"THE HEAVENS ARE CHANGING": NINETEENTH CENTURY PROTESTANT MISSIONIZATION ON THE NORTH PACIFIC COAST

by

SUSAN LYNN NEYLAN

B.A., The University of Toronto, 1990
M.A., The University of Toronto, 1991

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Department of History)

We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

June 1999

©Susan Lynn Neylan, 1999
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of History

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date 28/06/1999

DE-6 (2/88)
Christianity is an aspect of Native history, not simply an external force acting upon it. This dissertation examines the nature of Protestant missions (Anglican, Methodist, Salvation Army) in their first few generations on the North Pacific Coast of British Columbia (1857-1901) by focusing on Native roles in Christianization. It pays special attention to the Euro-Canadian missionary perspective on this process, the Native spiritual specialists, missionaries, and Christian lay workers themselves, and particular everyday events that illuminate the negotiation of Christian identities. My regional focus examines the territories of the Tsimshianic speaking peoples (Coast Tsimshian, Nisga’a, Gitxsan, Southern Tsimshian, with special emphasis given to the Coast Tsimshian)—the North Pacific Coast of British Columbia, including the Lower Nass and Skeena River watersheds. While they never entirely directed or controlled their own Christianization, Native men and women frequently took the initiative and assumed roles of leadership in mission activity, and within the churches themselves. The relationship forged between Tsimshian and Euro-Canadian missionary was dialogic, although not necessarily a mutually beneficial one.

This study examines the function of missions and the meaning of conversion, demonstrating the themes of social action, hegemony, and gender in the writings of non-Native missionaries. Likewise, evangelicalism shaped the emergent forms of Protestant Christianity throughout the region, the discourses about them, and added to their attraction for the Tsimshian. Yet, pre-existing indigenous discourse on transformation also informed Native reception to Christianity, and the nature of the Native roles within the mission sphere did not entirely forsake this spiritual history. While the Euro-Canadian mission record dominates historical missionary sources, Native writings illustrate both a genuine evangelicalism and an indigenized Christianity. Over time, Christian meanings were challenged from both within and without the mission context, through revivalism and group evangelism. While the Tsimshian sought empowerment through new forms of spirituality, those same power mechanisms could confine, challenge, and assault their social and cultural structures. The exercise of power at the village level reveals how social and cultural meanings of Tsimshian daily life were disputed, contested, and negotiated.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .................................................................................................................................................. ii  
Table of Contents .................................................................................................................................... iii  
List of Illustrations ................................................................................................................................. iv  
List of Abbreviations and Note on Indigenous Words ........................................................................... v  
Acknowledgements ................................................................................................................................... vi  

Chapter 1. Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 1  
Chapter 2. Spiritual Dimensions of Coast Tsimshian Culture ................................................................. 35  
Chapter 3. “Driftwood” on Their Shores and the Mission to Convert .................................................... 58  
Chapter 4. Proselytizing from Within: the Native Christian and Catechist ........................................... 97  
Chapter 5. Engendering Tsimshian Women ............................................................................................ 130  
Chapter 6. The Self-Reflections of Arthur Wellington Clah ................................................................. 155  
Chapter 7. Of Native Missionaries ........................................................................................................ 175  
Chapter 8. Prophets, Revivals, and Evangelists ...................................................................................... 209  
Chapter 9. The Politics of Everyday Life ............................................................................................... 254  
Chapter 10. Christian Houses and Colonial Spaces ............................................................................. 283  
Chapter 11. Conclusion .......................................................................................................................... 320  
Epilogue. Christian Identities and Secular Battles .................................................................................. 328  

Bibliography ........................................................................................................................................... 331  

Appendix A. William Duncan’s Plan for Civilizing and Rules at Metlakatla ........................................... 362  
Appendix B. Arthur Wellington Clah as the “Transformed” Christian .................................................. 363  
Appendix C. C.M.S. Mission Statistics (1857-1901) ............................................................................. 364  
Appendix D. Methodist Mission Statistics (1883-1900) ....................................................................... 365  
Appendix E. Similarities and Characteristics of Selected Bini Narratives ............................................ 366
Figure 1: Native Spiritual Specialists ................................................................. 18
Figure 2: Tsimshian Culture (after Miller 1997) ..................................................... 48
Figure 3: Tsimshian Culture as proposed by Euro-Canadian missionaries ................. 52
Figure 4: Map of the Native North Pacific Coast and Tsimshianic Speaking Groups ...... 56
Figure 5: Map of North Pacific Coast Posts, Missions, and Settlements ...................... 57
Figure 6: Table of Methodist Missions: Port Simpson District 1883-1900 ..................... 94
Figure 7: Post-Christian Tsimshian Culture as influenced by missionization ................ 95
Figure 8: “Legaic, Chief of all the Tsimshean Chiefs, Attacking Mr. Duncan”
(Wellcome, Story of Metlakahtla, 12) .................................................................... 117
Figure 9: “Legaic as a Simple Citizen and Carpenter of Metlakatla”
(Wellcome, Story of Metlakahtla, 40) .................................................................... 118
Figure 10: Metlakatla’s Brass Band [188?] (BCA A-00585) ........................................ 252
Figure 11: Port Essington Revival Meeting, 1897 (BCA A-06191) ............................... 253
Figure 12: Metlakatla [188?] (BCA C-8105) ........................................................... 314
Figure 13: Chief Dudoward’s “Eagle House” at Port Simpson, n.d. (BCA B-03750) ....... 315
Figure 14: Port Simpson Volunteers (Soldiers), n.d. (BCA B-003552) ......................... 316
Figure 15: Saint Paul’s Interior (chapel at Metlakatla),
R. Maynard photo, n.d. (BCA A-04163) ............................................................. 317
Figure 16: Nishlkumik/Sudalth or Victoria Young
with Rev. Thomas Crosby [187?] (BCA G-07293) .................................................. 318
Figure 17: Port Simpson Longhouse [188?] (BCA E-06350) ........................................ 319
## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACCA</td>
<td>Anglican Church of Canada Archives, Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCABC</td>
<td>Anglican Church of Canada Archives, Diocese of New Westminster, Vancouver, BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add. MSS</td>
<td>Additional Manuscripts, British Columbia Archives, Victoria, BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AWCJ</td>
<td>Arthur Wellington Clah's Journals, Wellcome Institute, London, UK (WMS Amer 140), microfilm version from the National Archives of Canada (MG 40 F11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMSP</td>
<td>Church Missionary Society Papers, microfilm, University of British Columbia Library, Vancouver, BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAC</td>
<td>National Archives of Canada, Ottawa, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAA</td>
<td>The Salvation Army Archives, George Scott Railton Heritage Centre, Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UBCL</td>
<td>University of British Columbia Library, Vancouver, BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UBCSC</td>
<td>University of British Columbia Library, Special Collections Division, Vancouver, BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCA</td>
<td>United Church Archives, National, Toronto, ON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCABC</td>
<td>United Church Archives, British Columbia Conference, Vancouver, BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VST</td>
<td>Vancouver School of Theology, Vancouver, BC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## NOTE ON INDIGENOUS WORDS

I have attempted to adhere to the most recent spelling variations for First Nations names and for words in the Coast Tsimshian language (Sm'ul'gyax), following Jay Miller, *Tsimshian Culture: A Light Through the Ages* (Lincoln and London: Nebraska University Press, 1997); and Wayne Suttles, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians: The Northwest Coast*, Vol. 7 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1990). One notable exception is the Coast Tsimshian word *halaayt*. I utilize the older version *halait* because of its frequent occurrence as a root within other words (e.g. *smhalait, wutahalait, etc.*). For the purposes of clarity, I have standardized the spellings of some words (e.g. *naxnox, smgigyet, swansk halait, adawx*), in quotations from secondary sources, but have not attempted to "correct" historical sources. I have used the label "Tsimshianic" as a linguistic designation which includes those First Nations who speak a Tsimshian language, namely the Coast Tsimshian, Southern Tsimshian, Nisga'a, and Gitxsan. Although grouping Tsimshianic speaking nations together under the term Tsimshian was common practice among academics until recently, throughout this study, "Tsimshian" refers only to the Coast Tsimshian, unless otherwise designated.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are so many people who have guided me along this twisting dissertation road. Firstly, I am greatly indebted to my supervisor Arthur J. Ray. Since my arrival at UBC, he has been a constant source of enthusiasm and intellectual guidance, and has fostered my personal development as a scholar in countless ways. Likewise, I am greatly appreciative of contributions by the other members of my advisory committee. Dianne Newell has always been supportive and encouraging throughout my graduate work. I am especially grateful for her constructive criticisms and very thorough editing of early drafts of this dissertation. I am thankful to Julie Cruikshank for her enthusiastic support and generous commitment to graduate students, even those from other departments. Much of my exposure to the wide array of anthropological literature was because of her encouragement. Lastly, I appreciate John Barker’s informed discussions, suggestions for research material, and helpful critiques.

My heartfelt thanks to fellow graduate students for intellectual engagement, emotional support, and warm friendship. I am especially grateful to those friends who endured reading my early drafts: Bonita Bray, Eileen Mak, and Louise Robert. My special thanks to Jane Finnan Dorward for her expert proof-reading and long-distance moral support. I am also indebted to all those professors in the History Department who have helped me grow as a scholar and as a person during my time at UBC. In particular, I wish to thank Robert McDonald, for his guidance (and generosity with lecture outlines) in helping me ensure that sessional teaching did not interfere too much with the completion of this dissertation.

A doctoral fellowship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada helped me through my formative years in the graduate programme at UBC and funded my start on this research. I would also like to acknowledge financial assistance from the Chinese Railroad Workers Commemorative Scholarship.

Over the course of research, I was assisted by several friendly and helpful church archivists: Bob Stewart in the United Church Archives (Vancouver), Doreen Stephens in the Anglican Church of Canada Archives, Diocese of New Westminster (Vancouver), and Captain Flo Curzon, research coordinator at the Salvation Army Archives, George Scott Railton Heritage Centre. I also appreciate the service I received from staff and archivists at the British Columbia Archives (Victoria), National Archives of Canada (Ottawa), Anglican Church of Canada Archives (Toronto) and United Church Archives (Toronto). Lastly, I especially thank the folks at UBC Interlibrary loans, who managed to get me a microfilm copy of Arthur Wellington Clah’s journals for considerably longer than the original two weeks NAC had allotted.

Finally, to my family, especially my parents Dave and Joan Neylan: I cannot count the gifts of encouragement, strength, and love you have given. Thanks for believing in me. This is dedicated in loving memory to my grandmother, Ruby Harrison, who, for me, personified that part of Christianity that I have never fully experienced—unshakeable faith.
Chapter 1: Introduction

...[A] very heathen tribe... had heard that I was coming, and the chief in order to show his great delight at my arrival, put up what they call a large cap. Their cap was an umbrella. They had no idea of preventing rain from falling on their heads by its use, but looked upon it simply as a web-footed cap, and so they used it on state occasions. As soon as I had landed I saw a man with the umbrella, and saw the excitement. He sent a message to this effect: 'I would like you to come into my house, and I shall send my messenger to tell you so.' I immediately encamped upon the bank of the river. By and by, I was told that all things were ready and prepared to receive me. I said to my little crew--for in those days, I took only boys with me, being afraid to take men, as they might kill me for the purpose of getting my clothes--'What are they going to do when I go into the house?' 'Dance.' 'Tell them I did not come here to see dancing, and I cannot go therefore.' They told the messenger to tell the chief that I objected to seeing them dance, that I had come with a solemn message to them. The chief replied, 'Tell the white chief he must come; if he doesn't come to me I won't go to hear his word; but if he will come I will go and hear him.' That changed the matter altogether. I had a little consultation with my boys, and they said, 'You had better go; if you do not go the chief will not come to hear what you have to say.' I walked up to his house, I confess, in a very grim kind of spirit. I did not like to attend a dance. The idea of a missionary going to see a dance! (Laughter) But I saw that I had to do it; public opinion was in my favor. (Laughter) I was very glad afterward that I did go. When I entered the house there was a person there ready to point out a seat for me. There was a bear-skin spread over a box for me to sit on. The chief had all of his men placed around in different portions of the house, which was a very large one. I observed that he had gotten a large sail and used for a curtain in part of the room. Very soon I saw two men step out. One had a rod in his hand beating upon the floor. They had a kind of theatrical performance. The old man, after stamping his foot and putting his rod down very firmly, said, in his own language of course, 'The heavens are changing.' The other man was there to respond, 'Yes, so it seems; the heavens are changing.' A few little remarks of this sort were made, and then the sail was drawn aside and out dashed the chief, dressed in most magnificent costume, his head being completely covered with feathers and ornaments. He had his rifle in his hand. He shook it and then pointed it in my face; walked up a little way to me and then put up his hands with his rifle in it; he looked through the hole in the centre of the roof where the smoke came out, and immediately began a beautiful prayer. I was astonished. This was no dance. If I could only give you his prayer in his own beautiful and eloquent language, you would be astonished also. I can only give you the substance of this. It was something like this: 'Great Father! Great Father of Heaven! Thou hast sent Thy Word! Thy letter has reached this place. We, Thy children, are wanting it. Thy servant has come here with it. Help him to teach us and we will listen. Thanks to Thee, Great Father, for sending Thy word to us.'

That is just the outline. It was uttered in a most pathetic, eloquent, and solemn manner.

Having said this little prayer, he looked at me, thanked me for coming. Then he began to dance, and the Indians began to chant, clapping their hands. It was an extemporaneous song, and I listened to it with a great deal of pleasure. There was a man among them who made a hymn, just as they wanted it, and when they wanted it. The
time was a sad one in this instance. It was a chant; the words were all extemporized by
the man. I found that this song was all about God having sent his servant and his
messenger to teach the Indians. They clapped their hands and sung with the greatest joy.
It was a grand reception.¹

The meeting between First Nations and missionaries on the North Pacific Coast of British
Columbia in the second half of the nineteenth century was one shaped by cultural assumptions
and expectations on all sides. The foregoing vignette recorded by Anglican lay missionary
William Duncan in the late 1880s is emblematic of the meeting of very different cultural worlds
and of non-Native perceptions of these.² Indeed, the heavens were changing for North Coast
peoples, but into what? What meanings did the changes have for Natives? The event described
by Duncan and other similar missionary experiences are inextricably connected to cultural
preconceptions that had shaped his attitude towards Christianity and towards First Nations long
before his arrival in the region. The encounter between any First Nation and missionary was a
culturally laden relationship, wrought with misunderstanding on both sides and influenced by
shifting and unequal power relationships. Yet Native peoples took the initiative and assumed
roles of leadership in mission activity and within the church itself. This dissertation examines the
nature of Protestant Christian missions in their first generation on the North Pacific Coast of
British Columbia (1857-1901) by focusing on Native roles in Christianization. It pays special
attention to the Euro-Canadian missionary perspective on this process, the Native workers
themselves, and upon particular events that illuminate the negotiation of Christian identities.

The North Coast missions were sites of hegemonic struggles, in the sense of living the
unequal power relationship on a daily basis. Northwest Coast peoples actively took part in
missions, shaped and defined the processes of their own Christianization, yet they never could
entirely direct or control them. Nevertheless, as Robert W. Hefner explains, “[e]ven if politically
imbalanced, conversion encounters are always two-sided, and the social and intellectual

¹William Duncan, “Mr. Duncan’s Address before the Board of Indian Commissioners, and the Conference of the
Missionary Boards, and the Indian Rights Association, Washington, D. C., Jan. 6 1887,” in The Story of Metlakahtla,
²This experience most likely occurred some two or more decades earlier, when Duncan’s mission was one of only a
handful in the region.
dynamics of each camp affect the outcome."^3 The ways in which each side responded to the other merit fuller inquiry than the Canadian historiography hitherto has allowed, as does exploration of the variety of those responses within each "camp."

The introduction of Christianity among First Nations was also a colonial act. Indeed, unraveling this complex and multi-layered process constitutes a significant chapter in the history of Canadian colonialism. Contemplating the criticisms of historiographic colonialism made recently towards the anthropological approach, Jean and John Comaroff write: "the essence of colonization inheres less in political overrule than in seizing and transforming 'others' by the very act of conceptualizing, inscribing, and interacting with them on terms not of their own choosing; in making them into the pliant objects and silenced subjects of our scripts and scenarios; in assuming the capacity to 'represent' them, the active verb itself conflating politics and poetics."^4 Hence, to recognize the subtler forms of colonization, one must appreciate the active and frequently willing participation of First Nations. The forged relationship was dialogic—a "clearing out of a space of mutual intelligibility," "constant negotiation and change of the meaning elements in discourse"—but not necessarily a mutually beneficial one.\(^5\) Because much of the documentary record replicates the creation of "other", objectification, and (mis-)representation, historians have, often inadvertently, perpetuated the process by building their historical interpretations based on Euro-Canadian records alone. From perspectives gained from these sources, the colonizer is portrayed as the aggressor and the colonized as the victim; a "savage" dance of resistance by potential converts is expected by the missionary. But this dialectic tells us little of the active process at work.

---


Native Christians, Native mission workers, and Native missionaries are the central historical figures in this study. By focusing on these Native men and women, examining the discussion or discourse about them and produced by them, and the roles they assumed in missionization, I will explore the ways in which: (i) conversion to Christianity did not constitute a replacement of preexisting spiritual beliefs, (ii) missions were sites of contested meanings that reveal the hegemony of colonization and (iii) Native roles in missionization are central to understanding the aforementioned process. While the original messengers of the "Word of the God of Heaven" (Christianity) were Euro-Canadians, the reception to it, transformation by it, and further dissemination of it was also the work of First Nations themselves. Christianity here is assumed to be an aspect of Native history, not simply an external force acting upon it.

In the subsequent pages of this introduction, I outline some of the methodologies and theories informing my work. Following a review of the historiography, I will present some of the key concepts used throughout this study. My focus is on the cultural brokers and "middlemen" players in the religious encounter between Tsimshian and Christian. To this end, I explore how concepts of cultural hegemony, conversion, discourse analysis, and a dialogic approach furthers this aim. Lastly, I will justify my regional focus and summarize what follows in the body of the dissertation.

