arms and spent the next two years roaming the island, living off the locals, and fighting running engagements with government troops and armed settlers. They even seized a township with the deliciously gubernatorial name of Sorrell, and held it for the night, replacing the convicts

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69 Hughes, Fatal Shore, 372.

in the gaol house with respectable settlers, and posting notices that offered a reward for the capture of the Governor:

It has caused Matthew Brady much concern that such a person known as Sir George Arthur is at large. Twenty gallons of rum will be given to any person that can deliver his person to me.71

Later, on hearing that “execrable monster” Jefferies was being held at Launceston prison Brady threatened to break him out in order to administer to him some of the bushrangers’ own rough justice. His band launched an assault on the town which was repulsed, but they remained in the vicinity destroying fields and stock yards and threatening to hang a local landowner, Mr. Massey. Brady, wearing the hat of a Colonel he had acquired in a skirmish, holding court-martials, executing Arthur’s spies, releasing the prisoners he captured rather than murdering them, targeting wealthy farmers, and acting as if he represented the force of law became, unsurprisingly, something of an embarrassment to Arthur, and a popular figure among those who despised the Governor and hated the wealthy landowners.72 Brady himself distinguished between bushrangers and common criminals, reassuring a captured magistrate who had recently condemned a runaway convict and thief to death, that he

71 Quoted by Hughes, Fatal Shore, 232.

72 Colonial Times, March 10, 1826.
Brady was uninterested in vengeance because the executed man had not been a bushranger but simply a robber.\(^{73}\)

When Brady was finally captured by the settler John Batman in March of 1826 he made it clear that he could not have survived as long as he did without the support of friends. Nor did those friends desert him once incarcerated. Dozens of petitions for clemency were sent to Arthur; women shed tears for him; his cell was daily filled with visitors, flowers and fruit.\(^{74}\) He and his cellmates somehow acquired a butcher’s knife with which they tried work their way through the wall,\(^{75}\) he received “many small comforts in the gaol, from a very respectable Gentleman, whose humanity is proverbial,” and wore a new suit to his trial.\(^{76}\) According to legend he received handkerchiefs and letters from many of the colony’s young ladies.

The *Colonial Times* reported that he attributed his downfall to a moral, rather than a tactical or strategic failure. “He is understood to have declared,” the paper reported, “That success uniformly attended him until he embrued*[sic]* his hand in blood after

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\(^{73}\) Brady seems to have anticipated Eric hobsbawm’s distinction by a century or so. Eric Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movements in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959).

\(^{74}\) Hughes, *Fatal Shore*, 234.

\(^{75}\) *Colonial Times*, April 7, 1826.

\(^{76}\) *Colonial Times*, April 28, 1826.
which he became perfectly wretched and felt his fate was sealed.” 77 By his own telling at least he was quite the tragic hero – not least because it was his own flaws that brought about his destruction.

The whole of the town of Launceston turned out to see his procession through the streets to the gaol. “He deported himself in a firm and determined manner,” the Colonial Times reported, “and rode well, although badly wounded in the leg. He had no hat – a hankerchief was bound around his head.”78 Later the same paper described Brady as a “good looking man, with a penetrating eye,”79 who when sentenced behaved with “utmost fortitude and firmness.”80 The official Hobart Town Gazette on the other hand emphasized Brady’s continued intransigence. He pleaded guilty to all the charges he faced but subverted that plea by declaring he would plead guilty to whatever accusation the court might have chosen to make against him. Brady and his chief companions remained, according to the Hobart Town Gazette, insensate to the true nature of their “unhappy state,” and that insensibility excited the observer to both compassion and disgust. For Brady and his companions, in a phrase much beloved by the editor,
“the whirl of their late lawless and dissipated life seems scarcely to have subsided.”

There was to be no redemption for them in the grinding mills of Arthur’s great factory.

In the year and a half that the gang was at large there was scarcely a newspaper published that did not make reference to their escapades. Nor were they the only convicts running free in the colony – the lists of escaped or missing men and women that the government published rarely included less than a dozen names. Sorell had thought he had put an end to bushranging in 1818 with the killing of Michael Howe, but if anything the publicity surrounding that event had further validated the practice as a particularly dramatic form of popular resistance to state control. At least a hundred armed men were at large during the period of Brady’s reign in the bush, and Arthur’s dispatches to the colonial office describe the colony as in a state of dangerous crisis.

The bushrangers constituted a considerable obstacle to the efficient governance of the island, and had been disrupting legitimate commercial activities for over a decade. Even the architecture reflected the uncertainty of those years, with isolated homesteads being built complete with rifle slots in their formidable walls.

What most concerned the governors about the bushranging was their awareness that it was not an act of

81 Hobart Town Gazette, April 29, 1826.

82 West, History of Tasmania, 419.

isolated individuals, but integrated into colonial society and economics. The propertied classes provided a market for stolen goods, and the poor emancipists and convict servants provided a ready network of eyes and ears through which the rangers observed the machinations of colonial state. It was the very reflection of Arthur’s own system.

To set themselves up as agents of a more genuine justice than the Crown’s representative, as Brady did and Howe before him, was but a public acknowledgement that a subversive conceptual order existed among the colonists over which the government had little control. Arthur further inflamed an already well-politicized problem by blaming Brady’s celebrity on the publisher of the Colonial Times and suggesting that bushranging itself was a product of an unrestrained colonial press. Through the Hobart Town Gazette he argued that constant and public criticisms of the Governor, and attention to the bushranger, had turned Brady from a simple criminal into a dangerous radical. Arthur blamed the violence of the bushrangers on an irresponsible respectable class whose demands for freedom of speech were misconstrued by less intelligent members of society as a demand for freedom of action.84

It was probably a mistake on Arthur’s part to start a newspaper war, and the governments accusations were scoffed at by his enemies as a transparent attempt to muzzle the press. Yet the memory of Howe, and the manner in which Brady’s exploits were reported, particularly when contrasted with those of Jefferies, suggests Arthur was

84 West, History of Tasmania, 419.
right to be concerned about the media representation of the bushranger as a subversive and popular figure, rather than the deluded and violent criminal of his own propaganda.

To Carvosso it was the salvation of the monster Jefferies that should have been celebrated and the people’s hero Brady forgotten; an attitude which goes a long way to explaining the evangelicals’ popularity with the colonial authorities and lack of it with the masses. His depoliticized and pious version of the hangings was not to be the one remembered in the songs and stories shared by men and women who felt the boot of the colonial state against their throat. And the one bushranger who had made the greatest impression on Carvosso, James Goodwin, has been almost entirely forgotten.

Goodwin was a leading member of Brady’s gang, and “knew much of the system of wickedness” that had allowed the bush-rangers the run of the colony for so long.85 The day after Brady’s hanging, and the evening before the next set of prisoners were to be dispatched, Bedford pressed the converted men for information on their fellows still at large. Goodwin flew into a fury and, according to Carvosso, accosted his more malleable comrades and stirred up “the latent corruption of their hearts” against the minister. In desperation Bedford sent for Methodist missionary and Carvosso spent the night remonstrating with Goodwin.

85 Blencowe, The Faithful Pastor, 136
“I have seldom felt as much for the distress of any man,” wrote Carvosso of their conversation. Goodwin, “in a frenzy,” told the missionary that he could not in good faith sue for divine mercy while sacrificing his dearest friends to worldly justice:

I felt pity for him, but said if he could not consent to receive a sacrament on a condition which he believed God had imposed, I could see no ground for him to trust for mercy. He acknowledged it with bursting tears, but said it was terrible for him to bring so many poor fellows into trouble.86

Goodwin’s agony on the rack of conscience is evoked with exquisite tenderness by Carvosso: terrified of damnation, yet unwilling to condemn others to the same tortures, he really does stand on an isthmus, not between earth and hell, but between heaven and hell. That agony can be read, if one so chose, as a tragic condemnation of how the practices of evangelical Protestantism could function in an unthinking complicity with the machinery of repression. And it certainly stands in stark contrast to the methods of an earlier generation of ideologues who relied on more overtly physical tortures to discipline outraged bodies. Goodwin did indeed break, metaphysical fear won out over what Carvosso called “corrupt natural affection,” and having betrayed his companions on the outside of the prison he flung himself weeping into the arms of those, who like him, were about to die.

This is not how Arthur imagined the mechanics of penal reform to function. Goodwin, Brady, Jefferies and their companions were already a lost cause in the Lt.

86 Blencowe, The Faithful Pastor, 139.
Gov.’s system, they had refused to participate in the calculus of reform, and now their only use was to die instructive deaths. And the evangelical ministers helped ensure they did. But that the death row revival occurred in one of Arthur’s prison does not mean it was a constitutive element of his apparatus, any more than the practice of Christianity in the colonies meant it was a constitutive element of British imperialism.

It is worth noting that Goodwin and Carvosso expressed their understanding of the divine will in the language of the law – just as Carvosso’s father frequently did back home in a Cornwall filled with anti-Methodist magistrates. They imagined the bushranger suing for mercy before a court that they contrasted with “worldly justice.” There is more than a hint here of missionary collaboration in the subaltern subversions of the jail cell. The religious ecstasy of the men at the drop can be read, without putting too much strain on the evidence, not as a capitulation to reformist pieties, but as a rejection of the efficacy and usefulness of Arthur’s monstrous apparatus. That Benjamin Carvosso cared more for Goodwin the man than he did the colonial state was however, from Arthur’s perspective, entirely irrelevant – except insofar that it was the missionaries love which broke for him the rebels unbent back.

Carvosso, like his father, but not, incidentally his sons, occupied that curious space which existed not just between the laboring and the respectable classes, but between a Revolutionary epoch in which everything seemed dangerously possible, and a Scientific one in which all seemed dangerously fixed. That is perhaps an overdramatic
generalization but it is important to remember that the Carvossos’ most insidious enemy was what they called Calvinism – that attitude in which a belief in Humanity’s capacity to choose salvation was derided as the most optimistic and dangerous of antinomian radicalisms. Benjamin Carvosso’s uncompromising message, as poor Goodwin could tell you, was of the hard and deliberate choice between the heaven of faith and the hell of doubt.

The transformative revival experience was the very ground of Carvosso’s religious experience, but its practice was viewed by many of his social and political superiors – even within Wesleyanism – as dangerously uncontrolled. Revivalists like Carvosso were useful as deliberate reformers and accidental informants, but refined noses could detect on them the faint sulfurous whiff of revolutionary eschatologies. Carvosso’s spiritual egalitarianism and personal empathy was the very contradiction of the sort of pragmatic, bureaucratic Christianity increasingly practiced by the professional managers of the reformatory institutions. Such institutions were being championed by colonial administrators like Arthur and Macquarie, reformist lobbyists like Jeremy Bentham and Elizabeth Fry, and migrants from artisanal Britain like George Augustus Robinson and William Bedford in Hobart, and Samuel Marsden in New South Wales.87

In the mid-1820s the Methodist migrant George Augustus Robinson could be found hustling about Hobart Town, making himself available to the various organs, institutions and committees dedicated to improving the manners and morals of Vandemonian society. He was precisely the sort of man Lawry and Carvosso wanted to migrate; a self-educated, married, and ambitious builder who had left England in his late thirties to seek a colonial fortune. Like Carvosso Robinson had arrived just as Arthur was putting a violent end to the social and commercial turbulence caused by bushranger predations, and the press was turning its attention to that other menace, the aboriginal Tasmanians.

On the strength of letters from Church Missionary Society (CMS), and the support of local evangelicals like Bedford, Arthur engaged Robinson as a conciliator. He was sent with some supplies, and a few convict-servants, to establish a permanent village for the small band of Aborigines living on Bruny Island, near Musquito’s old base of operations at Oyster Bay. His brief was to teach the band the customs and habits of civilized life and so conciliate them to their inevitable alienation from the land. Robinson had at most mixed success, receiving neither the support from the government he had hoped for, or the encouraging results he had expected. The Tasmanian women in particular were constantly fleeing his protection to cohabit with the very whalers who worked coast, stockmen on the ranges, and sealers, from whom Robinson was so eager to rescue them from. Even the children would abscond from his mission into the bush, a
phenomenon Robinson, like Marsden in New South Wales, could only explain with reference to their natural propensity for wandering. Despite the very meager returns of the investment Robinson was the closest thing Arthur had to a sympathetic expert in Tasmanian behavior, and so it was to Robinson he turned after the failure of his first attempt to resolve the Aboriginal problem – the Black Line.

During the twenties the previously accommodating Tasmanians became intransigent as pasturages were extended and their traditional hunting grounds encroached upon. The newspapers were filled with stories of murdered stock-keepers and slaughtered livestock, and strident editorials condemning government inactivity. Public opinion seems to have been that the only options open to the administration were conciliation, by which was meant rounding up the Aboriginal Tasmanians and depositing them in isolated reserves, or extirpation, by which was meant turning a blind eye to the efforts of the settlers to murder them all.

Arthur’s solution rather lagged behind that of the settlers themselves. They had been waging their own war since long before 1830 when Arthur mobilized both his meager military forces and armed settlers to capture as many Aboriginal Tasmanians as they could. A skirmish line of soldiers, convicts and settlers worked its way across the entirety of the settled territories in an effort to round-up those Tasmanian Aboriginals who had survived the previous decade of violence and a half century of disease. Three were killed and two captured, the rest, presumably, slipping the net. In the aftermath of
its failure the government began to pay settlers bounties for captured Tasmanians in the early thirties and more violence ensued. During the same period Arthur recruited George Augustus Robinson in an official capacity to track down Tasmanians living beyond the frontier and organize them into a manageable group. Robinson was to use the appointment to transform himself into the celebrated, and often reviled, great conciliator and chief protector of the Aborigines not just on the island, but eventually on the mainland colony of South Australia as well.

Robinson led an expedition of his “mission blacks” and convict-servants beyond the frontier and into Tasmanian territories. He hoped to convince those bands still at large to accept the government’s offer of protection and resettlement in areas safe from settler advances. He spent much of the next decade doing just that. Together with the Bruny Island Tasmanians, and occasional supplements of convicts and Sydney Aborigines, Robinson tracked down, and ultimately removed all the original Tasmanians to the Bass Strait islands previously inhabited by the sealers and their families.

On the whole he implemented Arthur’s conciliation policy to the Lt.-Gov.’s satisfaction. By the mid-Thirties the Aborigines were almost invisible in Vandemonian society. And when they were seen they were deemed to be sad artifacts of the past,

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rather than evidence of a pressing political, legal, and moral problem. Reservation life resulted in their further decimation by disease, malnutrition, and depression, and was an ever-decreasing administrative expense. Robinson’s efforts to Christianize the Tasmanians were rudimentary at best, merely an element of his various attempts to transform them into harmless and civilized subjects, and he rarely, if ever betrayed concern for anyone’s immortal wellbeing. This may not have been the outcome that committed evangelicals like the Reverend’s Bedford and Carvosso would have imagined as they gave Robinson his leg up into the world of colonial officialdom and the business of Aborigine protection, but it was an attitude that made him as bureaucrat.

Robinson’s journals have neither the intense piety, nor agonizing self-doubt, one expects in the papers of an early nineteenth century evangelical. Compared to the revivalist enthusiasms of the Lawry and Carvosso, Robinson is a bath in a cool pool, albeit a curiously unreflective pool. The drama of self-representation practiced by Lawry and Carvosso in their writing occurs on a stage shared with all manner of people; irresponsible convicts, diligent farmers and merchants, rebel bushrangers, savage Aborigines, infidel settlers, Calvinist clergy and so on. Nature and society formed the backdrop against which the struggle for salvation is acted out by all the participants. Walter Lawry for example described a New South Wales in which potential converts burst noisily out of that canvas – Black, White, and even Irish. In some ways it seemed a garden of earthly delights; vibrant, busy and colorful; a world of remarkable inhabitants
who could reach out and pluck their salvation, or their damnation, from the trees of the beautiful orchard in which they lived.\textsuperscript{89}

In Robinson on the other hand all seems detached observation, cynicism and machination. The stiff figures of the intrepid explorer, disinterested philanthropist, and the practical-man-of-the-world which he constructed to represent himself can barely contain the seething resentments that surge through the text. He struggles in a desert wilderness with an often anonymous cloud of convicts, Tasmanians, and family members drifting about him. He fights with the landscape, frequently on the cusp of starvation, barely managing to constrain the animosities that threaten to tear his expedition apart, always on the brink of disaster. In his telling of it the Tasmanians he is hunting seem to blend so perfectly into the ecology they inhabit as to often be indistinguishable from it – a framing which makes his eventual triumph all the more heroic. He picks them out from the indeterminate chaos of nature, one by one, and collects them for the colonial state to reorganize.

Yet there is an interesting contradiction in the journals; one that exists between the imaginary civilized Tasmanian that is his great goal, and the Tasmanians he describes as civilized, or half-civilized, and with whom has to work. He mentions “the civilized aborigine Robert” only to report that he has absconded, vanished into the

\textsuperscript{89} See Chapter Three.
wilderness.\textsuperscript{90} The so-called “Mission Blacks” drift back and forth from the fire-lit circle of the expedition camp sites into the darkness that so obscures Robinson’s vision. His great nemesis among them was his guide and assistant Black Tom.

Tom became famous as one of the leaders of Tasmanian resistance to European rule in the years after the 1825 execution of Musquito. The man known as Black Tom, Birch’s Tom, Tom Birch or Kickertopoller had joined Musquito’s Oyster Bay mob in 1822.\textsuperscript{91} He had been raised from childhood in the household of Thomas Birch, a Hobart Town merchant and landowner. The Birchs had taught him to read and write, and described him as inclined towards Christianity and Civilization, but he fell in with that colonial arch-villain Musquito. Around the time of Musquito’s execution Tom, and a former bushranger and accomplice of Michael Howe, were captured, charged, and convicted of the murder of Matthew Osborne.\textsuperscript{92} After the intervention of his adopted parents Tom’s death sentence was reprieved and he was sent to Macquarie Harbour. He promptly escaped and, to much colonial outrage, immediately returned to the settled areas where he joined another mob, the Abyssinian, in their attacks on the stock, labor and property of the free settlers.\textsuperscript{93}

\textsuperscript{90} Robinson, \textit{The Friendly Mission}, 73.

\textsuperscript{91} Bonwick, \textit{The Last of the Tasmanians}, 95-96.

\textsuperscript{92} \textit{Hobart Town Gazette}, July 16, 1824. On Beagent see \textit{The Friendly Mission}, p. 428.

\textsuperscript{93} Bonwick, \textit{The Last of the Tasmanians}, 96.
It was Tom’s perceived betrayal of civilization that generated so much fascinated distress among the colonists. The editor of *Hobart Town Gazette* November 11\textsuperscript{th}, 1826, wrote, “they are a lawless, brutal mob, under the guidance of this Black Tom, who had at a former period voluntarily become a free member of this community, who lived many years as a free servant to one of our settlers, and who now, with the basest treachery, turns the very weapons which he then acquired, to the destruction of that society which he deceived into confidence. He is, therefore, not a deserter, but a rebel, a civil and internal enemy, and those who have joined him are alike guilty with himself.”

And this from the *Colonial Times*:

Black Tom and others, who, like him, have been reared among Europeans, and who have ultimately absconded into the bush, the savages have acquired a certain degree of manners of the whites. Aboriginal natives, who are reared from their earliest years among us, if even they should be kept until they arrive at maturity, always evince a disposition to join their black brethren, and when they do so, they carry with them those seeds of civilisation which they have sown in their minds, and which they disseminate among their tribes, thereby rendering them more formidable by thus enlightening them – not that we are enemies to the civilisation of the blacks – far from it, but as by nature they are prone to enmity against the Europeans; any increase of knowledge is only stirring up the flame within their bosoms, and by their becoming acquainted with our manners, they are less intimidated by us, as it is now clear that fear alone has kept them so harmless as they have been. Now they are in the possession of cutlasses, pistols, muskets, bayonets, &c., which they have learned the use of by those who have been brought up (under the hope of ameliorating their condition) in civilized society...They are now becoming dangerous, and if not checked in time,
will become as formidable in their descents on the Settlers, as those of the Caffres at the Cape of Good Hope. 94

Tom, another colonist suggested, ought “to be immediately gibbeted on the very spot which has been the scene of his atrocities.” 95 The newspapers betrayed an intense anxiety about permeability of boundaries between social groups, and the dangers posed to social order by those who pass through them that was not evident in the early years of colonization on the island. There were horrified even reports of whites with blackened faces fighting with the Tasmanians. And even a conciliator such as Robinson dedicated himself, after all, to protecting the Tasmanians from the influence of colonial society. And Arthur himself wrote in 1826 that:

An impression however still remains that these Savages are stimulated to acts of Atrocity by one or more leaders who, from their previous Intercourse with Europeans, may have acquired sufficient intelligence to draw them into Crime and Danger. The capture of these Individuals therefore becomes an Object of the first Importance. 96

When Tom was captured however, he was not gibbeted on the spot, or banished to some penitential oblivion, but immediately pardoned by Arthur and employed as a tracker and interpreter in the ongoing effort to hunt down other Aboriginal bands. By 1828 Black Tom was one of George Robinson’s long-term assistants in the effort to round up 

94 Colonial Times, November 10, 1826.

95 Quoted in Clive Turnbull, Black War: The Extermination of the Tasmanian Aboriginals (Melbourne: Cheshire-Lansdowne, 1966), 72

96 Hobart Town Gazette, December 9, 1826.
and relocate the Tasmanians to sites in which they could not interact – as he had been
doing for his whole life – with the European colonists.

Tom’s resistance to the will of officialdom had by no means run its course with
his capture. It continued even after he became a crucial player in the implementation of
Arthur’s policy. Tom frequently ignored Robinson’s orders, came and went as he
would, and, to Robinson’s abiding horror, seemed to “cohabit” with every Aboriginal
woman he came across. Black Tom’s life in the bush with Robinson did not seem very
different from what it must have been like with the Oyster and Abyssinian Mobs at the
height of the Black Wars – aside from the noticeable absence of violence. A diet of
kangaroo, fish, and local plants, was supplemented by food acquired from the colonial
state; the little band traversed the island in the nomadic fashion of the past; and the little
community was occasionally divided by squabbles and political power plays. Robinson
was certainly a useful hostage against settler violence, but even after Black Tom had
died of dysentery in 1838, and the Aborigines had been shipped off to what had been
sealer territory, the question of Robinson’s power to control his wards’ behavior must
remain open. After Robinson finally had them all safely ensconced on the barren
islands, cut off from both a landscape that encouraged recidivism and a colonial society
that encouraged degeneration, it was the women he had rescued from the depravity of
sealer life that most tormented him. They taught the others to curse in English,
reinvented their old dances and rituals and spiced them with obscenities that shocked
Robinson. They mocked him, telling him that white men were no better than black snakes.

The issue of gendered decorum was of course a crucial one for evangelicals such as Robinson and his mentor Bedford. Robinson’s initial interventions into Aboriginal mores occurred on Bruny Island as he tried – and failed – to keep the women separated from whalers and shepherds. As early as 1830 he was trying – and again failing – to convince a Tasmanian Aboriginal woman in Hobart not to return to the sealer from whose brutality Robinson believed she had fled. Robinson’s mentor Bedford was also preoccupied with such issues. Bedford, who as a stay maker in London had long been familiar with the arts of female containment, was in his thirties when Elizabeth Fry plucked him from the ignominy of artisanal existence, and sent off to encourage the unfortunate inhabitants of Newgate prison as lay evangelist. In 1821 he was ordained a priest by the Bishop of London and appointed as an assistant military chaplain to Van Diemen’s Land. In 1823 he and his family sailed for the colony. On arrival he launched himself into a protracted campaign to reform Vandemonian society. He was active – as we have seen – in the prisons and on the gallows stage, was on various philanthropic and educational committees, had a seat on Arthur’s legislative council by 1830, and was made a justice of the peace in 1831.

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Bedford has achieved a small celebrity among historians of Van Diemen’s Land as the Dickensian figure of “Holy Willie;” an insufferably self-righteous and comical ass interfering in the lives of colonials in general and female convicts in particular. And the impression he made on those whose lives he sought to salvage from history’s wreckage provides us with some support for those unfriendly characterizations.

William Gates was an American who had participated in a cross-border raid during the Canadian rebellion of 1837-38. He had been captured by the British and along with some seventy fellow American insurgents, and French-Canadian rebels, been dispatched to Van Diemen’s Land. Gates despised “Holy Willie,” and is quoted on the Chaplain’s methods by Fred Landon in *An Exile From Canada to Van Diemen’s Land*:

> We were mustered out, formed into double rank, and marched with the most soldierlike [sic] precision to the convict’s church in Hobart Town, to hear the detested ritual of the Church of England…There we were, helpless and forced to submit to it all, and compelled to endure the purgatory of two or three long, doleful hours – rising, kneeling and sitting according to the most precise formula, all the while holding our faces as grave as an owl…Thus we had to submit to those above us under the ministration of our parson Bedford…who made no other impression on our mind than those of hatred and disgust.99


Aside from the personal vitriol with which this reminiscence is soaked, what is remarkable about it is the emphasis the American puts on the empty ritual of the Church of England. His careful delineation of Anglicanism denominational characteristics smacks of the hostility towards those formulaic practices which revivalist Protestantism identified with Papism.

There is a famous anecdote of a visit by Arthur’s successors the Lieutenant-Governor and Lady Franklin to the Cascades Female Factory in Hobart. The convicts first drowned out Bedford’s welcome address with simultaneous coughing, and then, after the wardens had shouted for silence, turned around as one, raised their skirts and smacked their naked posteriors with a loud report. A second attempt on Bedford’s dignity occurred later when the women seized him as he was crossing the prison yard, removed his trousers, and “deliberately endeavoured to deprive him of his manhood.” The guards intervened to save the Chaplain, but such subaltern eloquence speaks volumes of convict attitudes towards the man. His relations with the people over whose backs he had climbed in order to brush shoulders with the rulers of an Empire were strained to say the least.

The Cascades Female Factory where the incidents occurred had been founded in 1828 when the previous facilities for the incarceration of female convicts proved

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100 Landon, An Exile from Canada, 203.

101 See Damousi, Depraved, 59. The event is also alluded to in the Colonial Times, June 16, 1826.
inadequate to their containment.\textsuperscript{102} By the time transportation to Van Diemen’s Land ended in 1853 nearly 12,500 women had been shipped to the colony, and no small number had passed through the Cascades doors.\textsuperscript{103} It was primarily a place of punishment for women who had broken any of the many rules that governed their lives as the unpaid servants of Vandemonian settlers. But it also served as a home for those who were pregnant and unmarried, ill, otherwise incapacitated, or simply between assignments. The architecture and design of the facility meant even after the end of transportation the buildings continued to be used as a repository of those who could not, nor would not conform to the conditions imposed on Vandemonian society by the colonial state. It held by turns lunatics, invalids, and paupers. But its initial purpose was to contain that dangerous class of females who, in the views of men like Bedford and Marsden, threatened to infect the colonial society with their degeneracy.\textsuperscript{104}

The first such dangerous women had arrived in small enough numbers that they had been held in rooms and houses attached to the Hobart Town gaol. But when whole shiploads of them began to arrive in the mid-twenties Arthur established a dedicated

\textsuperscript{102} Proposed Amendment to the Tasmanian Heritage Register Entry for the Cascades Female Factory, South Hobart, (Tasmanian Heritage Council” Hobart, 2007), 4.


\textsuperscript{104} Proposed Amendment, 5.
facility. Bedford’s metropolitan patron the Quaker penal reformer Elizabeth Fry was a correspondent of Arthur and is credited with the design of the facility, so it is no surprise that he was put in charge of the new institution. Bedford’s installation as the gatekeeper of the settler’s primary source of domestic labour and sexual partners led to resentment and complaints. Evangelicals may have spoken loudly in philanthropic societies and government meetings, but they did not by any means speak for all Vandemonians. In 1825 the Colonial Times ran a letter from “An Old Settler” in which pointed questions were asked about the role of the Chaplain’s religious and social sensibilities in his distribution of the women to potential employers and husbands. The letter suggests it was not only intransigent female convicts who thought the evangelical enthusiasm for interference in convict life excessive, but at least some of the island’s respectable inhabitants were unhappy with the changes introduced by the new Lieutenant-Governor and his allies.

Arthur nonetheless continued to appoint evangelicals to such positions, and in particular Wesleyans. Esh Lovell and his wife Anne for example, the Superintendent and Matron of Cascades from 1828 to 1831, were Methodists; as were their replacements the Rev. John Hutchison and his wife Mary. That Wesleyan chokehold on the factory depended, of course, on the goodwill of the administration. And not only was Arthur a

105 Colonial Times, November 18, 1825.
106 Proposed Amendment, 5.
good friend to the evangelicals, the wife of his replacement John Franklin was an enthusiastic correspondent of Elizabeth Fry, and an eager observer of the processes of female reform.

The unfortunate Mary McLauchlan, who was incarcerated in the Cascades twice before her execution and dissection, provides us with a case study of how evangelicals functioned in the penal institutions Arthur had established on the island. In 1828 Lachlan, the mother of two young children, had been convicted of theft in Glasgow, and sentenced to transportation for fourteen years. In January 1829 she arrived in her Vandemonian exile. After a brief interlude at the Cascades Female Factory, McLauchlan was assigned as a domestic servant to the settler John Nairne. Five months later she was pregnant and back in the Factory, charged by Nairne with an unspecified misconduct. After a six day spell in solitary McLauchlan was integrated into the highly regulated life of the Factory. She spent her days laboring for the colony –washing clothes, spinning wool or any other of a variety of tasks – and learning the rhythms of Arthur’s reformatory system. In December 1829, not even a year since she had arrived at the colony, she gave birth to a son, and his body was shortly found in one of the privies. The following April she was tried for the infant’s murder, found guilty, and sentenced to death.

The newspapers reported that Mary McLauchlan died well, as well, in fact, as a man.\textsuperscript{108} And they reported that Bedford was there to see her off, discharging his religious duty as the hangman discharged the secular. Bedford had spent a great deal of time with the prisoner, attempting on the one hand to obtain the name of her accomplice in the murder, and the confession of guilt that would make possible the poor woman’s salvation, and on the other convincing her to give up the idea of denouncing her ‘seducer’ on the scaffold.\textsuperscript{109} The \textit{Courier} claimed she spent the night in almost unendurable agony before she finally found peace by giving up the name of another woman at the facility. It is all so very reminiscent of Carvosso and Goodwin. But for McLauchlan there were no shared ecstasies; no joy; no revival. For her there was only a lonely betrayal, and a lonely march up the scaffold steps and death.

After it was cut down McLauchlan’s body was carried from the scaffold into to the death house. There, as was usual in the case of executed convicts, the Reverend Bedford’s son Edward assisted the Colonial Surgeon James Scott in the dissection of the body.\textsuperscript{110} Those individuals who Arthur’s system failed to reorganize into redeemable individuals were, it seems subject to dissolution, and anatomized entirely.

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\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Colonial Times}, April 23, 1830
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\textsuperscript{109} MacDonald, \textit{Human Remains}, 82.
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\textsuperscript{110} MacDonald, \textit{Human Remains}, 50.
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The Vandemonian medical establishment had long been dismembering the bodies of not only convicts but of Tasmanians as well. In the denouement to the first violent conflict between English colonists and the indigenous Tasmanians in 1804, the party surgeon Dr. Mountgarrett offered to dissect one Aborigine body and sent another off to Port Jackson for further scientific study.\footnote{Kociumbas, \textit{History of Australia}, 97.} In 1819 the genial Rev. Knopwood was shipping Tasmanian skulls from Van Diemen’s Land to New South Wales so Archdeacon Thomas Scott could indulge his curiosity about “cranial bumps.”\footnote{Kociumbas, \textit{History of Australia}, 275.} And Hobart Town’s Colonial Surgeon, another Scott, stripped clean the skull of the infamous cannibal Arthur Pierce and, according to Bedford’s protégé William Parramore, permitted an assistant to ship it all the way to the Samuel Morton in Philadelphia.\footnote{MacDonald, \textit{Human Remains}, 50. See also Ann Fabian \textit{The Skull Collectors: Race Science and America’s Unburied Dead} (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010). Fabian shows clearly the links between metropolitan collectors and U.S. and European imperial adventuring and Morton’s catalogue. See also J. Aitken Meigs, \textit{The Catalogue of Human Crania, in the Collection of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia}, (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1857).} Morton, the celebrated craniologist and patriarch of scientific racism incorporated Pierce into his vast collection where it was labeled “English” and “cannibal” and perched between the skull of an Italian mass murderer and an Egyptian mummy.\footnote{MacDonald, \textit{Human Remains}, 102.}
The scientific and professional justifications for anatomization are straightforward. For medical men it was an invaluable for training surgeons – giving the young practitioners an opportunity to familiarize themselves with surgical techniques and anatomical structure in a laboratory environment. For theorists and philosophers it provided the opportunity to gather evidence for the increasingly popular idea that the origins of human difference could be found in the physiological organization of the human body. This was a very different view than that of Carvosso and other enthusiasts of revivalist conversion, who maintained it was the interaction of metaphysical forces with the human soul that produced behavioral variation. This increasing preoccupation with embodiment made convicts such as Pearce and McLauchlan, as well as Tasmanians, into degenerates rather than sinners, encouraged their post-mortem dismemberment, and changed the way philanthropists and reformers were inclined to think of them. Prisons, female factories, and reservations, remained for all evangelicals potential mission fields overflowing with lost souls ripe for redemption. But for some of them they were also permanent, scientifically grounded institutions. They provided ambitious men like Robinson and Bedford with both a comfortable living, and an ideological buttress to the analytics of class, gender, and race they used to justify their positions.

None of which is to say that in the 1830s there was a particularly neat transition among philanthropists from a Christian and metaphysical, to a scientific and material
worldview – if anything the suggestion here is that there is no necessary contradiction between those two positions. There is however something of incompatibility between ideologies of those who controlled reformatory institutions, and the enthusiasms of revivalists such as Carvosso, who believed and hoped the world could be saved in a single glorious instant. For the revivalist slow change was not reassuring, it was frustrating, and could lead to despair. Carvosso had written to the secretaries when he moved to Hobart that the fluctuating and unstable conditions of a new colony were profoundly unfavorable to religion.\textsuperscript{115} And when he left in 1829 he wrote again that he remained pessimistic about the prospects of Christianity in the Antipodes, and held himself, his fellow missionaries, and the hegemony of colonial Calvinism to blame for that state of affairs.\textsuperscript{116}

There were to be very few magnificent transformations of the convict and aboriginal soul here; just slow, grinding, industrial rehabilitation, or the ecstasy of the drop. Van Diemen’s Land was a world which belonged to a different sort of itinerant than Carvosso; one who could navigate his way through the increasingly complex institutions of the colonial State and the established church. Official men like Robinson who subordinated their evangelical beliefs to more weighty matters of political and managerial expediency were very different men than Carvosso’s beloved father William.

\textsuperscript{115} Carvosso, August 25, 1825, WMMS/SOAS MMS/12 Australasia/South Seas Correspondence.

\textsuperscript{116} Carvosso, February 3, 1829, WMMS/SOAS MMS/12 Australasia/South Seas Correspondence.
These evangelicals were not missionaries of a church that exceeded the reach of secular power but employees of that power, and adept at using the machinery of bureaucracy to displace the violence on which their achievements depended.

Robinson, who had overseen the destruction of the people he had been paid to protect was rewarded with a similar job in Port Phillip during the second, and more successful, British attempt at settling the region.\textsuperscript{117} When that effort at conciliation came to naught he transformed himself from an agent of philanthropy to one of ethnography. In 1851 he became a Fellow of the Royal Society of Tasmania – which had been founded by the Franklins – and in 1853 he became a Fellow of the Ethnological Society of London. By then he had retired on his pensions from the governments of Van Diemen’s Land and Victoria, living by turns on the continent and at Bath.\textsuperscript{118} On his return to England he is said to have looked up the wife of Arthur’s successor, the philanthropic Lady Franklin, who we remember as a witness to Bedford’s embarrassment at the female factory. Lady Franklin was then mourning the disappearance of her husband in the Arctic. His ships had wrecked as he searched for the North West Passage, and the corpulent Admiral had been eaten by his starving crews. Even as the wind, ice, and sun bleached his gnawed bones into austere whiteness, his widow was busily engaged in the task of reorganizing

\textsuperscript{117} Kocuimbas, \textit{History of Australia}, 148. See Davidson, \textit{The Invisible State}, 65-90. Davidson discusses the roles of both Robinson and John Batman – who had been the man to hunt down Brady and one of Robinson’s chief competitors in the Aboriginal collection business – in the dispossession of the Port Phillip’s Aborigines

\textsuperscript{118} Kocuimbas, \textit{History of Australia}, 278.
Franklin’s life story into the image of something heroic. She was transforming him from a middling administrator and failed explorer into a martyr of science, progress, and British Imperialism. Legend has it that Robinson, who understood precisely the nature and importance of such necromantic transformations, had brought Lady Franklin the gift of a Tasmanian skull.¹¹⁹

5. The Many Faces of Maskepetoon: Robert Rundle and Imperial Ideologies on the Upper Saskatchewan, 1840 to 1848

In the fall of 1844, almost fifteen years after Benjamin Carvosso returned to Cornwall, his nephew Robert Rundle (1811-1896), a WMMS missionary on the upper reaches of the North Saskatchewan River, received a note from the Cree band leader Maskepetoon (1807-1869).¹ The note was written in the syllabics the Methodists were teaching the indigenous people of the region, and in it Maskepetoon asked Rundle if his “small son Benjamin” could come to live with the missionary and learn English from him.² Benjamin had received that name from Rundle on the occasion of his baptism; a process by which the missionary was slowly populating the entire Hudson’s Bay drainage system with Cree, Assiniboine, and Métis children named after the family members he missed so much.³ By inviting the Cornish missionary to adopt the child into his small entourage, Maskepetoon was, amongst other things, establishing relations with the north Atlantic Methodist community. The intersection of the two families in the small person of Benjamin – the one of trappers and traders in the Old Northwest, the other Cornish revivalists and farmers – formalized an alliance that was to last long after

¹ See Hugh Dempsey, Maskepetoon: Leader, Warrior, Peacemaker (Vancouver: Heritage House, 2010).
² Robert Terrill Rundle fonds, Letter 1844, Glenbow Alberta- Institute Archives (hereafter GAI) M-1083
Rundle left the territory in 1848, and even survived the murder of Maskepotoon by the

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Figure 3: Rupert’s Land

Blackfoot twenty years after that. This chapter is a study of the two men’s relationship in the forties, and the volatile colonial context in which it took place.

Rundle provides us with a much better opportunity to examine the interaction between Methodist missionaries and the indigenous communities that were being

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4 See H.C. Wolfart, “The Education of a Cree Woman,” in Michael Rosenberg, Their Example Showed Me the Way: A Cree Woman’s Life Shaped by Two Cultures, (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1993) xii-xiii. “The efforts of the early Methodists (most prominently R.T. Rundle, who by 1850 had established a missionary Pigeon Lake...are still measurable on Samson and Montana Reserves (where in 1939 Catholics reportedly accounted for 441 and 49, or 70% and 61%, in a total population of 633 and 81, respectively); conversely Ermineskin and Louis Bull Reserves (with populations of 331 and 148 in 1939) are reported to have been exclusively Roman Catholic.”
displaced by settler colonialism than does his Uncle Benjamin. In part this is because Rundle spent so much time beyond the palisades of the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) and among the people living in the countryside. Carvosso, by contrast, ministered primarily to the convicts and settlers of a colony proper. And in part because in the Forties the people of the Great Plains were still in a position to treat with Europeans as equals while, in Tasmania and New South Wales, the aboriginal communities were already being overwhelmed by the flood of British migration and the explosive expansion of the pastoral economy.

This is not to suggest there were essential equivalences between the three indigenous groups, but rather that the similar changes in their respective situations bear comparison. In each instance the missionaries arrived right on the cusp of the transformation of the colonies from penal or trading outposts governed according to martial lines hierarchies, into explosively expansive settler colonies occupied by self-consciously white communities eager for political and economic autonomy from the British ruling classes. The revivalism of the Cornish brethren in Australia, and Rundle’s fervent Arminian enthusiasms, stood in marked contrast to the growing hegemony of European frontier ideologies. His earnest pieties were at odds with the supercilious indifference of the gentlemanly capitalism that drove the fur trade. And his aim of incorporating the indigenous locals into the larger colonial community was the
very contradiction of the virulent racism of settler colonialism that was emerging as a force on both sides of 49th parallel.

Rundle’s optimism for the future of non-Europeans provided an alternative to the notion that the Native American – like the Tasmanian and the Australian Aborigine – was doomed. Ethnological determinism may have titillated and reassured much of the reading, and investing, public on either side of the Atlantic, but many evangelicals were skeptical of its validity. Such contrasting attitudes were not, of course, confined to neat ideological packages, nor were they the fixed manifestations of particular economic interests, but they were stable enough to warrant comparison. In the instance of Maskepetoon it is Rundle’s evangelical humanism, a product of a transatlantic and transnational religious culture, which has provided us with our most complex, convincing, and ultimately satisfying image of the man, and not his representation by proto-ethnologists, fur traders and frontier painters. And in turn it was Rundle who presented to Maskepetoon and his fellows the friendliest, if also the most bemusing, face of Atlantic imperialism.

I will begin this chapter with a study of Rundle’s participation in Cornish Methodism in the twenties and thirties; a period which saw both the continuance of revivalist practices in the county, and increasing tensions between the Conference party of the Connexion and the proponents of lay autonomy. I will then proceed to discuss Rundle’s revivalist practices during his mission to Rupert’s Land. While he clearly had
a great deal in common with his uncle and grandfather, Rundle was much friendlier towards the Church of England, and much more nostalgic and sentimental about England and Englishness, than were his older relatives. After a quick survey of the colonial context of the high plains in the 1840s, and the social dynamism and flux which characterized the period, I will turn to the figure of Maskepetoon. By comparing the representations of him in texts written by other contemporaries to that of Rundle, we can see how the missionary’s evangelicalism, while still a species of imperialism, was an imperialism of a very different order than those of the traders, ethnologists, and adventurers, who were in the West with him.

5.1 Rundle in Cornwall

Robert Rundle was born near the Cornish village of Mylor in 1811. It is perched on the Fal Estuary, about four miles east of the Carvosso farm at Ponsanooth, and just north of the old port of Falmouth. His mother Grace was the daughter of William Carvosso and his father Robert was a yeoman farmer. Rundle’s maternal Uncle William Carvosso (named after his father) farmed nearby, as did his older brother John Rundle, and eventually a much younger brother Charles Lukey Rundle took over the property the family leased from the Lemons. Rundle’s father and uncle were, as we have seen in Chapter Two, among those farmers who renegotiated their economic obligations to the
Church of England with the local Vicar, and whose names appear on chapel and workhouse leases.\(^5\)

The pews of the Mylor Church had become the private property of local families and as late as 1830 one was still owned by the Rundle family.\(^6\) There is also a family tombstone in the churchyard, memorializing Robert Rundle’s grandparents, parents, and his brother William.\(^7\) The church and graveyard occupied an important place in the mystical geography Rundle constructed for himself in Rupert’s Land, but he had imagined himself being buried there since at least his mid-twenties.\(^8\)

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\(^5\) CRO WH/1/650 19 Aug. 1818: “99 yr. lease (Rob., s. of Wm. and Jane Carvosso of Mylor, Wm., s. of Wm. and Jane Pearce of Mylor, and Jn., s. of Rob. and Grace Rundle of Mylor); rent 2/- . Sir Wm. Lemon of Carclew, to Wm. Pearce and Rob. Rundle of Mylor, yeos. Plot of ground already marked out being 32’ x 32’, on r.h.s. of road from Carclew towards Mylor village, part of which plot was formerly wastrel, the rest meadow belonging to Thos. Lawrence, and lately sold by him to Wm. Pearce and Rob. Rundle, on which plot a Methodist meeting-house has lately been built; to be held in trust for the use of a “certain society commonly called Wesleyan Methodists”.”

\(^6\) Hugh Olivey, Notes on the Parish of Mylor (Taunton, Barnicott & Pearce, 1907) 72. A Mr. Rundle of Dowstall tenement according to Dowstall tenement was a property Robert Rundle the elder was renting from Sir Charles Lemon, CRO WH/1/528 in 1832. The same property was being rented by William Rundle, likely the son of Charles Lukey Rundle from Arthur Tremayne, the new resident of the Lemon’s Carclew estate in 1886 CRO WH/1/532.


\(^8\) Robert Rundle, March 16, 1837, GAI Rundle Papers A/R941D. Nicolas Orme, English Church Deductions, (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996) 107. The church-building was very old, perhaps as old as the Tenth Century but most of the structure dated from the Fifteenth. Nicholas Orme, The Saints of Cornwall, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 185. According to local tradition, a St. Mylor or Melor had been martyred on the site, but the cult of Mylor likely originated in Brittany in the Ninth Century. If Rundle was familiar with the legends of the missionary saints who had brought Christianity to Cornwall, and his beloved Mylor, there is no evidence, but he certainly would have appreciated them.
Unlike the Carvossos who came from the much rougher smuggling and mining enclaves to the west, the Rundles seemed at home in the local parish, and at ease with the Church of England. But when he was only three, Rundle’s Grandfather William moved in with the family and lived with them until his death in 1834. This was the period of William’s itinerancy and young Rundle could not but have been grown up aware of Methodism’s capacity to destabilize the established institutions of English religious and political life. He could have measured his adolescence out by the revivals in which his Grandfather participated. In 1821 his grandfather wrote to Rundle’s Uncle Benjamin in Australia saying that a revival was occurring in the vicinity which shook the very gates of hell.9 Two more revivals followed in Helston in 1823 and Redruth in 1824.10 1827 saw a revival in Mevagissy which began while William was visiting Samuel Dunn’s father;11 and a second right at home at Mylor Bridge during which Rundle’s older brother William converted.12 In 1828 old William participated in the revival in Mousehole.13 And the year after Rundle’s Uncle Benjamin and his family returned from Australia, the whole of western Cornwall was convulsed by the revival of 1832. From

9 William Carvosso to Benjamin Carvosso, 15 August 1821, WMMS/SOAS MMS/17/3.
11 Carvosso, Efficacy, 236.
12 Carvosso, Efficacy, 231.
what we know of William’s evangelical style it is also fair to say he will have evinced a fair interest in the condition of his grandson’s soul, but there is no mention of their relationship in the texts left behind by either man. A more noticeable influence on the young man came from his Uncle Benjamin.

On his return from Australia Benjamin Carvosso found the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion once more convulsed by controversy. And once more “the Pope of Methodism” was in the middle of it all. In the 1820s Jabez Bunting began a number of highly publicized battles with the champions of lay power. The first great melee had taken place in 1827 when the trustees and ministers of the wealthy Brunswick chapel in Leeds decided to install an organ in their building. There was an immediate indignant outcry from the congregation. In the eyes of its critics the organ stood for a growing sense of contentment and entitlement amongst the most powerful Wesleyans, and was held to be indicative of a drift towards the ornamentation and pomp of Romish idolatry. It coincided with intense debates in Leeds between a clique of ministers and a few very wealthy trustees, and an opposition that wanted Sunday Schools to be engage in more thorough literacy training, to have more local say in personnel decisions, and to impose more limits on the power of wealthiest society members and on the Wesleyan establishment epitomized by Bunting. Bunting, who had once been a minister on that


circuit, waded straight into the argument, launching a lengthy invective against schismatics, radicalism, and “Methodistical Luddism.” His intervention likely contributed to the very schism he was warning against and a secession split Leeds’ Methodism into two.

Six years later in 1834 Bunting and the Connexional ministers attempted to establish a theological college (with Bunting as its president) in which to train future preachers. Once more Wesleyan Methodism was rocked, and once more splinter groups, particularly in the northwest and in Cornwall, broke off along the fault lines of political ideology and class. In the process Bunting and his colleagues purged Wesleyanism of large numbers of its most Radical members. Carvosso’s return to Cornwall was sandwiched between these two crises. And as Connexion was rocked by these protracted struggles the county was awash in revivals.

The most substantial revival of these years began in far west of the county in 1832 and coincided with Benjamin Carvosso’s assignment to the Penzance circuit. These years were a renewal of sorts for Carvosso, and the revival was a profound reassurance after all those dry years spent in a colonial and Calvinist wilderness.

17 Hempton, Empire of the Spirit, 104; Taylor, Methodism & Politics, 156.
Carvosso found to his surprise that in Penzance, a society that other ministers considered difficult and contentious, he was prospering. “Here is an amazing field for usefulness,” he recorded in his journal. There were almost 3000 society members in the circuit, he continued, and congregations with “interesting, and respectable.” “Our social circle is vast,” he wrote, “and here, also, is a great opportunity for doing good.”

There was a considerable thirst after the doctrine of Christian Perfection among the believers of the circuit, he continued, especially in Penzance itself. And this circumstance he credited to one of his father’s recent visit.

Lawry was in Cornwall then as well. He was assigned to Falmouth, and sharing accounts of the progress of Christianity in Australia sent to him by his in-laws with Carvosso and his family. On a day on which Carvosso’s preaching at Mousehole had been “attended with power,” for example, Lawry showed him a letter from Thomas Hassall that reinforced the link between the two distant mission fields. Hassall was writing to encourage the two men in their ongoing evangelical efforts, letting them know that a servant of Hassall’s who had been brought to God by Carvosso’s efforts was still “walking in truth.” Francis Truscott, the two men’s earliest patron, a long-time defender of revivalism and a close friend of William Carvosso was also with them as the

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superintendent of the district. Carvosso was surrounded by friends and family, and very much at home. And then shortly after Truscott was replaced by John Hobson, a minister who had spent most of his career in Scotland and the far north of England, the heavens opened up, and in the language of revivalism, a gracious rain began to fall on the Penzance circuit.

The region had been in some ferment since November of 1831, with small and local revivals occurring here and there. And then in the New Year a general awakening began that encompassed not only Penzance but a good half dozen of the villages and towns nearby: St. Just, Zennor, Sancreed, and many more, including, of course, Mousehole. Carvosso describes how on February 6th “the skies poured forth righteousness” on that “favoured spot.” Over the next few weeks the pages of his journal were filled with the “glorious work.” It consisted of the same outbursts of weeping, wailing, shouting and falling that had for so long been associated in Cornwall with the blowing of Pentecostal winds. Richard Treffry, Jr., another of Benjamin Carvosso’s old Cornish friends, a writer, and a defender of revivalism, provided this account of events in St. Just,

22 Minutes of the Methodist Conference (London: John Mason, 1833), 564.


24 Blencowe, Faithful Pastor, 195.
The loud and piercing cries of the broken hearted penitents drowned the voice of prayer, and all that could be done at this stage of the meeting was to stand still and see the salvation of God. At length the penitents were conducted and upheld, each of them by two persons, in one part of the chapel. And now when their cries and groanings were concentrated, one of the most affecting scenes appeared before the people. Their humble wailings pierced the skies. Sometimes a burst of praise from the pardoned penitents mingled with the loud cries of the broken hearted; and this greatly encouraged those that were in distress.25

By April five new chapels were being planned for the circuit with two more to be enlarged. By June it was announced that more than a thousand people had joined the Society since the revival began.26

The initial burst of the revival occurred in late winter and early spring. Before it could die away a cholera epidemic generated another surge of religious anxiety and concern.27 “Yesterday at Newlyn, I stood in the midst of the dead, the dying, and the bereaved,” wrote Benjamin Carvosso in October. “Six persons who had died of cholera were buried from the village during the day.” “I endeavoured to be as faithful and consolatory as possible,” he said but he also noted that “It is a matter of praise that many of the ungodly are fleeing to the Saviour for refuge.”28

25 Quoted by Rule, “Risky Business,” 163.
26 Blencowe, Faithful Pastor, 199, 204.
27 Blencowe, Faithful Pastor, 206-207.
28 Blencowe, Faithful Pastor, 209.
“Political commotions, and pestilential diseases,” wrote Carvosso’s supervisor Hobson for the Wesleyan Methodist Magazine, “these are all co-operating with the great machinery, in hastening the universal reign of grace.”

For these were also years when the agitation for Reform and Abolition was at its height, two causes for which that mouthpiece of Cornish Methodism the West Briton had lobbied long and loud. But Hobson, a newcomer to the region also commented that many people thought “that there is connected with Cornish revivals a sovereignty peculiar to the county; a power which acts, if not contrary to, yet entirely independent of human agency.” And the recent returnee Carvosso also localized events. He declared himself a happy worker amidst “the glorious churches of this most privileged spots of earth.” But if there was something peculiarly Cornish about the piety that fueled the revival of 1832 Carvosso was soon to see the other face of Cornish enthusiasm; the wilful intransigence for which it was also famous.

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31 Wesleyan Methodist Magazine 11, 362.

32 Blencowe, The Faithful Pastor, 192.
In 1833 he was transferred to the Redruth circuit, just up the road from Mylor where his father, sister, brother and assorted in-laws, nieces and nephews were living. He was at Redruth when the shockwaves generated by the Conference Party’s decision to establish a theological college hit Cornwall. Warren, the chief antagonist of Bunting at the time and soon a secessionist, toured the region in 1835 and found many sympathizers in Carvosso’s congregations.\footnote{Blencowe, \textit{The Faithful Pastor}, 231.} For the first time Carvosso felt personally the manner in which revivalism could be turned against a minister by hostile congregations,

Last night, at W------, a woman kept a dreadful noise while I was preaching. She shouted, and shrieked, and at times appeared convulsed all over. I finished the service with difficulty, and then had pretty much conversation with her. She strongly contended that it was all the effect of the outpouring of the spirit on her; that she could quench the Spirit if she attempted to be quiet and restrain the distortions of her body; and that it would be well if others in the congregation were in a similar state.\footnote{Blencowe, \textit{The Faithful Pastor}, 234.}

The next Sunday her husband was in Carvosso’s view even more outrageous. “His unnatural screams were loud and terrible, and his gestures, and writhings, and twistings horrid,” wrote Carvosso. The minister expressed his disapprobation to the congregation and the man challenged his right to try and control the “outpourings.” “In their

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\footnote{Blencowe, \textit{The Faithful Pastor}, 231.}

\footnote{Blencowe, \textit{The Faithful Pastor}, 234.}
conduct,” wrote Carvosso, “there are no marks of extraordinary piety; but some of the
leaders favour them, and are not at all inclined to check their extravagance.”

Carvosso did not try to test the lay leaders’ power but patiently waited for the
storm to pass. While he does not seem to have been drawn into polarizing public battles
such as this one he certainly made his opinions known in print over the next few years.
He continued both his defense of the revivalism which Bunting so distrusted, and his
critique of Calvinism and the Church of England which Bunting was willing to
accommodate. In the schismatic atmosphere of 1835 he published his father’s memoirs.
They were a celebration of lay piety, Cornish revivalism and radically Arminian
theology. The Efficacy was a text which in many ways represented everything the
Buntingite party were working so hard to put into orderly constraint. And two years
later in 1837, while superintendent of the Isle of Wight district he published a revisionist
interpretation of the evangelical best seller The Dairyman’s Daughter. The Dairyman’s
Daughter is a largely forgotten classic of an evangelical age. The tract sold some
2,000,000 copies in the 1830s and 1840s, and the girl’s grave (she died, of course, young
and well) became a tourist attraction to which no less exemplary a personage than
Queen Victoria herself is purported to have made a pilgrimage. In Carvosso’s essay he

35 Blencowe, The Faithful Pastor, 235.
37 Helen Rappaport, Queen Victoria: A Biographical Companion (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2003) 220.

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argued – and he included the correspondence to prove it – that it was not the Anglican missionary Rev. Samuel Marsden, who had converted the titular character on his way to New South Wales as the text suggested, but a Methodist circuit preacher.³⁸

Carvosso’s was a sharp critique of the book’s claim that the piety of the girl was “an evident exception to the established order.”³⁹ On the contrary, Carvosso argued, it was through the instrumentality of individuals such as Elizabeth Wallbridge, the dairyman’s daughter, and “that delightful man, Mr. Crabb,” the itinerant Methodist who saved her, that God acted liberally and constantly.⁴⁰ Such people may occupy positions outside of “what has too often been asserted to be the exclusive order of the ministry,” Carvosso argued, but it is through their agency that God can be seen in history.⁴¹ Carvosso’s rereading of The Dairyman’s Daughter was more than just a Methodist attack on Establishment condescension. It was also a revivalist’s criticism of the professionalization of the Wesleyan ministry that was occurring under Bunting’s watch.⁴²

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³⁹ Carvosso, Further Account, 118.