The Mission Context

For Steven Kaplan, a specialist in African Studies and Comparative Religions, the encounter with Western Christianity "represents one of the major themes in the history of contact between Western and non-Western civilizations." In the Canadian context, religious encounters between Europeans and indigenous people remains a vastly underdeveloped field. Terence Turner, writing about the meeting of Native South Americans and Europeans suggests that

---

6The term discourse is offered in its most conservative meaning, referring to literally "the discussion" as well as the "discursive culture and narrative structure" it is situated within. I believe this is be an appropriate use given the dialogic rather than dialectic approach which informs the entire dissertation.

contact is simultaneously event, situation, process, and structure. This insight applies to the Canadian experience. Much documentation on the early religious contact allows us a glimpse into the Euro-Canadian writing about this encounter and on the missionization of Native peoples. However, less is known about what the event, situation, process and structure of missions, and of Christianity generally, meant to aboriginal peoples. Native village sites on the Northwest Coast were socio-cultural as well as physical spaces upon which missions (for local peoples, a new social and cultural space), were grafted. The Christian mission was intrusive, coercive, and destructive, but it never achieved absolute control nor completely realized its aims amidst competing Native agendas concerning Christianity.

This study aims to explore the dialogic encounter within the mission context between Tsimshian and Protestant missions through a focus on the local Native roles in the conversion to Christianity. While the Euro-Canadian voices heavily dominate the documentary record, literate Native Christians have also left their impressions of the process of which they were an essential part. Native and non-Native oral histories recorded for the generation directly exposed to nineteenth century Anglican, Methodist, and Salvation Army evangelism likewise provide glimpses into Native viewpoints. Missionary and Native oral sources explain events such as revivals and movements ranging from group evangelism to prophets, intentionally to construct meaning for missionization of which they were a part. Symbolic practices arose out of the mission context as clashes of political and cultural hegemony (such as the regimentation of time and space, practices in dress, or mortuary rituals). First Nations negotiated their own agendas within the process, embracing, resisting or rejecting Christianity (or aspects of it) for a multitude of reasons.

**Historiography of Missions**

Writing specifically on the “contact and conflict” wrought through Native-European encounters in British Columbia, Robin Fisher uses the model of non-directed/directed cultural

---

change, placing missionaries (along with government officials and white settlers) in the role of calculating destroyers of Native cultures and civilization. Indeed, he is prominent among those historians of Canadian missions who have argued "that a degree of cultural disruption is a prerequisite for missionary success; only in a situation where old ways and values are proving ineffective or are being called into question will new ones be considered." The missionaries arrived into this fluid environment, Fisher argues, intending to consciously and deliberately transform Native cultures. In this interpretation, the fur traders were responsible for only non-directed cultural change, developing a "relationship" with British Columbia's Native peoples; the missionaries, however, had an "impact," throwing Native religion into crisis. Similarly, the central thesis of John Webster Grant's *Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter since 1534*, a classic Canadian work in the field, is that aboriginal peoples accepted Christianity at a time when their own "traditional" beliefs were being challenged and fading away in the face of the influence of Euro-Canadian culture. Much of the theory written about Native revitalization movements or crisis cults follows a similar path of thinking. These prophet movements are often explained by a theoretical model known as the "deprivation thesis," which attributes the cause of such phenomena to a crisis or some sort of "deprivation" (cultural, social, political, military, environmental, religious, etc.) arising in that society. The deprivation model has also been apparently applied to the notion of Christianization generally.

Such essentialist interpretations of the impact of missionization on indigenous peoples are problematic. Throughout human history, when confronted with "abnormal" societal pressures and cultural assault, people frequently turn inward to traditional faiths or reformulate their religions to adapt to the new circumstances. Can we not see the acceptance of Christianity as an aspect of the latter kind of strategy? Why should the acceptance of Christianity by Native North

---

12 Ibid., xiv.
Americans automatically replace or preclude Native forms of spirituality? Is it not possible that an "indigenization" of Christianity occurred in the process? I believe that a more nuanced understanding of Christianization through missions opens up new and profitable avenues for the study of nineteenth century Native/Euro-Canadian relations in British Columbia. My research intends to exploit this potential for the Canadian context.

New approaches are needed to explore this possibility. The Canadian field began with a very promising start, as interest in the late 1960s and early 1970s focusing on the history of early Christian missions to First Nations of the Northeastern woodlands (including Canada during the French regime) coincided with the development and ascendance of the ethnohistorical approach. Although religion has long been a staple of narrative histories, and certainly the missionary biography and mission "story" remain popular topics of inquiry, innovative historical approaches have also given the subject new expression. Scholars such as Cornelius Jaenen, Robert Berkofer Jr., James Axtell, and Bruce Trigger were leaders in the development of this new methodology and frequently applied it to their study of missionization of Native peoples.  

Cornelius Jaenen, in the 1970s, systematically rejected the polarities of civilization/savagery, or conceptual frameworks such as Turner's frontier thesis, the Protestant ethic of Parkman, and the ideologically driven perspective of the French Canadian Nationalist school in favour of a focus on "acculturation," which he defined as a cultural "two-stream" contact experience, "characterized by inter-change, intercourse and interface" between the Native and non-Native newcomer. While missionary contact was fundamentally different than the kind of contacts that developed because of trade, the translation of belief, the exchange of spiritual knowledge and the implications of conversion were dynamic inter-changes to say the least. Another example applying this viewpoint can be found in the work of James P. Ronda, who

---


like Jaenen, called for the application of relativistic cultural perspectives on how Natives and missionaries forged meanings from their encounters with one another.\(^{16}\)

James Axtell’s “Some Thoughts on the Ethnohistory of Missions” (1982) called for an assessment of Native responses to Christian missions in as much detail as historians had hitherto invested in the examination of missionary goals and criteria.\(^ {17}\) Above all, the ethnohistory of missions should reveal that Christianity is an important part of that post-contact Native past, whether through resistance against, conversion to, or the various reactions that fall between.

It would be easy—and foolish—to lament this particular revitalizing break with their pre-Columbian past as a tragic loss of innocence for the Indians. It was indeed a loss for them, but not necessarily a tragic one. Only if we continue to see the precontact Indian as the only real Indian, as the ‘noble savage’ in other words, can we mourn his [or her] loss of innocence. Only if we persist in equating courage with mortal resistance to the forces of change can we condemn the praying Indians as cultural cop-outs or moral cowards.\(^ {18}\)

Several works have explored the diversity of religious encounters among Christian missionaries and Canadian First Nations. Eleanor Leacock and Karen Anderson explored the impact of Jesuit proselytization on Native social structures and especially the relationships between aboriginal men and women, while more recently Natalie Zemon Davis examined Iroquoian and European women in the larger global perspective that contributed to our understanding of how Native and non-Native women coped with change and maintained power in their respective seventeenth century social contexts.\(^ {19}\)


\(^{18}\)Axtell, “Ethnohistory of Missions,” 37. This issue of representation (self-representation, mis-representation), particularly in respect to Native spiritualities, is a hotly debated, highly politicized one among academics and Native writers and activists. See the Special Issue of the American Indian Quarterly devoted to this and related themes: Lee Irwin, ed., “The Hear the Eagles Cry: Contemporary Themes in Native American Spirituality,” American Indian Quarterly 20, nos. 3-4 (Summer & Fall 1996); See also Arif Dirlik, “The Past as Legacy and Project: Post-Colonial Criticism in the Perspective of Indigenous Historicism,” American Indian Culture and Research Journal 20, no. 2 (1996): 1-31.

In the 1990s there has been a renewed interest in the history of missions to Canada's First Nations applying the ethnohistorical approach, particularly for the central subarctic and prairie regions. This focus also shifted the period under study to the more recent past, to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Historian Martha McCarthy, for example, argues it was the similarity between Catholic and Dene spiritualities that permitted missions into Dene territory, and when the Dene did “convert” to Christianity, it was in a manner conforming to preexisting understandings of culture and religion. Like Axtell, McCarthy rejects the tendency to moralize over the degrees of continuity and change among indigenous spiritualities. Instead, she postulates a dialogic relationship evolved from the meeting of missionary and Dene, only in respect to the message of faith, resulting in what she calls “inaculturation.” According to her definition, inaculturation is essentially an acceptance of certain tenets of Christianity as non-culturally specific ones. The theory suggests that Christian beliefs and practices can be absorbed into non-Western cultures and exist in a non-Western form there. Hence, according to her interpretation, there is no contradiction between the survival of older Dene spiritual beliefs alongside new ones. There was syncretism between “traditional” and Christian beliefs and Dene spirituality was encouraged, consciously or not, by the Oblates, despite an active Westernizing programme as part of their missions. Another scholar who has explored the extent to which conversion to Christianity becomes means to other (Native) agendas is Winona Stevenson. She found that for one Native person in the Prairie West, the conversion to Christianity and the decision to become a missionary was never a process of clear cut transformation from one

---


21McCarthy, *From the Great River*, xviii.

22Other historians however, are less convinced that the secular aims of missions can be separated from conversion and matters of belief (i.e. Christianization). Kerry Abel’s doctoral thesis on missions to the Dene examined the persistence of expressions of Native spiritualities and even the Dene’s stubborn resistance to Christianity. Abel concluded that the impact of Christian doctrine was minimal, at least in terms of daily Native society and culture in the central subarctic. Kerry Abel, “The Drum and the Cross. An Ethnohistorical Study of Mission Work Among the Dene” (Ph.D. diss., Queen’s University, 1984). Abel maintained this argument of cultural continuance in her much expanded monograph on Dene history: Kerry Abel, *Drum Songs: Glimpses of Dene History* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993).
spirituality to another. For Cree catechist, Askenootow/Charles Pratt (Stevenson's own relative), it was a personal decision that affected the social and cultural continuity of not only his life, but that of his aboriginal community. Secular and spiritual aims of the mission did not necessarily form separate or indivisible boundaries, even within a single individual.

Despite the earlier work of the ethnohistorians on missions elsewhere, until recently, encounters between Natives and missionaries in British Columbia have been rather narrowly addressed: missionary biographies, histories of a single church or denomination in a particular region, and ethnographic studies of the apparent decline of traditional Native religion within a single tribe or culture group. For the most part, religious interaction between Native peoples and Euro-Canadians in the province has also remained apart from mainstream religious or church history, much in the same way that Native history was previously regarded as separate from provincial or national historiography.

Historian Jean Usher's 1974 seminal study of William Duncan is a prime example of the traditional biographic approach to North Pacific Coast mission history. Offered as an analysis of the Native Christian village of Metlakatla, the personality and theological influence of Church Missionary Society lay missionary Duncan is the lens through which this portrait is presented. The book's strength is its focus on the missionary within the process of social change. The influence of Duncan's evangelical theology and the Tsimshian's own socio-cultural dispositions explain how this Victorian, industrial social experiment was initially "successful," but also why it

25A notable exception has been John Webster Grant's Moon of Wintertime.
26Usher, William Duncan.
ultimately “failed,” at least in Euro-Canadian terms. Usher’s work is particularly relevant to my study because of its examination of Duncan’s ideas on missions and his failure to mesh that vision with the pre-existing social dynamics of Tsimshian culture, particularly concerning the role of chiefly class in the “new” Christian society. Duncan’s stubborn resistance to the orthodoxy of his denomination eventually led to his separation from the Anglican church, and allowed those dissatisfied factions within the mission additional and increasingly “official” outlets through which they sought a voice and influence in their own Christianization. More recently, Clarence Bolt similarly focused on the non-Native missionary in his study of the missionization of the Tsimshian by Rev. Thomas Crosby, yet gives even more credence than Usher to the role of Native peoples in mission work.27

Prophets of Religion

An examination of prophet movements (especially those movements which latch onto some aspects of Christianity directly) can be particularly fruitful in revealing many of the processes involved in religious contact. The term prophet can be applied to an individual who teaches or interprets the alleged will of God, someone who acts as spokesperson or advocate for a specific cause or viewpoint, or a person who foretells events.28 Both shaman and missionary were teachers, interpreters and spokespersons for their particular spiritual beliefs. They were religious specialists and the dialogue that arose from contact between them created new expressions of spiritual power (although as Euro-Canadian missionaries proved repeatedly, they were the much poorer listeners). Prophecy and prophets were also ways of understanding change. For many of British Columbia’s First Nations, literally and narratively, prophecies about the coming of newcomers were utilized to interpret rapid change. Some prophet movements must be considered in conjunction with mission activity, because they define Native activism within the process of Christianization.

Prophet movements in British Columbia historiography, especially those incorporating Christian elements, have frequently been connected to religious encounters between “traditional”

27Bolt, Thomas Crosby.
Native and Christian cosmologies. There exist very few studies specifically on prophet movements in the province; however, one notable exception is Leslie Spier's *The Prophet Dance of the Northwest and Its Derivatives.* Although it is an older work that is caught up in the debate over the pre-contact or post-contact origins of prophet movements, it does pay particular attention to the integration of Christian elements into Native religion. There are also at least two studies which focus on the prophet dance as it appears in individual Native groups: Wayne Suttles' research on the prophet dance among the Coast Salish, and Robin Ridington’s continuing interest in Dunne-za (Beaver) prophets.

A comparative perspective on this phenomenon can be extremely helpful in understanding the British Columbian experience. Theoretical contributions derived from anthropological and sociological models of revitalization movements or crisis cults from around the world illuminate how religious movements are created in response to abnormal or unusual stresses placed upon a society and emerge from “certain basic aspects of human nature.” They are one means by which a society innovates elements of its culture. Unlike other “processes of cultural change (evolution, drift, diffusion, historical change, acculturation)” revitalization movements are dependent on “the deliberate intent by members of a society.” Indeed, prophetic movements among the indigenous peoples of North America have been a topic of long-standing academic interest. Many scholars have offered a variety of definitions for such movements and employed different methodologies to study them. Yet many of the definitions and theoretical frameworks developed by anthropologists to interpret these prophetic movements prove to be limited when attempting to conceptualize them in conjunction with Christianization.

33Scholarly evidence and outcomes vary according to approach (e.g. anthropological, historical, ethnohistorical, sociological, etc.).
If any general pattern can be identified through ethnohistorical examination, it appears to be that, above all, Native peoples took an active role in their "Christianization" or conversion process. It seems to me that these prophetic movements were manifestations of indigenous forms of spirituality that adapted and incorporated two belief systems. They may have been religious responses to social and cultural upheavals, but they were not exclusively derived from the contact experience; they were prior forms that helped to understand and explain contact change.

Cultural historians may have insights to add to the social sciences discourse, as Lynn Hunt assures us in her introduction to *The New Cultural History*: "Historians working in the cultural mode should not be discouraged by the theoretical diversity, for we are just entering a remarkable new phase when the other human sciences (including especially literary studies, but also anthropology and sociology) are discovering us anew." Indeed prophet movements can be reinterpreted through an historical analysis of what their functions and influences were within the context of Christianization. The central debate in the existing indigenous prophet literature asks whether these movements are traditional Native responses, i.e. indigenous forms of religious expression), or whether they must be interpreted as post-contact phenomena only, directly related to the Euro-American colonialism. There are alternative lines of inquiry. For example, what are the roles of prophet movements in the relationship of power and authority in a process of Christianizing? Given that prophets were an aspect of Christianity from its inception, Native prophets may have been more congruent with mission forms than scholars have previously allowed. Furthermore, how does one integrate the authority of indigenous epistemology? For that reason, I devote a chapter in this dissertation to associating the Christian message of the Wet'suwet'en prophet Bini with two mission-based forms of cultural revitalization (revivalism and group evangelism), in terms of their function as public ceremonies of social and cultural regeneration for the Tsimshian.

What of the other "prophets" active in the region—Christian ones? Previously historiographic concerns centred around the nature and personalities of the "players" involved and questioned whether Native conversion to Christianity was "genuine." These inquires have

entrenched difference and dichotomy, giving Native missionaries and catechists a liminal status in a relationship that recognized Christian and Native as opposites. John Webster Grant’s *Moon of Wintertime* was an important, early challenge to this perspective, because, whatever the book’s faults, Grant recognized the active role played by Native Christians in the encounter between missionaries and First Nations. Since *Moon of Wintertime* there has been some further inquiry into the role of Native mission workers in British Columbia by historians Margaret Whitehead and Palmer Patterson, which, above all, demonstrate the complexity of “conversion” in terms of individuals and for communities. In some cases, Native mission workers became important local leaders for the communities in which they lived, and ultimately may have had a more enduring legacy than any itinerant Euro-Canadian missionary.

Scholars in the humanities and social sciences now seem more sensitive to the process of negotiated identities that Native missionaries created and lived on a daily basis. They ask, for example, how were conversions acts of cultural survival? Recently, a return to the earlier interest of ethnohistorical approaches, now applied to the Northwest Coast, has yielded fuller (and more inclusive of Native people) interpretations of these encounters, and as John Barker observed in the late 1980s, scholarly study has begun to explore “mission influences on native settlement patterns, religious ideas, gender, feasts, religious movements, and land claims.” Scholars question how power struggles were played out in the mission context. Michael Harkin’s recent examination of Heiltsuk (formerly known as the Bella Bella) navigation of Methodist dogma is a good example of how one can examine missionization in terms of negotiated process, hegemonic struggle, and symbolic as well as socio-cultural practices. Other scholars continue to make more explicit the previously implicit sensitivity, assessment, evaluation and analysis in historical

---

36 John Barker, “Bibliography of Missionary Activities and Religious Change in Northwest Coast Societies,” *Northwest Anthropological Research Notes*, 22, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 13. Indeed, the nature of religious Native-Euro-Canadian relations in British Columbia are evoking a renewed interest among graduate students and new scholars. For example, at UBC alone, several recent graduate thesis from departments as diverse as geography, history, and education. For example, Dan Clayton, “Geographies of the Lower Skeena, 1830-1920” (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1989); and Brett Christophers, “Time, Space, and the People of God: Anglican Colonialism in Nineteenth Century British Columbia” (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1995); 37 Harkin, “Power and Progress.”
studies. It is clear that terms like disempowered, subjugated, and “voiceless” are subjective tropes, requiring more sophisticated, critical, and diverse scholarly analyses. The interdisciplinary discourse fueling recent Native history seems readily equipped to handle this challenge because it can draw upon a wide range of theoretical and methodological contributions from disciplines for which the purposes and approach to history might otherwise have been very different.

My own approach as an historian is predominantly textually based. I am aware of the biases pervading non-Native written records, acknowledging, as Clarence Bolt observes, “[m]issionaries, in particular, were extremely skilled in selling the public their view of the nature of the contact between the two cultures, and the success or failure of missions is still often defined according to missionary terms.”[^38] The construction and propaganda of the “conversion story” (still the method by which the history of Christian missions to First Nations largely continue to be understood by non-Natives) was intended to reinforce the European or Western vision of colonialism.[^39] Consequently, almost the entire written record has encouraged the writing of mission histories built on Euro-Canadian categories and criteria.

While originally an Euro-Canadian form of expression, documentary evidence is not exclusively representative of that perspective alone. Literacy was one of the primary goals Native peoples sought through Euro-Canadian style education when missionaries first offered it. Thus, those nineteenth century Native Christians who strongly influenced the direction of Christian evangelism through their participation, becoming salaried missionaries for the Anglican, Methodist, and Salvation Army churches and for non-denominational missions, also left some written records. These records are few in number and not without their problems, such as the simultaneously insider-outsider perspectives they represent because they are both Native and Christian texts. Nonetheless, these Native documents provide invaluable insights into a non-Euro-Canadian discourse on the meaning of conversion and the significance of missionization. Because Native peoples sought to gain the “power” of the written word to obtain more control in

[^38]: Bolt, Thomas Crosby, xi.
the post-contact world in which they lived, failure to exploit the use of Native written sources, in
effect, silences First Nations and thwarts their goal.

Through the application of literary techniques of discourse analysis to the record
pertaining to the cultural region of Tsimshianic speaking peoples (with an emphasis on the Coast
Tsimshian), I can begin to locate the mechanisms of power in the process of Christianization in
the second half of the nineteenth century.40 A regional focus avoids narrowing the historical
narrative solely to an individual Euro-Canadian missionary (as with missionary biographies) or a
single mission (as with case studies or mission ethnographies). Furthermore, the regional
perspective permits a comparison across villages and religions. Larger patterns of
interdenominational rivalry or multi-agenda colonialism may be more easily discerned. The
textual records themselves describe a rich assortment of Native contributions to missionization
and public historical sources reveal that contemporaries may have given greater weight to Native
participation than the later biographical historiography. My use of examples are by necessity
selective, owing simply to the scale and scope of the missionary record for such a large area and
time frame. Yet, it is my hope that this regional approach will provide a context for the
development of solid case-studies hitherto lacking in the historiography. By applying three
theoretical, interdisciplinary approaches (historical-geographic, dialogic, and discourse analysis),
the complexity of Christianization will be expressed, instead of merely presenting a narrative of
oppositional forces (Native spirituality/Christianity or shaman/missionary).

An important departure from the previous mission historiography is my turn away from
questions of the “successes” or “failures” of individual missions, to study the proselytizing-
conversion experience. I examine the possibilities of new religious identities arising from that
contact. “Conversion” was rarely absolute. Religious beliefs were interpreted through one’s
cultural context and necessitated a blurring of boundaries between spiritual systems in order to

40Scholars in a wide variety of disciplines have been evaluating the extent to which written and oral modes of history
may be complementary. For BC examples see: Wendy Wickwire, “To See Ourselves as the Other’s Other:
Nlaka’pamux Contact Narratives,” Canadian Historical Review 75, no. 1 (March 1994): 1-20; and Liz Vibert, “The
Natives Were Strong to Live:” Reinterpreting Early-Nineteenth Century Prophetic Movements in the British
Columbia Plateau,” Ethnohistory 42, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 197-229. However, the dichotomy and privileging of textual
history has been stubbornly retained in this province’s courts (e.g. “Delgamuukw vs. British Columbia,” the outcome
of which was overturned by the BC Supreme Court in 1997, because Native oral histories had not been given
sufficient weight by the trial judge in his original ruling).
construct meaning. For this reason, I also draw on concepts from anthropology and religious studies concerning religious identities and how they are defined.

Three important concepts inform my work: syncretism, convergence, and dualism. Syncretism is a concept that refers to the blending of Native and Christian beliefs, symbols, rituals, and cultural expressions. It is akin to Martha McCarthy's or Theresa Smith's "inaculturation." Christianity, according to this idea, is not accepted as a comprehensive package. Rather, it is incorporated selectively into, even altering, pre-existing spiritual practices. The borders between the two religious systems become so blurred that they effectively combine, although rarely equally, into new beliefs, practices, or systems. Convergence, on the other hand, refers to a commonality between religions as certain tenets or practices coincide with one another and are recognized as similar or even identical. In other words, Native and Christian beliefs or practices converge, so closely resembling one another that for all intents and purposes, the believer sees them as one and the same. Dualism recognizes a co-existence between forms of Native spiritualities and Christianity side by side, yet separate and distinct from one another. This concept is intriguing for its appropriate description of the process that all Native Christians undoubtedly struggled with at one point or another. Instead of belief systems blending or actually converging, dualism fosters a separation of the two, but not necessarily a rejection or privileging of one over the other. Contradictions may not be viewed as being problematic or even apparent, as each belief systems may be relegated to its own specific context and purpose.

The possibility of acceptance of both "traditional" and Christian expressions of spirituality simultaneously within Native communities—whether as syncretism, convergence, or dualism—undoubtedly caused the most consternation among the missionaries. By centring on this dynamic interaction between religions, I can avoid falling into the trap of dealing with Native religion and Christian missions separately. This approach can be further represented by a simple model:

---

43 For the sake of clarity and brevity of introduction, I have not included chiefs in their priestly guise (sn̩muwalit), who should be located alongside the shaman in the above figure. I will further explain the differences between Tsimshian
The model does not necessarily represent one form becoming the other, but rather the co-existence of old and new forms of religious expressions.\(^{44}\) It demonstrates a horizontal plain in which the concurrence of spiritual beliefs included Native mediators who blended or combined both pre-Christian and Christian systems within one individual. In this case, prophets may be leaders of shamanic movements who have been indelibly touched by their contact with Christianity. Similarly, Native Catechists trained by missionaries to disseminate Christian teachings among their own peoples undoubtedly remain influenced by their original religions. I am not suggesting that any one form is less “pure” or an eroded version of an original. Whatever the term “traditional” might mean in this context, religion from both Native and European perspectives has always been a rather innovative and dynamic expression of human spirituality. Just as Euro-Canadian missions aspired to bridge cultures through their evangelism, Native prophets and catechists also mediated between the two religious cultures. My study is an exploration of the dialogic nature of the interaction between those spiritual specialists included in the above model. Christianity was influenced by indigenous spirituality, particularly at the local level. At the same time, Christian missions were colonizing forces that brought tremendous

socio-cultural changes to Native communities. As much as I am bound by my sources to pursue largely Euro-Canadian perspectives on the event, situation, process and structure of religious encounters on the Pacific Slope, I believe that by focusing on the religious "middlemen," this study will contribute new insights to nineteenth century Native-Missionary relations.

REVIEW OF CENTRAL THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Colonial Christianity

The burgeoning literature on Christianity in colonial situations often speaks of an "indigenization" of Christianity and offers a variety of theoretical models on which to base descriptions of missionization.\(^{45}\) Indigenization, according to Antonio Gualtieri and Sergei Kan is "a process of cultural adaptation, in which the fundamental meanings of a cultural system are retained, at least partially, but are expressed in the symbolic forms of another, non-native culture."\(^{46}\) Few Canadianists have even broached the question of indigenization, particularly for the western regions, and the field remains vastly underdeveloped when compared to the historiography of missions to indigenous peoples elsewhere in the world. Clarence Bolt briefly examines ideas about the processes of conversion, but does not fully explore the possibility of an indigenous Christianity or even of syncretism.\(^{47}\) Anthropologist Goulet and professor of religion Antonio R. Gualtieri have considered the extent to which indigenization, syncretism, or religious dualism is a reality for the Dene and Inuit of the Western Subarctic and Arctic.\(^{48}\) Most of the Canadian literature addressing the topic of indigenization is anthropological and based largely on


\(^{46}\) "Of course, the opposite phenomenon of attributing new meanings to old symbols is just as common in culture contact and culture change." Antonio R. Gualtieri, "Indigenization of Christianity and Syncretism among the Indians and Inuit of the Western Arctic," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 12, no. 1 (1980): 57; as cited in Sergei Kan, "Russian Orthodox Brotherhoods Among the Tlingit: Missionary Goals and Native Response," *Ethnology* 32, no. 3 (1985): 196.

\(^{47}\) Bolt, *Thomas Crosby.*

ethnographic studies. However, there is much to be gained from the comparative perspectives from around the globe, as treatments of similar situations of religious encounters between aboriginals and Christian missionaries in the South Pacific, South America or Africa provide interesting parallels to the Canadian situation.

Throughout this dissertation, the term indigenization refers to an influence of Native cultural practices, interpretations, and behaviours upon Christianity. Christianization is the word I use to explain both the act of becoming more Christian and literally, the “Christianification” of Native spiritual or cultural practices. Both terms follow the conventional North American use. However, Erik Cohen and other contributors to the 1995 cross-cultural collection of essays entitled, *Indigenous Responses to Western Christianity*, use these same terms with the meanings reversed. Cohen describes Christianization as the absorption of indigenous elements by Christian churches while indigenization, he argues, is the absorption of Christian elements by indigenous religions. This antonymic use of key terms thus requires careful reading of the historiography if workable comparisons are to be derived from the cross-cultural literature.

The acknowledgment that the meeting of disparate religious worlds was a creative process has implications for our understanding of colonialism. In the words of John Comaroff, “The image of colonialism as a coherent, monolithic process seems at last, to be wearing thin. That is why we are concerned here with the tensions of empire, not merely its triumphs; with the contradictions of colonialism, not just its crushing progress.” From the literature on colonial cultures—especially scholars like Frederick Cooper, Ann Laura Stoler, Jean and John Comaroff, and Homi Bhabha—the concept of hybridities and fractured identities suggest that colonial dichotomies of colonized and colonized “only reflected part of the reality in which people lived” and not only “took hard work to sustain,” but were “precariously secured” and “repeatedly

---

49 John Barker suggests quite the opposite for South Pacific studies: “Several anthropologists have called for studies of 'missionization' in recent years and some have published innovative ethnohistorical studies of conversion in a number of societies. But few have attempted ethnographic appraisals of Christianity as it is currently experienced and practiced in Pacific societies.” Barker, *Christianity in Oceania*, 1.


In the case of the North Pacific Coast of nineteenth century British Columbia, ethnic or racial divisions are most readily apparent in the Euro-Canadian discourse of missions which viewed the terms Native and Christian as opposites. In their studies on BC Native economies, Rolf Knight, Dianne Newell, and John Lutz have explored the class dimension of the wage labour system as it pertained to Native men, women, and families, a process contemporary with the emergence of industrial missions like Metlakatla, suggesting that class issues are indeed valid concerns for an historical inquiry on missions. Church patriarchal structures envisioned very different roles for female and male Native Christians, although some groups such as the Salvation Army positively recognized female leadership from the pulpit and within the upper echelons of power in the organization. Nowhere in the lived experience were Native and Christian homogenous categories.

Cultural Hegemonies: the Politics of Missions

It is vital to keep in mind that there were glaring inherent contradictions in mission work, because although Christianity offered a new world view, missions were also designed to prohibit indigenous peoples full access to this “brave new world.” The very struggle over new religious identities in the mission context reveals how colonial hegemony worked. Hegemony is “a complex interlocking of political, social and cultural forces,” or “the active social and culture forces which are its elements.” Hegemony is more than ideology or political rule because it permeates all levels of life, becoming “common sensical” (at least temporarily) when predominant. Often the term is modified into the more specific cultural hegemony, where culture is defined in its broadest terms, as the whole social process. The concept of cultural hegemony

52Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, “Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda,” in Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 34.
has been recently employed in the writing of colonial Native histories,\textsuperscript{56} as it allows for a contrast between indigenous and non-indigenous cultures, without necessarily permanently delimiting them. I too, will avoid using oppositional comparisons. While still acknowledging the existence and influence of unequal power relations, cultural hegemony seems a potentially fruitful framework through which the politics of missions might be explored.

Attempting to summarize its application, Raymond Williams suggests the key to understanding hegemony at work begins with a notion of domination rather than dominance—in other words, as an ongoing process, a lived experience.\textsuperscript{57} Just as colonial forces were heterogeneous, the myriad of responses to those forces cannot be encapsulated by a single term like "resistance" or "colonized." Colonial successes were never total nor uncontested.\textsuperscript{58} Cultural hegemony "has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not at all its own."\textsuperscript{59} In this respect, it is not a top-down model of social control. On the contrary, it exists simultaneously as an external and internalized process. Thus, more than merely a model of resistance/acceptance, in function, by definition, it therefore identifies an active role in historical processes for both the colonizer and the colonized.\textsuperscript{60}

Cultural hegemony as a theoretical framework is especially useful when analyzing encounters between two cultures. Drawing on older notions of contact frontiers as creative zones of communication, it is not always apparent how to differentiate contact-cultures into clear-cut "us/them" camps, especially when new mutually comprehensible cultural forms and symbolic meanings arise out of the contact situation. It is also important that Christianized First Nations should not be written about as though they are any less genuine or "real" than "traditionalist"


\textsuperscript{57}Williams, \textit{Marxism and Literature}, 112-113.

\textsuperscript{58}Michael Harkin, "Contested Bodies: Affliction and Power in Heiltsuk Culture and History," \textit{American Ethnologist} 21, no. 3 (1994): 600.

\textsuperscript{59}Williams, \textit{Marxism and Literature}, 112.

\textsuperscript{60}Scholars such as Antonio Gramsci, Raymond Williams, and T. J. Jackson Lears have also identified "alternative hegemonies" and "counter-hegemonies" which are extremely complex actions within the hegemonic process itself, and I do not intend to apply these concepts in any specific sense in this study.
First Nations. Prior to the 1950s, for example, scholars viewed post-contact First Nations histories in terms of a uni-linear progression of assimilation and acculturation, punctuated by the struggle between “traditionalist” (i.e. resistance) and “progressive” (i.e. acceptance) Indian. Scholars have since abandoned this whiggish view of history through an acknowledgment of the complexity of post-contact cultures and through the use of analytic models which account for cultural continuity with the past, not merely its dilution or replacement. The outmoded approach attempting to chart the “inevitable” assimilation and acculturation of aboriginal cultures is no longer a focus; nor is the influence of colonial predominance, a given.

The second half of the nineteenth century was a crucial period, in terms of the struggle over power and authority along the North Coast. As Sergei Kan observed, “[a]nalyses that separate ‘religion’ from ‘politics’ and then concentrate on one or the other violate the spirit of Northwest Coast cultures in which the two were not distinct domains but different aspects of the same process.” While I have chosen not to dwell upon North Coast political struggles, I do feel it necessary to briefly acknowledge the use(s) of Christianity for political agendas and the politics of missions reveal much about the hegemonic processes at work among Tsimshians and their neighbours.

Conversions of “the Old and New Peoples”

Academics and First Nations alike have blamed missionaries for the most dramatic shifts in Native consciousness and identity, frequently focusing upon religious identities. As scholars have recently begun to explore, conversion to Christianity is a multi-faceted transformation; it can simultaneously mean both a ‘colonial’ transformation in its broadest sense, and when rejected or avoided, can symbolize a counter-hegemonic resistance to imperialism. How the term

---

63 The phrase the “old and new peoples” appears throughout Tsimshian Christian Arthur Wellington Clah’s journals, that simultaneously describes both the invasion of Native territories by newcomers and how the Tsimshian themselves were changed as a result of the encounter. Arthur Wellington Clah, “Journals,” [hereafter cited as AWCJ], NAC MG40 F11 #A-1706-1709, 1711-1714.
64 Forrest LaViolette, The Struggle for Survival: Indian Cultures and the Protestant Ethic in British Columbia (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961); and Fisher, Contact and Conflict.
"conversion" has been defined and utilized by missionaries and historians of missions alike, merits a brief discussion.

In a Christian theological sense, conversion means literally a "turning," used to refer to the "spiritual or moral change which accompanies the turning of a sinner from his [or her] sins to God." It is thus, primarily an individual activity. For each person, conversion to Christianity, especially for the evangelical denominations, did not mean a process at all, but rather the sudden experience of rapture, of being overwhelmed by the spirit of God, and being reborn in that moment. While some scholars have made distinctions between voluntary and involuntary conversion, for the case of the North Pacific slope, I prefer to avoid either dichotomy. Actual conversions at the individual or social levels were far more complex than this. While a voluntary transformation lies at the heart of evangelical definitions of conversion, the presence of Euro-Canadian coercion and imbalanced power relations inherent in the process of missionization on the North Coast, suggests that ultimately this spiritual shift was not entirely one of free choice. After all, conversion was the first goal of the missionary endeavour; the first step in Christianization was assuredly defined by the churches as a mechanism for social change. It cleared the way for the achievement of other Euro-Canadian missionary objectives, the broadest one, being "civilizing the Indian." Conversion is thus conceived as "being self-conscious change in more or less enduring religious belief and affiliation from one religious system to another." Hence, while conversion is a deep personal conviction of the truth of Christian teachings, it can also mean a variety of things. As Peter Wood explains, “[a]ffiliation to a Christian church, an explicit claim to Christian identity, or merely a borrowing of religious elements associated with Christian tradition can be construed as indices of conversion.” Taking this broader definition, it can thus apply to nations as well as individuals, because conversion "is a matter of belief and social structure, of faith and affiliation."
Recently, scholars interested in the role of culture and its relationship to religious transitions have given primacy to the local perspectives, concluding "that religious meaning is to be found first of all in the exegetical accounts of religious participants." Self-representation and direction in the study of Native religions and their relationships with Christianity, is unequivocally demanded by many First Nations communities today. Likewise, scholars must take into consideration historical aboriginal viewpoints on conversion. For example, on the North Coast there is evidence to suggest that ordinary people tended to follow the example of their chiefs. In some locations, such as Port Simpson, conversion was initially a "top-down" phenomenon, which in turn, lends greater credence to the idea of conversion as a shift in religious affiliation for an entire group, rather than the voluntary spiritual "turning" of an individual. The discourse produced by Native converts further defines what the transition to Christianity meant both ideologically and practically. Converts expressed their personal experiences and how these affected their identity within the larger community. Overall, Tsimshian conceptualizations of conversion were varied and dynamic ones.