⁴⁰ Carvosso, Further Account, 114.

⁴¹ Carvosso, Further Account 119.

Such was the ideological world in which Rundle grew up. In a letter the young man wrote to his father in 1837 one can see him carefully navigating his way through the social and political landscape of not just Methodism, but of England as well. Rundle was attending the business school of Bottreaux Castle, in the village of Boscastle on the northern coast of Cornwall at the time. In that letter Rundle describes his instructor as a “staunch Tory in church & State,” but an excellent and honorable man nonetheless, even if “too much engrossed with the things of time & sense.” Rundle had outgrown his radicalism at the school he told his father and in a bantering tone added he might well end up a Tory himself – “you will say I suppose I have no business with these matters.” Of Methodism he continued,

The Old Ship is still ploughing her course through the tumultuous ocean, like a 78 crossing the Atlantic under the influence of a smacking breeze. I believe she has recovered from the late storm… I am a stauncher Wesleyan than ever. I see no reason for recanting my sentiments but I suppose you will say I have nothing to do with these matters either. I have. I like Methodism. I am proud of the name of a Wesleyan. Uncle Benjamin left an excellent name behind him in this circuit; he was much esteemed during his residence here.

People, 93. Hempton quotes a letter in which Bunting describes revivalism as “rant and extravagancies” and a force likely to destroy “genuine Methodism.”

43 MARC

44 MARC
According to Rundle the village of Boscastle was a seat of radicalism but that the brand new Wesleyan Chapel was doing quite well nonetheless. That qualification suggests something about the ideological lay of Methodist land in Cornwall. Political radicalism seems to be associated with secession from Wesleyanism. For Tory reformers like the family friend Samuel Dunn such associations likely made his efforts to democratize the Connexion all the more difficult. Young Rundle’s claim that he was becoming committed to Wesleyanism as he drifted rightwards on the particular spectrum is certainly intriguing. There were other contradictions, or at least tensions, straining his identity-building as well. He was, he assured his father, still partial to the “Mother Church” of Anglicanism, often attending twice on the Sundays,

I have one wish respecting my poor body & that when the period arrives when it will be laid in the dust, it will find a resting place in Mylor Church Yard. I often wander there in imagination. I should not like to be laid in a Dissenting place of interment, it should be in some such picturesque spot as Mylor.45

That the “Dissenting place of interment” he had in mind was the Wesleyan graveyard at Ponsanooth, where his maternal grandmother Alice had been the first person buried is only a guess, but it is a site he will have known, and so new that it would offend his romanticism. Regardless, he clearly belongs to a different mode of Methodism than did his grandfather. He is after all on the other side of parliamentary reform, and at 26

45 Rundle, Journals, xiii.
already laying down the badges of a youthful radicalism. Rundle’s Wesleyanism is one tinged by a Tory nostalgia for a passing moral order that the old parish church represented; a sentiment that would have had old William Carvosso turning in his fresh Dissenting grave.

In 1838, a year after the letter, the region around Camborne had been convulsed by one of the last of the great Cornish revivals, and family friends Samuel Dunn and Walter Lawry were in the very middle of it. Rundle’s Uncle Benjamin was also relatively nearby, in Liskeard. It was the beginning of Benjamin’s close association with the temperance movement, a movement which claimed was critical to the occurrence of the 1838 revival. John Wesley Thomas, a minister on the St. Austell circuit provides some additional evidence for this claim. In 1839 Thomas complained to Bunting that not

46 Rundle, Rundle Journals, 297. His tone concerning politics is very different in 1848 after seven years in the mission field: “Thought this morning of the glorious 1st March 1830, memorable as the time when Lord John Russell introduced the celebrated Reform Bill. I was then only about 18 or 19 years of age and am now more than 36 years old! What difference in my views now and then! What numbers too who talked of the celebrated Reform measure are not where potential changed and agitations are unknown. In the invisible world the laws are fixed, irreversible, and eternal! What a stir in those days! Reform! Reform! Multitudes thought much about reform who neglected to think about reforming themselves and now probably are in that awful place where no healing measure of reform can ever reach them. A vain and deluded world! When will you have wisdom and think of reforming yourselves? Alas! The world is asleep and led captive by the devil at his will! But blessed be God soul reform reached me and not only reform but a mighty soul rending revolution for old things passed away and all things were made new.”

47 W.R. Ward, ed., Early Victorian Methodism: The Correspondence of Jabez Bunting (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 226. It was ten years yet before the Flysheet scandals and Dunn, the superintendent of the Camborne circuit between 1831 and 1841 used the huge burst of membership which followed as an opportunity to impose some of Bunting’s administrative reforms on the local chapels.

only had some radical trustees provocatively licensed a chapel for the performances of marriages, but the year before they had also, with the collusion of the Rev. Hobson, who with Carvosso had seen the Penzance revival of 1832, lent the building to a Mr. Teare. Teare was shoemaker and a Methodist from the Isle of Man, and one of the first nationwide tee-total missionaries. In Thomas’ view the teetotal meeting was a desecration of the place. In Teare’s tour of Cornwall, which coincided with the revival, he recruited some 5000 people into his society, including Benjamin Carvosso.

In 1841 the Conference party had resolutions passed at the annual conference against the use of unfermented wines in the sacrament, the lending out of chapels for teetotaler meetings, and ministerial activism of precisely the sort Carvosso was engaged in. 850 members of the St. Ives circuit immediately seceded and formed the Teetotal Wesleyan Methodist Connexion. That same year Carvosso publically announced his commitment to the movement by publishing Drunkenness, the Enemy of Britain, arrested by the Hand of God in Teetotalism; a sermon, preached at a temperance festival, near Liskeard, on

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49 W.R. Ward, Early Victorian Methodism, 218.
50 Hudson, Temperance Pioneers, 254-255.
51 Taylor, Methodism & Politics, 141.
52 Ward, Early Victorian Methodism, 219, n.1.
Whit-Tuesday, June 9th, 1840.\textsuperscript{53} But by then Rundle was abroad. In the aftermath of the 1838 revival he had given up his commercial ambitions and decided to become a missionary.

In 1839 Rundle had begun attending the brand new Methodist seminary in London and committed himself to his chosen vocation. In the spring of 1840 Rundle he and two other young missionaries were in the middle of the Atlantic, on his way from “dear Old Cornwall” to “the trackless forests & wilds of America.”\textsuperscript{54} His Uncle Benjamin was to be one of his most important confidants and correspondents on this adventure, and his Uncle’s commitment to evangelical revival were soon to become his as well.

\textbf{5.2 Rundle in Rupert’s Land}

Robert Rundle was convinced that a deliberate conversion to evangelical Christianity was the only sure path to salvation from the fires of hell. This conviction gave him a sense of responsibility that drove him to pursue his travels in British North America to the brink of physical collapse and a nervous breakdown. Like his Uncle and his Grandfather he believed it an obligation to try and save everyone from the agony of those fires; from the drunkest tin miner in Cornwall, to the most distant and

\textsuperscript{53} Benjamin Carvosso, Drunkenness, the Enemy of Britain, arrested by the Hand of God in Teetotalism; a sermon, preached at a temperance festival, near Liskeard, on Whit-Tuesday, June 9th, 1840 (Liskeard, Cornwall: James Hill, 1841)

\textsuperscript{54} Rundle, Rundle Journals, 4.
unenlightened inhabitant of the Antipodes. In his pursuit of that universal salvation
Rundle was sent by the WMMS to Fort Edmonton, an HBC trading post on the upper
reaches of the North Saskatchewan River. He spent eight years there ministering to the
men and women who lived in, or passed through, the district.

The territory was known to the British as Rupert’s Land and was a corporate
fiefdom of the HBC. It had been granted to the fur trading operation by the British
Crown in 1670 and consisted of the entire drainage basin of Hudson Bay, an area that
today includes Northern Quebec, Northern Ontario, portions of Nunavut and the North
West Territories and the entirety of the prairie provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and
Alberta. For most of its history the HBC governors had administered the territory as
they saw fit, which meant above all administration on the cheap. In the early years of
the nineteenth century however they came under increasing public scrutiny, particularly
from such organizations as the Aborigines Protection Society, and found themselves
pressed to accommodate the philanthropic opinions of politically powerful men and
women with close ties to the evangelical community. The HBC charter had been
renewed by an act of parliament in 1838 after extensive lobbying, but only on the
condition that the Company would make the effort to ameliorate the condition of the
native peoples who lived in its vast territory. In response to this condition the Governor

55 See for example Report of the Parliamentary Committee on the Aboriginal Tribes(English settlements): Reprinted
with Comments by the Aborigines Protection Society (William Ball: London, 1837).
of the HBC, George Simpson, made arrangements with the WMMS to begin evangelizing to the Indians. Rundle and two other English colleagues, George Barnley and William Mason, had been sent out in 1840 to join the more experienced Canadian missionary James Evans and two Ojibwe assistants, Henry Steinhauer and Peter Jacobs, in this endeavour.

To the Chief Trader of Fort Edmonton, John Rowand, and Governor Simpson, Rundle and his colleagues were something of a nuisance. Rowand, who seemed genuinely fond of Rundle, nonetheless considered him an incompetent fool whose presence prevented him from treating his staff as severely as he would like.56 And Simpson thought Rundle not only a fool, but a gossip whose cheerful fraternizations with the dregs of fur trade society set the wrong sorts of precedents for labor relations. When artist Paul Kane, who went out to the Old Northwest in the 1840s to record and catalogue that changing world for the Hudson’s Bay Company, met Rundle he described him as something of a clown; ill-suited to the rigors of wilderness travel and out of synch with the rhythms of frontier life.57 While Kane admitted Rundle was a favorite of the Indians, he preferred to emphasize the missionary inability to survive the

56 Rundle, Rundle Journals.
57 Paul Kane, Wanderings of an Artist among the Indians of North America: From Canada to Vancouver Island and Oregon through the Hudson’s Bay Company Territory and Back Again (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1859), 116-117; See also Daniel Johns, “Company Fool or God’s Tool: Robert Terrill Rundle, the Hudson’s Bay Company, and the Plains Indians,” Alberta History (Spring, 2007): 2-11.
hardships of life beyond the frontier without constant management. Even Rundle’s superior James Evans, in a letter to his wife Mary, wrote that “Mr. Rundle is an Englishman and must become a Hudson’s Bay Man.”

Evans, who was English himself, had been in the Canadas since the early 1820s. He had converted to Methodism shortly after his arrival and become a camp-meeting revivalist and missionary to the Ojibwe of the Great Lakes. He clearly shared a sense of colonial identity with Kane, Simpson and Rowand; one in which rough frontier living was contrasted with metropolitan softness.

Rundle’s eccentricities only reinforced such categorizations. He took his beloved cat with him everywhere, by boat, dogsled, horseback, and foot. He was terrified and bullied by the camp and trading post dog. By his own admission he was ultimately ineffectual in his preaching to the Indians, and outperformed as a Company chaplain by itinerant Catholic priests. Even after several months in the territory his encounters with Indians were frequently mediated through the works of popular writers such as Washington Irving and missionary tracts. He allowed himself, for instance, a twinge of delicious horror when he mistook a few Rocky Mountain Cree making their way to a

58 Evans to Mary Evans, Dec. 8, 1841, University of Western Ontario, Evans Papers.

59 Kane, Wanderings, 116; Dogs, 388; Diane Eaton and Sheila Urbanek, Paul Kane’s Great Nor-West (Vancouver: UNC Press, 1997) 64. On his incapacity for travel Diane Eaton and Sheila Urbanek point out that while Kane mentions that on one trip Rundle was “too knocked up” one morning and left behind, the missionary himself records in his journal he was simply stopping for the Sabbath.; On inadequacies as a missionary – “I wish for real, sound gospel conversions. This must be realized some time,” Rundle, Journals, 155; On the Catholic competition – “the priest appears to be sweeping everything before him,” Rundle, Journals, 116.
trading post for a band of “the terrible Blackfoot.”\textsuperscript{60} And his representation of the Plains Indians in letters home was frequently coloured with melodrama. But in his journals his encounter with the aboriginal populations of the region was portrayed in more muted quotidian tones. To his credit he was – dogs aside – willing to brave his terrors; he resolutely refused to give in to the anxieties he so often felt; and achieved the sort of close relationship with some of the Blackfoot, Plains Cree, and Assiniboine people of which an interested sojourner such as Kane could only have been jealous. He immersed himself in the banalities of their lives, and the day-to-day toil of domestic life in the camps. He fussed about how they raised their children, resolved disputes, spent their spare time, and acquired their food. And Rundle – in contrast to Kane who did nothing but capture likenesses, steal skulls, and purchase artifacts – could at least offer the locals the gift of writing, the promise of moral and political support from English Methodists, and assurances of eternal life.\textsuperscript{61}

The most explicit account of what Rundle perceived his mission to Rupert’s Land to be can be found in his description of his arrival in Norway House in 1840. Rundle had just spent several months traveling, a good portion of it through the Canadian wilderness, and was very far from home indeed. He had experienced intense homesickness during the journey, and his journal during this period reads as a

\textsuperscript{60} Rundle, \textit{Journals}, 54.

\textsuperscript{61} Kane, \textit{Wandering}, 260. Kane stole a Flathead skull from a burial ground.
meditation on death, distance, and domesticity. From the time he left England Rundle began constructing an analogy between the almost incomprehensible geographic distance that lay between himself and his family, and the abyss that lay between the living and the dead. He saw death, not unreasonably, everywhere; from the darkening hues of the Atlantic, to the mountains along the Hudson which seemed monuments to the dead, to the rapids of the Canadian Shield that had claimed the lives of so many voyageurs. In those moments when Rundle came face to face with the possibility of his own death in the wilderness he resorted to the language of revivalist Methodism to collapse literal distance (between the Christians of England and his isolation in the wilderness), and figurative distance (between the living and dead) into the spiritual unity of the Kingdom of God.

After saying good-bye to his colleague William Mason at Lac La Pluie towards the end of May Rundle finally arrived at Norway House. He was to wait there for his superior, James Evans, before heading up the Saskatchewan to his own station at Fort Edmonton. The second Sunday he was at Norway House Rundle obtained an interpreter and set out to preach to the Indians. He had spent the evening before preparing his sermon and reminding himself of his awesome responsibility. In a passage written at midnight Rundle described how back in England the bells would be ringing, his friends would all be on their way to Church, and that the next morning his
own act of worship on the Sabbath would provide a bridge across the unbearable distance. Rundle:

Is it possible the wide Atlantic with the trackless forests of Amer. Are between us? Is it a dream? No I am separated from them but still I find myself one with them. The chains which unite us remain unbroken by distance. Unbroken by distance! Yes, their memory will even survive the icy touch of death & the sepulchral night of the tomb.62

His topic for the next day was, of course, to be the Resurrection, and the subject lead him to think, as he had on a number of earlier occasions, of the picturesque spot in Mylor where the ashes of his mother and an older brother lay. “Two grassy hillocks rise to my view, wet with the dews of the night,” Rundle wrote, “but the darkness of the night has disappeared & the morn of the Sabbath has arrived, awakening the scene to life & melody. Dew drops glance in the sunshine & the grass waves gracefully in the morning breeze; but what forms are these that hover in the air? They were laid in the tomb, silent & motionless & the livid aspect of death was on their much loved countenance. But hark! They sing of victory & their celestial vests are radiant with immortality! Then it is no dream we shall meet again!”63

On June 14th Rundle preached to the Norway House Indians for the first time. Through an interpreter he warned them of hell and promised them salvation. He later described in his journal how he was so overcome with the Holy Spirit while he preached

62 Rundle, Journal, 22

63 Rundle, Journal, 22.
that he fell to his knees and nearly shouted aloud. His impact it appears was immediate, for at the end of the sermon he was approached by people eager for baptism. As was the case throughout his mission Rundle did not immediately oblige, but chose to wait. Not only to see whether the conversion was genuine, but in order to prepare the potential convert for baptism by teaching them Methodistical self-discipline.

This first sermon was preached on the Norway House grounds, but before long Rundle was venturing into the local village, and the nearby camps, to spread the word. These were happy days for Rundle, and he felt as if both the local Indians and the employees of the HBC were properly attentive to the state of their souls. He even had the obligatory local opposition from traditionalists, a few old conjurors camped across the lake ridiculed him, and said they would burn him alive if he came out to their lodges. Rundle resolutely had himself paddled across the water to their camps, and preached them a sermon on how Christianity ‘was invested with all authority & power, that everything that was sinful would finally be destroyed.’ But while such acts as conjuring certainly were sinful his was not the civilization-first-Christianity-later evangelism of Church of England missionaries like Samuel Marsden in Australia, or pragmatic servants of the state like George Augustus Robinson. For Rundle it was the

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65 Rundle, *Journal*, 27.
hellfire-and-brimstone preaching of an old Methodism that sought to leap in a flash across the divides of custom and language.

Rundle chose not to try “to reform outward acts” but rather aimed his message at “that seat of all corruption, the human heart.” He told his audience that “by nature they are dead,” and their only hope for salvation and reunion with their lost loved ones was to submit themselves immediately to the will of God. For Rundle the greatest measure of success – like his grandfather William and his uncle Benjamin – was to have the people weeping bitterly at his words (“a sight at which angels might delight to witness”) and – again like William and Benjamin – his most frequent topics seem to have been death and resurrection. When he preached on Lazarus to the people of Norway House he described the effect as thrilling as if “the conqueror of the grave was present,” and wrote that he felt the presence of the Holy Spirit “in the wilderness of the far west” as he had never felt it England. But even as Rundle celebrated these “golden day,” he knew that before too long Evans would arrive and he would be obliged to leave his penitents for his permanent post at Fort Edmonton.

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Evans arrived with his wife and daughter in an HBC canoe on July 26th and poor Rundle was heartbroken. After two months of evangelical enthusiasm he was so overcome at the thought of leaving the Indians that when he told them he would have to go he broke down in front of them and wept.\textsuperscript{70} He lingered on in Norway House for a little over a month, and finally was sent on his way on September 7th. After a few days on Lake Winnipeg on the HBC cargo canoe his despondency had lifted. At the mouth of the Saskatchewan, on a day he thought resembled May in England, Rundle, overwrought and trembling at the edge of ecstasy, had a vision of himself as Balboa.\textsuperscript{71} He imagined stopping the expedition to splash into the icy water, just as the Spaniard had waded into the Pacific to take possession of it on behalf of his king and master. At first glance it seems the imperialist impulse \textit{par excellence}: but Rundle’s authority to make such a claim was not the dispensation of some distant north Atlantic court, it was that of a heaven which, in the words of his successor and future brother-in-law Thomas Woolsey, was as near to the Rocky Mountains as it was to London.\textsuperscript{72} It was not for glory, gold, or flag that Rundle had crossed the wide Atlantic, and braved the trackless

\textsuperscript{70} Rundle, \textit{Journal}, 31.

\textsuperscript{71} Rundle, \textit{Journal}, 38.

\textsuperscript{72} Thomas Woolsey \textit{Heaven is Near the Rocky Mountains: The Journals and Letters of Thomas Woolsey, 1855 to 1869} (Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 1989), v, xxv.
forests of America, it was for God, and the salvation of all humanity from an eternal death.  

The woodlands about him, he observed, were ravaged by the fall, its beauty was “the splendid decoration of decay,” and the wind in the trees and the roar of the cataracts sounded like “the despairing cry of souls perishing on the banks for lack of knowledge.” Everything that came before that moment seemed to Rundle a prelude to what was to come next, even the two glorious months he had spent evangelizing to the Cree of Norway House was mere preparation for the momentous task ahead of him. His tone, while touched by a morbid romanticism, was quietly optimistic, for Rundle was confident that whatever was to happen to him would be part of a divine plan, and that the lost peoples who lived among the foothills of the Rockies and in the valleys of the Saskatchewan River basin were destined to become part of what David Hempton has called Methodism’s empire of the spirit.

Rundle’s conflation of distance and death into a single problem that can be solved by Christianity is not simply a rhetorical figure or symptom of existential anxiety, but also an ideological device. He imagined he possessed a singular sort of knowledge, one that had to be felt as well as thought, and one which it was his duty to share with all.

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73 Rundle, Journal, 38.
74 Rundle, Journal, 38.
75 Hempton, Empire of the Spirit.
human beings. It was Rundle’s ultimate hope that the communities he was preaching to, and which seemed to respond so positively to his message, would reconstitute themselves in a form similar to that of the community he was missing so terribly. And while the Cree and Assiniboine people at Norway House, and later Rocky Mountain House, responded immediately to his resurrection stories, the reconstitution of their communities along the lines Rundle imagined would have been little less than a social revolution, and did not occur with anything like the expediency he desired.

It is a recurring motif of Rundle’s journal that when he prepares for the Sabbath celebration he imagines the church bells ringing in Cornwall and his friends and family traveling to and from their parish churches. Rundle’s purpose as a missionary was to bring into that same privileged circle some of the many millions who had not heard the gospel message. Like his uncle and his grandfather, he hoped to unite the heathen world with their Christian brothers and sisters in a single body of believers that did not recognize the boundaries of space, politics and race. But unlike those relatives, in Rundle’s records the constitution of that family seems more self-consciously anglocentric. The crucial ritual requirements of entrance into sacred space were, like Cornwall’s ringing bells, all about the ordering time, and synchronizing life in the fur trade with life in the British Isles. He was nostalgic for the traditions and institutions of the Church of England in a way that was absent, even unthinkable, in his uncle’s and grandfather’s writings.
In Rundle’s view being a Christian meant more than an intellectual and emotional act of conversion, it meant both a strict observance of the Sabbath and undergoing the life-cycle rituals of baptism, marriage, and burial according to the proper formulae, and overseen by the proper official. These rituals had long been monopolised by the Church of England in Britain and we have just seen how as late as 1839 there were conservative ministers who were wary of infringing on the Anglican prerogative to sanctify marriages. The Carvossos and the Rundles had all been baptized and married and, with the exception of William and his wife Alice, buried by priests of the British Establishment. The graveyard in particular had long been a site of contestation between Anglican priests and Methodist preachers. The establishment of a Dissenting graveyard by Rundle’s grandfather at the Ponsanoorth Chapel was an example of how thoroughly that community rejected Anglican monopolies. And in Van Diemen’s Land the Rev. Knopwood had refused to bury the child of Carvosso’s predecessor William Horton because the infant had not been baptized according to the forms of the Established Church. But Rundle’s distaste at the thought of burial in a Dissenting graveyard suggests a different sort of relationship with the Imperial Church and State was possible for a Methodist missionary, than that of nonconformist hostility.

In Australia the Anglican clergy had been quick to take offense at what they perceived to be the sacramental poaching of Carvosso, Lawry, and Mansfield. But in

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26 Roy, “Reappraisal,” 139.
Rupert’s Land Rundle and his fellow Methodist missionaries came very close to functioning as chaplains for the de facto colonial government of the HBC. They travelled from trading post to trading post, marrying the traders and laborers to local wives, baptizing their children, and burying their dead. This speaks not just to a difference in colonial context, but to Bunting’s ongoing professionalization of the Wesleyan ministry. They were becoming more a priestly caste in an independent denomination than a commonwealth of preachers dependent on lay support.

Of the three major life-cycle rituals burial was the least problematic in Rupert’s Land. Death was one of Rundle’s primary preoccupations and once out on the prairies he mourned frequently. The first time he preached in Cree was at a funeral, and he did not approve of the Indian practice of suspending some bodies in the trees, nor of the feast for the dead that followed it. Yet even though in some ways death was his chief enemy – the gift that he imagined himself bringing was after all immortal life – he wasted little energy struggling against local burial customs. Perhaps this was because after two hundred years of living together the Cree and Assiniboine most closely connected to the posts often shared the funeral practices and burial sites of the Europeans.

Marriage on the other hand, was very problematic indeed. One of Rundle’s chief duties as an HBC chaplain was sanctifying the unions that already existed between

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77 Rundle, Journals, 153, 159, 162,
servants of the company and local women. Such marriages were frequent, and not much remarked upon. Rundle and his fellow missionaries certainly never criticized European and Indian unions on racial grounds. In fact, when Rundle’s colleague William Mason married Sophie Thomas, the daughter of an HBC factor and a Cree women, he was roundly congratulated, and if anything envied, by his colleagues.\textsuperscript{78} Polygamy was the chief problem the Methodists faced and their horror at marriage in fur trade society was due to the presence of second and third wives among the Cree, and the actions of men powerful men like George Simpson who used and discarded women as they would. There were some echoes here of the situation Marsden faced in New South Wales; the vast majority of the population seemed to the missionaries ignorant of Christian marital practice, and the elites indifferent.

Rundle was perhaps naive about the realities of fur trade marriages and domestic organization, and was highly critical of any and all marital behavior that did not meet his idealistic standards. His own extended and regretted bachelorhood is something of a curiosity; he repeatedly requested permission from his masters in London to come home and wed. And in a letter home to his sister he complained of the difficulty of being a missionary without a wife. But while there are hints in his journal that the widowed daughter of a Cree leader was interested in him, she was hardly the educated, well-mannered, thoroughly Christian, and respectable help-mate that William

\textsuperscript{78} Rundle, \textit{Journals}, 85.
Mason had found in Sophie Thomas. Rundle was certainly aware of race as a category of difference. He mobilized “Indian,” “half breed,” half caste,” and the like with a great deal of frequency, but it was not those categories that limited the set of his potential mates, it was religion and class.

Finally there was baptism. Rundle’s policy seems to have been to baptize infants and young children with few questions asked, and the frequency with which his own brothers, sisters, nieces, and nephews, served as namesakes is suggestive of how closely he identified the prospective Christian community he was trying to create, with the nostalgic one he imagined as his past. In a letter home to his sister Alice (who was named after the maternal grandmother) on the birth of a son, he thanked her for naming the child after him. He went on to propose naming an Indian child after the new born, just as he named one after their niece and so “renewed John’s dear little sainted Mary in America.” Rundle may have been profligate in regard to the baptism of children, but he was conservative about the baptism of adolescents and adults. His preaching on death and resurrection often had good effect, and people would flock to him to be saved, but he was generally reluctant to satisfy them with a ritual. He was likely nervous about taking

79 Rundle, Journals, 85.
such steps until there were the classes and lay support necessary to ensure the doctrinal
and moral discipline of recent converts. He tested the applicants rigorously and it took
him eight years to gather together enough Christians confirmed enough in their faith
that they could be organized into a proper Methodist class. And one of those, their
leader, was Benjamin Sinclair, a Swampy Cree from Norway House, who had been sent
by Evans to help him.

Interestingly, as in Australia, it was over the issue of the Sabbath that the
Methodist missionaries came into the most conflict with the colonial authorities – in this
case the HBC. Unlike in Australia this conflict had nothing to with arguments
ecclesiological. Rundle, for instance, refused to travel on Sundays, and since he often
traveled with Company men, particularly in the earlier years before he acquired some
independence of action by attracting his own guides and interpreters, this meant an
incompatibility between his sacred schedule and that of his secular hosts. Rundle’s
solution on a number of occasions was to travel long into Saturday night while his
comrades rested, and then hope to make up the distance he lost on Sunday by an extra
effort on Monday. For a small and not particularly healthy man this was a difficult
thing to do, and not without its dangers. Rundle even managed to convince some
company servants to do their Sunday chores on Saturday night, but on the whole
Company time ticked on despite his best efforts to halt it. His superior James Evans,
living much closer to both the administrative center of the HBC fur trade, and potential
allies among the malcontented free traders and settlers of Red River, pushed the company much harder than Rundle. When he convinced some Methodist boat men to refuse to work on Sunday he publically challenged the authority of his hosts at Norway House, and the HBC Governor Simpson, in a very visible way. That challenge was one of the events that paved the way towards Evans’ eventual expulsion from the territory.

Rundle also sought to reorganize the space in which the people to whom he was proselytizing lived. The bells not only imposed a sacral order on time but, as Rundle imagined in his musings, called people to the church at the parish center. He was a committed itinerant but he certainly seemed to identify more strongly with the parish organization of English society than did his Uncle and Grandfather. And there was the hint of relief in his journals when he crossed from the United States into “British dominion” once more, and a territory “under the flag of St. George.”80 While there is no jingoistic or aggressive English- or British- ness in Rundle’s writing there is evidence the form of social organization he though most ideal was that of an English village. Within a year of setting up at the HBC post of Edmonton, Rundle was writing to the WMMS secretaries about the imperative of establishing a permanent and agricultural Christian settlement well beyond its influence. “The Rocky Mountain Crees and also the Assiniboines are desirous of being fixed in some settlement,” he wrote to the WMMS in 1841,

80 Rundle, Journals, 9.
There are, I think, about 50 men with their families thus disposed. You will perceive that several of them...and a great number of their children are baptized. They are ripe for civilization & evangelization & I hope many of them are budding for heaven.  

He proposed a site near the Pigeon and Battle River Lakes, both well-stocked with fish and close to the buffalo. He was convinced the land could support crops of potato and barley and he began experimenting there with gardening. In the same letter he broached his concern that it was only a matter of time before a Catholic priest might be brought by a Métis guide across the plains and into his virgin territory. His anxieties were justified by the arrival of Catholic priests in the summer of 1842. His correspondence home became full of the progress his confessional enemies were making among the Canadians and the Indians living north of Edmonton and the Saskatchewan. Rundle first discovered them on returning from his first trip to Rocky Mountain House and the Bow River. The Canadiens, the Metis and Homeguard (the Native communities identified with particular forts through intermarriage and labor) with whom he thought he had been making such progress all jumped ship and left him with a small congregation of the English. Rundle:

June 22 – Reached the Fort early in the morning & found a Popish Priest there. My feelings can be better imagined than described. Prayers in the morning but found that the Priest had made a dead sweep excepting the English. When will this system of lying vanities end?

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81 Rundle, Journals, 87.

82 Rundle, Journals, 116.
A day later Rundle records that the priest, Jean Baptiste Thibeault, was telling the
Canadiens and the Indians that neither the Governor nor the Queen had the authority to
send missionaries to the prairies, but that power belonged to the Pope alone.83

It was particularly painful for Rundle that among the priest’s immediate
supporters was Piché, a member Maskepetoon’s Rocky Mountain House band who had
expressed interest in Rundle’s message. Piché had approached the Bishop at Red River
of his own accord, and invited the Catholics to come out west. And it was Gabriel
Dumont, another member of Maskepetoon’s band, the uncle and namesake of the hero
of the North-West Rebellion forty years later, and the father of children Rundle had
baptized, who was Thibeault’s first guide in the territory. It was Dumont who led the
priest to Lac Ste. Anne, an area in which a number of Métis freemen had established
themselves after the merger of the Northwest and Hudson’s Bay Companies in 1822 had
led to their redundancy.

The first priest was soon followed by others and the denominational geography
of the region was quickly established. The Roman Catholics controlled Edmonton
House, much to Rundle’s consternation, the area North to Lesser Slave Lake, and the
Saskatchewan River valley up to Carlton. Rundle maintained his hold over Rocky
Mountain House and the land south of Edmonton, where in the fall of 1845 he finally

83 Rundle, Journals, 116.
got to work on his mission at Pigeon Lake. His first act was to start gardening there, his second to hire a Canadian to build a house.

In the end, despite his declared goal of targeting the hearts of men and not their customs, Rundle pinned his hopes on establishing a community of families that might trade with the HBC, but was otherwise self-sufficient and autonomous from them. Such a community would also enable the Cree, Assiniboine, Blackfoot and Métis who lived beyond the palisades on the open plains to make a break with the nomadic lifestyle that Rundle had come to see as a brake on their conversion. Rundle wanted to create a space in the margins between two social worlds in which Methodism could flourish; the same sort of space that his grandfather had found when he moved from Mousehole to Ponsanooth.

It is also certainly the case that Rundle had, without making much fuss about it, almost immediately begun to find ways to assert his independence from the HBC. Protestant Christianity exceeded the political boundaries of the confessional state and Rundle began looking across the border for allies he could not find within the Empire. He wanted to send for an American interpreter to accompany him on his trips among the Blackfoot rather than relying on the Company’s men. He also corresponded with American Methodist missionaries along the Columbia. And in the same way that his Uncle and his colleagues rejected the frivolous colonial life of “infidel” free settlers in Australia, Rundle stood aloof from the dancing, gambling, and drinking that was the
customary entertainment of the HBC men. More than this, he spent as much time as he could among the free men and the Indians of the country, rather than on HBC grounds.

Rundle went about his business with a quiet and friendly stubbornness and never irritated Simpson or his agents into anything resembling open hostility. His host in Edmonton, Chief Factor John Rowand, was a practicing Catholic and hard-nosed businessman, but his criticisms of Rundle were always tempered with something resembling tenderness. The irascible George Simpson may have been frustrated with Rundle’s refusal to behave like a chaplain in the employ of the Company. But Simpson’s irritation that Rundle was not the servile creature he would have preferred in his missionaries led to nothing more than sarcasm. Matters would have been quite different if Rundle had come close to achieving his vision of a Christian society in the Saskatchewan district. Such an achievement would have amounted to nothing less than a radical challenge to the classed and raced society Simpson was, as we shall see in the next section, trying to create at the time. James Evans in Norway House, on the other hand, who operated in the very heart of HBC territory, and whose aggressive arguments with the HBC and forthright efforts to reconstruct Fur Trade society were therefore impossible to ignore, very quickly became an object of the Governor’s vitriol. Simpson even tried to trump up murder charges against him.
5.3 The Old Northwest

The decade Rundle spent evangelizing to the Cree, Assiniboine and Blackfoot bands that sojourned in the shadow of the Rockies during the spring and autumn was a turbulent one. It was a period when the region was on the cusp of a considerable economic and demographic transformation. The Sioux were at the apogee of their military power and with their Cree and Assiniboine allies they still controlled the headwaters of the Missouri and Saskatchewan Rivers, and therefore British and American access to the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains. But political and social relations between these masters of the northern Great Plains, and between them and their visitors from the Atlantic seaboard, were increasingly under strain. Many of the communities with whom Rundle lived and travelled had been devastated by the smallpox epidemics of the 1780s and again in 1837-1838, and those in the boreal forest were visited periodically by winter famine. In his journals he described a social milieu torn apart by alcohol, violence and despair. For the last one hundred years or so

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intense competition in the fur trade had led to an influx of French Canadian, American and British traders and trappers on both sides of the 49th parallel. These men and the families they formed with local women had begun to establish permanent settlements at Red River and along the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Rivers. By the end of the eighteenth century the fur trade had already swept across the prairies, over the Rockies, and onto the Pacific slope. By the beginning of the nineteenth the Russian, American and British governments were struggling over the question of which imperialist power had the right to claim the fur-rich territories of the rugged northwest. The 1844 election was won by James Polk on an expansionist platform and western Democrats such as the Missouri Senator Thomas Benton were talking about Manifest Destiny, and had been fantasizing about and an Anglo-Saxon empire stretching clear across the continent since before the 1820s.

It was in this volatile atmosphere that the Cree band leader Maskepetoon, or Broken Arm, had decided to send his son to live with the young missionary. Maskepetoon, whom Rundle never converted but was considerably fond of, had by the time they met been on a diplomatic trip to Washington, brought settlers from Red River


across the Rockies to the Columbia, and ranged regularly across the vast swath of land that lay between the Saskatchewan, Red and Assiniboine Rivers. His band included men who were the product of both Cree-English and Cree-French marriages, and he maintained relatively good relations with the Sioux at a time when their old coalition with the Cree and Assiniboine was breaking up under the pressure of increasingly aggressive horse raiding. 91 Maskepetoon was, in short, capable of taking a very broad view indeed of the political landscape, and it was interesting that he was willing to make an ally of a man like Rundle – who seemed to many of his contemporaries a sentimental and foolish meddler.

The band was the fundamental social unit of Plains life and the data in Rundle’s journal certainly supports that. It was organized around the extended family, and such families functioned in much the same way as extended families everywhere. Leaders

91 Rundle mentions a “halfbreed” named Piché (147); Hugh Munro or Munroe (59, 69, 166); Jimmy Jock Bird (264, 269, 273); Bird’s Blackfoot wife; and Gabriel Dumont. It was Piché who circumvented the HBC monopoly and riverine transport to bring the first Catholic missionary across the prairie from Red River to the Upper Saskatchewan; DCBO, s.v. “Bird, James” accessed 19 March 2012, http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?id_nbr=5977&terms=xii. Jimmy Jock Bird was the son of a retired HBC factor at Red River and was sent as by the HBC to convince the Sioux to trade with the British rather than the Americans. The HBC could never control him and he spent most of his adult life living with the Plains Cree and the Sioux; Adolf Hungry-Wolf, The Blackfoot Papers – Volume Four: Pikunni Biographies (Skookumchuk, BC: The Good Medicine Cultural Foundation, 2006) 1190-1202. Hugh Munro was the son of a British army officer from Quebec who came out west around 1815 at the age of seventeen and never went home. Like Bird he was initially a servant of the HBC but became a free agent. He married into and lived with both Cree and Sioux bands operating in the upper reaches of the Missouri and Saskatchewan rivers. He achieved some celebrity as the white Indian Rising Wolf thanks to the pulp ethnologies of George Bird Grinnell and the prolific story-teller James Willard Schulz. , DCBO, s.v. “Dumont, Gabriel,” accessed 19 March 2012, http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?id_nbr=6692. Like Piché Gabriel Dumont was, to Rundle’s dismay, one of the first Métis in the Fort Edmonton area to establish close ties with the Catholic church.
carried no formal title and held no institutionalized office, but had influence only in proportion to their reputation.\textsuperscript{92} Band members were free to join and leave as they would, and marriage across linguistic and cultural lines was frequent. Kinship and the reciprocal obligations it entailed meant marriage was often a political medium through which alliances and coalitions were formed.\textsuperscript{93} Such coalitions might be quite durable and long lasting, but they were ultimately determined by matters of expediency and could disintegrate as rapidly as they had been formed.\textsuperscript{94} The combination of such a fluid and dynamic political system with the fact that a single band, such as Maskepetoon’s, might be composed of Cree, Assiniboine, Sioux, French and English individuals makes the contradictory and confusing nature of early European attempts to make sense of them quite understandable.\textsuperscript{95} One can also understand the trouble newcomers to the region like Rundle had in making sense of the myriad of kinship relations that existed between Europeans and Indians and the proliferation of labels – French Half-breed, English Half-breed, Métis, Country-born, Freeman and so on – that existed for their children.

This shifting kaleidoscope of inter-band relations did however follow some basic patterns, and the arrival of the horse on the northwestern prairie in the first half of the


\textsuperscript{93} Binnema, Common and Contested Ground, 13.

\textsuperscript{94} Binnema, Common and Contested Ground, 15.

\textsuperscript{95} Binnema, Common and Contested Ground, 14.
1700s had set one such pattern in motion – the split between northern and southern interest groups. It was the bands to the south that first acquired horses from the Spanish and they used them to good effect against their northern neighbors. In the 1730s an aggressive coalition of Shoshoni, Crow, and Flathead had used the horse to drive the still pedestrian Sioux farther and farther north until they were pressed up against the parklands inhabited by the Cree and the Assiniboine. It was the Cree and the Assiniboine who knew and controlled the waterways along which trade flowed between the Great Plains and the Europeans huddled along the shores of Hudson’s Bay. While the Sioux had quickly acquired their own horses through raiding and trading, it was only after establishing a loose coalition with the Cree and Assiniboine that they could ensure themselves a relatively steady supply of fire arms, and turn the tide of war back towards the south.\(^96\) By the late 1740s the Sioux had made themselves masters of the northwestern plains.\(^97\)

This northern coalition began to break down towards the end of the eighteenth century as the fur trade began to change. The British and the French had been competing, often violently, for aboriginal trade for well over a century and their respective strategies were largely the product of geopolitics. The French traded by paddling out from Montreal to meet the Indians along the rivers and lakes of the

\(^{96}\) Binnema, Common and Contested Ground, 94.

\(^{97}\) Binnema, Common and Contested Ground, 100-102.
Canadian Shield. These men operated independently, or in small partnerships, and usually spent the winters in the vicinity of the trappers with whom they traded. The British fur trade on the other hand, was monopolized by the HBC, and unlike the French the English clung to the coast line of the Bay and expected the Indians to travel to them. In both cases the traders spent lengthy periods of time with the native inhabitants of the land, married local women, and were very much a part of the complex set of relations of which fur trade society was comprised. In the eighteenth century the aboriginal groups with whom the French and the English formed this fur trade society were primarily the Cree, and Assiniboine, and substantial numbers of traders, post servants, voyageurs and band members were the children of that society.98

Following the Peace of Paris in 1763 the Montreal fur trade came under control of British subjects – primarily Scots – who began pushing farther and farther up the Saskatchewan River and into Athabasca in order to acquire fur as close to the source as possible. Competition among the traders from Montreal, called bourgeois by their voyageur labor, led to journeys deeper and deeper into the Hudson’s Bay hinterland until even the HBC found it necessary to join the westward surge if it did not want to be cut out of the trade altogether. These extended voyages demanded a sophisticated system

of financing and credit, and traders from Montreal began to establish larger and larger partnerships in order to spread liability and pool capital. As competition between these partnerships heated up fur trading posts began proliferating along the Saskatchewan and Assiniboine Rivers. This process initially strengthened the position of the Cree and the Assiniboine. Those bands who had the closest relationship with the fur traders had long helped to provision the forts and houses along the coast, and the rapid increase in commercial specialists spending winters in the interior led to more opportunities for such native hunters.

By the early 1770s traders along the Saskatchewan system, and along the route from Rainy Lake to Lake Winnipeg, were trading heavily for pemmican, the concoction of dried buffalo meat and berries pounded into powder which fuelled the fur trade, and a new industry was born, one which spread rapidly westward.\(^\text{99}\) The Cree and Assiniboine were so eager to control this industry that there are accounts of their deliberately firing the bush around fur trade establishments to drive off game and thereby increase European dependency on local labour.\(^\text{100}\) But if this new subsidiary industry was something of a boon, the westward creep of the outposts meant the Cree


and Assiniboine were in danger of losing their control of the trade between the parkland and the plains. By 1800 the Europeans and Canadians were trying to set up outposts among the Sioux themselves. They were trading directly with Rocky Mountain groups who had previously relied on middlemen.101

Another result of the intensification of fur trade competition inland was that the non-Indian population of the Saskatchewan River began to grow rapidly. This population increase was not merely a question of an influx of French Canadian voyageurs and the Scottish bourgeois, but of the children they had with Cree and Assiniboine women, and perhaps as many as 200 Iroquois trappers brought in from Canada to increase production.102 By the 1770s there was a substantial community of traders and their wives and children living along the river. The relationships between fur traders and local women were governed by their own sets of norms, and had been occurring in one fashion or another since the fur trade began, but by the late eighteenth century the patterns were set and the kinship ties between traders and trappers were proliferating. This new demographic development was made more dramatic by the arrival of smallpox in the 1780s.

101 Hugh Dempsey, A History of Rocky Mountain House (Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development: Ottawa, 1973), 8; Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade, 104.

The epidemic originated in Mexico City in August of 1779, by 1780 had spread to New Mexico, and from there it swept across the prairies. It struck the bands of the southern coalition in the spring or summer of 1781 and spread amongst the northern coalition after a Cree, Assiniboine, and Blackfoot war party raided a camp of dead and dying Shoshoni. The plague hit the adult male population particularly hard, and the loss of leaders and hunters led the reformulation of communities into smaller, more mixed bands of the sort Rundle encountered sixty years later. The loss of something like a third of the existing population will not only have been a tremendous source of trauma for the indigenous peoples, but in the highly contested spaces of the northwestern plains will have made space for the emergence of Métis as a power in their own right.

In the eighteenth century European and European-American influence on the plains proper had been largely economic in nature, and native geo-politics moved at its own pace. In the nineteenth that was going to change. The Russians had been trading furs in the Pacific north-west since the 1740s with little competition, but towards the end of the century American, Canadian, and English companies began to trade along the coast as well. And not just from ships but via overland routes through the Rockies. These companies were not merely after new and untapped markets but had an eye on the potential posts on the Pacific would have for trading with China. And they were all

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103 Binnema, *Common and Contested Ground*, 120.
actively lobbying their respective governments to pursue policies that would ensure their control of such a strategically important region.

By this time the North West Company (NWC) had emerged as the HBC’s chief competition.\textsuperscript{104} It was by far the most substantial of the new fur trade companies and controlled the Montreal trade by 1804.\textsuperscript{105} Even the mighty HBC was struggling to compete with them and the Northwesterners had powerful political friends in Britain to trumpet the contributions their explorations were making to British imperialism.\textsuperscript{106} By the early 1800s agents of the NWC were exploring the head waters of the Columbia, and racing with the Americans towards the rivers mouth to strengthen their claim over the fur rich territory it ran through. In 1805 Lewis and Clark had crossed the Rockies, and the American fur trade was expanding west of the Great Lakes, and up the Missouri from St. Louis. In 1810 John Jacob Astor established Astoria.\textsuperscript{107} When the war of 1812 broke out the Scots and the Americans were already eyeing each other bellicosely across the Colombia. With Astoria under threat from the British navy the NWC shrewdly negotiated its purchase from Astor. But regardless of which of the Atlantic Empires was in control of the western slopes of the Rockies, more and more Europeans and

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{104} Brown, \textit{Strangers in Blood}, 1.
\textsuperscript{105} Brown, \textit{Strangers in Blood}, 41.
\textsuperscript{106} John C. Galbraith, \textit{The Hudson’s Bay Company as an Imperial Factor, 1821-1869} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957) 6-7.
\textsuperscript{107} James P. Ronda, \textit{Astoria and Empire} (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990).
\end{flushright}
European-Americans were braving increasing Indian hostility and picking their way through the rugged passes to trade, and even settle, on their Pacific side.

Significant changes were occurring on the Great Plains as well, and in 1811 the HBC attempted to establish a permanent settlement in the Red River valley. The settlement was the brainchild of Lord Selkirk, an influential stockholder, and its purpose was two-fold. It was to provide a new home for displaced Scottish highlanders, and a site to which servants of the HBC could retire if they wished to remain in the country. An additional benefit of the settlement was that it would cut across the routes that took pemmican from the prairies to the Winnipeg River system along which the Canadian voyageurs traveled. Conflict between the HBC and Lord Selkirk’s settlers on the one side, and the NWC and their Métis pemmican suppliers on the other, was almost immediate and led to a decade of kidnappings, violence and murder.108

In 1822 the British government, embarrassed and frustrated by the legal and illegal wrangling of the two companies, brokered a deal between them. The HBC took control of the NWC trading routes, forts and personnel, and in turn acquired a large number of experienced and ambitious NWC men as traders and factors. The man given the job of overseeing the merger, and rationalizing HBC operations, was George Simpson. Once more the HBC claimed sole dominion over the drainage basin of the Bay but things had rather changed. There were substantial communities of country born

men and women along the Saskatchewan and the Red River who Simpson cut loose from the new company, and who did not consider themselves beholden to either it or its charter. There was also a growing community of independent British subjects at the forks of the Assiniboine and Red River who did not like the fact that they were ruled by an autocratic company which monopolized the most valuable resource of the territory. And American traders were setting up at Pembina, just across the border and encouraging the locals to challenge HBC authority by trading illegally with Indians and bringing the furs south.

To further complicate issues was the fact that traditional relations between Native and European society at the trading posts was also in flux. The NWC had encouraged its wintering partners to cement ties with the locals through marriage, but the HBC had pursued a much more puritanical policy. They had long forbidden their traders to bring wives with them into the wilderness and had attempted to prohibit local marriages. The Company’s anxiety about the extra expense of feeding the progeny of such relationships was couched uneasily in vaguely moralistic terms, and showed a remarkable naivety of the day-to-day functioning of the outposts. The men in London did not understand the necessity of unpaid female labor, or the importance of local marriages to establishing good trade relations, and so the prohibition was largely ignored by their agents in the field.
A much more serious challenge to this tradition was to be the behavior of Governor Simpson. He indulged in numerous liaisons but was indifferent to the rules that governed fur trade marriages. In 1830, after shunting off a handful of former partners and children onto various employees, the Governor formally broke the Company’s 150 year old ban on importing women by marrying his cousin Frances and bringing her out to the territory.109 The previously sacrosanct modes of European-Native relations could no longer be taken for granted, and marriage to a British rather than a country-born wife rapidly become a sign of status, a class marker, and perhaps even a mark of metropolitan rather than local sympathies.110

Prior to his marriage Simpson seems to have taken it for granted that he could have sexual access to any unattached woman in the territory, and such women were by definition country-born, in his infamous words merely “bits of brown.”111 A proper wife in Simpson’s view was an English wife, and as Jennifer Brown and Sylvia Van Kirk first pointed out in the 1980s, once other senior officers began to follow his lead a type of racial stratification occurred that had simply not been there before. That polarization was further intensified because Simpson considered both English and French half-


110 Van Kirk, Tender Ties, 186.

111 Van Kirk, Tender Ties, 186.
breeds to be ill-suited to administrative work. Following the merger company elite
began to be recruited almost exclusively from the British Isles and the children of the fur
traders who had once had the promise of a good job in the business as their birth right
found themselves reduced to dead-end jobs as clerks and laborers. It was in this period
that the missionaries with their resolute universalism, and their own ideas of what
constituted a proper marriage and appropriate domestic arrangements, first began to
appear. The Church of England and the Roman Catholics had been in the Red River
Settlement since the 1820s, but Rundle and his colleagues were the first to be invited into
the fur trading territory proper. Despite HBC attempts to limit missionary activity to the
WMMS by 1840 the CMS already had a missionary at the Pas, and by 1841 the first
Catholic Priests had made the grueling overland trek across the prairies to the upper
Saskatchewan.

5.4 The Many Faces of Maskepetoon

Maskepetoon was born near the turn of the nineteenth century and came of age
during the climax of the conflict between the NWC and the HBC. If he himself was not
involved in the violence that occurred between the two companies he had friends and
in-laws who were. The merger saw the lapse of a competition that had favored trappers
rather than traders, and it made the distant American posts more attractive. Not only
did they have more liberal policies on selling alcohol, they would purchase the buffalo
skins the HBC could not afford to transport by canoe to the Atlantic, and ship them cheaply down the Missouri on barges.

Maskepetoon was intimately familiar with the rules that governed marriage in the fashion of the country. He had seen the emergence of the French speaking Métis as an important new interest group on the plains, and one self-confident enough to challenge HBC hegemony. He would have been aware of that the growing competition for buffalo and horses between the various First Nations peoples who lived on the plains verged on endemic warfare. His people lived in a region in which starvation was an ever present danger, and across which epidemics periodically swept. Smallpox had most recently traveled along the fur trade route up the Missouri in the late 1830s, and had hit the Sioux and the southern groups with its usual ferocity, but its impact among the Cree and Assiniboine was dulled by HBC vaccinations. When Maskepetoon first met Rundle in 1841 he was the tough leader of a cosmopolitan band of hunters, trappers, and traders. He was capable of the occasional outburst of violence, familiar with the extremes of physical hardship, and had substantially more experience of the world than the young missionary from Cornwall.

Maximilian, the Prince of Wied, reported that he met the Cree chief Maschketipon, or Broken Arm, while visiting Fort Union in late June, 1833.112

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Maschketipon and his people had traveled to Fort Union from their territory between the Saskatchewan and the Assiniboine Rivers. They had not come down to trade but to treat with the Fort’s manager Keith Mackenzie. In Maximilian’s words “to do him honor, and prove their attachment to him.” Maximilian noted that Maschketipon wore a medal with the effigy of President Jackson around his neck, an ornament he had received on a visit to Washington.

That visit may have been orchestrated by John Jacob Astor in an attempt to gain a larger share of the Indian fur trade from the British by a display of diplomatic largesse. The Indian agent Major John Sanford brought a representative from each of the Blackfoot, Assiniboine, and Cree groups by steamboat and train to the capital in the fall of 1831, and returned them the following summer. If the goal of that rather expensive diplomatic expedition was to establish trading relations between nations it had at best short term success. Political and commercial affairs on the plains were much too dynamic for the influence of such a distant power to last more than a season or two at best. As a fascinating anecdote, however, it has proved a fecund subject for moralizing observers.


115 Ewers, “When the Light Shone,” 85-86. Ewers estimated the mission cost $6,450 and assumed it had little effect on the trade.
George Catlin, the prolific painter of the vanishing frontier and enthusiastic amateur ethnologist, encountered the party at St. Louis and painted two of them. The first he identified as an Assiniboine named Wi-jun-jon or “Pigeon’s Egg Head,” a name more accurately transcribed and translated as Ah-Jon-jon or “the Light.” The second portrait was of the Cree warrior Catlin called “Bro-cas-sie, the broken arm.” According to Catlin, who joined the party for the last leg of their return trip from St. Louis to Fort Union, “Wi-jun-jon” had undergone such a transformation that his homecoming became a curious spectacle. Catlin describes him as wearing a colonel’s uniform, with beaver hat and high heel boots, and carrying a keg of whiskey under his arm:

In this plight and metamorphoses, he took his position on the bank, amongst his family and friends – his wife and other relations; not one of whom exhibited, for an half-hour or more, the least symptoms of recognition, although they knew well who was before them. He also gazed upon them – upon his wife and parents, and little children who were about, as if they were foreign to him, and he had not a feeling or thought to interchange with them. Thus the mutual gazings upon and from this would-be-stranger lasted for a full half hour.

Catlin was so fascinated by The Light’s transformation that he completed a before and after study of the man. The Light had previously been for Catlin a typical example of “a


117 Ewers, “When the Light Shone,” 78.

118 Catlin, *Illustrations of the Manners*, 55.
fine and noble race,” but in his second painting he is turning his back on that self.\textsuperscript{119} The pseudo-civilized man stands awkwardly in his boots, carrying an effete fan, leaning on an umbrella, with a whiskey bottle tucked into a pocket, and a cigarette dangling from his mouth. Of Bro-cas-sie he has little to say other than that the Cree scarcely knew the extent of their own country and are “primitive, as no inroads of civilized habits have been as yet successfully made amongst them.”\textsuperscript{120} The contrast between the pure and the hybrid Indian is as sharp as it is false – the Cree had been active partners in the European fur trade since the Seventeenth Century and had become wide-ranging salesmen of European manufactures and goods. Not only had they been the primary conduit of the firearms which helped make the Sioux masters of the northwestern plains, but the “Indian” ornaments Catlin painted into Maskepetoon’s portrait were made by white wampum makers in New Jersey, the jewelry in his hair was made from conch shells imported from the Bahamas.\textsuperscript{121}

The American fur trader Edwin Denig spun a slightly different tale from the same events.\textsuperscript{122} In his account the Light returned from Washington loaded with presents and honors and was well received. But consequently his “high tone of manner and

\textsuperscript{119} Catlin, \textit{Illustrations of the Manners}, 54.

\textsuperscript{120} Catlin, \textit{Illustrations of the Manners}, 57.

\textsuperscript{121} Ewers, “When the Light Shone,” 81.

action” led to resentment, and his never-ending discourse on the astonishments to be found on the eastern seaboard gained him a reputation as an inveterate liar.123 Denig, who later married one of the Light’s sisters, ultimately attributes his eventual murder to resentment of his grand claims.124 As in Catlin’s account, The Light’s Cree companion, whom Denig calls *Ah ah to wish kin e sic* or Eyes-On-Each-Side, provides a counterpoint to the Assiniboine. While in Denig’s view The Light “was a man of truth who could not bear contradiction,” and responded honorably to Jackson’s “counseling and good advice;” the Cree “was a scheming, mean beggarly Indian and on his return proved himself unworthy of the attention bestowed upon him.”125 According to Denig, the Cree, fearing to meet the same end as The Light, misrepresented the Americans as “but a handful of people far inferior in every respect to his own.”126 Denig’s outrage at Eyes-On-Each-Side’s misrepresentation of the Americans was further inflamed by the fact that the Cree man still lived and exerted influence over his people while he was writing his ethnography in the 1850s.