Anthropological approaches to African conversion have produced a variety of theoretical models, several of which have some pertinence for the North Pacific Coast/Tsimshian case. Two such models, in particular, question the nature of conversion to world religions in terms of how whole communities undergo religious transformation. African scholar Humphrey J. Fisher developed a theory coined the "Juggernaut" of Christianity and Islam or "external conversion." This view suggests that while local cultures, politics or economics are important variables, ultimately converts are "reshaped by the key doctrines, dynamics, and practices of the world religions themselves." In other words, the broader "external" world-view of Christianity...
creates a "juggernaut" effect for conversion that transforms communities, even if all their members are not necessarily believers. Robin Horton, debated Fisher, championing an opposing theory: the "Phoenix of resurgent indigenous religions" or "internal conversion." Horton argued that "the crucial variables are not the external influences (Islam, Christianity), but the pre-existing thought-patterns and values, and the pre-existing socio-economic matrix." Conversion manifests itself as a highly selective process by which indigenous populations adopt only those ideas, concepts and values that mesh with pre-existing world-views. World religions are not the sole agents of change in the final analysis, but rather "catalysts," stimuli and accelerative forces for change already underway. For the North Pacific Coast and the Tsimshian conversion to Christianity, neither thesis is entirely satisfactory, (although, the above description is, by necessity, greatly simplified). Furthermore, the reduction to purely internal or external factors blurs the extent to which there was a constant shifting between the two. Conversion did not occur in a linear fashion and embraced various elements at the societal level through the variety of experiences by individual Christians at the local level.

Hitherto, I have discussed the merits of considering Christianity as not exclusively an Eurocentric spiritual system and the ways in which "[i]t is not necessary to become a believer in a 'world religion' to be a convert." However, in many respects, Christianity's association with Europe (or Canada under Europeans) was a primary appeal for Natives. Access to literacy and the material benefits of an industrialized mission village, such as Metlakatla, were powerful incentives for conversion, and indeed, as inspiring for some as hearing the "Word of God" or "receiving the Spirit." Commenting upon the phenomenon of colonial evangelism in particular, Wood remarks: "The Christian missions conducted during periods of colonial rule and the continuing association of Christianity with Western goods, with the 'macrocosm' of the world economy, and, to a lesser extent, with Western culture provide Christianity with surplus but very powerful meanings." Throughout this study, I argue that the balance between spiritual and

---


76 Jordan, "Glyphomancy Factor," 286.

material mission is an important factor determining the mechanisms of power and the establishment of new social identities.

Problems of Textuality in Native Autobiographical Writings

As the boundaries and borders between academic disciplines have become permeable within recent decades, the historical approaches to interpreting the past seem to have become ever-expansive. Postmodernist concerns with the relationship between knowledge and power and with representing "authentic", unappropriated "voice," has produced, as Kenneth Morrison suggests, "a crisis of representation in the social sciences and humanities." This "crisis" seems particularly acute in the interdisciplinary approaches and methodologies applied to interpret indigenous/non-indigenous historical relations. One productive response has been to replace the traditional and simplistic dichotomies of Orientalism (us/them and representation of "the Other") with a "fairer" dialogic approach, whereby the dynamic nature of cultural encounters is better appreciated. The dialogic approach is especially well-suited to those scholars who literally, as well as conceptually, have conversations with their subject matter. The application of such an approach is less straight-forward, though not impossible, for textually-based disciplines like history. By revealing the complexity of a lived colonialism and the dialogic nature of religious encounters between Natives and missionaries, the Comaroffs' work on Christianity in South Africa has set new standards for scholars without dismissing the richness of archival documentation. All voices (and for that matter, silences) can be included in the dialogue, adhering to what Michel Foucault labeled as "the rule of tactical polyvalence of discourses."

80"There is no absolute shift in quality...in moving from 'talking with others about them' to 'talking with each other about us.'" Wilfrid Cantwell Smith cited in Kenneth Morrison, "No Relatives," 12.
81Obviously, all history does not rely on documentary sources exclusively, but this has been the backbone of the discipline and the historical technique until recently.
82"[I]t is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together. And for this very reason, we must conceive discourse as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable. To be more precise, we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies. It is this distribution that we must reconstruct..." Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality: Vol. I, An Introduction (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 100.
Nowhere is this "criticism that insists on its betweenness" more apparent than when it comes to scholarly "conversations" with Native American literature. Arnold Krupat identifies two types of Native writings about the self where a form of dialogic production he calls ethnocriticism, is particularly apparent: the Indian autobiography and the autobiography by an Indian. The Indian autobiography is a collaborative effort between an aboriginal subject whose life experience make up the "content" and a non-Native who edits the text and possibly posed the original questions, thereby providing the ultimate "form" of the project. Autobiographies written by Indians, while more "bicultural" in nature, given the literacy requirements to produce such texts, are, in Krupat's estimation, truly "self-written lives," without "compositeness to their composition." Many published letters by Native missionaries containing autobiographic sketches, such as the letters from the field which frequently appeared in the Methodist Missionary Outlook, or published autobiographies, such as William Henry Pierce's From Potlatch to Pulpit, are good examples of Krupat's "Indian autobiographies." "Autobiographies by Indians," although less common in the archival record, can be found among less public textual sources, such as letters sent to other missionaries or personal diaries, most notably Arthur Wellington Clah's journals.

What can historians conclude about polyvocal texts by Native missionaries? Krupat has explored Native Christians' use of the "salvationist discourse" and the implications this expression has had on the their own self-identities. He found that this discourse of "aggressive Protestantism," which defined all humankind and their actions in relation to God's will, encouraged Native converts to "draw their sense of self entirely from Christian culture." As a case example, Krupat examined the writings of an early nineteenth century "mixed blood" Pequot and Methodist preacher, William Apes, who "came to view Christianity as part of the

---

83 Krupat, Ethnocriticism, 28.  
84 Ibid., 219-220.  
86 AWCJ, NAC MG40 F11 #A-1706-1709, 1711-1714.  
solution, rather than part of the problem." This is an important observation to make about Native missionaries along the North Pacific Slope of British Columbia in the nineteenth century. Christianity necessitated a reordering of one’s sense of self and subsequent relationship with one’s community. Native catechists and missionaries tended to do this in such a way that Christianity was a potential solution to the woes that may (or may not) have driven them to seek out the transformation to a Christian, in the first place. Once again, while the “use” for Christianity may have been novel, the “form” of spiritual power derived through the transformative experience was not. There was a strong continuity with conventional Coast Tsimshian discourse on power acquisition and this illustrates just how the Tsimshian sense of self, was not predicated on Christian culture alone.

David Murray in his study on Native American literature, *Forked Tongues: Speech, Writing, and Representation in Native American Texts*, also devoted considerable study to the writings of Native American Christians. Murray identified a variety of literary motifs or narrative discourses employed by Native Christian writers. While acknowledging the adoption of Euro-American conventions in many instances, he also demonstrated Native resistance to the stereotyped forms through use of inversion, irony, and critical analyses of the processes at work in his colonial world. Many of the Native Christians of the North Pacific Coast who left written records utilized the power of their pens to similar ends, and I will examine the extent to which some of Murray’s typology may be applied to them. However, Murray cautioned scholars against confusing the authorial presence in a text with the historical person. Native Christians of the past were no less complex in terms of their public identity and how they represented themselves to audiences than people are today. This principle informs my exploration of the Native discourse on missions.

*Nēhiyaw* (Cree) scholar Winona Stevenson focused on this very issue—that of the complexity of historical representation—in her article examining the “voices” of an Anglican catechist on the Canadian prairies in the nineteenth century, who was also *nimosôm* (her great-

---

89 David Murray, *Forked Tongues*, chapters 4, 5, and 7, passim.
90 Ibid., 57.
great-great-grandfather). She was deeply shaken at the apparent contradiction between the character of Askeenootow/Charles Pratt who she knew first through family oral history and the representation she found of him later, written by his own hand in his mission journals. In the final analysis, she concluded that both the oral and written representations were accurate portrayals of Pratt. The written Askeenootow/Charles Pratt represented himself as closely as he could to the missionary ideal; the intent of his journals "was to convince his superiors that the mission field was ripe and that he was conducting his work according to their standards and desires." Stevenson did find "wisps" in those journals of the great-great-grandfather she knew through the collective memory of his descendants, but the match was a subtle and hidden one.

Thus, I am mindful of the ethical dangers for scholars who still claim to want to hear only "authentic" Native voices in historical documents. As Murray points out, the "collaborative role of reading" in writing history "means being aware of the impossibility of finally pinning down any historical figure's 'real' voice." On some level, they all are "real." While the problems of textuality in Native autobiographical writings are genuine, so too are issues of "authenticity." Christianity, I will argue was indeed, an "authentic" Native experience.

A Regional Focus: North Pacific Coast and Lower Nass and Skeena River Watersheds

This study employs a historical-geographic approach by examining a large and varied region of mission activity. Spatial-temporal representations of missionization have been consistent features in both primary and secondary sources on religious encounters on British Columbia's Pacific slope. Many missionary biographies, and certainly most church and mission histories, contain maps of the region(s), with some indication as to the location of mission sites and denominational territories. The temporal aspect can be added to this by charting the introduction, transformation or discontinuation of missions through particular periods. Prophet movements, especially the diffusion of the prophet dance, Smohalla cult, and the Ghost Dance,

92 Stevenson, "Church of England Native Catechist," 308.
93 Ibid., 324.
94 David Murray, Forked Tongues, 52.
frequently have been mapped. Despite the scarcity of detailed academic studies on missions in nineteenth century British Columbia, a broad geographic approach may illuminate important characteristics of the scope and history of religious interaction in the region.

In inquiring into the patterns, processes, and forms surrounding Christian missions and the conversion of First Nations to a new or additional religion, there are several advantages and disadvantages to selecting as my focal point a region, rather than any one mission, village, or nation. The region of the North Pacific Coast of British Columbia, including the Lower Nass and Skeena River watersheds, was a socio-economic and cultural zone in the Aboriginal or pre-European period. While boundaries between nations existed, there was a great deal of movement and interaction in terms of goods, people, ideas and customs. For thousands of years prior to the arrival of Europeans, approximately 10-12 000 Tsimshianic speaking peoples (which anthropologists have divided into four major cultural-linguistic groups, Coast Tsimshian, Southern Tsimshian, Nisga’a and Gitxsan) occupied the North Pacific coastline and Nass and Skeena Rivers. Their economies were built around permanent home villages and a regular, seasonal-round, using different locations in the region to exploit a wide variety of resources. The spring-time saw a movement of people to the Nass River for the eulachon fishery. This gathering was typified by not only fishing, but considerable trade as well. When the eulachon runs were finished, small groups of people departed to various coastal locations to hunt sea mammals and other marine resources, while others moved to inland hunting sites. They traveled to camps along the Lower Skeena River in the summer to fish for salmon and gather berries. By late fall, they had prepared enough provisions to see them through the winter or for use in trade with other First Nations, and with these goods they returned to their winter village sites.

Tsimshianic societies were hierarchical, and the maintenance of authority and power depended on extensive systems of trade, exchange and redistribution of material resources, which

---


96George F. MacDonald, Gary Coupland, and David Archer, "The Coast Tsimshian, ca. 1750" in *Historical Atlas of Canada. Volume I: From the Beginning to 1800*, ed. R. Cole Harris and cartographer Geoffrey J. Matthews (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), Plate 13. However, scholars (like the above) of Tsimshianic speaking peoples have frequently recognized only three major groupings: Coast Tsimshian, Nisga’a, and Gitxsan.

97Ibid.
frequently extended over long distances and even outside the immediate North Coast area. Scholars often describe the continued importance of the region after the arrival of Europeans for these same reasons. The peoples of the North Coast region, especially the Nass and Skeena River valleys, remained intermediaries in a trade that now included Europeans. This intensive and central involvement in trade facilitated variety, cross-cultural understanding, and fostered the adaptive growth of their own traditions. When religious ideas became a commodity of exchange by mid-century as various denominations introduced missions, the Coast and Southern Tsimshian, Nisg̱a’a, and Gitxsan were geographically situated in the middle of the mission field and subsequently involved in Christian evangelism, dominating the dissemination of information concerning Christianity. This entire region, and particularly the territory of the Coast Tsimshian, is an appropriate area upon which to focus a study of Native religious intermediaries also because of the variety of Protestant missions (Anglican, Methodist, Salvation Army, and non-denominational) that came to be established there in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Another key feature of this region is its relatively slow development of Euro-Canadian settlement and distance from large populations of non-Native peoples, at least until the late-nineteenth century. The first coastal post, Fort Simpson was established first on the Nass River in 1831 but moved shortly thereafter in 1834 to its current position, closer to the mouth of the Skeena River near present-day Prince Rupert. Following the move, the Gispaxlo’ots tribe of Coast Tsimshian established a permanent winter village close to the fort at a site that formerly had been a camping place for Coast Tsimshian groups traveling to the spring fishery on the Nass River. However, the proportion of non-Native to Native remained small until the ascendancy of the town of Port Essington (established 1871) by the close of the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, the long term interaction with Euro-Canadians at Fort Simpson had profound effects on Tsimshian societies. Christian missions would continue this influence and proved to be the more sustained and intrusive form (at least on the level of daily village life) of Euro-Canadian contact.

98 This was the first coastal fort in Tsimshian territory. However, the indirect influence of nearby interior posts (Ft. Klimaurs or Ft. St. James) to the south-east in Gitxsan, Wet’suwet’en, and Sekani territories had already begun this process.
with First Nations of the region for until late in the nineteenth century. Given the chronological scope of this project, (approximately a half century), the larger geographic area allows for an overall view of the introduction, expansion, and development of several Protestant churches among First Nations. It also allows me to focus on a people (Coast Tsimshian) ideally located as religious “middlemen,” as well as the object in this missionization process. Some of the most significant and influential nineteenth century mission sites (Metlakatla, Port Simpson, Kincolith) in the province belong to this region. The interactions between Native and missionary and the relationship between different Christian groups and villages were dynamic and only visible at a macrocosmic level.

What Follows

This study considers a number of larger themes as it surveys missionization in the North Coast region of British Columbia in the second half of the nineteenth century. The Christianization of First Nations was a process of negotiation and contested meanings, and this dissertation focuses on the discourses of conversion and of Native Christianity. My first two chapters examine the structure and historical “event” of missionary contact in the region. “Converting” to Christianity has multiple meanings as agenda, practice and outcome of mission work. In Chapter 2, I introduce the pre-existing indigenous discourse on transformation that informed Native reception to Christianity, and the nature of the Coast Tsimshian’s pre-contact, spiritual life. Chapter 3 explores the arrival of Christianity, through an outline of the temporal and spatial patterns of that work and discussion of missionary rationale and technique, especially in respect to Native roles. The region under inquiry was profoundly affected by evangelical forms of Protestantism, and I will explore how this influence shaped missionary approaches and practices in the mid to late nineteenth century. Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 are concerned with the function of missions and the meaning of conversion, demonstrating the themes of social action, hegemony, and gender in the writings of non-Native missionaries. Although the Euro-Canadian mission record dominates historical missionary sources, a handful of prominent Native missionaries left enough written material, letters, journals, and reminiscences to begin to reflect
upon the Native voice on this matter. Their lives are exemplary of the larger experiences of other Native mission workers about whom much less is known or was recorded. The relationship between the missionary discourse and historical representation is considered in chapters 6 and 7, as Native writings illustrate both a genuine evangelicalism and an indigenized Christianity.

Subsequent chapters deal with the process by which power—influence, authority, ascendancy, control, status, or authorization in spiritual, social, economic or political matters—was unequally distributed within the mission context, and with how social and cultural meanings of aspects of daily life were disputed, contested, and negotiated. Christianization was self-admittedly in this very business of creating new moral and spiritual paradigms, as well as re-interpretations of civilization and forms of social order. Chapter 8 examines how Christian meanings were challenged from both within and without the mission context, through revivalism and group evangelism, and informed by a pre-Christian indigenous discourse on prophets. All three—prophets, revivals, and group evangelists—are forces that share similar goals and function as public ceremonies of social and cultural regeneration. While Native peoples sought empowerment through new forms of spirituality, those same power mechanisms could confine, challenge, and assault Native social and cultural structures. How does a researcher uncover the political aspects of missionization, assuming that certain sites of common ground between Euro-Canadian missionaries and the Tsimshians became contested ones, while others did not? Chapter 9 and 10 focus on this question. These themes of power, missions, and religious identities are also raised in the brief epilogue. Production and reproduction of meanings as they relate to identities emerging from the mission experience highlight the impact of Christianity in the region. There were increasing tensions between Euro-Canadian missionaries in the field and other church or governmental authorities, and "secular" attacks on Tsimshian social, economic, and political forms demonstrated the diversity of colonial forces. Indeed, more than merely the "heavens" were changing, and the dialogue of how they were changing would continue for the next century and likely beyond.
Chapter 2: The Spiritual Dimensions of Coast Tsimshian Culture

"Converting" to Christianity has multiple meanings as both agenda, practice, and outcome of mission work. Tsimshian Christian and self-styled preacher, Arthur Wellington Clah, often used the phrase "the history of the old and new peoples" throughout his journals. It was his way of describing both the intrusion of non-Native peoples into Coast Tsimshian territory and the impact it had upon his nation, making them, in essence, a "new people." Yet, understanding who the "old people" were is vital to any history of this process. The idea that Euro-Canadian missionaries converted First Nations to Christianity without Native participation in the process is as preposterous as it sounds. Mission work involved complex relations of religious cultures. Anglican Bishop William Ridley commented on the level of engagement required of missionaries in their evangelism of the Tsimshian: "No missionary can be dull among these Tsimshian Indians, unless, failing in his duty, he keeps them at arms' length. Where they give their confidence they give no rest. They have an alertness of mind and purpose which forbids stagnation." What accounted for this "alertness of mind and purpose" in religious matters was the fact that spirituality permeated all aspects of Tsimshian culture and daily existence. It is impossible to consider the implication of categories such as Christian and non-Christian, before first exploring the Northwest Coast peoples' predisposition towards religious innovation through a brief summary of pre-Christian Coast Tsimshian cosmology.

Spirituality on the Northwest Coast was a complex and vital aspect of Native cultures when it first came into contact with Christianity. It heavily influenced how Christian missions were received by First Nations and shaped the forms Christianity took among Tsimshianic speaking peoples. I have decided to focus on the philosophical groundings of Coast Tsimshian religion to allow me to illuminate continuities in the later Native responses and adaptations to Protestant Christianity. By discussing religious concepts in an abstract way, rather than reviewing ritual forms and expressions, I hope to sketch the cognitive framework of Coast

1 AWCJ, 1859-1909, NAC MG40 F11 #A-1706-1714.
Tsimshian religion which shares several fundamental concepts with evangelical doctrine. In particular, the significance of transformation and of experiential forms of spirituality, I argue, predisposed Coast Tsimshian towards certain aspects of Protestantism, not because they were “new,” but because they were familiar.

The following discussion of Coast Tsimshian spirituality also draws heavily upon academic reconstructions which are inevitably reductive and over-systematized. Specifically, my characterization of Tsimshian cosmology is derived from the works of several anthropologists who have studied Native spirituality in some depth—Viola Garfield, Marjorie Halpin, John J. Cove, Margaret Seguin, Marie-Françoise Guédon, Audrey Shane, and Jay Miller. While drawing upon the knowledge of Coast Tsimshian people themselves, through direct ethnographic research, many of these scholars developed much of their understanding from post-colonial sources. Anthropological fieldnotes and oral narratives collected in the early twentieth century (especially the work of Marius Barbeau and William Beynon), were heavily exploited in building their reconstructions of Tsimshian spiritual culture. I must acknowledge that however useful in focusing attention on some of the key themes in indigenous worldview, the veracity of any of their interpretations can be questioned. For this reason, the following outline is limited to a general discussion of the key elements and expressions of Coast Tsimshian religion.

Any separation of spiritual and material aspects of the world was a totally alien notion to the Coast Tsimshian and most of their neighbours on the North Coast. Their cosmology did not divide the natural from the supernatural world, as Euro-Canadians did; nature was supernatural. Whereas Judeo-Christian tradition divided humans from other living beings, through the biblical declaration that God had given humans dominion over the animals, such a dichotomy did not exist for the Tsimshian. For them, the relationship between humans and non-humans was a shifting shared personhood. John Cove concludes that the Tsimshian concept of humanness was not spiritually or materially different from other beings:

Non-humans have second skins that are removable, and beneath those skins are the same physical forms as humans. Commonalities in external appearance define types of being and affinities which are the basis of collectives. The difference between humans and non-

\(^3\text{Genesis 1:26,28.}\)
humans lies in the latter having powers which the former lack. Humanness, then, is a residual category defined by the absence of those powers—to exist at the most basic level. To be non-human is to be more than human.\(^4\)

In the far distant past, the Tsimshian believed humans and non-humans could easily transform into one another and move between dimensions of existence. Later, shamans continued this practice, although as I will expand upon below, access to some kind of spiritual power was open to all members of their society. Thus transformation was a key concept of Tsimshian spirituality, particularly in connection with actualizing one’s potential to become literally “superhuman.” It was the pervasiveness of this transformation theme which made evangelical Christianity (with its central emphasis on the transformative nature of conversion) not simply attractive, but, on one level, familiar. This convergence of beliefs facilitated a degree of indigenization of Christianity in the late nineteenth century.

A particular difficulty of any explanations of “traditional” Native spiritual forms in the missionary discourse has been the dual problem of translation and prejudice. Many of the expressions of spiritual power can not be adequately translated into English. English words like “supernatural” and “spiritual” carry enormous cultural baggage from the Victorian era. Furthermore, it is clear that missionaries themselves were unable or unwilling to understand the complexities of Tsimshian sacred culture and, hence, had the tendency to lump together very different manifestations of spiritual practice under a single term. Marie-Françoise Guédon contextualizes this phenomenon using the example of how three key concepts in Tsimshian spirituality—shamans (swansk halait), witches (haldaugit), and spiritually endowed objects, people, or practices (halait)—have become muddled within a Christian framework that applied labels of “sorcery,” “witch doctor,” or “pagan ritual” haphazardly.

When we speak English, we are likely to use the terms sorcerer or witch (according to the European traditions of conflicts between traditional pre-Christian beliefs and Christian dogma, and to the historical oppositions between peasant populations and official hierarchies) indiscriminately to translate such Tsimshian terms as swansk halait (meaning “Shaman”) haldaugit (witches), and halait; by doing so, we impose a negative connotation on the realities to which the terms apply. The easy opposition between the new Christian

religious ideas and the old so-called ‘pagan’ traditions embodied by the halait, the haldaugit and their colleagues further amplifies the negative tone.\(^5\)

Sorcery and witchcraft did exist in pre-Christian Tsimshian culture. By definition witches (haldaugit) attempted to harm others or were responsible for working evil, but they did so through magical not spiritual means.\(^6\) Shamans and chiefs in their “priestly” capacity accessed non-human helpers, immortal beings, or eternal sources of spiritual power more commonly (although not exclusively) for positive rather than negative results. The Tsimshian notions of halait and naxnox are central to understanding the relationship of religious specialists to their culture. To Europeans shamans and priest-chiefs were one and the same, blurred together as the antithesis of Christianity and thus were representative of the work of the devil or evil ways. Yet these two figures were the Tsimshian equivalents to the missionaries themselves and are vital to comprehension of the nature of spiritual leadership in pre-Christian Tsimshian society.

Missionaries viewed themselves as apart from this relationship, and in the context of this study, it was of interest to me to uncover whether Euro-Canadian missionaries were received as shamans or chiefs with a priestly function by the Tsimshian. The Tsimshian term for Christian priest, minister, pastor or preacher is lüpleet or lüpleed, suggesting that an entirely new label was devised for categorizing this post-contact type of spiritual leader.\(^7\) In different contexts, however, missionaries were perceived as either shamans and chiefs. Their roles as conceptualized within a Tsimshian perspective on religious specialists is a theme to which this study will frequently return.

\(^5\)Marie-Françoise Guédon, “An Introduction to Tsimshian Worldview and Its Practitioners,” in The Tsimshian: Images of the Past; Views for the Present, ed. Margaret Seguin (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984), 138. For the purposes of clarity I have standardized the spelling of swansk halait throughout this dissertation, although Guédon employs the older spelling halaidm swanaskxw or suanaskw.

\(^6\)“To work ‘through magic’ means that one is not using one’s or a spirit’s power but rather the properties of the ingredients or materials one is using. ‘Magic’ in this sense is very ancient, and widespread traditions based on the belief that objects which have been associated in some way can transmit at a distance to each other and to people connected with them, some of these properties. For instance, an image or photograph is linked with what it represents, part of an object or a body with the whole object or body; so a doll shaped in the likeness of, or dressed with a piece of clothing having belonged to a given individual or containing one of this individual’s hairs or some nail paring, is related to that individual in such a way that whatever is done to the doll, or to a photograph, or even, as one informant related, to a piece of paper bearing the name of the person, is supposed to somehow affect this individual.” Ibid., 147-148.

Halait and Naxnox

Two key concepts to understanding Tsimshian spiritual forms are halait and naxnox. Much of the following discussion draws heavily on Marie-Françoise Guédon’s explorations of the key concepts of Tsimshian spiritual beliefs concerning the manifestations of power or “wonders,” as they might be more aptly defined. Central to one of the sources of spiritual power in Tsimshian cosmology is halait (or halaayt). Translated into English halait means “dance,” “dancing” and “dancer,” but it is also the term applied to “shaman” or “initiate” (all potential participants in dancing). Guédon explains, that “everybody endowed with power may be called halait.... Halait means one is dealing with the paranormal, the supernatural, or the extraordinary realm... Any demonstration or representation of the gift or power, and especially the dramatization of such power by initiates of the secret societies, are also designated by the same term.”

For example the term applied to Tsimshian winter ceremonial dance is wiihalait (plural is wutahalait), meaning “great halait,” thus incorporating halait as its suffix.

Frequently a halait is someone or something that is in contact or endowed by a naxnox. Naxnox “applies to any being, event, or ability which appears to exhibit or express some form of ‘power’” translated into English, as “supernatural” or “spirit.” “If a halait is the person through which the power is made manifest as well as the demonstration of that power, the naxnox is the source of that power.” Like halait, the term naxnox can be confusing because it refers both to the source and the expression of spiritual power, although more frequently the former is the case.

For the purposes of this discussion, naxnox will refer to the source of power, the immortal beings, while the term “wonder” will be applied to the cultural recognition of this, following the lead of

---

8Marie-Françoise Guédon, “Tsimshian Worldview,” pp. 137-159; and Marie-Françoise Guédon, “Tsimshian Shamanic Images” in The Tsimshian: Images of the Past; Views for the Present, ed. Margaret Seguin (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984), 174-211. For the purposes of clarity, I have standardized the spelling of naxnox throughout this dissertation, although Guédon used naxnoq.

9The current accepted spelling for this term is halaayt, however, as the majority of my sources utilized the more widely applied halait, I have decided on the latter as my standard spelling.


11Jay Miller clarifies this with how the degrees of halait were added to Tsimshian spirituality at different times: “Halait itself usually meant ‘shamans’ and was ancient; smhalait ‘real halait’ referred to the chief in his priestly winter aspect; wihalait ‘great halait’ were the four orders of secret societies diffusing north from the Northern Wakashans, especially the Bella Bellas.” Jay Miller, Tsimshian Culture: A Light Through the Ages (Lincoln and London: Nebraska University Press, 1997), 119.

12Guédon, “Tsimshian Worldview,” 139.

13Ibid., 140.
Jay Miller. The way the Tsimshian interacted with naxnox were varied but they all had one common characteristic, according to Guédon:

*All human manifestations of naxnox rely on the concept of helpers:* in other words, the human individual by himself or by herself is not able to deal with whatever challenges they are offered without relying on the presence and the help of what we call powers, supernatural beings, or spirits. In the case of the *swansk halait* [shamans], the helpers may turn out to be part of the individual himself. In the case of the *smgigyet* [chief], or the *wihalait* [secret society], the power of the helper outside always remains a different entity operating via the individual but still very distinct.

**Chiefs, Shamans, and Secret Societies**

Viola Garfield argues that the “Tsimshian regarded spirit power acquisition and protection as essential for all free persons.” Guardian helpers were important to Tsimshian culture and were accessed by individuals to assist them in any and all aspects of their daily lives. However, aside from shamanic encounters and vision quests, the majority of powers were obtained or consulted through a much more formalized structure where hereditary sources were paramount. “Formalized” spiritual leadership in Tsimshian culture could be wielded by chiefs (*smhalait*) and shamans (*swansk halait*). Membership of all high-ranking Tsimshian in one of the four dancing or secret societies (*wutahalait*) was socially mandatory and had components of power acquisition. These three arenas of superhuman power constitute the backbone of the more “formalized” of Tsimshian religious practices. The relationship of these categories to Tsimshian

---

14“Naxnox are beings, supernaturals, in their own right, the foundation of the other institutions. To distinguish the naxnox themselves from their primary expression, manifestation or ‘instanciation’ in masks and displays, the dramatizations themselves are here called ‘wonders’. In the Tsimshian language, they are all included together in the term naxnox.” Jay Miller, *Tsimshian Culture*, 169, n. 7.

15Guédon, “Tsimshian Worldview,” 140. For the purposes of clarity, I have standardized spellings of *smgigyet* and *wihalait*, throughout this dissertation, although Guédon employs the older spellings of *simoogit* and *wihalait*, respectively.


17I have employed the term “formalized” in reference to Tsimshian spirituality, although this is an artificial designation. Supernatural and human domains were not separate in Tsimshian worldview and therefore spiritual power was accessible to nearly everyone. However, there were certain “formal” (frequently seasonal) accesses to supernatural powers prominent in performances, rituals, and displays which also had important social functions. Spiritual practitioners who specialized in communication with the non-human and superhuman aspects of the universe, particularly in the context of healing, and who were trained and/or developed their skills over the course of a lifetime, likewise, merit the categorization of their religious practices as “formal” rather than informal.
culture was very complex and the following explanation is thus a much simplified definition of Tsimshian spiritual forms.

There were two basic types of spiritual power in Tsimshian society: chiefly and shamanic. Chiefly power ("the 'bright mirage' of heaven which is reached through the hole in the sky," practically manifested as "the smoke hole of the house") "can be opened by certain chiefs who receive its power directly and 'throw' it into others." Chiefs or *smgigyet* ("real persons") and their powers were the basis of Tsimshian social organization. In essence, as one anthropologist explained, "[i]ncumbants of chiefly positions are quasi-supernatural beings involved in a series of relationship to humans and non-human, and in collectivities such as Houses, clans, and villages...In a sense, real-people and shamans define the two cultural alternatives for what it means to have powers, and therefore, to be more than human." Shamans did not seek supernatural power, rather it sought them. They acquired power through direct contact with supernatural forces, outside a ritual framework, and they underwent a temporary "death" in so doing. Halpin remarked, "[t]hrough the ancient medical formula that to cure one must be cured, the shaman reverses his [or her] own power encounter, moving back from illness to health, and death to life. Non-shamans can endure power-illness, but only shamans can endure power death." It is logical, therefore, that it is shamans who most commonly diagnose, heal, cure and protect with their spiritual powers.

Based on Cove's study of how spiritual power is represented in Tsimshian narratives, one can describe the central difference between access to power by chiefs and shamanic uses of power in terms of passive and active relationships. Chiefs' contact with supernatural forces (*naxnox*) did not require them to enter into states of altered consciousness as did shamans. Chiefs "put on" names or crests, and Cove concluded that "many chiefs do not truly embody powers in the sense of actually experiencing and participating in non-human being." Chiefly powers were

---

22 Ibid., 230.
inherited, whereas supernatural powers chose or "elected" shamans. Chiefs are constrained, mainly utilizing spiritual powers in the service of the House. The power names they receive as recognition of this spiritual service thus belong to the House. A shaman "does service for anyone, including non-humans" and the names they derived from supernatural encounters were not generally passed on to another individual.23

By the time Christianity was introduced among the Tsimshian, power acquisition had already been absorbed and redefined by the crest system and secret societies. Access to power was largely placed in the hands of the house and clan chiefs, "leaving the individual solitary guardian spirit quest to the shaman and to those people seeking spiritual or mental assistance outside the kin-group framework."24 All members of Tsimshian society appealed to non-human helpers and observed specific practices on a daily basis to ensure good hunting, fishing, luck, health or to increase wealth. Through a vision quest, an individual was brought into contact with the superhuman power directly. This direct encounter could be routine or a life-altering experience. Shamans were persons who had a continuing and active relationship with non-human beings and powers. In terms of transformative skills and the ability to move interdimensionally, shamans were the most talented of all Tsimshian spiritual practitioners.

Guédon identified three essential stages in the making of a shaman, the first of which was the acquisition of a non-human "helper" (atiasxw) through a vision quest or sometimes unexpectedly, through a chance encounter.25 The individual then accepted their new status of shaman or they died. In this respect, the decision to become a shaman was not a voluntary one, but rather a mechanism with coping with what one had become through direct contact with non-human powers. So powerful were the encounters with non-human beings, that the individual became gravely ill. "His (her) ability to heal himself (or herself) then become the ability to heal others—and this is the main function of the swansk halait."26 The final phase was the establishment of a formal relationship with these non-human helpers (usually marked by the

---

23Ibid., 231.
24Guédon, "Tsimshian Worldview," 144.
25Ibid., 147.
26Ibid.
receiving of a name and songs) and the embarking upon a role of healer within one’s community. The final stage may have continued to evolve over the entire span of a shaman’s life.

While shamanic spiritual powers could be accessed anytime (or whenever contacted by non-human helpers), the role of chiefs as religious leaders was relegated to the winter months. The seasonal movements from summer to winter village locations, was paralleled by a shift from an economic to a spiritual focus. During the summer months, chiefs were known as smngigyet, (“real people”), but in the winter, they became smhalait (“real halait”), through their function as priests. Hence naxnox displays with masks and “wonders” devised by specialized artists, replaced potlatches and feasts. In addition to the seasonality of the respective power seekers, status played an important role. Garfield observed that “[m]ost of the famous Tsimshian shamans were neither lineage heads nor tribal chiefs. They were men who had achieved distinction and prestige not through hereditary rank[,] but through the use of their supernatural skills.” Thus, while affiliation in lineage and clan with other shamans was an advantage, it was not a requirement. In contrast, the empowerment of chiefs (when smhalait) and of all whom they in turn initiated in throwing ceremonies or secret societies (see below) was contingent upon which gifts of power they were entitled to receive from their house, lineage, or because of their social rank. In this respect, spirituality and social structure were closely linked.