Finally, in Charles Larpenteur, another American trader and a colleague of Denig’s, The Light’s story is a parable of the superficiality of European American

123 Denig, *Five Indian Tribes*, 86.

124 Denig, *Five Indian Tribes*, xxxii.

125 Denig, *Five Indian Tribes*, 114.

126 Denig, *Five Indian Tribes*, 114.
influence on Plains behavior. For Larpenteur the only “advance he had made in civilization” was to learn how to use a towel and a house bell. After his return he passed himself off as a great medicine man and claimed no musket ball could harm him. That claim was shortly tested and he was “buried after their own way in a tree” at Fort Union. His skull was later sent down to St. Louis in sack with many others to be studied by physicians. “This is the whole amount of good” that The Light accomplished according to Larpenteur, and he ends his parable with the observation that the Cree chief did not amount to even that much. His sarcasm is present in his two other mentions of the Cree chief as well.

In an account of a trading mission to a mixed group of Chippewa and Cree at Woody Mountain in January of 1844, he calls him “Mr. Broken Arm, the great chief of the Crees, who had been to Washington.” The chief purpose of that story seems to be to show the drunkenness and squalor of Indian life. In the shorter anecdote which dates from November of the same year, Larpenteur recounts meeting Broken Arm, this time called a chief of the Assiniboine, somewhere north of the Missouri, and being tricked to go and trade with his small band rather than the larger one the trader was looking for.


128 Larpenteur, *Forty Years*, 413-415.


130 Larpenteur, *Forty Years*, 332-333.
These American accounts of Broken Arm and The Light all emphasize the attempt by the latter to become more European. In Denig’s version The Light is making a heroic but tragic attempt to cope with the realities of American imperialism, while in the others he is a ludicrous figure who merely apes the manners of civilized culture. In contrast Broken Arm, regardless of motivation, remains true to his essential Indian-ness, and for good or worse, aloof from civilization. Neither comes off particularly well – the one written off because he was too Indian, the other mocked because he tried to be too white.

From this American perspective Maskepetoon was a representative of a northern band – usually called Cree and occasionally Assiniboine – which ranged north of the Missouri between the Rocky Mountains and the Assiniboine River. The Americans considered him shrewd to the point of deceit, but were jealous enough of the influence the British had over his people that they employed their President to glad-hand him. North of the 49th parallel on the other hand Maskepetoon’s reputation during this period was as a reliable guide. To the men of the HBC he was a member of the westernmost of the Plains Cree band who frequented Rocky Mountain and Edmonton House. They knew he was familiar enough with both sides of the Rockies to recommend him as a
guide across the mountains for James Sinclair and his troop of migrating Red River settlers in 1841, a service he repeated in 1855.\textsuperscript{131}

George Simpson, who had crossed the Rockies a few weeks earlier than the settlers, told the story in his \textit{Narrative of a Journey Around the World, During the Years 1841 and 1842} of how that Cree guide, whom he called Bras Coche, expertly guided his wards to the Pacific Ocean, and then went for a ride on the company steamship \textit{Beaver}.\textsuperscript{132} In his most patronizing tones Simpson describes Bras Coche’s amazement that a boat could be moved by iron machinery without the aid of either wind or paddle. Since none of his countrymen would believe such a thing, and think him a liar, Bras Coche, in a twist to the story of The Light, requested a certificate to verify the truth of what he had seen. “The savage,” wrote Simpson, “stands nearly as much in awe of paper, ink and pen as steam itself,” and such “medicine” would ensure Bras Coche was believed by his illiterate friends.\textsuperscript{133} This story, with its emphasis on Indian ignorance of European technologies is curiously similar to the American Broken Arm stories, but should be read less as evidence of what Maskepetoon actually thought and said, than of audience expectation. In the preceding pages Simpson had been arguing that “the powers of


\textsuperscript{132} George Simpson, \textit{Narrative of a Journey Around the World, During the Years 1841 and 1842}, (London: H. Colborn, 1847)

\textsuperscript{133} Simpson, \textit{Narrative}, 140.
steam” could quiet “the savages...love of violence and robbery” and reinforce “the red man’s” opinion of the “superiority of his white brother.”

Even if Simpson’s Broken Arm was a different person than the one who traveled on a steam boat up the Missouri in 1831, we know that the Plains Cree had been seeing, and occasionally riding on such vessels for over a decade. And just a few pages later Simpson himself is waxing eloquent over the cosmopolitan crew of the steamer which involves French Canadians, Sandwich Islanders, and native Cree speakers.

Accounts of Maskepetoon from the period after Rundle had left, during the 1850s and 1860s, all emphasize his role as a peacemaker, and the violent aspect of life on the plains. In these stories it is not the arrival of an industrial civilization that shapes the narratives, but what appeared to be the savage and permanent state of war that existed between the various tribes of the region. It was Canadian Methodist missionaries most responsible for the hagiographical accounts of Maskepetoon as a peace maker and a martyr. The various versions written by the father and son team George and John McDougall, and E. Ryerson Young, are virtually interchangeable in their pious enthusiasms. In these accounts the young Maskepetoon was a violent drunkard who scalped his wife alive, and lived a wholly dissipated existence. After meeting Rundle in the 1840s he had a change of heart, was further influenced by Rundle’s eventual successor Thomas Woolsey in the late 1850s, until he was finally converted by George

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134 Simpson, Narrative, 139.
McDougall, the first Canadian Methodist missionary on the plains. According to MacDougall Maskepetoon was eventually murdered by the Blackfoot while trying to treat with them – an account of his death that the HBC logs support.\textsuperscript{135} Egerton Ryerson Young, writing in the late nineteenth century, claimed Maskepetoon as a trophy for the cross. His martyrdom revealed to Young’s readers the power of the gospels over the savagery that existed on the Great Plains, a savagery that had existed for millennia "before the waves of Anglo-Saxon civilization began to surge over those glorious, fertile prairies."\textsuperscript{136}

None of these representations of Maskepetoon – the unrevised Indian of the Americans,’ Simpson’s unsophisticated rube, or the later missionaries’ repentant savage – resemble the Maskepetoon we find in Rundle’s journal. He certainly plays a very different role in the Rundle text than in the others. Aside from the intense romanticization of the “savage” that occurs sporadically in Rundle’s account of his journey through Great Lakes and the Canadian Shield, the missionary is at pains to de-emphasize differences that lie between Simpson’s “red man” and “his white brother,” Young’s “Anglo-Saxon civilization” and native savagery, and which find their starkest expression in Larpenteur’s sack of Indian skulls. It is not that Rundle avoids tropes like “savagery” and “civilization,” but that such terms are strictly moral, and not racial or

\textsuperscript{135} Quoted in Milloy, \textit{The Plains Cree}, 115.

\textsuperscript{136} Egerton R. Young, \textit{Indian Life in the Great North-West} (S.W. Partridge: London, 1900), 114.
even cultural categories. Even as Rundle acknowledges the tenderness he feels towards rough men like Maskepetoon, he mourns the failure of his attempts to save them from damnation. His intense sentimentality and his fearless self-righteousness are products of a world view in which all humans are faced with the same moral dilemmas, and judged by the same unbending standards as he is. Like his grandfather and uncle Rundle inhabited spiritual world that was ultimately egalitarian. Reading Rundle’s journals one would never get the sense Maskepetoon is a worse or better human being than Sir George Simpson, for example: much more likeable certainly, but not of a different order.

Rundle likely met Maskepetoon for the first time in the spring of 1841 at Rocky Mountain House. Rocky Mountain House was a post with something of a troubled past. It had first been opened up by the NWC in 1799 to challenge the HBC in the rolling plains that ran southward along the spine of the Rocky Mountains. It was not in an ideal location as such and had never proved particularly lucrative. Even after the merger of the two companies it was operated chiefly as a concession to the Sioux that kept them from trading with the Americans. In the 1840s the chief trader at Rocky Mountain House was the Englishman James Harriott. Harriott had a reputation for being good with the Indians and had close ties with the Cree. He was an enthusiastic Protestant, at least relative to the other fur traders in the region, and proved to be not

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only one of Rundle’s most important allies, but the closest thing he had to a friend among the *bourgeois* of the fur trade.

It was at Rocky Mountain House that Rundle had the most success with the Indians, but that success did not come within the walls of the fort itself. It occurred when Rundle followed the bands that traded there down through the wooded river valleys and out onto the open prairie, and it was never one of dramatic Damascene conversions. Aside from a few women closely associated with the other fur trade posts, whose attentions seem to have made Rundle nervous, attendance at his prayer meetings waned considerably after the first flush of enthusiasm had faded. But among the Rocky Mountain House bands he always seemed to be welcomed. Maskepetoon and his people continued living much as they had before his arrival, but often invited Rundle to join them in their camps, and expressed their regrets at his absence when he could not. This polite rejection of Rundle’s message led him to torments of despair. His successes eventually came to consist of little more than having locals pay attention to his preaching, participate in singing and praying, express their regret at the sinful state of their lives, show willingness to get married according to the Church of England sacraments, and baptize their children and infants.

When Rundle first entered Maskepetoon’s camp the community he described was a particularly evocative example of how dynamic and fluid the constitution of a
Plains Indian band could be. He described Maskepetoon as “a kind of chief,” whose position was taken up by his brother when he was away on his frequent journeys. When Rundle mentions visits to the band they are almost invariably camped with, or near, the Assiniboine. People of mixed Cree and European descent travel and camp with them frequently as well. The two most celebrated of such folk were James “Jimmy Jock” Bird Jr., the son of former HBC Factor James Bird who had both Cree and Sioux wives, and Wild Cat, or Piché, who had not only guided Thibeault across the plains but Simpson across the mountains. Another occasional associate of the band was Hugh Munro, an adventurer from Montreal who like Bird chose to make his life among the Plains peoples rather than in the posts and forts of the fur trade. The band would spend early spring and late fall in and around Rocky Mountain House, hunting the buffalo as they drifted into the parkland where they wintered. During the summer however they would travel south, right out onto the plains and into what Palliser described as both a neutral hunting ground shared by the Blackfoot, Cree and Assiniboine. They would also travel quite far down the Saskatchewan River Valley, all the way to large Cree and Assiniboine rendezvous in the vicinity of Fort Carlton.

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In Rundle’s first spring he tagged along with the Rocky Mountain band out into the open prairie, where Jimmy Jock and Hugh Munro acted as his rather unreliable interpreters among the Blackfoot. Maskepetoon led the same group on a similar trip in 1847. On the latter occasion tensions between the Blackfoot and the Cree and Assiniboine band ran high after Maskepetoon’s son and some friends stole Blackfoot horses. Later that summer the young men were hunted down by the Sioux and murdered, along with a group of other band members which included Maskepetoon’s wife. Rundle visited the sight of the massacre not long after it occurred, and he was horrified by the signs of the struggle. In Rundle’s view such violence was all too common in the region and the inevitable product of alcohol consumption, gambling, or horse theft. In the summer of 1844 while camped with Maskepetoon’s people he saw Piché and his son gunned down over a gambling debt, and in the winter of 1845 he heard rumors that Maskepetoon had nearly killed a man in a drunken brawl. But aside from the thrill of fear he experienced on encountering what he mistakenly thought was a group of “the terrible Blackfoot” on his first visit to Rocky Mountain House, he went about his business with a remarkable lack of anxiety. What he did frequently record was the horror he felt for the damned souls of men and women he had known.

140 Rundle, The Journals, 172.

141 Rundle, The Journals, 54.
For Rundle any revolution, be it of the heart or of a society, was empty unless graced by the Holy Spirit, and was always in danger of reversal. The ecstasy of the revival, which at first had seemed to come easily to the Cree and the Assiniboine of Norway House, needed to be tempered by the discipline of daily practice, and it was the latter that the people of Rupert’s Land proved reluctant to embrace. One of those who petitioned Rundle most frequently for baptism was Jimmy Jock’s principal wife, but he refused to conduct the ceremony so long as she was in a polygamous relationship, and she refused to end her marriage. And an old man in the group told him that he feared for his soul but could not become a Christian so long as their horses to steal and buffalo to hunt. But Maskepetoon who himself showed no signs of giving up the lifestyle of a nomadic warrior, hunter, and trader, nonetheless entrusted Rundle as a surrogate father with the education and care of his son.

The one thing that the missionaries were offering to the Indians which no one else in Rupert’s Land had ever even considered giving to them was the gift of literacy. James Evans had crafted a Cree syllabary in 1841 and it proved to be popular. Maskepetoon was using it by 1844 and regularly corresponding with Rundle. The notes are short, and they tend to feel formulaic, and like the letter that mentions his son they are often expressions of respect and refer to reciprocal obligations. One gets the sense

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142 Rundle, Journals,

143 Rundle, Journals, 48.
that little Benjamin’s adoption into Rundle’s domestic circle was as much a political as an educational move. Rundle at the time lived and traveled with two other youths, William and George. Relations between the missionary and the youths were occasionally troubled, particularly with William who occasionally snuck out to drink and dance. On one occasion it appears Maskepetoon slapped him for being insubordinate to Rundle, but little Benjamin is only mentioned on a few occasions. He climbed a tree on March 19th, 1846 to retrieve Rundle’s cat, and in the spring of 1847 he became ill. On May 19th, 1847 Rundle saw “poor little Benjamin” for the last time. The sick child was briefly reunited with his father before he was left to die with “a friendly Indian.” We have no clues as to what the emotional toll of the death was from Maskepetoon’s perspective. From Rundle’s it was a minor tragedy. He mourned the boy once more as he left the territory in 1848, exhausted and with a painful and badly healed broken arm. He reassured himself that at least the lad had been baptized. After the death the relationship of the two men continued on much as it had: they would send each other notes, Rundle often sent tobacco as well, and they camped together when the opportunity arose.

144 Rundle, The Journals, 260.
The only reference we have to how Maskepetoon felt about Rundle is to be found in Paul Kane’s account of a conversation he had with the chief he called Broken Arm. In that conversation Maskepetoon suggested that so long as Mr. Rundle claimed that what he preached was the only true road to heaven, and Mr. Hunter the Anglican missionary at the Pas claimed the same thing, and Father Thibault as well, and they all claimed the others were wrong, his people were likely to remain unconvinced by any of them. He then told Kane the story of a Cree man who became a Christian, did all he was told to, and died. When he arrived in heaven he found it beautiful and good, but while the white men were among their relatives the Indian was alone and could not share in their joy. When God asked him why he was sad the Indian explained. God told him since he had chosen to be a Christian he could not send him to the Indian heaven, but as he had been such a good man he would send him back to earth and give him another chance. It is a curious anecdote because it is very similar to one that the Jesuit De Smet recounts after visiting the same band, but who attributes it to “an adroit imposter” among the Saulteaux people – distant allies of the Cree who lived on the Winnipeg River but with whom they were “considerably intermixed by reciprocal marriages.”

145 Rundle, *The Journals*, 113. Rundle also mentions a letter he received from the American missionary on the Columbia, a Mr. Lee, which discusses how Sinclair’s guide (Maskepetoon) had been instructed by Rundle, and despite the interference of Catholic Priests had remained firm.

146 Kane, *Wanderings of an Artist*, 242.

story the baptized Indian describes a vision in which he was refused entrance to the white heaven on the basis of his red skin, and then refused entrance to the Indian heaven on the basis of his baptism. He was sent back to earth to renounce his baptism and take up his old ways. Like the stories the Americans told about Maskepetoon, the stories he told about Christianity were concerned with the dangers of hybridity.

Both De Smet and Kane treat the tale as a species of fable but its widespread popularity certainly makes it seem that Maskepetoon’s carefully measured skepticism of Rundle’s value as an ally was probably typical of local attitudes to the new interlopers. The most striking difference between the two versions is that in Kane’s version it is familial relations that determine which heaven one goes to, and in De Smet’s it is racial identity. This is in keeping with the tone of De Smet’s letters which are ethnographically rich, and emphasize cultural and racial differences both between Indian groups, and between Indians and Europeans. The two stories tell us more perhaps, about the people who recounted and published them, than the men who told them, but the wry cynicism towards missionary claims which they illustrate is certainly worth noting. It also provides more evidence concerning the sheer range of Maskepetoon’s political relations – Red River was some 1500 kilometers from Rocky Mountain House.

The most we can say about Maskepetoon’s attitude towards Rundle is that he treated him with kindness, and practiced a pragmatic skepticism where his mission was concerned. He was careful neither to offend him, nor promise him too
much, and quick to exploit Rundle’s most immediately valuable resource, the lesson of literacy. How much little Benjamin could have told him about the Methodists and their ambitions is difficult to imagine, but one does wonder at what the grizzled veteran of life on the Great Plains will have made of the asceticism that rejected the age old customs of the fur trade, and the young man who tried to draw the entire world into his sentimental dream of a perfectly loving Christian family.

5.5 Conclusion

Rundle’s attitudes, by comparison, are well documented. In the first half of the Nineteenth Century the Protestant missionary adventure remained very much a product of the pietism of the Great Awakening, the politics of Abolition, and the humanism of the Enlightenment. The ideological axiom from which evangelical efforts proceeded was the belief that all humans were essentially rational creatures who, when confronted with the beneficial system of knowledge that was Christianity, would, by the grace of God, achieve salvation by giving up their irrational superstitions and immoral practices.  

There is a great deal of latitude for arguments and debates about what, precisely, constituted irrationality and superstition; such were the labels applied to the Wesleyans by the Church of England after all, and to the Catholics by the Wesleyans. But missionaries such as Rundle, regardless of denominational affiliation, were, in the

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theoretical parlance of the day, monogenists who believed in the common brotherhood of humanity and in a universal history which was to end in the convergence of all the various nations into a peaceful Christian commonwealth.149 The course of that history could be discovered by a comparison of ethnological data to the foundational knowledge of the biblical text. The very existence of aboriginal peoples of the New World for instance, was a conundrum most often explained away with recourse to the myth of the Lost Tribes of Israel – at least until more materialistic theories began to be developed.150

What is striking about Rundle’s Methodism, and it can be seem in the way he writes about Maskepetoon, is that it runs counter to the trends we can see developing in the ethnographic writings of fur-traders and aristocratic visitors of the time. He was not interested in fixing the Indians as of a different order, and thereby governed by different rules, but in establishing the universality of human experience. Rundle considered the domestic circle, unbroken even by death, to be the foundation of that experience, and he saw Satan at work whenever that natural and sacred order was disrupted by alcohol, violence and adultery.


A man like Paul Kane represented a very different sort of perspective. He was a member of a generation of painters, travelers, and scientists who set out west, beyond the frontier, to capture in images and print the last remnants of what they believed to be a dying race. Men like George Catlin, George Bodmin and Prince Von Wied had no purpose in the Great Plains, the Rocky Mountains, and the Columbia Basin beyond the performance of their ethnological field work. Self-consciously modern men, this first generation of frontier ethnologists rejected Biblicist arguments as at out-dated eighteenth-century speculations or the dewy-eyed fantasies of irrational Christian philanthropists. They looked at the Indian through the clear lens of their science and saw a sub-species of humanity, one whose existence could be explained most rationally

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in terms of a polygenetic theory. In this view the various races had independent origins, independent histories and independent interests. However much one might wish it otherwise these various species of humanity were in conflict over resources and land, and the obvious superiority of the White race meant there could be but one outcome to that conflict.

Robert Rundle’s account of his initial journey westward through the forests and lakes of the Canadian Shield in the spring of 1840 seems at times the very picture of the same unabashed romanticism that inspired the frontier painters, but he ultimately constructed a very different type of Indian than the polygeneticists. He agreed that the aboriginal inhabitants of what he called the great trackless wastes of the New World were on the brink of destruction, but in his vision that destruction was the result of a cosmological and moral crisis rather than biological and material conflict. It was the same sort of crisis his Uncle Benjamin had feared when he in Van Diemen’s Land he heard rumours of a war between the French and the English. And it was the sort of destruction from which any Nation could be saved – should they so choose.

In the draft of a letter he composed for his Uncle Benjamin in 1843 Rundle imagined soaring across Rupert’s Land, looking down on the scattered trading posts, settlements and encampments. The twilight world he described was one of staggering beauty but also one on the verge of being overwhelmed by a satanic night, illuminated

only here and there by the warm hearths of Christian domesticity. In the letter Rundle revisited the moment he first saw the Saskatchewan River, and how that scene was made more sublime by terrible certainty of divine judgment. It is a melancholy and curiously naturalistic apocalypse; there is even a touch of self-deprecation in his “imaginary flight.” But an apocalypse it is. Rundle’s imagination teemed with hunters and warriors – countless thousands of them living in desolation on the prairies and in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, and dying there, in darkness, before the light of Christianity could reach them.

The imminent damnation of all those souls is the organizing motif of his journal, and it is Christianity that is their only hope. He was to find however, that many of those he so longed to help chose to face their imminent demise on their own terms. The question of why they, or anyone else, should choose darkness over light is a question that has continued to haunt not only the proponents of evangelical Christianity, but all those other revolutionaries, reformers, and modernizers who have sought to change the world, and found their gospel rejected by the very people who to them seemed to need it the most desperately.

Rundle attempted to transform the lives of the Plains Cree, Assiniboine and Sioux peoples of the Saskatchewan drainage basin with the same techniques with which his Methodist forbearers sought to transform life in Georgian and Regency Cornwall.

154 Rundle, Journals, 143.
Despite some initial success Rundle found that so long as the Great Plains economy revolved around horses and buffalo his only converts were to be found among those who were trapped by expedience and dependency in the river valleys of the fur trade. He attempted to create a safe haven at Pigeon Lake for those individuals and families who were happy in neither world; much as his sixty years before his grandfather William had tried to build a Gilgal in the margins between the boom-towns of the great Cornish mines and the villages of the feudal parish.

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155 Rundle, Journals, 48. “Yesterday an old Indian said he did not want to be instructed whilst there were any horses remaining in the country, intimating that as long as there were any he must steal them & go to war.”
6. The Track to Heaven: Transnational Revivalism, Missionary Networks and Colonial Mobility, 1850 to 1860

In 1866 the price of copper in the London market plummeted and the consequences were disastrous for Cornwall.¹ By 1870 all the major works in Gwennap, the region where first William and then his son Benjamin Carvoso had discovered their calling, were closed. And unemployed Cornish miners were pouring out of the county and onto ships bound for Australia.² But while the late sixties were remembered as a particularly dramatic moment in the history of Cornish migration, the emptying of the countryside had begun long before that great crisis. According to Philip Payton, the roots of Cornish emigration could be found in a “culture of mobility” that preceded the globalization of the mining industry and the consequent export of Cornish technology and labour. He argues that in the years after Waterloo a Methodist ethos of self-help and improvement made both internal and external emigration seem a rational choice for those seeking to avoid hardship.³ Constant movement both within Cornwall, and to destinations outside its boundaries, often transatlantic and colonial, made such behavior seem familiar. Methodism also, one should add, provided a vigorous critique of the

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older geopolitical organization of the county into parishes. Its model of itinerancy challenged the bureaucratic logic of the established church, and the demands of feudal economics. This reconceptualization of space encouraged, rather than hindered, movement.

At least as early as the late 1830s the Methodist *West Briton* assisted local agents in Penzance and Falmouth in their recruitment of settlers for Edward Gibbon Wakefield’s freshly minted colony of South Australia. And, just as a decade earlier Benjamin Carvosso had participated in publicizing opportunities for free settlers in Van Diemen’s Land, so too did enthusiastic preachers and missionaries such as the recently returned Walter Lawry. At the urging of Wakefield and his allies the British parliament had passed the South Australia Colonisation Act in 1834. That act declared some 800,000 square kilometers of “waste and unoccupied” lands neighbouring New South Wales as the site for an experiment in systematic colonization. The colony had been conceived of along the highly rationalized lines of utilitarian thought, but the presence of men like the Baptist George Angas Fife on the South Australia Company’s board meant such conceptions coincided neatly with the ambitions of many evangelicals of the


middling classes.\textsuperscript{6} It was to be a non-penal and non-conformist ‘Paradise of Dissent.’\textsuperscript{7} At the time Cornwall was convulsed by anti-Buntingite schism, and England by the clamour for political reform. So the prospect of a colony in which a middle class freed of the feudal shackles of old corruption was to rebuild a Protestant Britain on its own terms must have been attractive to many. And particularly to a population like that of Methodist Cornwall, one which had long roots in nonconformist intransigence, transatlantic travel, and the illicit free trade practices of smuggling.\textsuperscript{8}

Potato blight and economic downturn in Cornwall, and gold-rushes in the Australian colonies of Victoria and New South Wales meant they continued to be a choice destination for the Cornish. Philip Payton gives examples of the exuberant letters being written home in the period; often read in public, or published in newspapers. They were filled with the promise of good and steady wages, and the contrast between freedom in Australia and bondage and “slavery” at home.\textsuperscript{9} Free passage was being granted to migrants who met the right age and status criteria and the county was alive

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\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{7} Douglas Pike, \textit{Paradise of Dissent: South Australia, 1829-1857} (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1967).
\item \textsuperscript{8} Payton, \textit{The Cornish Overseas}, 228.
\item \textsuperscript{9} Payton, \textit{The Cornish Overseas}, 81.
\end{enumerate}
with Australian news. The West Briton in Cornwall and Steven’s South Australian Register in Adelaide both ran stories in 1840 designed to encourage immigration. The news in 1841 that two Cornish prospectors found silver-lead in the Adelaide Hills, a discovery that coincided with a booming agricultural economy, was also advertised. In 1843 copper deposits were found at Kapunda and in 1845 at Burra Burra and the miners began to arrive in waves. The entire mining infrastructure of the colony soon looked like that of Cornwall; from the ubiquitous prefix “Wheal” in front of the mines name, to the use of the Cornish cost-book system of share-holding, and the tut-work organization of labour. The piston of push-and-pull incentives kept driving the engine of Cornish migration throughout the 1840 and 1850s.

While the prospect of work was certainly critical to miners and farm laborers who relied on assisted migration, the ideological trappings of the new colony were attractive to ambitious déclassé migrants as well. In Pike’s classic history of South Australia he identifies the path to respectability in the colony as early arrival; land ownership; non-conformist piety; and self-discipline. And R.B. Walker describes the fifties and sixties in the colony as a period of Methodist ascendancy. That ascendancy

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10 Payton, The Cornish Overseas, 229.
12 Payton, The Cornish Overseas, 163.
was due not just to the large number of early Methodist migrants but the conversion of many later arrivals. The denomination’s great popularity depended on the democratic appeal of what were still lay-driven institutions; the inexpensiveness and energy of an evangelical and itinerant ministry; a willingness to go into debt to build large, unostentatious chapels; and above all Sunday Schools which gave secular as well as religious instruction. And within this Methodist world there was a room for intellectuals and ideologues to carve out spaces for themselves as educational and journalistic specialists – the intellectuals and propagandists of an emergent evangelical lobby. Certainly when Joseph Hobart and Baker Banks Carvosso, and their younger brother David, arrived in South Australia in 1851 they were not drawn there by copper, grain or wool per se. They were reasonably well educated, literate, capital poor, and uninterested in farming or mining. But if they had no money, experience or technical knowledge with which to get ahead, what they did have was social capital; a well-established and connected social network waiting to insure they would not have to get dirt under their fingernails to stay alive.