The implications for the reception of Christian power within this dualistic religious system of passive and active encounters with power is far-reaching and a question at the centre of this study. Conversion to Christianity broadened the possibilities of transformative experience to more people, who were neither shamans nor smhalait. Paradoxically, it allowed the empowered shamans and chiefs potentially another mode of retaining their roles of spiritual leadership and specialization, something that historically was more true for chiefs than for shamans. Further examination of Tsimshian spiritual culture is required before the Native meaning and use for Christianity can be understood.

Secret societies had a profound impact on the role of chieftainship and the clan system. Wutahalait translates literally as “great halait” and were known as the dancing orders or secret

---

There were four secret societies—*mila* (Dancers), *nulim* (Dog Eaters), *ludzista* (Destroyers) and *xgyedmhalait* (Cannibals)—which had originally diffused from the Tsimshian's southern neighbours, particularly from the Heiltsuk (Bella Bella) centre known as *wiitsdaa*. Membership in one of these societies was mandatory for all Tsimshian (with the exception of slaves) who had the necessary wealth for the initiation ceremony. Initiation into the last two orders was the privilege of only the highest ranking Tsimshian chiefs and nobles, hence a form of *halait* which was "truly a badge of the elite." To be initiated into one of the secret societies required a ritual possession of the initiate by the power associated with the group. "Unlike shamanic possession," Halpin suggests, "it was planned, managed, and regularized in form." Initiation required careful preparation and many aspects of the ceremony were carried out in a very public forum, customarily in the Fall and Winter. Viola Garfield described the central characteristics of the process of initiation:

The appropriate presiding spirit was called by the songs and symbolized by the dances of the members of the society. The spirit which was in the society dancers seized the novice and he [she] vanished to the accompaniment of whistles. Later, he [she] was heard and seen about the village under the influence of the spirit and without voluntary control over his [her] actions. The state which overcame him [her] corresponded to the vision or hallucinatory experience of a solitary guardian spirit seeker. Society members enticed the novice, through his [her] spirit, to return to the house where they captured him [her]. His [her] behavior was sometimes so violent that he [she] had to be forcibly restrained. When his [her] ecstasy or frenzy had been brought under control, he [she] danced for his spirit power, and the songs associated with it were sung for him [her] by the society members. Each initiate received an individual dance, song, name, and symbol from the tutelary. This parallels the individual and personal manifestation of power received by a solitary seeker.

Those who were wealthy enough and of the highest social status could sponsor more than one initiation, and thus, acquire stronger power and greater prestige through membership in several secret societies.

---

29 Guédon, "Tsimshian Worldview," 139.
30 Garfield, Guédon, and Miller all agree that these dancing societies were the most recent additions to the Tsimshian power displays prior to Christianity.
The gitsontk were another group vital to the religious life of the Tsimshian, although little is known of them owing to both the secret and the sacred natures of their function in Native spiritual life. The name gitsontk means "people secluded."^4 The gitsontk were a pan-tribal network of artists who created naxnox regalia and devices used during any halait performance.^5 Thus, they made sacred objects that represented supernatural beings (e.g. masks, rattles, whistles) used in wutahalait (secret societies) and constructed complex mechanical devices used to make the performances both entertaining and spectacular. The gitsontk were themselves a secret society and all halait performances required their participation, but they did not stage their own ceremonies independently. Socially, they were a very important group, drawing from predominantly noble lineages and could assume power whenever subversive activities or inversion of the normal were at play (such as was the case frequently during winter ceremonies). However, the gitsontk could include commoners who achieved an "honourary" high status because of their skill and artistry. Marjorie Halpin suggested the gitsontk could be considered an "incipient priesthood" which included hereditary rights and a permanent structure.^6 However, while they created naxnox materials, the power wielded by the gitsontk was more akin to witchcraft than shamanism. Audrey Shane remarks on this particular distinction: "The gitsontk had the right to kill or force to join the society any who inadvertently saw the construction of a halait device or otherwise broke a halait tabu [which happened rarely]... Much more important as a source of power was the involvement of the gitsontk with the chief in forcing initiations into the dancing societies."^7 The gitsontk were answerable with their lives for the successful execution of their naxnox devices and the chiefs were dependent on the gitsontk to provide a physical presence for their displays of power.^8

---

^8Ibid., 170.
The Light

Another key Tsimshian religious concept that merits discussion and one that proved particularly relevant to Christianization, was the Light. The Light (goypah, goypax) and the closely linked Heaven (laxa) were Tsimshian spiritual powers which proved extremely compatible, or rather translatable with concepts of a “one true” Supreme God, the Christian Holy Spirit, heaven and Christ as the “Light of the world.” According to Marjorie Halpin, “Light” in its Tsimshian context, is “a principal attribute of divinity, and implies power and (male) potency. Light and seeing are direct oppositions to such naxnox qualities as death and darkness, although in a religious sense they may be the same.”

Miller viewed the Tsimshian’s conceptualization of Heaven as a mediating source of health, life, well-being and light (laakis).

The Light was a transformative power. For example, the Tsimshian ethnographer William Beynon translated the word for being initiated into smhalait as “‘elevated’ by virtue of ascension into Heaven.” The personal power names of Coast Tsimshian chiefs which contained reference to heaven (laxa) or the sun (genk) were the most potent of all names. One of the mythic trickster-creator figure Raven’s most celebrated achievements was the stealing of Light from the Chief of Heaven, thereby making it available to all human beings.

Unlike Christian cosmology, where Heaven represents both dwelling place of the Creator and Redeemer of humankind and an afterworld for “good” Christians, the Tsimshian Heaven was a manifestation of the universal power or potency Light. Light was an important theme throughout Tsimshian culture:

[Light is a pervasive symbol among the Tsimshian...A favourite expression of the naxnox was to have a mask, apparently blind, suddenly see....In myths, wondrous sky beings first appear accompanied by four bolts of thunder and lighting [sic]. Light is also emphasized in references to shining surfaces, like those of beads, shells, mirrors, crystals, and water creatures, particularly the glistening bodies of salmon.]

---

40 Jay Miller, Tsimshian Culture, 7: Heaven in the Tsimshian language is laxa and is the word also used for sky and storm. Dunn, Dictionary of Coast Tsimshian, s.v. “heaven.”
41 Jay Miller, Tsimshian Culture, 11: In reference to the connection of Light/Heaven to the secret societies, anthropologist Marjorie Halpin concluded: “In ritual performance, initiation into either the Dancers or Dog Eaters was known as the hilaxha (‘going into the heavens’) stage in power acquisition, and followed one and, preferably two, childhood power strengthenings by the chief’s personal power.” Halpin, “Seeing in Stone,” 284.
43 Jay Miller, Tsimshian Culture, 37.
Light itself had neutral associations as did many Tsimshian sources of spiritual powers.

However, Heaven also was portrayed as an otherworldly chief who controlled the destinies of mortals, frequently assisting them through helpers, known as the nExnox. Halpin writes, "The most important mythological mediators between heaven and humans are shining youths, usually identified as the Chief of Heaven's son, who appear to humans, usually women whom they take to heaven where they have children who return to the earth with special powers." One can easily see the potential for the translation of these conceptualizations Light and Heaven into a Christian context by Native and non-Natives alike. While there were many sources of power or potency in the universe, "the being called heaven, the source of deification of light, had priority among these chiefs" and during missionization he was transformed into a Supreme being Chief of Heaven in order to equate him with the Christian God. Historian Palmer Patterson concluded that "Indigenous traditions of the Chief of Heaven (the Chief of the Sky) as living on the upper Nass may have aided the Tsimshian and Nishga missionaries in proselytizing for Christianity."

The Tsimshian sense of social and spiritual order in the universe can be demonstrated by utilizing the diagram (Figure 2) of "traditional" Tsimshian culture developed by Jay Miller. Drawing "on indigenous trees and rivers to provide a model for the culture that branches at different places and times to reflect the pressures and enhancements of changing climates and local conditions, yet always reaching for the light," Miller's diagram also demonstrates the gendered associations inherent in the balance between substantive (maternal) and spiritual (paternal) aspects of Tsimshian culture.

---

46Jay Miller, Tsimshian Culture, 30.
47The epitaph on William Duncan's tombstone reads "He Brought Us Light." Ibid., 181 n. 4.
49Figure 2 is after Jay Miller, Tsimshian Culture, Figure I., p. 10. Figure 3 (p. 52) is my adaptation of this model taking into consideration the missionary agenda towards Tsimshian culture. Figure 7 (in chapter 3) is my adaptation of the historical reality, neither identical to pre-contact Tsimshian culture, nor the total replacement of "traditional" spirituality with Christianity as envisioned by Euro-Canadian missionaries.
50Jay Miller, Tsimshian Culture, 9.
It is worth expounding upon its meaning because it contextualizes spirituality within the whole culture. The basic social unit of the Tsimshian is the house, representing a membership, territory, and repository, as well as a mere building. In the Coast Tsimshian language, the same word *waab* (*waap* or *walb*) used for family also means house or dwelling. Miller deemed this appropriate to provide the base which contains and from which all other aspects (distinct "categories" reflected in language and culture) of culture stem. The centre beam of light becomes the symbolic trunk and includes "Heaven, the sun, the hearth of the house, and the heart of a person." "On the left are the fourfold crests (*p’tex*), inherited through mothers, divided into semi-moieties. On the right side are the wonders (*naxnox*) and privileges (*halait*), for which

---

51Ibid., 45.
52Dunn, *Dictionary of Coast Tsimshian*, s.v. “family”: Instead of the term family, Viola Garfield uses the term "household," meaning both or either “belonging to the same kinship group or subdivision of a clan” and/or “includes all those people who live in a single dwelling...includ[ing] people belonging to different clans.” Garfield, *Tsimshian Clan and Society*, 174.
53Jay Miller, *Tsimshian Culture*, 9. For the purposes of clarity, I have standardized the spelling of *p’tex* throughout this dissertation, although Miller uses the older spelling *ptex*.
54Ibid., 10.
fathers had responsibility." The Tsimshian clan system, part of a much larger and centuries old international kinship system, is represented by two sets of paired crests, each with reciprocal obligations to their counterpart in the pair: Orca (Killerwhale) or Blackfish/Wolf, and Raven/Eagle. "Inherited matrilineally, proximity to these ranked crests is mirrored in the social classes of the royals, nobles, commoners, and slaves, with the most prestigious crests associated with royal status." The masculine aspect of spirituality is composed of supernatural powers and their manifestations (human access to and display of wonders). The lower branch is made up of wonders (naxnox) represented by their habitats. Some of the wonders, as I have previously described, are seasonally accessed by the Tsimshian to establish and maintain power associated with the four crests or in performance of their sacred histories (adawx). The other branch, which Miller claims as "the most dynamic" is halait or all manifestations of the supernatural including the objects used, the performance, and the practitioners. "The primary branch consists of shamans called swansk halait, who partook in all sources of power." From that branch stems, smhalait ("real" halait), "whose insignia of frontlet, raven rattle, and chilkat robe indicated the chief in his or her priestly winter guise" and wutahalait ("great" halait), the secret or dancing societies.

While labeled masculine in Miller’s model, this does not preclude the existence of female halait. There are numerous examples of high-ranking chiefs who were women, although there is debate among academics over how common this has been. Miller himself suggests that in “the roster of eternal names that were and are passed through succeeding generations,” there are both

55Ibid. (italics mine)
56Ibid., 11.
57Ibid.
58Ibid.
59This debate revolves around the place of women in matrilineal Northwest Coast societies and the impact on that role brought on by sustained contact with Europeans. For example Jo-Anne Fiske, argues that the status of women was eroded in the colonial era resulting in considerable loss of power for especially high-ranking women in the areas of resource control, patronage, and political power. Jo-Anne Fiske, “Colonization and the Decline of Women’s Status: The Tsimshian Case,” Feminist Studies 17, no. 3 (Fall 1991): 509-535. Carol Cooper, in an article summarizing her doctoral research, disagrees, suggesting high-ranking Native women gained in practical power because of contact. Carol Cooper, “Native Women of the North Pacific Coast: An Historical Perspective, 1830-1900,” Journal of Canadian Studies 27, no. 4 (1993): 44-75. Jay Miller offers yet another perspective, suggesting that matrilineal kinship and social ranking defined in terms of noble houses did not translate as equal access to power between the sexes. He notes that male names always outranked female names, and that when a woman held a man’s name, she was treated as male at a potlatch. Jay Miller, Tsimshian Culture, 179, n. 3.
male and female names, "but the names of the men always outrank those of women." Women could of course hold male names, which occurred when there was no appropriate male heir. Shamans could be male or female. There is also much scholarly debate over the gendered nature of membership in the secret societies. While it had been first assumed that only the sons of high-ranking (royals) Tsimshian were initiated into the two most elite dancing societies (xgyedmhalait or the Cannibals and lutzista or the Destroyers), the prohibitions may have been based on class more than sex, and there is conflicting evidence to suggest that some girls and women became members if they had high enough social status. In summary of his model of Tsimshian culture, Miller concludes: "Overall, halait (closest to the Light) is most inclusive, wonders (naxnox) are inclusive because of their associations with power, and the crests are exclusive, being transmitted through women. Indeed, at the basic expressive level, the genius of Tsimshian culture, expressing different ways of dealing with light, is the matrix of lid, lens, and loop, represented by crests, wonders, and privileges."

Contacting Christianity

From the Native viewpoint, labels such as "Christianized ‘traditionalism’" or "indigenous Christianity" were historically, in most respects, interchangeable ones. As John Webster Grant observed of the Natives peoples in Northwest, "there was no reason to think that they were aware of any fundamental incompatibility between Christianity and their traditional ways," so how can scholars really measure where one ends and the other begins? It is hard to deny that contact with Europeans had a profound effect on Tsimshian economic, social and cultural structures. Miller noted that the activities of Native prophets in the early part of the nineteenth century were highly influential in fostering an accommodation between European and Native beliefs. However, like many historians of missions, Miller also concludes that the European missionaries,

---

60Jay Miller, Tsimshian Culture, 179, n. 3.
61Garfield, Tsimshian Clan and Society, 314; Cooper, “Native Women,” 51.
62Jay Miller, Tsimshian Culture, 11-12.
63John Webster Grant, Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter since 1534 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 122.
like William Duncan, were the greatest instigators of change and interrupted "traditional" sources of power and authority in Native society: "In hindsight, it appears that Duncan was so successful because he replaced Ligeex, who became a convert, as high chief of the Tsimshian." While Miller’s conclusions regarding Duncan’s chieftain status are debatable, if one examines Tsimshianic conceptions of supernatural power acquisition in "traditional" culture, the introduction of Christianity from external sources represents no great break from the past or a radical departure from the typical way new religious perspectives were incorporated into Tsimshian society. To this point, Miller ultimately agrees: "The continued importance of the power of the ‘light,’ together with identifying Duncan as the ‘chief,’ indicate that Christianity fit quite easily within the template of traditional culture."

For the Tsimshian, like many of their neighbours on the Northwest Coast, the exotopic nature of religious culture provided a pattern whereby practices, ideas, and rituals from external sources were routinely internalized. Just as the region was characterized by a large degree of socio-economic cooperation among different First Nations, cultural expressions of supernatural powers, likewise, circulated. Mythically and "traditionally," a Tsimshian's transformative power was bestowed or activated through external donors. Many of the key religious organizations such as the wutahalait (secret societies) were incorporated into Tsimshian cultural life relatively recently, just prior to contact with Europeans, or like the gitsontk (artists of naxnox materials used in halait performances), formed in a pan-tribal network. "Throughout the region," Miller explains, "the cultural hub of the Bella Bella, known to the Tsimshian as the wütsdaa, was significant for the dissemination of the secret orders, elite shamans, and priesthoods that

65Jay Miller, Tsimshian Culture, 6.
67Micheal Harkin utilizes the term exotopic (originally from Bakhtin) as a "spatiotemporal motif involving movement to the outside" and which also "involves a dialogic relationship with some Other" to explain "the general Northwest Coast mythological concept of the acquisition of supernatural power." Michael Harkin, "Power and Progress: The Evangelic Dialogue Among the Heiltsuk," in Ethnohistory 40, no. 1 (Winter 1993): 4-5; Tzvetan Todorov uses a variation of this concept, allocentric, his example being how Jerusalem for centuries was not part of Europe, yet central to it. "The centre is elsewhere which opens up the possibility for the Other to become, someday, central." Tzvetan Todorov, The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Harper and Row Inc., 1984), 109.
68Michael Harkin, The Heiltsuks: Dialogues of Culture and History on the Northwest Coast (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, in cooperation with the American Indian Studies Research Institute, Indian University, Bloomington, 1997), 1, 9-18; and Shane, "The Gitsontk," 167.
constituted membership in the privileged ranks of royalty. Great shamans of the Tsimshian went to the Bella Bella to become confirmed in privileged positions."^{69}

Missionaries anticipated a remaking of Tsimshian spiritual culture with the introduction of Christianity, and in some respects they were successful in prohibiting and restricting "traditional" religious forms, at least in the public arena. Figure 3 is my revised post-missionary model of Miller's conceptualization of Tsimshian culture (shown in Figure 2).^{70} This model represents what the missionaries envisioned through Christianization, although historically they did not succeed in replacing all "traditional" Tsimshian spiritual forms with Christian ones.

![Figure 3: Tsimshian Culture as proposed by Euro-Canadian missionaries](image)

In Figure 3, the social foundation of Christian Tsimshian society was the nuclear family. The adherence to different notions of the "family" among First Nations proved to be problematic for Euro-Canadians, when they did not conform to Victorian definitions.

This model highlights two significant post-contact challenges to "traditional" Tsimshian culture. Firstly, missionaries encouraged a masculinization of all social relations. Missionaries

^{69}Jay Miller, *Tsimshian Culture*, 3.

^{70}Figure 3 is my adaptation of Miller's model.
expected a patrilineral genealogy to replace the matrilineral clan system. This involved substantiating Christian baptismal surnames following the male line of families. Membership in specific types of Christianity—the four denominations available to the Tsimshian in the nineteenth century, Catholic, Anglican, Methodist and Salvation Army churches—were conceptualized by missionaries as an alternative to matrilineral clan affiliation. Clearly, many Euro-Canadians did not understand how the Tsimshian system of semi-moieties functioned, particularly with respect to how nuclear families were divided among two clans, whereby, husbands and wives were always from different crests, and children adopted the clan affiliation of their mother. Under the new church membership model, entire families (presumably) belonged to the same congregation. Another patriarchal aspect of this conceptualization of the Tsimshian Christian culture, was that many positions of leadership and authority were male dominated. While female Christians could become teachers, interpreters, and lay leaders within the mission, or in the one exceptional case, become officers of the Salvation Army, the majority of spiritual leaders were, by default, men.

Secondly, according to this idealized model of post-Christian Tsimshian culture, powers were not inherited. According to missionaries, there was only one true source of spiritual power—the Christian God—and individuals did not travel interdimensionally or acquire Christian power, but were awakened by God and “saved” through Christ. This meant that faith alone, sustained an individual through his/her life. Immortality was assured only after death, when all “deserving” Christian souls would “dwell in the House of the Lord, forever”; hence the pinnacle of spiritual power could not be achieved in life. This notion was at variance with the fundamental Tsimshian belief that individuals acquired powers throughout their lifetime to realize their potential of becoming more-than-human. A Christian calendar replaced the spatial and temporal orientation of the Tsimshian year. Technically, God was accessible anytime, and for evangelical Protestant denominations, available directly without the intervention of an intermediary (i.e. priest or minister). However, just as in “traditional” Tsimshian culture, different expressions of religion were emphasized at different times during the year, (e.g. patterned upon stages in the life of Jesus: birth, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension). Power
would no longer be disseminated and activated through *yaawk* (potlatch), *adawx* (sacred histories) or *naxnox* performances. Instead key church rituals marked the acquisition of Christian spirituality and demarcated the individual's position within the church (e.g. baptism, confession/testimony, confirmation, or communion).

The church itself was the place where religious rituals and worship were carried out, although personal devotion, such as prayer, bible study, and meditation, school, and burial practices also provided symbolic communion with God. In Christianized villages, at least publicly, God was substituted for the Chief of Heaven, while white-robed angels replaced the "shining youths" and *naxnox*. "Yet, by virtue of his stated purpose of leading the Tsimshian from 'darkness' into the 'light'," Miller noted, "the structural integrity of the over-all relationships remained." But there were also new structures in the equation. The mission village itself functioned as a microcosm of the huge plethora of colonial infrastructure that weighed heavily upon British Columbia's First Nations after BC joined Canada in 1871, including the Indian Act, reserve allotments, and a Euro-Canadian education system. Spiritual leadership was taken out of the hands of aboriginal peoples, at least in terms of the regulation, theology, and administration of the Protestant denominations which they joined.

Yet, while Euro-Canadian missionaries dominated village and church affairs, Native Christians did have a say in the forms, expressions, and local direction of their Christianity. For this reason, the fulfillment of the culture proposed by Euro-Canadian missionaries for the Tsimshian in Figure 3, was never fully realized. Non-Native missionaries were quick to acknowledge the pre-existing politics of Tsimshian culture, and worked to win the support of powerful chiefs. They hoped that Native leadership would now be founded on Christianity piety and standing within the church rather than exclusively upon privilege and inheritance, and Native mission workers and catechists had an important role to play within mission culture.

It is clear that the Coast Tsimshian had a long-standing tradition of cultural borrowing from neighbouring First Nations. Speaking of the adoption of secret societies from Native groups in the south, Cove suggests, "we should not be surprised if the Tsimshian were attracted to a new

---

71 Jay Miller, *Tsimshian Culture*, 12.
alternative, given the importance they place on the relationships with the supernatural."\(^{72}\) I would argue something analogous occurred when the Tsimshian encountered Christianity, particularly as it provided not only access to the spiritual power of the Euro-Canadian culture, but economic, political, and social links as well. Given that material and spiritual worlds were not separate according to Tsimshian cosmology, it is certain that Christianity was not received for its religious messages alone. Likewise, status derived from those who demonstrated initiative and leadership in the Christian church signified more than merely religious authority. In essence, two parallel patterns of indigenization seem to have occurred through Tsimshian Christianization. Initially the introduction of a new source of power increased the possibility for individual transformation. However, the tradition of differential access to power in Tsimshian society contingent on one's class and wealth also found a new mode of expression through Christianity. On one level, chiefs who converted to the new religion, high-ranking individuals who became evangelists and missionaries themselves, and those Tsimshian who conducted class meetings and Sunday schools, received additional social status and power. In so doing, some circumvented "traditional" methods of acquiring this status through their roles as Christians. Yet, others claimed conversion as a further validation of their existing rank as Christian power was added to further their potential of becoming more than human.

\(^{72}\)Cove, *Shattered Images*, 229.
Figure 4: The Native North Pacific Coast and Tsimshianic speaking groups

- Tlingit
- Haida
- Nisga'a
- Gitxsan
- Gitimzhal devastating language loss
- Lingual or cultural divisions (e.g., Nisga'a)

Tribes at traditional summer locations (e.g., Gispaxio'ots)
Approx. limits of Tsimshianic speakers

Sources: MacDonald, Coupland and Archer 1987; Miller 1997; and Galois 1997/98
Figure 5: North Pacific Coast Posts, Missions, and Settlements

- Kitsgegas
- Babine R.
- Kispiox
- Glen Vowel
- Hazelton
- Hagwileget
- Kitseguecla
- Moricetown
- Aiyansh
- NASS R.
- Kitwilcoo
- Kitwanga
- SKEEN R.
- Glenell
- Greenville
- Lackalzup
- Ft. Simpson (1831-34)
- Pt. Simpson
- Metlakatla
- Kitkatla
- Hecate Strait
- Hartley Bay
- Kitamaat
- Bulkley R.
- Zymoetz R.

- Mission
- Trading Post
- Other non-Native settlement
Chapter 3: “Driftwood” on Their Shores and the Mission to Convert

The missionaries to the First Nations of coastal British Columbia were not the first Europeans to interact with Native cultures there. Indeed, it was a half century after sustained contact with non-Native peoples before mission work even received any serious interest. What had brought most newcomers into the area concerned material, not spiritual matters. In an age of exploration and mercantilism, the same forces that had sent wave after wave of European ships to the Americas, also drove them into the Pacific realm. The Coast Tsimshian word for European or Caucasian is *amksiwah*, which means driftwood.\(^1\) It was the secular interests of fur traders operating in the interior of British Columbia in the early nineteenth century that brought Christian beliefs and instructors into the region in a more sustained way than had the fleeting contacts of the earlier naval explorers and the coastal ship to shore Maritime fur trade of the eighteenth century. Only then, did the driftwood begin piling up on Tsimshian shores.

What follows is a survey of the patterns of missionization on the North Coast of British Columbia. My examination of the missionary and mission literature will also provide an entrée into the central tenets of missionary policy and the Victorian missionary mentality. In terms of approaches to mission work, apart from theological issues, various denominations shared common goals, techniques and rationales that informed their work. Denominational affiliation and interdenominational rivalry were significant issues for missionary work. Likewise, the influence of international mission societies and evangelical theology place the experience of Tsimshian Christianization within a larger context. Missionization of First Nations was a process connected with these other structural and ideological tensions within the Protestant community and between Protestantism and Catholicism. Native peoples were quite adept at utilizing these rivalries to their full advantage as they sought access to a transformative new power.

---
Drifting into Tsimshian Territory

Magellan's voyage in 1519 was the first of many expeditionary trips in the Pacific arena. The Russians established a few trading posts throughout the Aleutians and Unalaska by the mid-eighteenth century and their voyages are thought to have brought the Russians as far south at the 56th parallel, roughly the southernmost limit of the Alaskan panhandle, to the very heart of the homeland of the Tsimshian peoples. However, practically, the Northwest Coast of North America remained isolated from direct European influence until the late eighteenth century. After 1778, the Maritime fur trade brought upwards of twenty British, American, and European vessels yearly to the Northwest Coast to trade with First Nations, until sea otters became scarce by the second decade of the nineteenth century. By that time, an interior fur trade had been well established. The Northwest Company, desperate to find a shorter supply route to their operations east of the Rockies, prompted Alexander Mackenzie to chart a land route to the Pacific from the east in 1793, Simon Fraser to descend the river that now bears his name in 1808, and Nor'wester David Thompson to expand company operations down the Columbia River, following it all the way to the sea in 1811. The heart of the British Columbia’s (then called New Caledonia) fur trade in the north was centred east of Tsimshian territory, at McLeod Lake, the first permanent European trading post established in the region in 1805. Soon after, the European presence southeast of the Tsimshian was increased, with the founding of Fort St. James at Stuart Lake (1806) and a post on Fraser Lake (1806). After the North West Company obtained Fort Astoria at the mouth of the Columbia River during the War of 1812, renaming it Fort George, the Nor’westers had a more efficient means by which to supply their interior posts, such as Fort Kamloops (1812), and their sphere of operations expanded accordingly. Thus, initially, the North West Company dominated trade in the interior of British Columbia. However, it was not until after the merger with the Hudson’s Bay Company in 1821, that the area’s fur resources “were exploited systematically.”

---

3 Ibid., 3.
1831 at its first location on the Nass River, then in 1834 it was moved to its present location near the mouth of the Skeena River, and in 1880 it was renamed Port Simpson), Fort McLoughlin at Bella Bella (1833-1844), and the Vancouver Island posts of Fort Victoria (1843) and Fort Rupert (1849).

The backgrounds of the H.B.C.'s servants varied considerably. They included English, Scots, English Canadians, French Canadians from Québec, Christianized Caughnawaga Iroquois from the St. Lawrence River valley, prairie born Métis, or men from even further around the globe, such as Orkney Islanders in northern Scotland, or Kanakas from the Hawaiian Islands; so, too, did the level of Christian piety, as these men, (and their families), brought a diversity of religious beliefs and practices into the region. Hence, knowledge of Christianity—be it through overtly religious fur traders, Native Christians employed by fur trading companies as voyageurs and labourers, or through the general religious traditionalism of European customs such as Sabbath observance or Christmas celebrations—was reaching the Tsimshian through the same trade routes that brought the European goods. Many Natives were interested in the new belief system these company employees espoused in their various ways. This curiosity manifested itself in prophet movements with Christian characteristics, Native catechist activity and general dissemination of Christian symbols, ideas, and practices before direct involvement of European or Canadian missionaries. Consequently, when Christian teachings were first heard by many First Nations in the region, they were not exclusively delivered by Euro-Canadians.

Some Native groups who had migrated or retired from the fur trade, chose to settle in the Pacific Northwest, and were also influential in disseminating Christian teachings. As early as 1811, a group of Catholic Caughnawaga Iroquois settled among the Salish (Flatheads) of Montana and soon intermarried with them and related groups in the region. “These men brought with them an Indianized form of Catholicism,” according to Jacqueline Peterson, one “woven from the recollections of their own experience under the Jesuits who had missionized in eastern Canada

---

before being expelled as an order from North America in 1773.\(^6\) The most celebrated of these Christian Iroquois was *Ignace Saxa* or “Old Ignace” who may have been among three successive Nez Perce-Flathead delegations sent to St. Louis between 1831 and 1837 in an effort to secure a missionary settlement.\(^7\) Thus aboriginal in-migrants, most likely former and/or current employees of the Montreal-based North West Company, are credited with introducing such Christian practices as the observance of the Sabbath, morning and evening prayers, and even grace before meals in the Pacific Northwest.\(^8\) A number of scholars point to the influence of Christianized Iroquois employed as voyageurs throughout New Caledonia, suggesting that the Native dissemination of pre-missionary Catholic practices, such as making the sign of the cross, observing the Sabbath, and knowledge of paddling hymns, was both common and widespread during the early nineteenth century.\(^9\)

Another Native Christian influence was related to missionary efforts on the Canadian prairies. In the 1820s, when the H.B.C. still officially discouraged missions within its vast jurisdiction of Rupert's Land, it permitted the Church Missionary Society to open a school at Red River for the purposes of education of First Nations children. In 1825, two Native boys from the American Pacific Northwest, Spokan Garry and Kutenai Pelly, attended this school.\(^10\) While the latter died during his stay in the prairie west, Spokan Garry returned to his own people, the Salish speaking *Sma-hoo-men-a-ish* (Middle Spokanes), in 1829 to recruit other students and to


\(^{\text{7}}\)The details of exactly who journeyed to St. Louis and for what purpose is shrouded in myth and mystery. Christopher Miller writes of the event as a pivotal factor in the coming together of a number of prophecies regarding the arrival of Euro-Americans and Christianity into the Plateau region. Christopher L. Miller, *Prophetic Worlds: Indians and Whites on the Columbia Plateau* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1985), 60. Peterson and Peers specifically mention that Old Ignace led two of the three delegations across the Plains “in search of teachers of the new religion,” but that he “was killed along with the entire party, at Ash Hollow near the Nebraska sand hills,” Peterson, *Sacred Encounters*, 23.

\(^{\text{8}}\)John Webster Grant, *Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter since 1534* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 121; and Christopher L. Miller, *Prophetic Worlds*, 53.


\(^{\text{10}}\)Both Garry and Pelly were baptized in June 1827, two years after their arrival at the Red River school.
disseminate some of the Christian teachings he had acquired while at Red River. When Spokan Garry returned home, he quickly gained influence and widespread appeal for his knowledge of Christianity. His teachings gained considerable popularity and contained a perspective on the new religion quite different from the Red River missionaries' original intent. The impact of these Native catechists reached the interior as far north as Fort Alexandria and Stuart Lake, just southeast of Tsimshian territory. A century later, anthropologist Leslie Spier reached the same conclusion, and suggested further that they were connected to the indigenous religious movement known as the Prophet Dance. Therefore, there is some evidence to suggest that knowledge of Christianity had reached the far North Coast and interior from Native sources originating below the 49th parallel. Direct Euro-Canadian involvement in this process soon followed.

Patterns of Formal Mission Work on the North Pacific Coast

In the first half of the nineteenth century, missions to First Nations along the Northwest Coast came as a by-product of European commercial interests in the region. Missions benefited from the tendency towards Native groups to cluster around New Caledonia's trading posts, which were established for the land-based fur trade in the early part of the century. Both

---

11There is some confusion in the historical record as to whether “Kutenai Pelly” ever returned to his people. John Webster Grant concluded there was enough evidence to suggest that Pelly and most of the other students had died in 1830 in Red River, however he does not cite his source for this evidence. Grant, Moon of Wintertime, 121. John McLean, a HBC trader stationed at Stuart Lake specifically mentions both Garry and Pelly returning when he wrote of their influence on a religious movement with Christian elements that reached his fort in the winter of 1835-36: “Two young men, natives of Oregon, who had received a little education at Red River, had, on their return to their own country, introduced a sort of religion whose groundwork seemed to be Christianity, accompanied with some heathen ceremonies of the natives.” John McLean, Notes of Twenty-Five Year's Service in the Hudson's Bay Territory, ed. W. S. Wallace (Toronto: n.p., 1932), 159-160; cited in Thomas E. Jessett, Chief Spokan Garry, 1811-1892: Christian, Statesman, and Friend of the White Man (Minneapolis: T. S. Denison and Co., 1960), 35-36. Biographer of Spokan Garry, Thomas Jessett explained that both Garry and Pelly returned to the Columbia river area in 1830 to recruit or persuade chiefs to send 5 boys to the school at Red River, to which they also returned that same year. The CMS proceedings for the year 1831-32 report that Kutenai Pelly had been seriously injured in a horse riding accident, and that on Easter Monday 1831 he died at the home at Reverend David T. Jones. Pelly was buried at the Red River settlement and on April 6 1831, Spokan Garry departed with the HBC brigades on his way west to his home. Jessett, Chief Spokan Garry, 37-41.

12Grant, Moon of Wintertime, 120; and Fisher, Contact and Conflict, 123. Grant's and Fisher's interpretations are both based on John McLean's journal remarks and on Leslie Spier's thesis (1935), which connected the dissemination of Christian-like practices not to devout Native catechists or Iroquois Christians but as directly related to an indigenous religious movement with a Christian gloss known as the Prophet Dance during the 1830s. Please see chapter 8 of this dissertation for further discussion of the relationship between prophet movements and Christianization.
voluntary and involuntary in nature, many Native villages amalgamated or moved to locations more beneficial for trading with Europeans, such as closer proximity to posts and forts. In part an extension of the seasonal movement of village groups, the nine “tribes” that composed the Coast Tsimshian people further consolidated when the influential Gispaxlo’ots tribe took the lead and relocated in the area of Fort Simpson (see Figures 4 and 5). Miller explains, that although they often settled in neighbourhoods, “the discrete boundaries provided by separate towns did not exist in the new community, and many new solutions to rank, rivalry, and respect had to be negotiated and confirmed by potlatches.” Similarly the Nisga’a moved from traditional residence along the upper Nass River to the mouth of the Nass to be closer to the trading and mission posts there. Depopulation owing to the ravages of disease would continue to be an adverse consequence of sustained contact with non-Natives, and this too altered social structures as villages joined together unable to sustain a viable existence alone after epidemics reduced their numbers. This spatial clustering of aboriginal populations at fewer numbers of locations throughout the region facilitated the dissemination of Christianity.