By contrast back in Cornwall their father Benjamin and their cousin Robert Rundle were trapped in England by the very ministerial vocation that facilitated their earlier travels. Their global itinerancy may have overlapped with the surge of emigration that began Britain’s imperial century, but in the twilight of their careers they were left behind to preach to dwindling provincial congregations. Times became so
bleak for Carvosso he was even compelled to the humiliation of writing to the
Conference for pecuniary assistance drawn on the special fund. 14

The late forties and early fifties which saw Wesleyan effervescence in the
Australian colonies saw increasing torpor in Britain. It was the very contradiction of the
1820s. Jabez Bunting’s efforts to transform Wesleyanism into a unified, disciplined, and
respectable denomination finally succeeded, but at the cost of thousands of members
and his own career. Anonymous pamphlet attacks on his leadership in the so-called fly-
sheets, and his aggressive attempts to hunt down and punish the perpetrators, had
created a scandal which led to wide spread secession. By 1851, the year the Carvosso
boys left for Australia, Bunting had been forced by events to retire from his various
offices. And the mid-century saw, for the first time in its history, Wesleyan membership
start to decline as a percentage of the overall population. 15 Just as for the first time the
affected parts of Cornwall suffered from population decline in absolute terms. 16

In the first part of this chapter we look at Bunting’s Pyrrhic victory over the
forces of Connexional democracy and revivalism. If itinerant Wesleyan ministers
remained frightened of the occasional outburst of Cornish revivalism as late as the
1870s, the mob of Methodism was no longer a serious threat to Conference authority,

14 Carvosso


16 Payton, Cornish Overseas, 132, 177.
and revivalism was a diminishing force. The most aggressive proponents of lay power, who were also the most aggressive revivalists, had seceded or migrated to the colonies, sometimes both. For Benjamin Carvosso and Robert Rundle, who refused to do the first, and were denied the second, this meant increasing isolation from the dynamic world of transnational revivalism. They had spent the first decades of their careers attempting to bridge the gaps between a vibrant provincial Methodism and the fields of colonial enterprise. They spent their last decades circulating about the institutional circuits that had once done so much to shatter parochialism. In the second part of the chapter we will see how in the aftermath of Britain’s Wesleyan civil war the Carvosso children deserted England. They travelled to the farthest reaches of Empire to pursue their Christian vision of the world. My primary subjects will be Carvosso’s eldest two sons, Joseph Hobart and Baker Banks Carvosso, who joined an ascendant Methodist community in the Australian colonies, and parlayed their father’s missionary and Cornish connections into careers as lay activists and social reformers.

6.1 “What a calamity is this!”: The Fly Sheet Scandal and the Problem of Revivalism

By the middle of the 1840s the Wesleyan mission to Rupert’s Land was in a shambles. The WMMS secretary Robert Alder had assured his friend George Simpson
that the missionaries would not meddle in Company business.\textsuperscript{17} And Simpson had promised transport and lodging in exchange for their services as chaplains.\textsuperscript{18} But the Governor was not well pleased with their subsequent efforts to civilize the people on whose semi-nomadic lifestyle the Company depended for its furs. Nor were his officers pleased when Evans at Norway House and York Factory, and Barnley at Moose Factory, lost control of the ideological content of the mission.

At York Factory in the spring of 1842 the Chief Factor’s wife Letitia Hargrave wrote home that “the Indians were all in a religious frenzy,” an occurrence she blamed squarely on the missionaries.\textsuperscript{19} The practices of Methodist singing and Evans’ syllabic writing spread through the homeguard community like wildfire, hymns were written down on birch bark and transported from post to post with bewildering speed. A Cree trapper named Abishabis declared himself a bishop and a prophet and began to preach

\textsuperscript{17} Frits Pannekoek, “The Rev. James Evans and the Social Antagonisms of the Fur Trade Society, 1840-1846,” in R. Allen Religion and Society in the Prairie West (Regina: 1974), 1-18. Pannekoek quotes Alder as telling Simpson that he loathed “all unnecessary intermeddling with political affairs,” and that WMMS missionaries were interested strictly in the spiritual welfare of the people. They were not permitted to engage in politics or secular disputes nor “engage in trade of any kind or for any purpose whatsoever,” 4.


\textsuperscript{19} Letitia Hargrave to Mrs. Mactavish, May 14, 1842 in The Letters of Letitia Hargrave ed. Margaret MacLeod (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1947), 107. “The Indians here are all labouring under a religious frenzy. They preach, perform miracles speak unknown tongues, die & come to life again, wont hunt, & it is extraordinary how many performances they have. People are afraid to speak in case of bringing “The Church” down on them, so that I don’t know how the Inland savages get on, but it seems plain that a set of perfect animals as they are can get no good from hearing of mysteries & miracles, and I think that wretches who don’t know six times in a year what it is to have a full meal, are not likely to have a keen sense of the goodness of God. The very aspect of the country would in some degree chill the feelings of any one of sound mind.”
about a new path to a heaven; a heaven filled with trade goods and livestock. After the Europeans refused to recognize his authority he set up in competition with the missionaries. Some traders in the region reported many of the homeguard had stopped trapping and hunting to spend all their time singing and praying. In September of 1842 John Cromartie at Severn House recorded that for three weeks the Indians had been gathered nearby, harassing him with their “psalm Singing and painting Books,” and “doing nothing but Roaring and Singing night and day,” instead of hunting Geese for the post. At Moose Factory down the coast the trader George Barnston railed against false prophets who claimed they could show the “Track to Heaven” with charts drawn on wood and paper. And at the same post Rundle’s colleague George Barnley was confronted by a Cree prophet who called himself Jesus.

The whole region was in an uproar and in a way that was reminiscent of Cornwall during a revival. Millennial excitement in Rupert’s Land is certainly not identical to similar behavior in an industrializing English province, but the parallels are striking nonetheless. There was the noise and the singing, the claims of the unschooled to religious authority, the dismissive derision of wealthy elites, and the frustrated rage


of the British state’s representatives. But amongst other things there is a long tradition of Native prophecy in North America that operates according to its own logic. Besides, the turbulence in this colonial territory was calmed more easily then it could been in a county entirely under the rule of English law. In 1843 servants of the HBC murdered Abishabis at Severn House and burned his body on a nearby island. The semiotic meaning of that act was clear to all; the man was windigo, possessed by an evil spirit. Chief Factor James Hargrave wrote to Simpson from York Factory that the death “entirely tranquilized the ferment,” and the movement slipped beneath the surface of fur trade society.\(^{22}\) But the phenomenon of religious frenzy was, just as in Cornwall, closely connected to issues of social and economic instability, and if “revival” was a particularly spectacular mode through which people could express their dissatisfaction with the status quo, it was not the only one.

Simpson was also suspicious of the visible leadership role played in the formal missionary project by Indian converts. He complained to Mason about the Society’s use of “semi-civilized catechists and schoolmasters.”\(^ {23}\) They represented too much of a challenge to the classed and raced stratification of Fur Trade Society which he and other HBC officers were trying to encourage. In 1840 Henry Steinhauer and Peter Jacobs, both

\(^{22}\) Brown, “Track,” 55.

Ojibwe missionaries from the Great Lakes, had been sent out West to assist Evans and his English colleagues. When Letitia Hargrave found out Evans had insisted Jacobs (“the Indian Wesleyan dominie”) live in the Fort with him, and had him put on an officers ration of “raisins, flour, butter, currants, wine, brandy” she was outraged.24 Class tensions further aggravated relations between the missionaries and the traders, relations already inflamed by local enthusiasms and religious pretension.25 Evans’ wife for example, refused to treat Hargarve’s wife with the deference she thought was due. “Mrs. Evans,” Hargrave wrote to her mother, “wrote me a letter that I could hardly stand from a Methodist. I replied by a middling stiff note commencing with dear Madam. I feel satisfied she is dangerous. She had ended hers with yr affecte friend.”26

And at Moose Factory when Barnley returned with a wife from his brief hiatus in England his relations with Barnston unravelled rapidly, with conflict between their wives over status being a critical factor.27 Again, as in Cornwall, a self-confident Methodism, despite the protestations of the Conference authorities, created not only religious but social disturbances.

24 Hargrave, Letters, 113.
25 See especially Frits Pannekoek, “James Evans.”
26 Hargrave, Letters, 107.
27 Pannekoek, “James Evans.”
But for Simpson the crisis came to a head when Evans began criticizing HBC policies, fraternizing with free traders from Red River, complaining that the Company exploited the natives, and insisting that Methodist employees not be required to work on the Sabbath. Evans wrote to his brother Ephraim, a Wesleyan abolitionist, revivalist, and journalist in Upper Canada, saying of HBC/Indian relations that “the state of the West India Slaves before the passing of the Emancipation Act is too good a comparison.”28 When the HBC agent at Norway House heard rumours Evans thought the Indians should start shipping furs to Red River independently of the HBC, and even selling them to the WMMS, he wrote to Simpson that the missionary “had shewn the cloven hoof and unmasked himself.”29 Alder and the other WMMS secretaries recalled Evans but not before the village of Rossville, which Evans had established just south of Norway House, had been rocked with scandal. Evans had been accused of sexual improprieties by a young woman living with his family as a servant. Mason and Henry Steinhauer, who had recently joined Evans at the village, examined the charges. They found him innocent but censured him for poor judgement. He was summoned home to England for further examination by the WMMS secretaries. He died there in 1846, mere days after having cleared his name before the secretaries.30

30 Neil Semple, The Lord’s Domninion, 175.
There is little hint of this chaos in Rundle’s journals, but he had problems of his own. He was lonely and isolated, and his repeated requests to return home to get a wife to help him were ignored by the metropolitan secretaries. That they were preoccupied with a major denominational crisis in Britain may well have had something to do with this, but that will have been little comfort to Rundle. Then in 1848 he broke his arm in a riding accident and was left in constant pain. He decided to return home to seek medical attention, and to marry, without having received permission from London to do so. He left Pigeon Lake in the charge of Benjamin Sinclair, a homeguard Cree from Norway House Evans had sent out to help him.\textsuperscript{31} He gave Sinclair lengthy instructions on how to organize the mission at Pigeon’s Lake, when to harvest, and what to build. He told Sinclair to be kind and generous to his young family and the mission animals in his care, but above all to attend to the Indians. “Let that be you great work,” he wrote to Sinclair. He was to go out to their winter camps near Edmonton, and in the spring to Rocky Mountain House. “Give them a little tobacco,” he said, and in good Methodist fashion suggested he “shake hands with all of them who come to prayers.” Rundle said he expected to return by next year but that until then, or some other missionary arrived, it was Sinclair who was in charge. The baton had been passed; a (relatively) local man was now the lay leader of a small class of Methodists on the Upper Saskatchewan, and a lay missionary to all who were not yet converted.

\textsuperscript{31} Rundle, The Journals, 317-318.
Rundle and two companions paddled the 1500 miles to York Factory on Hudson Bay without company assistance. Then he took the HBC ship to Liverpool in 1848. It must have seemed ages since that moment at the mouth of the Saskatchewan, when he had his vision of a pious empire stretching from the cold Atlantic all the way to Rocky Mountains. Rundle may have planned to return to Edmonton but he never did. In the early fifties he had written to Mason, then a CMS missionary at Rossville, that he was hoping to go to Australia as a missionary but that never happened.\textsuperscript{32} Instead in 1854 he married Mary Wolverson from a prominent Methodist family in Coseley, just to the west of the manufacturing town of Birmingham. In 1866 Mary’s sister Sarah married Thomas Woolsey. Woolsey was the English missionary the Canadian Methodist’s had enlisted to replace Rundle out west in 1855. He had looked Rundle up while in Britain to fund raise. Rundle was by then a circuit minister in the northwest of the country, and was to remain so for the rest of his life. In 1886 the Canadian Methodist missionary, journalist, and author Egerton Ryerson Young visited Rundle in Garstang, Lancashire, just fifteen miles north of Blackpool. Young described him as “a grand old veteran,” and reported that for years Rundle had received syllabic letters from the friends he had left the Saskatchewan.\textsuperscript{33} Literacy meant, as it had for his grandfather William and his Uncle

\textsuperscript{32} Rundle, \textit{The Journals}, lxiii.

\textsuperscript{33} Rundle, \textit{The Journals}, lxiv.
Benjamin, that Rundle could continue to play the role of a spiritual advisor and brother in Christ with co-religionists on the other side of the Atlantic.

Rundle died in 1896 and was buried in Garstang. The grave is almost 400 miles from the churchyard in Mylor where as a young man he had hoped to have been interred. It is even farther from the unmarked spot on the prairie where his friend Maskepetoon was killed by the Blackfoot in 1869. And it was half the world away from the Australian colony where his cousins had made a life for themselves, and where he had wanted to go himself. By the time of his death Wesleyan Methodism – which had once ranged across the entirety of the British Empire and beyond – had long since seen large fragments break off to form smaller bodies. It was not just secession and schism that had led to its fracture, but the increasing independence of the Canadian and Australian Conferences. The WWMS still had impressive global reach but the imperial networks Bunting and Alder had worked so hard to establish had been disrupted in part by geo-political and demographic processes, but also in-fighting, dissent and theological squabbles within the Conference. In these conflicts revivalism and its advocates played no small part.

The first Methodist mission to Rupert’s Land has been treated as a failure by historians such as Pannekoek and Grant, and it certainly faced some serious setbacks, but such characterizations are too harsh. Some of Rundle’s converts remained committed to the Methodism long after he had left them, and he remained committed to
them. But it is certainly the case that, as they did in Britain, revivalist practices upset the equilibrium of local social relations in Rupert’s Land. Perhaps more significant was the stubborn refusal of the missionaries to strike the properly deferential poses before the imperially constituted authority of the HBC elite, and to actually criticize company policy. Their unashamed intransigence led to the WMMS secretaries’ connivance with powerful colonial elites in the expulsion of the chief troublemaker: just as had been the case of the Cornish brethren in Australia.

The correlation of revivalism to reformist attitudes was precisely what troubled the Wesleyan conference party – at home as well as abroad. They were never against revival \textit{per se}, indeed it was their goal. They pursued a careful and steady revival, one that could be managed by the ministers, and would in no way alarm their social and political betters. That was not the sort of revival in which the Carvossos and their ilk reveled. At the Conference of 1849, Rundle’s first on his return from the colonies, Samuel Dunn – revivalist, proponent of Wesleyan reform, and a long time family friend – was expelled from the Connexion. It was the climax to the last great crisis in Wesleyan history.

The final burst of anti-Buntingite dissent began in 1846 with the Flysheet Scandal.\textsuperscript{34} The Flysheets were a series of anonymously authored pamphlets which attacked Bunting’s whole style of governance as autocratic and anti-methodistical.  

\textsuperscript{34} Taylor, \textit{Methodism & Politics}, 165-195
Three ministers, James Everett, William Griffiths, and Samuel Dunn, were eventually expelled from the conference. They were not banished for having written the documents, but for refusing to sign a document which declared they had not. Their expulsion was followed hard by the desertion of some 50,000 Methodists – many in the southwest.

Dunn’s father James had been a smuggler from Mevagissey who had once rescued Dr. Adam Clarke from an angry anti-Wesleyan mob on Guernsey. The Irish Clarke was one of Wesley’s closest disciples, and perhaps the first great Methodist theologian. While he was influential in Wesleyanism, and was even for a while a Conference President, Clarke always remained something of an outsider. Intrigued by the experiment of the French Revolution rather than appalled, he even flirted with Radicalism. He had also clashed with Bunting’s man and co-founder of the WMMS, the theologian Richard Watson, over matters of metaphysical arcana. Clarke disliked Conference despotism; approved of lay control of key Methodist institutions; argued for more Sunday schools; more local preachers; more small chapels; more revivals; and for women to take a role in spiritual leadership. His happiest times were as a working missionary on Britain’s Celtic fringe; in Ireland, the Channel Islands, and in Cornwall.

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He took the young Samuel Dunn under his wing in the years after the Napoleonic Wars and found “Dear Sammy” a posting as a missionary to the “naked melancholy” Shetland Islands during the same years Benjamin Carvosso was in New South Wales. But Clarke was not a particularly good politician, and was hard put to protect the temperamental and contentious Dunn.

Despite his criticism of Conference autocracy Dunn was no raving radical, and the organization of Episcopal Methodism in the United States with its powerful bishops held some attraction for him. J.T. Slugg remembers him as a conservative, and in Manchester during the thirties his reputation was that of a staunch Tory who warned people to have nothing to do with politics in general and the Liberals in particular. His conflict with Bunting was not about the social or political organization of the nation or the empire, but the ecclesiastical and institutional organization of Methodism. He was opposed to the idea of the Wesleyans being controlled by what his biographer called “the Buntingite oligarchy.” Dunn, like so many Methodists, was an avid journalist, writer, and publisher, and he had been taught as a boy by Edward Budd, an Irish Wesleyan like Clarke, who became editor of that mouth-piece of Liberal Methodism the

37 J.T. Slugg, Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine, 10 (1886), 744

38 D.A. Gowland, Methodist Secessions: The Origins of Free Methodism in Three Lancashire Towns (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979), 124

39 Gowland, Methodist Secessions, 124
West Briton. His chief crime, prior to his refusal to legitimate what he thought the Flysheet witch-hunt, was to publish an independent Wesleyan newspaper – the *Wesleyan Banner and Revival Record*. As the name of his newspaper suggests he was a fervent revivalist and the pages were filled with incidents and examples of Pentecostal visitations in Britain, the Empire, and throughout the world. But Dunn's contemporary, George Smith of Camborne, described the newspaper as a reformist organ printed principally for local preachers, class leaders, Sunday school leaders and other lay leaders of the Society. "It was intended to defend the small minority of Wesleyan ministers who generally dissented from their brethren in the Conference," according to Smith, but mischievously combined that critique with the "revival intelligence" and "Sabbath-school information."

Dunn and Griffiths were also identified by the Conference party as among the chief British allies of James Caughey, an Irish-born American Methodist Revivalist. Caughey’s itinerancy through the 1840s carried him up the Atlantic seaboard, to

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41 Smith, *History*, 462.

42 Dunn’s paper the *Wesleyan Banner and Revival Record* was certainly friendly towards Caughey, and used his persecution to attack the Buntingites, but in Gregory’s *Sidelights* Dunn is quoted as saying he stood up to Caugheyism in Nottingham, *Sidelights on the Conflicts of Methodism during the Second Quarter of the Nineteenth Century, 1827-1852* (London: Cassell and Company Ltd., 1898), 408. Carwardine calls him a Caugheyite, *Transatlantic Revivalism*, 133. See also *Victorian Britain: Tradition* eds. Gerald Parson and James Richard Moore (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988) 85. Parson argues Caughey was a flashpoint for the clash between local revivalists and a centralizing clerical party.
Canada, and across the Atlantic to Britain just as Rundle was heading in the other direction. It was the same path Lorenzo Dow had followed at the turn of the century, and it resulted in similar headaches for the Conference. Caughey had arrived in Manchester in 1841, gone to Ireland for a year, and then crossed the Irish Sea back to Liverpool. He was invited by circuit-leaders there to circulate about their chapels but the superintendents and the Conference were getting nervous about the American. One of their great fears of the Conference party was that Caughey was inspiring local laymen to break with regular practice and start evangelizing on their own – much as William Carvosso had been doing in Cornwall for the two decades before his death. One minister complained Sheffield was rife with Caughey’s imitators, and if an end was not put to his movements, “the connexion would soon be overrun with irregular preachers.” But Caughey had enough lay and circuit support that he could launch a full-fledged revivalist tour of northern Methodism despite Conference opposition.

Over the next six years he visited the major Methodist centers of Birmingham, Leeds, Hull, Sheffield and York, as well as innumerable smaller circuits, and in each place his meetings led to surges in declining or stagnant membership. He claimed over

43 Carwardine, Transatlantic Revivalism, 102-133
44 Carwardine, Transatlantic Revivalism, 129
45 Anonymous, A Brief Memoir of the Labours and a Vindication of the Character of the Rev. James Caughey (Sheffield: Chaloner, 1847), 25
46 Anonymous, A Brief Memoir, 111.
20,000 souls saved and 9,000 sanctified in his tour. One of his many stops was Nottingham. It was there where a young William Booth heard him preach in Samuel Dunn’s chapel. Booth later cited the two men, Caughey and Dunn, along with a rough Yorkshire revivalist named Isaac Marsden, as the chief inspiration for his own project in global revivalism, the Salvation Army. In 1846 the Conference President Atherton, with Bunting at his shoulder, finally made an effort to put an end to Caugheyism by requesting the American bishops to recall their errant preacher. It is no surprise that it was leading laymen, local preachers, and trustees that leapt to his defense when Atherton and Robert Newton, another Bunting friend, had Caughey excluded from Wesleyan pulpits. The Conference seethed with explosive energies but did yet erupt into open conflict. The crisis was postponed for a few years, but when schism came it followed the same lines of fracture as had the debate over the propriety of revival. The same ministers and trustees who defended the rights of lay and professional revivalists to transcend institutional boundaries and hierarchies, were the same ones who defended the rights of lay congregations against the authority of the Conference. One of the

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47 Norman H. Murdoch, The Origins of the Salvation Army (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994) 24-26. Dunn encouraged the young Booth to become a local preacher but he was later expelled. His association with Caughey and Dunn, his love of revivalism, and his resignation of his local preacher’s license being grounds enough in a time of crisis for the new minister to refuse him his class ticket.

48 Carwardine, Transatlantic Revivalism, 1131,
earliest of the Fly Sheets specifically addressed the issue of Caughey’s exclusion, and made of it an example of Conference despotism.49

Bunting and his colleagues were outraged by the Fly Sheets and spared no effort in trying to prove who precisely was behind them but they never did. At the Conference of 1849 when Bunting demanded Dunn to either admit or deny to being the author of the Fly Sheets without equivocation or explanation. Dunn replied that the Conference was refusing him the freedom of liberty of speech granted “to the meanest, lowest, basest criminal, in any civil court in the land.”50 Dunn and the others who refused to answer what they called the inquisition were shortly expelled.

After their expulsion Everett, Dunn, and Griffiths toured Britain speaking in their own defense and became a cause célèbre. Some twenty thousand copies of a pamphlet on the Flysheet Scandal by Benjamin Carvosso’s old Australian colleague the Rev. William Horton’s were sold, and when “the Three” spoke in London they filled Exeter Hall.51 Even the secular press took notice, and to the dismay of George Smith and other respectable Camborne Methodists they drew huge crowds throughout Cornwall.

Joseph Carvosso, Benjamin’s son and now a minister as well, was convalescing from a


50 Quoted in The United Presbyterian Magazine, Vol. 4, 1850, 113

serious illness in the southwest and wrote to a friend in the north that it was impossible
for outsiders to understand the degree of outrage and distress these events caused
among Cornish Methodists. A Wesleyan minister in Camborne, a former colleague of
Dunn’s met him on the street when he was touring, and could not bring himself to speak
to the man. The upheaval eventually reached clear across the Atlantic where the men
had many supporters. Dunn travelled to the United States where he received his Doctor
of Divinity, and began to describe himself as a minister of the Methodist Episcopal
Church – Caughey’s church. He eventually returned to Camborne to continue his
journalism, writing, and independent preaching.52

Benjamin Carvosso, just down the road from Camborne in Tuckingmill, and in
the autumn of his career, was horrified, and in 1851 he penned a private and furious
letter to Bunting.53 There should have been prayers and forgiveness instead of abject
pride said Carvosso.54 “One seventh of the connexion gone!” he wrote. “Three score
thousands Methodists cut off in a stroke!” He condemned Bunting’s autocratic and
“useless” methods of government, told him it meant nothing that the President and half
a dozen others could carry whatever point they liked at the annual conferences.
Carvosso blasted the institutional men; “those who depend on the conference for bread

53 Benjamin Carvosso to Jabez Bunting 30 June 1851, WMMS/SOAS MMS/1/442/118, Home Correspondence.
54 Carvosso to Bunting, 30 June 1851, WMMS/SOAS.
but have little talent are its slaves.” And he juxtaposed the official submissiveness of those men with their private and disheartened murmurings. He had been hearing complaints since long before the Fly Sheets were published, he informed Bunting. In Cornwall, he continued, things were very bad, and the poorest of the Cornish – “whose best earnings would scarcely keep your manufacturers from what they call “the starvation point”” – are the most disaffected, even if they loved Methodism too much to leave. It is a remarkable letter, written from the depths of despair but fortified by something like hope. Carvosso had seen the slow grinding away of those evangelical values he held dearest on the mill of political pragmatism and bureaucratic authority, yet he would not walk away.

“What a calamity is this!” he had written to Bunting, and one can’t help but wonder if he was thinking of more than the Connexion: if he was think of the miners miserable in the row housing of Camborne; of the Aborigines cleared off the land in New South Wales; the Tasmanians shot down in the bush; of the men he watched hanged by the score in Van Diemen’s Land. There were many thousands he had not reached who burned yet in hell; and many millions more who would be burning soon enough.55 Without an expansive, revivalist, and growing Methodism such people could not be reached, and Bunting’s retreat into respectability and safe conservatism must

55 Carvosso to Bunting, 30 June 1851, WMMS/SOAS.
have seemed a retreat from Arminianism towards Calvinism. Contrast Bunting’s penchant for preventive surgery with Caughey’s revivalist enthusiasm for growth:

Methodism, from the beginning, has been a system of aggression against the Devil and his works; let her keep to this, and she will multiply her numbers, and increase in both power and influence. Whenever and wherever she loses this distinguishing feature in her economy, she must dwindle into insignificance...It is not enough that Methodism is enabled to stand on the defensive, and hold her own...Acquisition should never be effaced from her banners. The devil’s territory must be invaded until earth and hell are aroused against her aggressive movements. Then, and not till then, shall Methodism be in the meridian glory of her usefulness.56

The frank evangelical imperialism of this revivalist psychology was better suited to men and women pursuing new opportunities in the colonies than those, like Bunting, who were so willing to cleave of offending arm, and pluck out the offending eye, in order to consolidate old gains in England. And Benjamin Carvosso’s surviving sons Baker Banks, Joseph Hobart and David Banks all left together for Australia in 1851 – the place their father described as their home. In 1853 his daughter Louisa married a Church of England clergyman and the two immediately left for Shanghai as missionaries. Only his daughter Jane was kind enough to wait until her father died in 1854 before she left for Australia.57


57 Personal communication, Miriam Smith.
Many years later a retired Wesleyan minister wrote of how he had found Benjamin hard at work in a Wesleyan chapel during a time when the local Methodists were torn apart by religious strife. 58 Much of the congregation had fallen away, wrote the journalist, many were too uncertain and nervous to venture to the services. Carvosso, who had once, the visitor remarked, said sharp things in a kind way to the convicts of Van Diemen’s Land had a different sort of a congregation now. There just a few quiet souls, mostly women, sitting here and there in the close, cold gloom of an austere old building. After the sermon the two men talked, finding the ways in which they were bound to each other by the “three-fold cord” of kinship, friendship and denomination.

William Carvosso had been a friend of the visitor’s father. The old man had even been there to see him preach his first sermon at Mylor. “Father Carvosso,” as William was called, had smiled his encouragements to the young preacher, and seemed to shine in the light of “an immortal Sabbath.” The son Benjamin, the journalist continued, “was a true Christian bishop,” indifferent to the denominational alliances of the villagers, “transparent,” and “one of the best devotional expositors I had ever heard – perhaps the best.”59 Such superlatives are not unheard of in evangelical tract writing, but they nonetheless give us a sense of Carvosso’s preoccupation with what his father called

58 “An Old Itinerant’s Story,” The Methodist Messenger for 1871 (1871), 162.

59 “Old Itinerant’s Story,” 163.
“soul work,” rather than Connexional politics. It is a striking image: a revivalist and a temperance enthusiast earnestly preaching in a deserted Cornish village to a half empty chapel of women.

Carvosso’s anonymous visitor certainly had no qualms about casting the pastor and his father as representative of an old and fading tradition, as holy fragments of a sacred history. But the violent schisms and the massive secessions which were a fundamental part of that history can barely be glimpsed through the blur of nostalgia. It is a whitewash. Carvosso had once said of revivals that often he had wished for less noise and confusion, but that the agony, sweat, and tears, were better than “lukewarmness.” And as he prepared to die he reflected in his journal that one had to walk past the portals of hell to get heaven. He meditated on the Wesleyan aphorism that “Truth lies within a hair’s breadth of Antinominianism.” He remained committed to the dangerous chaos and disreputable clamour of Pentecostal ecstasies to the last.

In the final few weeks of his life Benjamin Carvosso finally gave up working his circuit and retired to Camborne to die. He diligently recorded his thoughts on the process, and the deep depression with which he struggled as he faced his inevitable death. He was overcome with skepticism and doubt, he even felt himself drifting

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towards “the atheism of the continent.” 62 “A gloomy cloud of infidelity chilled me,” he wrote, “All was dark and silent – God seemed inexorable; I was just sinking when a sound broke from the highest heavens in my ear, as if Jesus himself spoke with an audible voice across the gloomy profound – “ARE NOT FIVE SPARROWS SOLD FOR TWO FARTHINGS, AND NOT ONE OF THEM FORGOTTEN BY GOD?” 63 The effect, wrote Carvosso, was electric. “All the clouds, and shades, and film of modern atheism were swept into the abyss of love. All the struggle was sanctified.” 64

6.2 The Bishops of Botany Bay: Evangelical Networks and Colonial Mobility

A surge of free migration in the forties and fifties had swept Wesleyan Methodism from out of the English provinces clear across the globe to colonial Australia. It carried it from its perches in the settlements on the coast, up the coves, bays, and rivers of the continent, and into the hinterland. Mission stations that had struggled to survive in New Zealand, Tonga, and Fiji, in the first third of the century were integrated into a rapidly growing regional economy. Lawry’s initial missionary and commercial venture to Tonga for example, had been parlayed by his successors, their Tahitian assistants, a booming coconut oil industry, and a creative and pragmatic

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62 Blencowe, Faithful Pastor, 359.

63 Blencowe, Faithful Pastor, 359.

64 Blencowe, Faithful Pastor, 360.
King into the only Methodist monarchy in the world.\textsuperscript{65} New missions were provided with close logistical and personnel support which they had never had before. Wesleyan ministers such as Lawry and Carvosso had once tried to defiantly hold out against the encroachment of an officious Calvinist determinism in the backstreets and backwoods of a penal-colony. But now with a sizeable, free, and growing population of Methodists in the colonies they could be re-imagined as founding heroes of a Methodist empire in the South Seas. That Empire was ruled as much – indeed more – by lay committees and local ministers in Sydney, Melbourne, and Hobart, than by the Connexional leadership who occupied the mission-house in London. Nor were the local Wesleyans merely a respectful missionary adjunct to the Church of England as they had been in the aftermath of Lawry’s summons from the Pacific to the WMMS court in England.\textsuperscript{66}

Things had changed since the days when Marsden and his creatures could expect to have Wesleyan missionaries reposted, recalled, and expelled if they were not suitably deferential to the Established clergy. The Tasman Sea – bounded on the west by Australia, on the east by New Zealand, and crowned in the north by a string of Polynesian islands – seemed to pious Arminian optimists as if it was on the verge of


becoming a Methodist lake. By 1854 the Antipodal Wesleyans had cut loose the apron strings by which they had been tied to metropolitan Conference and formed an Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Conference of their own. Even the name betrays the expansive ambitions of the community’s leaders.67

When the Carvosso family had first arrived in the region in the twenties there had been a tight-knit collection of evangelicals busy at work, scuttling back and forth across colonial borders and natural boundaries. By the fifties the web which the missionary pioneers of the first quarter century had started weaving had been reinforced by a steady influx of settlers from Britain. The new Methodists were part of a great wave of men and women had begun to outnumber the convict population even before the spike of migration between 1837 and 1842 and which crested after the discovery of gold.68 What Joseph Hobart and Baker Banks Carvosso, and their younger brother David Banks, found waiting for them in the colonies in 1851 was social safety net of remarkably tight and sturdy weave. It was comprised of what their father on occasion described as the threefold bond of kinship, friendship and religion. What follows is a description of those networks and bonds, one which should give a sense of how much more the Carvosso children were sustained in their colonial adventures by a community

67 Cable, “Protestant Problems,” 125.

68 Brian Murphy The Other Australia: Experiences of Migration (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 9, 15; P.M.G. Harris, The History of Human Populations: Forms of Growth and Decline (Westport CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001), 81.
of the sort that their parents, or for that matter, their cousin Robert Rundle in Rupert’s Land, had not known in theirs.

Walter Lawry, whom the Carvosso boys had known as children in Australia and youths in Cornwall, was still in New Zealand when they arrived – where he had been since 1843. But he was shortly to retire to the evangelical arcadia of Parramatta. His son Henry Hassall Lawry, who had been a schoolmate of their now deceased brothers William and Benjamin at Kingswood had been trained as a printer in England and was a missionary to the Maori. Henry’s daughter Hephzibah married into the increasingly influential and wealthy Waterhouse clan (more on them below) – who also had Cornish connections. Walter Lawry’s eldest daughter Elizabeth Anna had married Francis Oakes whose parents had been Duff missionaries and who later became a member of parliament. The youngest Lawry, Mary Australia, had married John Aldred, a Wesleyan missionary to New Zealand. Walter Lawry’s sister had migrated from

69 Sydney Morning Herald, August 3, 1880.


71 Colonial Times, June 12, 1849. In a double marriage in Auckland reminiscent of his participation in a triple marriage twenty-five years previously in Parramatta Walter Lawry preformed the marriage between his son Henry Hassall to Hephzibah Forsaith and his daughter Mary Australia to John Aldred on the same day.
Cornwall to New Zealand in 1852; her son John Vercoe was a WMMS missionary in Tonga, and her daughter married the Auckland lawyer and financier Thomas Russell.\textsuperscript{72}

Lawry was not only the patriarch of a kinship network that extended across the Tasman and about its littoral, but of a sizeable contingent of other Cornish missionaries as well. James and Jane Buller who migrated from Cornwall to Australia in 1835 and were later Wesleyan missionaries in New Zealand named their son, who became a prominent barrister, amateur ornithologist and naturalist, Walter Lawry Buller.\textsuperscript{73}

Thomas Adams, and the printer William Woon, Cornish Wesleyan missionaries in New Zealand and Tonga, were also closely associated with Lawry.\textsuperscript{74} Woon wrote letters home to Benjamin Carvosso in which he discussed their mutual friend; his happiness and popularity in the colony, and a contentedness hinted at in his cheerful comment to Mrs Woon, when he welcomed her to Wellington, “You have grown skinny and I have grown fat.” In 1856, four years after the Carvosso boys had arrived, Lawry – the grand old man of Pacific Wesleyanism – retired to Parramatta where his and Benjamin Carvosso’s old colleagues Ralph Mansfield and William Walker were still living.\textsuperscript{75}


\textsuperscript{74} Marshall, “Walter Lawry,” 3,

Mansfield had resigned as a missionary in 1828 after years of conflict with the WMMS committee. After his first wife died he married Lucy, the daughter of the Duff missionary William Shelley, which made him the brother-in-law of future Parramatta MPs Francis and George Oakes, and of Lawry’s daughter Elizabeth. He was for a while editor of the *Sydney Gazette* until 1832 when Howe’s widow got rid of him for mismanagement. He continued dabbling in the industry for the next ten years but was also involved in the Australian Gaslight Company, the Australian Steam Conveyance Company, the Sydney Floating Bridge Company and the Royal exchange Company. In 1841 he became the editor of the newly established *Sydney Morning Herald* and a moderate voice for *laissez faire* principles. Another colleague of Benjamin Carvosso’s from his Australian sojourn still living in Parramatta was William Walker – the first Wesleyan missionary formally sent out to the Aborigines. Walker, like Lawry, had married into the Hassall family and wealth, and like Mansfield had resigned from the WMMS in 1828. Walker devoted himself to ranching but remained an active Methodist, preaching as a layman to the sighs, sobs, and cries of Parramatta’s first revival in 1840.


78 John Watsford, *Glorious Gospel Triumphs as seen in my Life and work in Fiji and Australia* (London: Charles Kelly, 1901), 22.
Benjamin Carvosso’s colleagues, the ones who had married into established local families and either stayed in Australia, or managed to scrabble their way back there, were firmly ensconced in a network of Wesleyan families that had access to land, capital, media, and, increasingly, political power. The WMMS and all its fund-raising, organizational efforts, and metropolitan politicking may have made such social and geographical mobility possible, but the secretaries had little control over the colonial developments their evangelical ambitions contributed to. In the tens and twenties the various missionary families of the region had lived and worked in the shadows cast by the Established Church and the pastoral elite. On the whole they had been content to suffer the generosities of colonial chaplain Samuel Marsden, but by mid-century they were clearly becoming more active participants in the making of their own social and economic futures. And a critical factor in this growing autonomy was the migration of so many Methodists disaffected with the state of affairs back home in Britain.

The Waterhouse family for example, whose older boys had gone to school at Kingswood with the older Carvosso boys and Henry Hassall Lawry, were among those recent arrivals to Australia. Their patriarch, the Rev. John Waterhouse was a Yorkshire Methodist who had been in Penzance during the revivals of the early 1820s and was a proponent of revivalism.\(^79\) The family moved to Hobart Town in 1839 and worshipped

\(^{79}\) George Clement Boase and William Prideaux Courtnay Bibliotecha Cornubiensis: P-Z (London: Longmans, Greed, Reader and Dyer, 1878), 854. According to Boase and Clement Waterhouse and George Smith were engaged in a published controversy over the propriety of revivals with a Mr. Jeffry of Newlyn in 1824.
in the chapel, and with the community, that Benjamin Carvosso had worked so hard to establish. Waterhouse imagined the Bass Straits, the Tasman Sea, and the South Pacific as analogous to the Mediterranean of the New Testament, and his own role as a travelling *episkipos* (overseer or superintendent).\(^8\) His first tour was to New Zealand shortly after his family’s arrival in Hobart Town, the second a half year later was almost a full circumnavigation of the Tasman Sea that took him from Van Diemen’s Land to New South Wales to the Friendly Islands and Fiji. He died just two years later in 1842 but his family remained in the colonies. Back in England the Cornish revivalist and Carvosso family friend Samuel Dunn, who had not yet fallen entirely out of favour with the Conference, preached, and later published a memorial sermon at Waterhouse’s home chapel.\(^8\)

Waterhouse’s son Jabez was apprenticed to a printer in Hobart and eventually, with his brother Rowand Skipsey Waterhouse, purchased the premises and equipment.\(^8\) By twenty Jabez Waterhouse was a local preacher and missionary to the convicts, and in


\(^8\) Samuel Dunn, *The Missionary of Australia and Polynesia; or the Importance of Entire Devotedness to God; Illustrated from the Character and Labours of the Late Rev. John Waterhouse; a Sermon Preached and Published at the Request of the Stewards, Leaders and Trustees in Halifax* (London: Mason, 1842).

1842 became a professional minister. He returned to Van Diemen’s Land in 1847, essentially taking over Carvosso’s old circuits before moving to Adelaide in the fifties where he succeeded as a minister and a businessman. Jabez’ son Gustavus married Mary Jane Vickery, the daughter of the Methodist plutocrat and free trade politician Ebenezer Vickery who had made a fortune in ranching, mining, steel manufacture and shipping.83

Joseph Waterhouse, another of the Rev. John Waterhouse’s boys, had moved to Adelaide in 1846. After serving as a local preacher there he was ordained as a missionary and sent to Fiji. He worked in Fiji until 1864, and again from 1874-1878. In the sixties Joseph had argued against the cessation of the island to Britain and, like Walter Lawry, he had fought hard for a system of indigenous teachers. His theology was revivalist like Lawry’s and his father’s. He practiced a Methodism he hoped would startle “Hell itself by its aggressive movements.” One of his colleagues described Fijian Methodism as being as noisy as a “Cornish revival.” In Tonga as well, where the mission Lawry had started decades earlier had been spearheaded by Fijian lay preachers, the Wesleyan celebrations were compared to a “Cornish or Yorkshire love feast.”84 A third brother Samuel was educated entirely in Australia, and was in the

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84 William Reed, Recent Wanderings in Fiji (London: T. Woolmer, 1888), 49; Wesleyan Missionary Notices (London: WMMS, 1861), 194
fifties appointed first as a “bush missionary” to the rabble of diggers at the Alexandria goldfields. He later continued his efforts in Fiji where his brother was already working.\textsuperscript{85} The revivalist impulse to include all humanity within the bounds of the Christian Church was driving yet another generation of evangelicals to transcend social and racial boundaries.

It was however George Marsden Waterhouse who was the most prominent of the Waterhouse brothers.\textsuperscript{86} After working for Manchester House Drapery Establishment in Hobart, owned and run by his elder brother Rowland, George migrated across the straits to South Australia in 1843 where he set up on his own.\textsuperscript{87} In 1851 he was elected to the colonial legislature on a liberal platform, and again in 1860 as a free trade ideologue and activist, before becoming the Premier of the young colony from 1861 to 1863. These were great heights indeed for the son of a man who had preached revival to the smugglers, wreckers, and miners of West Cornwall. But he left office under a cloud – evading questions about a conflict between his interests in the mining concern at Moonta and those of his larger constituency. In 1869 he migrated to New Zealand where he raised sheep, and was elected to Parliament on a similar platform to that

\textsuperscript{85} \textit{The Wesleyan Missionary Notices}, Vol. 10 (1852), 114.


\textsuperscript{87} \textit{ADB}, “Waterhouse, George.”
which had supported him in South Australia: extended suffrage, Bible-reading in the schools, disestablishment of the Church of England, and free trade. 88 Briefly Prime Minister in a second British colony, from 1872 to 1873, Waterhouse ended his political career as a wealthy capitalist with business interests in New Zealand, Australia, and the South Seas. In his time he had lobbied vigorously for a free global market not only in the Antipodes, but in Britain and the United States as well. His vision was of a liberal and commercial world in which his non-conformist and free trade values were sure to eventually reign. “I detest the idea of being an inhabitant of a parish,” he once declaimed in true Wesleyan fashion, “With all the narrow views of those who never look beyond the borders of a parish. Let us look at matters from a colonial and not from a narrow provincial point of view.” 89

In 1851 there were already Carvossos in Australia as well. Samuel Carvosso (1814-1874), the son of Benjamin’s older brother William, was there when his cousins arrived. Samuel was born in Mylor in 1814, the same village in which William Carvosso had died and Robert Rundle had been born. He had married Deborah Carvosso’s youngest sister Louisa, and so was their uncle as well as a cousin. In the late forties Samuel and Louisa had moved to Adelaide from Truro where he had been a


coachbuilder. Samuel was a successful businessman by the time his young relatives arrived – he built coaches, agricultural equipment and – in good Cornish fashion – the steam engines which were used as pumps for firefighting. He was respectable enough to become a councilman in 1861.\textsuperscript{90} An active Wesleyan layman he was on the numerous committees and societies wealthy Methodists so often were. His daughter Elizabeth Ann married John Leggoe, the son of a tin miner from West Cornwall, and they worked as missionaries in Fiji from 1868 to 1886.\textsuperscript{91} Another of his daughters married Benjamin Rounsevell, the son of William, a Cornish farmer who had migrated to South Australia in 1839.\textsuperscript{92} Benjamin Rounsevell had interests in a number of businesses, but particularly ranching. He was a free trade politician; twice the mayor of Glenelg; occasionally the colony treasurer; and a commissioner of public works.\textsuperscript{93}

Thus the Carvossos found a dense network of family, commerce, and denomination waiting for them in Australia. This network that tied the mainland colonies of New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia to Van Diemen’s Land across the Bass Straits and New Zealand, Fiji and Tonga across the Tasman Sea. And these networks stretched even farther, if we should choose to pursue them back across the

\textsuperscript{90} Pascoe, \textit{A History of Adelaide}, 140.

\textsuperscript{91} \textit{The South Australian Register}, March 28, 1872 ; \textit{The Advertiser}, October 19, 1899 .


\textsuperscript{93} http://www.auspostalhistory.com/articles/807.shtml
Indian and Atlantic Oceans to include English provinces like Cornwall and Yorkshire. They even leapt across the Pacific to the Canadas, British Columbia, and the United States. This corner of that global network, the one that lay across the Tasman, had begun forming with the flight of the Duff missionaries from Fiji to Sydney in the 1790s. They formed alliances with, and intermarried redeemed emancipists, newly arrived free immigrants, and successive waves of missionaries, to create an affluent and influential class of evangelical families. They had their own newspapers and had parlayed positions in key institutions such as the prisons, female factories, orphanages and schools into considerable political influence. Even from as superficial a sketch of such networks as this it is possible to see ideological patterns emerging; the commitment to free trade; to nonconformity in general and Wesleyan Methodism in particular; to education as a marker of commercial and social success; and to a set of universal values that were as exportable as the commodities on which the colonial economy depended. It was this world of antipodal Methodism, a world that in many ways was a realization of the aspirations so typical of the Carvossos’ Cornwall, that Baker Banks, Joseph Hobart and David Banks made their home.

The Carvossos’ boys had arrived in Victoria just in time to witness the beginning of the gold rush. It was also the period when colonial migration, agriculture expansion, and increasing settlement was beginning to press severely on the local Aborigine
population as it had in New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land. It was once more evangelicals, and in particular Methodists, that tried to mediate between the settlers and the Aborigines. In the aftermath of the Black War George Augustus Robinson – that most famous member of Benjamin Carvosso’s Hobart Town congregation – had rounded up the remaining Tasmanians and deposited them on Flinders Island in the Bass Straits. He had hoped isolating them from degenerative colonial influences would make it easier to remake them as civilized and Christian subjects of the Crown.

Robinson, unlike revivalists such as the Carvossos and Rundle, had pegged his hopes for the Aborigine amelioration on their slow civilization, rather than instant Christianization. His Arminianism was muted to say the least – not for him the lightning strike of instant conversion, nor the promiscuous mingling of class and race in the chapel and the marketplace. But Robinson’s approach was more compatible with the orderly Calvinism of Church of England evangelicals, and the organizational demands of governmental bureaucracy. In 1836 he was offered an appointment as the protector of the Aboriginals in South Australia but he turned down the job. In 1838 he

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95 The Morning Bulletin 2 August 1954. In a retrospective article on Joseph Orton, Robinson is identified as one of those responsible for establishing Methodism in Van Diemen’s Land as an autonomous district from New South Wales.

was offered the same position at Port Phillip for more money and he accepted.\footnote{ADB, s.v. “Robinson, George Augustus (1791-1866),” accessed March 10, 2012, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/robinson-george-augustus-2596} He left Flinders Island in 1839 taking a small group of Tasmanians with him. He hoped their presence would help in the reconciliation of mainland Aborigines.

The purpose of the Protectors was defined with admirable clarity in the \textit{Report from the Select Committee on Aborigines}.\footnote{See Alan Lester and Fae Dussart, “Trajectories of Protection: Protectorates of Aborigines in Early 19th Century Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand,” \textit{New Zealand Geographer}, 64 (2008): 205-220; Nettelbeck, “The Principle of Aboriginal Protection,” 396-411.} With the model of “the Protector of the Slaves” in mind the Committee had proposed that these agents of metropolitan good-will should limit the inevitable damage inflicted on Aboriginal peoples by British colonialism. The Protectors were intended to gather ethnographic knowledge of the Aborigines of New Holland; establish good political relations with them; determine “what species of industry” might prove most attractive to them; and then “find them such employment” as best suited them.\footnote{Report from the Select Committee on Aborigines, House of Commons, 26 June 1837, HRV, vol. @A: 68. Marie Hansen Fels, \textit{I Succeeded Once: The Aboriginal Protectorate on the Mornington Peninsula, 1839-1840}, (Victoria: ANU Press, 2011), 17.} There is nothing in that mandate that necessitates a quick conversion to Christianity but most of Robinson’s first assistant Protectors were, like himself, Wesleyan Methodists.\footnote{Mitchell, \textit{In Good Faith}, 31. James Boyce, \textit{1835: The Founding of Melbourne and the Conquest of South Australia} (Collingwood, VIC.: Black Inc., 2011) 117. Boyce has three of the four as former Wesleyan schoolmasters,}
James Dredge, for example, had been appointed on the recommendation of Jabez Bunting, and eventually resigned from the government position to become a lay missionary for the WMMS among the Aborigines at Geelong. Edward Stone Parker, who in London had once hoped to become a Wesleyan minister, became a leading laymen and local preacher of the Port Phillip Methodist community. William Thomas once wrote that he had really wanted to be a missionary, and spent much of his energy preaching to the people in their own language. WMMS missionaries Francis Tuckfield (a former fisherman and miner from Germoe in Cornwall), and Carvosso’s successor in Van Diemen’s Land Joseph Orton, were also committed to protecting the Aborigines from land-loss and settler exploitation. Orton, who had been a missionary to Jamaica in the 1820s and been imprisoned for preaching to the slaves after sunset, was one of the earliest residents of the colony. He had accompanied John Batman to Port Phillip in 1836 and was a vocal participant in debates about colonial Aboriginal policy from the day they began.

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102 Fels, I Succeeded Once, 6.

103 Mitchell, In Good Faith, 33.

104 The Morning Bulletin, August 2, 1954. The article also mentions that Batman had attended the Wesleyan Sunday school in Parramatta as a child.
Despite their common origins there are in the careers of both the Methodist activists, and in the language of Select Committees Report, hints of a disentanglement of colonial Aborigines policy from purposively evangelical missionary and philanthropic societies.\textsuperscript{105} There was a tendency at work here, perhaps, towards the ideological and institutional separation of church and state that reflects the larger imperial trend towards the disestablishment of the Church of England from colonial state. Philanthropy and missions had been a largely unified field under colonial chaplains like Marsden two decades earlier, and it was really only after the arrival of the Methodists that it began to fracture into denominational fiefdoms. Orton for one argued strenuously against the formal amalgamation of religious missions and a secular protectorate. He insisted it was vital that missionaries must not be “in anywise shackled” by their relationship with the government – an attitude that echoes the troubled relations of the WMMS missionaries in Rupert’s Land with the HBC authorities, and that of Lawry, Mansfield and Carvosso with the official chaplains of New south Wales.\textsuperscript{106} Nonetheless in these early years of settlement in Victoria and South Australia local missionaries such as Tuckfield and Orton, metropolitan societies such as the Aborigines Protection Society and the WMMS, and the British and Colonial governments, all hoped that their

\textsuperscript{105} This tension between the aims of a secular government and evangelical religion in the protectorate is explored in length by Mitchell, \textit{In Good Faith}.

\textsuperscript{106} Mitchell, \textit{In Good Faith}, 45,
cooperation would mean not only better relations between settlers and the Aborigines, but facilitate the Christianization of the latter. This was not to be the case. One gets a clear sense from the contemporary newspapers of not simply settler opposition to such philanthropic projects, but of genuine hostility. And violence towards the indigenous inhabitants of the region remained an endemic problem.

The first judicial hanging in the history of Victoria was of two of the Tasmanians who had accompanied Robinson to the colony. Bob and Jack, as they were called in the press, had been found guilty of murdering two whalers on a nearby beach, and were hanged before a huge and cheerful crowd on January 20th, 1842. The incident was reminiscent of the hangings of Dick and Jack in Van Diemen’s Land. The Tasmanians refused to play their parts well, and the hangman botched theirs; the two men died badly, slowly strangled; twisting and writhing before the audience; while local Aborigines watched from the edges of the white mob. The miserable deaths of these conciliated Tasmanians could be understood by colonists as a symbol of Aborigine irredeemability. Robinson had, after all, brought the two men across the Bass Straits as

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107 Edmonds, Urbanizing Frontiers, 35.

108 A wealth of evidence for this can be found in Penelope Edmonds Urbanizing Frontier – to provide just one of many examples she quotes the Sydney Morning Herald as calling them “the whining crew who infest the colony,” 124.

evidence of his method’s success. And yet there they were, hanging from the gallows at the edge of town.

The efforts of the imperial government and philanthropic organizations to diminish frontier conflict were not particularly successful, and there is a considerable literature concerned with the humanitarian disaster that was Australian colonialism. The settlers continued to rely heavily on violence to assert their control of the land, and the Aborigines stubbornly refused efforts to transform them into colonial subjects. However loud the voice of the evangelical lobby in London, and committed the local Wesleyans, they certainly did not speak for everyone. In 1849 the Port Phillip protectorate was abolished. But Methodist efforts to save the Aborigines from both extinction and damnation continued apace.¹¹⁰

Joseph Hobart Carvosso, as a young Wesleyan minister, had longed to go to West Africa as a missionary. He was assigned by the WMMS to Jamaica in 1850 instead, and then had an illness dash his dreams entirely. But the Methodist community of Port Phillip provided him with second chance. In January of 1854 the British Wesleyan

minister Robert Young reported that Carvosso was teaching at government school for
the natives at Parker’s old station of Loddon.111

Young was in Australia on behalf of the home conference to investigate the
feasibility of uniting the Wesleyan missions to Polynesia, New Zealand, and Australia
into a single conference autonomous from the British Wesleyans.112 He was a former
missionary to Jamaica and Nova Scotia, and most recently a chairman of the Penzance
District in which both Carvosso and Waterhouse had worked. He had ensured the
stability of the circuit during the turmoil of the Fly Sheet scandals, and was something of
a Conference favorite, called on frequently for difficult political work. He was a
proponent of revivalism – having written a study of the phenomenon in 1844 – but of a
revivalism that was closely controlled by the ministers, and not that which was driven
by destabilizing lay enthusiasms and ambitions.113

Young’s attitudes towards the Aborigines were not particularly positive. “I have
never previously seen such degraded and loathsome specimens of human nature,” he
told readers in the book he wrote about his circumnavigation of the globe, but, he

111 Robert Young, The Southern World: Journal of a Deputation from the Wesleyan Conference to Australia and
Polynesia including notices of a visit to the Gold-Fields (London: Hamilton, Adams and Co., 1855), 405-408.

112 ADB, s.v. “Young, Robert (1796-1865),” accessed March 10, 2012,
http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/young-robert-4907

113 For a biographical sketch and description of his methods see Bebbington, Victorian Revivals, 96-97.
ventured, “The Word and the Spirit can cause even such dry bones to live.”\textsuperscript{114} What he called the deep mental and moral degradation of the natives was a formidable obstacle to their Christianization, but he allowed it was the baneful influence of colonization that was the greatest problem facing the missionaries.\textsuperscript{115} They themselves acknowledged failure, but blamed their lack of success on the withering influence of the white man. Despite his pessimism Young nonetheless included Joseph Carvosso’s three-page response to his queries. Carvosso had told him that while the adults were for the most part “exceedingly dull” the children whom he taught showed great promise. Some of the young men on the station who had received agricultural training had even started farming. As for their conversion to Christianity Carvosso reported it proceeded very slowly, but that their limited “acquaintance with scriptural truth” exerted a positive influence on their character. There was reason to hope for their futures – both temporal and eternal, according to Carvosso, but so long as they degraded by European vices, and hindered by their old customs, there would be no great revivals or mass conversions. In 1861 an editorial of the radically inclined Empire also called attention to Carvosso’s efforts. The editorial was concerned with philanthropic duty and the racial organization of an Anglo-Saxon empire. Carvosso’s successes at what was called the Mount Franklin industrial school were recognized by the writer as proof of the “plastic nature of the

\textsuperscript{114} Young, The Southern World, 61.

\textsuperscript{115} Young, The Southern World, 403.
young Aboriginal mind,” and their capacity to acquire, with training, “a high degree of
culture.”116

The Mount Franklin industrial school at Loddon where Carvosso worked was
run by Parker, and it was where the former Assistant Protector had established his
family’s homestead.117 After the Protectorate had been discontinued Parker had
managed to acquire a pastoral license, and leased the land and the station from the
government on the understanding he would continue working towards the amelioration
of the Aborigines condition. Parker at the time had become increasingly involved in the
politics of colonial education. He was appointed Inspector of the Denominational
School Board from 1857 to 1862. But despite his other duties he kept the school running
with government funding.118 It was not shut down until the Aboriginal people residing
on his land were removed to Coranderrk in 1864 – but by then Carvosso had long since
left.119

In 1856 we find him hundreds of miles north, giving a speech to the Moreton Bay
Aborigines Friends Society in another new colony, that of Queensland. In that speech he
gives a considerably more optimistic account of Aboriginal potentiality than found in

116 The Empire, September 16, 1861.
118 Holst, “Save the People,”118
119 Holst, “Save the People,”117
the material published by Young. He had lived with Aborigines, he told his audience, travelled with them, tended them while dying, and buried them when dead. It was his conviction that they were fully capable of receiving religious instruction, and would reward any expense or exertion devoted to their civilization and Christianization. In good evangelical fashion he gave the audience accounts of both living and death bed conversions. And while he ends his account by urging the establishment of a school for Aboriginal youth, his narrative sounds less like that of a government teacher than an itinerant missionary. It is reminiscent in fact, of his Cousin Robert Rundle’s experiences on the high prairie – and begs the question of where it was he had been between Mount Franklin and Moreton Bay. After his speech a Rev. Ridley, the Society’s missionary to the local Aborigines, recommended Mr. Carvosso, who had only recently arrived in their community, be hired to assist him in his work.

Two years later Joseph Carvosso was no longer a missionary’s assistant. He was the principal of the Brisbane Classical and Commercial School, married to an Emma Fox, and living in a comfortable four bedroom house. In 1861 his young family moved to Gladstone – as suitable name as any for an outpost of the Victorian Empire – where he became master of the national school. It was from there that he wrote a letter to the Governor of Queensland, proposing that a school be established for Aborigines “not

120 Empire, March 31, 1856.

121 The Argus, February 23, 1858.
only where the blacks are numerous but also in a neighborhood which they have long regarded as one of their homes,” and that the “ulterior object sought to be secured in the education of the native youths should be their subsequent settlement as small farmers in the vicinity of the institution.”122 This dream of reconstructing the displaced people of the Empire as yeoman farmers was a vision remarkably similar to Rundle’s plans for Pigeon Lake fifteen years earlier, and of his father Benjamin’s hopes for an Aboriginal agricultural institute when he stepped off the boat in New South Wales in the early twenties. Joseph Carvosso died in 1863, shortly after he had written the letter, just on the other side of forty, and far from finished a full colonial career.123

By late fifties Joseph’s brother Baker had made his way from Melbourne to “the Cornish Settlement” at Bathurst. At Bathurst he joined a contingent of Cornish Methodists which included William Tom, the farmer whose find triggered the gold rush.124 What little we have of Baker’s own words suggests he was very comfortable as a part of a self-consciously expansive, non-conformist, upwardly-mobile, and aggressively reformist middle-class evangelicalism. He was, like his father back home, an enthusiastic member of the temperance movement. During the fifties he published

122 Letter from JH Carvosso, Master of the Gladstone National School, 13 August 1861, Queensland State Archive M/film Z5609
123 The Courier, August 3, 1863.
letters in both the *Empire* and the *Bathurst Free Press* in which he proposed that New South Wales pass a law like that recently passed in Maine which prohibited the sale of alcohol except for “medicinal and mechanical purposes.” In 1868 he was also a committee member of the Bathurst Australian Wesleyan Missionary Society, and making speeches at their anniversary meeting. He and his fellow members encouraged each other to take inspiration from the efforts of Dr. Livingstone in Africa, and to exert themselves all the more in the South Seas. They celebrated the unity of humanity, and rejoiced at the mingling of imperial, commercial, and evangelical interests. At the end of the meeting Carvosso stood up and declared there was no greater work than that which sought the salvation of fellow-creatures “whose faces were black, but hearts white.”

The dream of a multi-racial Christian commonwealth was still alive and well it seems, at least in certain segments of colonial Australia. And a few weeks later a fellow committee member oversaw Baker’s appointment as the master of Bathurst’s brand new National School.

He had arrived in Bathurst in the middle of the gold rush boom. It was a period in which Methodism flourished, there was even a Cornish-style revival after which

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126 *Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal*, June 26, 1858.

127 *Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal*, July 17, 1858.
seven new Wesleyan chapels built in the region, and all without incurring debt.\textsuperscript{128}

Perhaps the Bathurst Wesleyan Missionary Committee members of that hopeful age can be forgiven their optimism for the future of humanity, their presumption of a place in its vanguard, and for heartily applauding a complimentary speech made by a visiting Wesleyan missionary from South Africa. The missionary reflected on “the rising importance of Bathurst – the metropolis of the Western District.” He approved of the delight the people felt at seeing a new bank replace the prison as the principal building in the town, and talked of how proud they should be that like the people of America, they were of British birth, part of a country not only “foremost in wealth, grandeur and political power,” and also “in the van of civil and religious freedom.”\textsuperscript{129} A Rev. S. Wilkinson observed at the same meeting that no institution was dearer to his heart than that of foreign missions, and how wonderful was their promise of uniting humanity in its common destiny. The recent failure of the Niger expedition in Africa he continued, provided proof that “mere philanthropy was unequal to the task of subduing the barbarian” and that “the gospel must precede all efforts to subjugate and humanize the children of nature.”\textsuperscript{130}

\textsuperscript{128} Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal, November 5, 1900.

\textsuperscript{129} Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal, March 15, 1851.

\textsuperscript{130} Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal, March 15, 1851.
In 1862 Baker married Eliza Vines, the daughter of Uriah Evenis.\textsuperscript{131} That the marriage of a school teacher and temperance activist in a mining town was noticed by both the \textit{Empire} and the \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} was probably due to the fact that he was the son of the “the late Rev. Benjamin Carvosso.” Such attention speaks to the continuing currency of that name in the circles of those Methodists responsible for creating public history of their presence in the Antipodes.\textsuperscript{132} And the members of those circles took care of their own. Two years later Baker Carvosso was invited to take charge of the Wesleyan model school in Sydney by the Rev. William Curnow. This was another instance of how Cornish and Wesleyan networks facilitated Baker’s progress through colonial society.\textsuperscript{133}

Curnow was originally from St. Ives, Cornwall, one of Benjamin Carvosso’s many ministerial stops, and had come to Australia in 1854 on the same ship as the man who was to be Baker’s minister in Bathurst, William Kelynack.\textsuperscript{134} Curnow and Kelynack, together with the Rev. Joseph Horner Fletcher, the son of a missionary to the Windward Islands in the Caribbean during the twenties, and a classmate of the older, deceased,

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\textsuperscript{131} \textit{Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal}, September 20, 1862.
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\textsuperscript{132} \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, September 20, 1862; \textit{Empire}, September 22, 1862.
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\textsuperscript{133} \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, July 10, 1866; \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, July 13, 1866; \textit{Empire}, July 14, 1866.
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Carvosso boys from Kingswood, were co-editors of the official organ of the Australian Wesleyan Methodist Conference the *Christian Guardian and Wesleyan Record*. But Baker’s good fortune did not last, and he died only hours after arriving in Sydney to start his new work. Once more the newspapers made reference to his Methodist bloodlines – this time both to Benjamin who had helped build the first Wesleyan chapel in Sydney and to his more famous grandfather William – but they had little to say about poor Baker. More important to the newspapers than a dead forty-year old teacher was the opportunity to build up an Australian history in which evangelical and international Protestantism played a crucial role.

In 1886 when Baker’s fellow missionary committee member the Rev. S. Wilkinson looked back to the period in Bathurst during which Carvosso had lived there he imagined it as a golden age of Australian Methodism. He recounted how he and Michael Walker, an Aboriginal Christian known as “Black Mick” who had been raised by Benjamin Carvosso’s colleague William Walker in Parramatta, had started a revival. “Its time we prayed for ourselves if this blackfellow is come to pray for us,” he recalled

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136 *The Maitland Mercury*, 10 July 1866.
the people saying. Soon “the whole circuit was all ablaze with the Holy Ghost,”
Wilkinson said, “In the Cornish settlement hardly an unconverted soul remained.”

6.3 Conclusion

In the second half of the Nineteenth Century there were revivalists operating in the
Australian colonies, and Fiji and Tahiti for that matter, who were both highly conscious
of racial differences, and sought to transcend them. Their discursive and ritual practices
were much the same as they had been in Cornwall, in Lancashire, Yorkshire, New
England, and the Canadas, and are evidence of the transformation of a universalizing
revivalism from a transatlantic into a global phenomenon. But their assumptions about
human nature and its relationship to imperial politics were neither unchallenged nor
unproblematic. Even in the pages of the Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal, the same
editor who published reports on Sunday School and Missionary committees, could warn
readers that while Chinese miners were arming themselves, and local women drowned
their babies out of fear of starvation, “pro-Mongolian” politicians and maudlin
philanthropists were forming committees to ensure “nigger babies” received coral tooth-
cutters.\textsuperscript{138} Even the Rev. Wilkinson treated the subjugation and civilization of the
world’s population by European Protestant powers as something to be taken for
granted. And Young’s comments on the Aborigines do not hint at his sense of fraternity

\textsuperscript{137} Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal, December 11, 1887.

\textsuperscript{138} Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal, March 16, 1861.
with them but of superiority and at the very least unconscious hostility. Such attitudes may make the glory of a revivalist like Black Mick seem all the more spectacular, in the same way the degradation of the sinner makes their redemption all the more inspiring, but they also show us how racist ideologies can be imported into the reviver project.

It is also useful to remind ourselves that the very processes of imperialism and colonization which the Carvossos criticized, and whose cruelty they sought to temper with their love, provided them with economic, social, and political opportunities that were denied them at home. If Baker Banks and Joseph Hobart worked from within the colonial Australia in an effort to shape its future according to their evangelical ideals, the youngest of the Carvosso children, David, spent a lifetime working the networks by which it was connected to both the imperial and global market. He was, like his maternal grandfather, a sailor and a ship’s captain, “well known in the Australia trade,” and shipped wool, meat, tallow, gold and copper to Britain, and migrants and missionaries to the colonies.\footnote{Marine Engineer and Naval Architect: A Monthly Journal of Marine Engineering, Shipbuilding and Steam Navigation, vol. 3, (London, 1881-83), p. 188.} When still a chief officer in 1861 he was named as a particularly kind and obliging officer by James Calvert and his party of WMMS missionaries after the first leg of their voyage to Fiji.\footnote{Sydney Morning Herald, March 20, 1861.} And in 1863 his name cropped up in the newspapers again after he was stabbed by a drunken sailor during an onboard
altercation.\textsuperscript{141} By the next year he was a captain.\textsuperscript{142} His career took him most frequently to London, but he was also involved with the California trade, and briefly and tragically in the shipment of indentured laborers from South Asia to the Caribbean. In 1865 he master of the \textit{Fusilier}, a ship in the Black Ball Line, that was transporting indentured workers from Calcutta to Demerara.\textsuperscript{143} Shortly after leaving port cholera broke out among his passengers and raged through the ship until he reached Fort Natal. By then 130 people were dead and a hundred more, including Carvosso and his crew, were sick. While anchored off the coast the cable broke and the ship was wrecked and a further 86 of his passengers were lost.\textsuperscript{144} An inquiry held by the local magistrate at Natal cleared Carvosso of any wrong but after the accident he seems have gotten out of what was then called the “cooler trade.”\textsuperscript{145}

He continued however to play his small part in facilitating the relentless global flow of labor and commodities that was causing the dissolution of and reformation of the communities amongst whom his brothers worked. There is an anecdote about him in which the Captain, “a martinet of the old style” threatened to turn the hose on the

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\textsuperscript{141} \textit{Brisbane Courier}, January 20, 1863.

\textsuperscript{142} \textit{Brisbane Courier}, May 19, 1864.

\textsuperscript{143} \textit{Freeman’s Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser}, September 23, 1865.


\textsuperscript{145} \textit{Parliamentary Papers: Accounts and Papers: Shipping} (United Kingdom) Vol. 65 1866, 91.
\end{flushleft}
ninety young single women tired of being confined below decks. The hilarity this incident has inspired for some antiquarians aside, there is some suggestion here of the continuing difficulty being faced by the proponents of free labor and trade of convincing the masses who were to benefit from it what precisely freedom entailed. And there is a photograph of his ship, the Illawarra rounding Cape Horn that is held by State Library of Victoria. On the back is scrawled the phrase “Men have spent their best years mid scenes like this who might have become Archbishops. It is easier to lay foundation stones.”146 That cryptic inscription is reminiscent of an old Cornish Wesleyan’s prophecy to Walter Lawry that he would become “the Bishop of Botany Bay,” a line that was not without some poetic accuracy.147 The photograph was taken off the same rugged coastlines where in 1832 Charles Darwin had begun to have the visions of a biological man that were to prove so troubling to some evangelicals. But it was also the place where David Carvosso, a child of Atlantic revivalism, collected flora and fauna for the benefit of scientific progress.148 He would capture birds blown out to seas and give them as gifts to the university naturalists – men like the professorial Waterhouse cousins, and Walter Lawry Buller. In 1903 the sixty-nine year old retired sea captain

146 “Men have spent their best years mid scenes like this who might have become Archbishops,” Brodie Collection, La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria. H-99.220/4144.

147 Basil Lubbock, The Blackwell Frigates (Glasgow: James Brown & Son. 1922), 280.

148 Arthur Gardiner Butler, Foreign Birds for Cage and Aviary, (London: “The Feathered World,” 1910), 122. Gardiner reports that a rare Patagonian bird that had been blown on board his ship a hundred miles south of Cape Horn. He made Gardiner promise to give the bird to the museum authorities should it die.
killed himself after years of suffering from rheumatism. He left a note saying he was “full up with it,” and gave himself an overdose on morphine.

Like David, who was the youngest of the Carvosso children to survive to adulthood, the eldest also faced a sad and lonely death after a busy life spent skirting the most distant edges of the Empire. Louisa Ann had been born in Sydney in 1823, but spent her youth and early adulthood in southwest England. When she was twenty she married Henry Reeve, an Anglican priest and Church Missionary Society (CMS) missionary. The next day they left for Shanghai. The Opium War of 1839-1842 and the Treaty of Nanking meant the gunboats that ensured British merchants could flood the Chinese market with opium also ensured the safety of Protestant missionaries who would rage against the drug. The Reeves remained in Shanghai for four turbulent years. They worked as school teachers with both children and adults. They complained loudly about the behavior and attitudes of the expatriate colonists living in the European parts of the city. They antagonized the Church of England Bishop by allowing American missionaries to worship in their facilities. And they survived the Tai’ping

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149 *The News of the Week, Sydney, April 22, 1903.*

150 *The News of the Week, Sydney, April 22, 1903.*

Rebellion – a movement whose syncretism and reformist attitudes inspired them with a degree of sympathy.

They returned to England briefly but were sent by the Columbia Mission Society to the Pacific Northwest in 1862 where they spent four years working with Chinese miners drawn to the Fraser Valley by yet another nineteenth century Gold Rush. By the seventies they were back in England where Henry worked as a prison chaplain before they finally settled down to a quiet life at Wickham Skeith in Suffolk. It was there, in a quiet vicarage, the very dream of English respectability and insularity against which her father and grandfather had rebelled, that Louisa’s youngest son Frederick died in 1876 at the age of fifteen. In 1881 Louisa slid into a very different abyss than had her father, and vanished into the St. Faith’s Private Asylum – “a Clergyman’s wife, lunatic.”

It is at this melancholic point I am going to end my pursuit of the Carvossos. Their trajectories have become too diverse, and their various colonial and metropolitan locations too scattered, to be easily incorporated into this project. If they remain wonderful examples of the degree to which colonial and metropolitan identities are mutually constituted, they are no longer usefully Cornish, and some of them have even set aside their Methodism. In my final chapter I will step outside the frame of the family biography, and of Cornwall, and re-examine revivalist ideology from a different perspective; that of converted Algonquian speakers from the Great Lakes and the Canadian subarctic. For the first half of the nineteenth century members of this
community participated with the Carvossos in the effort to instigate a world-wide religious revival that would unite humanity in a multiracial commonwealth of Christians. In the second half of that century Joseph, Baker, and David Carvosso, and Louisa Reeve, were exploiting evangelical and imperial networks to facilitate their climb towards respectability. They, like Abishabis, found that the track to heaven did not end where they had hoped, but that does not mean they ceased its pursuit.
7. Conclusion: “Such a Strange Sight”

In the spring of 1838 the Ojibwe missionary Peter Jones (Kahkewahquonaby) took a break from the rigours of a fund raising tour of southwest Cornwall in order to visit the remains of a “Druidical temple” called Carn Brea. The region was a hotbed of Methodist revivalism and he had preached to standing-room only crowds in Camborne, Gwennap, and St. Ives. He was impressed enough by the piety and generosity of the people to describe the region as the most Methodistical he had ever visited. But he had certainly arrived at a tumultuous time – Dunn, Lawry, and Benjamin Carvossos were among the circuit ministers overseeing one of the region’s chaotic revivals. And Jones himself received some quite clear hints about the schisms that were such an affliction for Cornish Wesleyans in the period, and in which the Carvossos were so involved. “The enemy said Jabez Bunting and Robert Newton had been training me to appear at the meeting,” he wrote as he prepared for his trip to Cornwall, “In order to extract money out of the peoples’ pockets!”


2 Hempton, Empire of Spirit; David Luker, “Revivalism in Theory and Practice,” 603-619; Shaw, A History of Cornish Methodism. On Cornish enthusiasm and Peter Jones see Donald B. Smith, Sacred Feathers: The Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewahquonaby) and the Mississauga Indians (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 166.

3 Jones, Life and Journals, 396.
But at Carn Brea Jones had the chance to get away from packed chapels and to wander among ancient stones on a grassy hill top. He was a man obsessed with how the history of the Algonquian speaking peoples of the Great Lakes, and the Indians of North America as a whole, were to fit into the universal history of Christianity. His brief respite from the draining schedule of endless teas, speeches, and sermons offered a valuable opportunity to meditate on this task. For Jones the tension between the personal experience of his Christianity, and the theatrical account of his conversion from savagery that the British loved, was painful. He once described the feathers and buckskins he wore to entertain white audiences as an “odious Indian costume.” Yet here, on the hills of Cornwall, was tangible evidence that Europeans also, had a dark, uncivilized past. The Cornish had once offered human sacrifices to their gods in such places, Jones recorded in his journal, and he was shown the hollows in the rocks where the blood of the poor slain creatures had been collected. The very depth of European degradation was proof for the Ojibwa minister of the efficacy of atonement. God had transformed one pagan wilderness into this “most Methodistical country.” And he would do the same for the Ojibwe. “Surely,” he ended his entry, “God has done much for England.”

4 See especially Kyle Carsten Wyatt, “Rejoicing in this unpronounceable name”: Peter Jones’s Authorial Identity,” Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada, 47 (Fall 2009): 153.

5 Jones, Life and Journals, 398.
Jones’ father was a Loyalist who had fled to Canada from New York after the Revolution, and his mother was from a prominent Ojibwe family in what is now southern Ontario. He belonged to a generation of Christians with Algonquian-speaking mothers who mobilized the ideology, and the social networks of transatlantic evangelicalism, to mount a vigorous challenge to the depredations of settler colonialism on both sides of the border. The endless tours and writings generated by such men as Jones, and the societies for which they worked, and their celebration of the common humanity of all peoples, fed off the evangelical enthusiasm for social reform that gripped sizeable portions of the population on both sides of the Atlantic. And between 1820 and 1870 Algonquian-speaking Christians had participated in both a transatlantic social movement that sought to transform the world into a multiracial Christian commonwealth, and a vigorous historiographical and nation-building project of their own.

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6 The Ojibwe (or Ojibwe, Ojibway, Ojibway, or Chippewa in the United States) belong to the Algonquian language group. The Ojibwe term of self-reference is anishinaabe (anishinaabeg in plural) which may be translated as “human being,” “our people,” or “Indian.” See Jennifer Brown and Roger Roulette, “Waabitigweyaa, the One who found the Anishinaabeg First,” in Algonquian Spirit: Contemporary Translations of the Algonquian Literatures of North America, ed. Brian Swann, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 159.


8 See my “The View from Pigeon Lake: Transatlantic Methodism, Ojibwa Nationalism and Homeguard Christianity,” forthcoming. In 1823 Jones and his paternal half-sister Polly attended a camp revival led by the American Methodist missionary William Case. The siblings, both already familiar with the rituals and theology of Protestant Christianity, had intense conversion experiences and returned to their homes as proselytes. Soon their brother John had joined them and was followed by another of Jones’ half-sisters.
This remarkable efflorescence began in the initial period of Protestant evangelism to the Ojibwe peoples of the Great Lakes region that began in the aftermath of the War of 1812. It coincided with the period of the Great Revival in Cornwall and the first heady days of Wesleyan expansion beyond the political and cultural boundaries of Britain. During this early period Ojibwe converts to Methodism preached to the First Nation peoples of the Great Lakes, raised funds in both the U.S. and Britain, and were deeply involved in diplomacy between First Nations groups and the colonial state. But the acrimonious divorce of British and Canadian Methodism in 1840 complicated Ojibwe relations with the colonial state and settler society. During this period not only were Ojibwe evangelicals forced to choose between their metropolitan and colonial allies, they found themselves increasingly marginalized within Wesleyan

Catherine Cameron (Wechikiwekapawiqua) and her husband, the Credit River Chief John Cameron (Wageezhegome) who had long been making efforts at incorporating settler technologies and practices into the life of his band. Jones’ cousin David Sawyer (Kezhegowinninme), a chief at Grand River, and his uncle Joseph Sawyer (Nawahjegegome) shortly followed them into Methodism, as did his maternal half-brother George Henry (Maungwudaus). Other key figures from the Mississauga community were the celebrated Methodist exhorter and later minister John Sunday (Shah-Wun-Dais) and Peter Jacobs (Pahtahsega). During the twenties and thirties William Case, Jones, and Sunday organized and led revival camps among the Anishinaabe throughout Upper Canada and along both the northern and southern shores of the Great Lakes. These camps were remarkably successful, especially among the Ojibwe, bringing in prominent converts such as the chiefs John Aisance, Musquaki, and William Snake. A second generation of Mississauga Methodists included Jones’ sons, his niece Catherine Sunegoo Sutton (Nahnebahwequay); his younger cousins George Copway (Kahgegagahbowh), and Henry Pahtahquahong Chase; as well as Henry Bird Steinhauer (Sowengisik), Allen Salt, Copway’s cousin John Johnson (Enmegahbowh) and Peter Marksman (Kahgoodahahqua). Less well known are the ministers William Herkimer, William Beaver, and Abraham Sickles, all ordained in the early forties. Peter and John Jones were also influential in the Mohawk community into which John, and their father, had married. The Mohawk Chiefs Thomas Davis (Tehowagherengaraghkwen) and Moses Walker were, like them, converts to Methodism.
denominational and missionary institutions, and divided into national camps by an increasingly reified border.

By the second half of the century British and colonial attitudes towards the Protestant missionary project were changing. Protestant missionaries such as Robert Rundle and his colleagues had once hoped to be the midwives who helped ease the birth pangs of an Indian Christianity, and the passage of a savage people into civilized society. By the 1870s missionaries were imagined by many to be palliative nurses watching over the agony of a dying race. With this shift in attitudes the bicultural identity which had once guaranteed literate Algonquian Christians such as Peter Jones professional opportunities in missionary and philanthropic societies could also be used to justify their institutional subordination. They were invited to no more audiences with Queen Victoria, had no more tête-à-têtes with evangelical allies in British

9 Gregory D. Smith, Science, Sexuality, and Race in the United States and Australia, 1780s to the 1890s, (New York: Routledge, 2009) 145. Gregory Smith identified the late Nineteenth Century as the period when missionaries in the US and Australia began to wholeheartedly embrace the idea that the missionary was to not so much transform as comfort the various dying races. Certainly by 1906 the Bishop of Queensland could describe missionary work as “smoothing the pillow of a dying race,” quoted from Keith Cole, The Aborigines of Arnhem Land, (Adelaide: Rigby, 1979) 144.

10 See Cox, The British Missionary Enterprise), 209-210; Andrew Porter, “Cambridge, Keswick, and Late-Nineteenth-Century attitudes to Africa” The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, 5, (1976-77), 5-34 and “Evangelical Enthusiasm, Missionary Motivation and West Africa in the Late-Nineteenth-Century: The Career of G.W. Brooke” The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, 6 (1977-78), 23-46. The most notorious example of the marginalization of indigenous missionaries is that of the Samuel Crowther, the Anglican Bishop of the Niger Delta, who was stripped of his authority in the 1880s. The troubled relationship of John Horden, English missionary and eventual Bishop of Moosonee, and Thomas Vincent, the mixed race interpreter, catechist and (eventually) clergyman, is a good example from British North America. See Hans M. Carlson, Home is the Hunter: The James Bay Cree and their Land (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 113-115.
Parliament, and no longer made filial speeches to sympathetic crowds in Exeter Hall. The Great Awakening had ended it seemed, and the West was slipping into an uneasy slumber in which the ideal of a common humanity was to be little more than a troubling dream.

Yet even if the visions of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century missionaries from the provinces had ceased to hold the attention of the British public, they were survived by a bewildering proliferation of societies, class-meetings, and congregations. In Britain, the colonies, and beyond, prayer groups, denominational conferences, and transimperial connexions formed, merged, ruptured, and dissolved with propulsive regularity throughout the long nineteenth century and into the twentieth.

The dissemination of such social forms in the empire and beyond was made possible by evangelical practitioners who were willing to exploit imperial networks, a globalizing economy, and the ascendancy of British power. These practitioners – people like Jones and the Carvossos – did not celebrate the possibility of British hegemony as the triumph of Anglo-Saxon civilization, but as a vehicle of Christian universalism. They were proponents of David Hempton’s “Empire of the Spirit,” an empire that was of a different order than either the sugar-and-slave empire which the evangelicals had helped destroy, and the free-trade and wage-labor empire which they had helped create, but which overlapped with, and has outlasted, both. It is into the historical origins of this transnational community which families like the Carvossos provide us entrée. And
it is useful to remember that the Christian commonwealth for which nineteenth-century Cornish Methodists were such enthusiasts, persisted long after their particular vision of it had been shattered by schism, transformed by the passage of time and by changing contexts, or left in quiet pools by the receding tides of British ascendancy to wait for the next great wave of globalization.

Alice Ahenakew will be our final example of such a practitioner, but one of considerably more recent vintage. Ahenakew was a member of the multi-generational Algonquian Christianity which Robert Rundle, Henry Steinhauer, and Benjamin Sinclair had helped establish during the first heady rush of Christian missions up the North Saskatchewan. 11 In her account of life in the years after World War II she recalled how her husband Andrew, an Anglican deacon and lay reader, went to a conference at the Pas. 12 While there, Ahenakew was visited in his motel room by the spirit of a polar bear. Despite the clerical collar the man was wearing the bear gave him the gift of a powerful medicine, and he became, without giving up his Anglican identity, a renowned healer and proponent of native spirituality. Christianity lived, in Alice Ahenakew’s stories, among the Native peoples of North America quite comfortably. Canada, England, and


12 Ahenakew, They Knew both sides of Medicine, 65.
Europe drift into her narrative but they generally do so incidentally, as much to help her make points about local conditions and issues as anything else, and never as a means to explain the basic circumstances of life. In that sense it is not a very different text from the one Benjamin Carvosso created from his father William’s memoirs, although in the final analysis the Cree woman is much better travelled than that most local of transatlantic revivalists.

Ahenakew did tell one lengthy story about the world at large. She provided an account of a journey her and her husband made to England, and it is gently reminiscent of that much earlier journey taken by another Algonquian-speaker, Peter Jones. Ahenakew was struck by the beautiful cathedrals with their towers, the ringing bells Rundle had heard in his ecstatic preparations for preaching, and the grandeur of the imperial state. But unlike her predecessor, dependent of British generosity as he was, Ahenakew emphasized that although they were hosted by the Anglican Church, she and her husband paid their own way. And she also wryly observed that the first time she had ever tasted alcohol – that iconic symbol of the European destruction of aboriginal culture – was when she accidentally drank some cider in the English southwest. It is an irony the temperance activist Benjamin Carvosso would have appreciated. But it was her visit to Stonehenge that provides the most touching echo of earlier events.

When Peter Jones saw the druidical stones outside of Camborne in the 1830s he was already frustrated, and becoming increasingly angry with hypocrisy in the
Protestant missionary project. In the colonies the missionaries insisted the Indians become white, but on the metropolitan stage they dressed them as savages. Canadian Wesleyans celebrated the capacity of Methodism to transform Indians into civilized subjects, but were reluctant to give those subjects positions of authority in Christian institutions. Jones saw in the stones evidence of a dark and bloody age, evidence of what Susan Thorne has called the equality of sin. Alice Ahenakew on the other hand, so much more comfortable in the world than the Wesleyan minister, simply observed,

They were truly a strange sight, these rocks are extraordinarily big, they stand upright, with others sitting sideways on top, I wonder how long ago and who on earth might have done that, it is such a strange sight; and there are so many big rocks sitting there. Oh my. 13

They were evidence for Ahenakew, not of God’s judgment, or the terrible sins of the English, but the boundless variety of human creativity.

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13 Ahenakew, *They Knew both sides of Medicine*, 55.
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Biography

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