Russian Orthodox Church (Aleutian Islands and Alaska) and Spanish Roman Catholic (Vancouver Island and eventually the area south of the 49th parallel) missionaries were the first to enter the area dominated by the North West Coast culture groups. Protestant denominations followed them, establishing permanent residence on the Northwest Coast and in New Caledonia. When Vancouver Island was declared a crown colony in 1849, followed by the mainland colony of British Columbia in 1858, the territory was formally divided into American and British mission fields, by virtue of the establishment of these new political boundaries and because the various denominations made a number of agreements between themselves to limit competition. With

---

14 Ibid., 16.
15 Natural disasters could also have this effect. In 1820 when a rockslide prevented salmon from reaching their spawning grounds, the Gitxsan and Wet’suwet’en villages amalgamated at Tse’ya or Hagwilget on the Upper Skeena River. Maureen Cassidy, *The Gathering Place: A History of the Wet’suwet’en Village of Tse-kyu* (Hagwilget: Hagwilget Band Council, 1987), 9.
16 Joan Weir mentions an arrangement between Anglicans and Catholics which left Kuper Island to the Catholics and established the Lytton area as an Anglican zone. Likewise, Methodists and Baptists divided the Cowichan valley and Salt Spring Island to discourage rival churches from locating in the same community. Joan Weir, *Catalysts and Watchdogs: B.C.’s Men of God, 1836-1871* (Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1995), 23. American mission work along the coast was, likewise, regulated by the mission groups involved. For example, Thomas Crosby explained how Alaska had
the exception of Rev. Herbert Beaver, an Anglican chaplain at the H.B.C. post of Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River (who begrudgingly and rather unsuccessfully ministered to Native and non-Native company employees and their families), there was little British or Canadian missionary activity specifically aimed at First Nations until large international mission organizations entered the region. Well organized, with the promise of decent staffing and financial backing, the English missionary societies who were active in nearly all parts of the globe—such as the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.), the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (S.P.G.), and the Colonial and Continental Church Society (C. & C.C.S.)—arrived to begin their work among Native and non-Native populations alike.\textsuperscript{17} The C.M.S. was actively involved in proselytizing efforts on the prairies, and at least six Natives from west of the Rockies, in addition to Spokan Garry, arrived at the Red River Academy for schooling.\textsuperscript{18}

Several missionary groups expressed a particular interest in the northern coastal region where the Tsimshianic speaking peoples were located. In 1829 American Jonathan Green sponsored by the non-denominational Protestant American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, travelled along the Pacific Coast with the aim to assess the region as a field of potential missionary action. While he believed the North Coast held great promise for Christian missions, the Protestant American Board did not act on his recommendations.\textsuperscript{19} However, by the 1850s, when British Naval officer Captain James Prevost surveyed the Northwest Coast, and also called for the establishment of Christian missions, several churches and mission organizations heeded his call and began formal and permanent missions throughout the region. Prevost would remain a presence on the coast, offering free passage to any missionary aboard his vessel the H.M.S. Satellite. The captain himself acted the missionary role, as Anglican Rev. W. H. Collison

\textsuperscript{17}Frank Peake, \textit{The Anglican Church in British Columbia} (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1959), 13.
\textsuperscript{18}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19}American missionaries preferred the lower Columbia river area, and Congregationalist (Samuel Parker working for the American Board of Commissioners in 1833), Methodist (Jason Lee in the Willamette Valley, 1834) and Presbyterian (Henry Harmon Spalding and Marcus Whitman, 1835-36; Cushing Eells and Elkanah Walker, 1838) missions appeared in the area throughout the 1830s.
discovered when he first attempted to begin a mission to the Haida at Massett in 1876. Collison's reception had been lukewarm at best, until a young Haida chief approached him carrying a book he had preserved for some eighteen years, although he could not read it. Chief Cowhoe explained that the book had been given to him by the captain of the "fighting fire-ship." It was in fact, a New Testament published by the Naval and Military Bible Society. The inscription on the fly-leaf read: "To the Indian boy, Edenshaw's son, I trust that the bread cast upon the waters will soon be found. James C. Prevost, Captain, H.M.S. Satellite, 1859."  

For the Coast Tsimshian and the Nisga'a, the establishment of Fort Simpson in 1831, marked the beginning of the era when this settlement served as the epicentre of Protestant mission work in the region. In the late nineteenth century, four versions of Christianity were available to them: Roman Catholicism (generally in the Upper Skeena River region only), Anglicanism, Methodism, and the Salvation Army. Interestingly, the dominance of four variants of Christianity was very compatible with the "traditional" Tsimshian conceptualization that viewed aspects of their culture in divisions of four. Jay Miller cites one such "statement about equivalences":

Louis Clifton, deceased Eagle chief at Hartley Bay, once said that there are only four valid religions for Tsimshians: these were the Anglican, the Catholic, the Methodist, and the Salvation Army. While reflecting the churches that had missionized among the Tsimshian, his statement draws parallels which confirm the model of Tsimshian culture as a branching system expressed most fully in fourfold divisions. In other words, while Tsimshians are aware of the many religions available in today's world, Clifton insisted that only four of them were primary. Such ranked differentiations were and are typical of the Tsimshian outlook.  

What follows is a description of the patterns of mission work for each of these four variations of Christianity. The spatial patterns of missions in British Columbia have as much to do with the territorial natures of the various Christian denominations as they do with the preferences of individual First Nations. From the Euro-Canadian perspective, competition for

---


21By the turn of the century, Pentecostal churches (such as the Seventh Day Adventists) had also begun to appear in the area, but their influence was limited and much more significant in the latter half of the twentieth century than in this earlier period.

22Jay Miller, *Tsimshian Culture*, 12.
souls was fierce and most denominations sought exclusive jurisdiction over areas and villages. Informal agreements were negotiated between denominations regarding the distribution of missions in an effort to avoid conflicts. However, in the face of the rapid expansion of missions in the latter half of the nineteenth century and perceived “awakening” to Christianity of the “long slumbering offspring of Adam,” in practice, the pursuit of potential converts superseded any boundary arrangements between the churches.

Roman Catholicism

While enormously significant to the province as a whole, the Roman Catholic missions to First Nations are only tangential to this regional study focusing on Protestant missions, which were more directly influential in Tsimshian territory. Roman Catholic methods differed from Protestant techniques particularly in regard to the role of laity in the church and mission work. However, like the Protestant denominations, chronic under-staffing over large dioceses, meant there were meaningful roles for Native converts to play in the mission work. The jurisdiction claimed by the Catholics was vast, stretching from California to Alaska, and limited personnel made any substantial or extensive mission activity very difficult without the active participation of First Nations. Within weeks of their arrival, the Catholic priests were relying heavily upon their teaching assistants, first drawn from Euro-American settlers and then from aboriginal groups.

24The term “long slumbering offspring of Adam” was one that William Duncan applied to the Tsimshian, according to Jean Usher, “The Long Slumbering Offspring of Adam: The Evangelical Approach to the Tsimshian,” *Anthropologica* 13 (1971): 37-61.
26François Norbert Blanchet and Modeste Demers, two French Canadian Roman Catholic priests arrived at Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River with the H.B.C. brigades in November of 1838 with the mandate to establish a Catholic Church in the Oregon Territory. Beginning in 1840, Jesuits Pierre-Jean De Smet, Nicolas Point, S. J. French, and Gregory Mengarini were active in the Plateau region among the Flathead, Coeur d’Alene, Pend Oreille, Colville, Kutenai and Blackfeet/Blackfoot First Nations. In addition, they made occasional forays into the Okanagan valley of British Columbia. However, Blanchet and Demers were far more influential than the Jesuits in establishing a permanent mission presence north of the 49th parallel.
The first Roman Catholic missionaries arrived in New Caledonia under the assistance and under the protection of the H.B.C. Although several churches were constructed in northern British Columbia in the 1840s, there would not be any permanent Catholic missions until after mid-century. However, these early ventures into northern interior would prove fortuitous. The centre of Catholic operations in the north was located in the homelands of the Wet'suwet'en. Our Lady of Good Hope was the principal church of New Caledonia, located near Fort St. James. Church historian Barry Downs noted: “Before its construction [in 1873], religious services were held in the trading post every Sunday by the officer in charge and, on the occasion of their visits, the Oblate missionaries. All company employees, without regard to their religious preferences, were required to attend these services, which were carried out in the Anglican manner, using the Church of England Book of Common Prayer.”

The arrival of the order of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (O.M.I.) in 1857 on Vancouver Island, led to the development of more substantial and enduring Roman Catholic missions to BC First Nations (along the South Coast, Lower Fraser valley, and among interior First Nations). O.M.I. missionary Father Adrien-Gabriel Morice arrived on Vancouver Island in 1880 and was immediately sent to St. Mary’s Mission and briefly Williams Lake, before settling in as the resident missionary at Our Lady of Good Hope mission (Stuart Lake) in 1885, where he remained for the next nineteen years. An amateur anthropologist, historian, and cartographer, as well as Oblate priest, Morice wrote copiously about the Wet’suwet’en to whom he chiefly ministered. He developed a syllabic dictionary for the Wet’suwet’en language and printed numerous religious pamphlets, primers, and newspapers in the Native language. At one time, Morice was responsible for First Nations (Wet’suwet’en, Gitxsan, Sekani) at some fourteen missions contained in a vast area “extending from McLeod Lake at the edge of the Rocky Mountains to Fort George (now Prince George) on the Fraser, north to Hagwilget on the Bulkley River and to Takla and Bear Lake at the top of the interior plateau.” The presence of the Roman Catholics in Gitxsan-Wet’suwet’en territory presented competition for Protestant missions who dominated the Lower Skeena and Lower Nass River regions. While Hazelton and Moricetown were important Catholic

28 Ibid., 31.
29 Ibid.
mission sites, the former itself becoming an important distribution centre following the Omineca gold rush, nearby New Kitseguecla, Minskinisht (Cedarvale) and Glen Vowell were new villages later established and under the various Protestant churches

Church of England (Anglican)

In late December 1856, far from Tsimshian territory, a working class twenty-four year British lay preacher from the Yorkshire region of England boarded the H.M.S. Satellite bound for British North America. William Duncan was to become one of British Columbia's best known and probably most controversial missionaries to First Nations peoples. Duncan arrived in Victoria in 1857 and by the autumn, he had departed to establish the first Anglican mission among the Tsimshian at the H.B.C. Fort Simpson. In 1862 he moved to the recently abandoned Tsimshian site of Metlakatla in Prince Rupert Harbour, taking with him about fifty Native converts. Duncan's intention was to isolate Native Christians not only from their "traditional" culture, but from the negative influences of Euro-Canadian settlements. In Duncan's mind, Metlakatla was to be a "city on the hill," set apart and distinct from other Native and Euro-Canadian communities. Metlakatla quickly became the jewel of the Anglican North Pacific Mission, swelling to a populous village of over 900 Tsimshian Christians and other First Nations from the region.

Metlakatla was an industrial village, designed to promote Victorian "progress" and the merits of European civilization. Anglo-Canadian traditions were imposed through a number of public buildings including a reading-room and museum, the mission houses, a jail, a boarding school, and a guest-house for visitors to Duncan's "utopia." Victorian-style homes, gardens, and a seawall, attempted to convert Tsimshian space as well as souls. Duncan designed Metlakatla to be economically self-sustaining, and he established a number of commercial enterprises for this end (e.g. sawmill, soap factory, furniture factory, blacksmith shop, trading post, salmon cannery).

The Native built church at the mission, St. Paul's, was reputedly the largest west of Chicago and north of San Francisco and capable of seating over a thousand.\textsuperscript{31}

The first Christian village of Metlakatla lasted from 1862 until 1887. Both as a model of practice and as a physical base from which to launch new missionary endeavours and regular itinerant circuits, Metlakatla lay at the heart of Anglican activity for the region. Radiating outward like spokes on a wheel, Anglican missions and church personnel spread from the mission, yet constantly relied upon it as a point of reference. After 1878 it became the Episcopal see of the diocese of Caledonia.

Duncan was an avid evangelical and was much influenced by the policies of his sponsor organization, the internationally active Church Missionary Society under the guidance of its honourary Secretary Henry Venn. But he was also a young man possessed of a strong willed personality who craved control. Duncan wrote to the C.M.S: "At present one strong will is supreme. To resist it, every Indian feels, would be as impossible as to stop the tides. This righteous autocracy is a much feared by the ungodly as it is respected by the faithful."\textsuperscript{32} This absolutist style of leadership frequently brought him into conflict with other missionaries and church officials. Although other Anglicans did work at Metlakatla for short periods of time before departing to establish or take up positions elsewhere in the area, several C.M.S. missionaries found Duncan intolerable to work alongside. Duncan's greatest conflict, however, came when the Diocese of Caledonia's newly appointed Bishop William Ridley assumed control over the region and its missions in 1879.\textsuperscript{33} The clashes between these two individuals had profound effects on

\textsuperscript{31}Collison, \textit{War Canoe}, page 8 and the illustration of church between pages 98-99.
\textsuperscript{33}Actually Duncan had already established a precedence of opposing the authority of church officials before the appointment of Ridley in 1879. Duncan had refused a visit by the Anglican Bishop George Hills, allegedly because of Hill's treatment of his friend, the evangelical Rev. Edward Cridge, during what history recalls as "the Cridge Controversy or Schism." In 1855 the H.B.C had brought Rev. Edward Cridge to Victoria to act as company chaplain. Cridge was subsequently appointed Dean of Columbia and Rector of Christ Church in Victoria. In the 1870s Cridge who was a radical evangelical, came into conflict with Bishop Hills over the forms and practice of Anglicanism. Cridge waged a war from his pulpit over what he regarded as "Catholic excesses" which he purported the Bishop encouraged through the formalization of Anglican ceremony and ritual. Cridge was eventually suspended from his duties, and subsequently formed his own church called the Church of our Lord, associated with the Reformed Episcopal Church. Peake, \textit{Anglican Church in BC}, 76-85.
Metlakatla and upon the climate of mission work in the area, by drawing the Tsimshian into the antagonism.

Briefly outlining the schism, Ridley had been appointed to ensure that the Anglican and C.M.S. sponsored missions adhered to current Church of England practices and customs. The Bishop reported "an unexpected absence of Christian instruction and privileges in the settlement," including the regular use of communion, one of the central sacraments of the church. Duncan disagreed, claiming the use of wine and bread representing the blood and body of Christ would be misunderstood by the recently converted Tsimshian, who might associate it with former pre-Christian practices. Duncan refused to accept ordination by the church and strongly disagreed over matters of formalized ritual and particularly the use of emotional expression during church services. This extended to the physicality of the sacred space itself. Barry Downs noted that Metlakatla's St. Paul's church itself was "devoid of all crosses, altars, and vestments." In the end, this conflict with church policy led to William Duncan's dismissal from the C.M.S. in 1881. Eventually, Duncan split from the Anglican Church entirely and established a non-denominational "Independent Native Church," which the majority of Metlakatla Christians joined.

As the government implemented a reserve system in the North Coast area during the 1880s, Duncan and the Tsimshian Metlakatlan also came into conflict with colonial and Anglican church authorities over land issues. Unable to resolve them, Duncan and over six hundred Tsimshian left the Canadian province in 1887 to establish New Metlakatla on Annette Island in southern Alaska.

Duncan's absolutist style of leadership also brought him into conflict with Tsimshian power structures. As Jean Usher concluded: "Duncan's success at Metlakatla had been due in great measure to the natural adaptability of Tsimshian society to the type of Christianity he wanted to introduce...Duncan's failure to maintain that unity that was the basis of his system was

35 Most historians suggest that Duncan believed the Tsimshian would relate the sacrament to rituals related to the xgyedmhalait / Cannibal Dancers Society.
36 Downs, Sacred Places, 158.
due to his inability to find an acceptable place in his utopia for the chiefs and traditional leaders of the Tsimshian.”

This split of a significant minority of hereditary chiefs and their families reveals Duncan’s ultimate failure to create a unified Christian community. The old mission continued after Duncan’s departure, but as a shadow of its former self. In the summer of 1901 a fire swept through Old Metlakatla, destroying many buildings, including the huge church. The Tsimshians contributed to much of the reconstruction, but Metlakatla’s fame, which had previously been so thoroughly promoted through missionary literature, also ensured a generous supply of financial support, and a new church was consecrated in 1903.

Despite the troubles, the establishment of Metlakatla as an Anglican mission had greatly stimulated the growth of evangelistic activity by the Anglican church throughout the region. In 1864, Reverend R. A. Doolan established the Nass River mission as an out-station of Metlakatla, and three years later the mission moved to its permanent site of Kincolith (Gingolx or “the place of scalps”). Reverend Robert Tomlinson, a medically trained missionary, took over Kincolith in 1867, hoping to build a village patterned after Metlakatla. He directed the construction of a mission house, log church, store, and hospital. Native converts soon followed in the village’s wake, and although a terrible fire partially destroyed it in 1893, Kincolith remained an important Anglican mission to the Nisga’a.

Reverend William Collison arrived on the North Coast in 1873 and worked at Metlakatla, Skeena River out-missions, the Queen Charlottes (Masset, 1876), and by 1883, he had moved to Kincolith. In 1883, Rev. J. B. McCullagh established another Nass River mission called Aiyansh, which was located several kilometres below the Nisga’a village of Gitlakdamiks. McCullagh, likewise, modeled this mission on Metlakatla.

The Upper Skeena region was at first maintained by only itinerant visits by Anglican missionaries and Native assistants formally attached to missions elsewhere. C.M.S. missionary A. E. Price visited Kitwanga in 1869 and again in 1889. In 1887, Price and Rev. Robert Tomlinson both resigned from the C.M.S., wintered in Kitwanga, and the following year established a non-sectarian Christian village at Minskinisht downriver at what is today, Cedarvale. Like Duncan,

---

38 Peake, Anglican Church in BC, 94.
39 See chapter 8 for how this fire stimulated a revivalistic response among the Christian community at Kincolith.
these missionaries rejected the institutional constraints of the parent mission society to follow a path they believed would produce a purer evangelical environment.

**Methodist Church**

Just as Metlakatla formed the centre of Anglican missions of the North Pacific Slope until the last decade of the nineteenth century, the H.B.C. trading centre of Fort Simpson (called Port Simpson after 1880) became the heart of Methodist missionization in the region. Methodism originated in England in the late 1730s, when John Wesley and his followers split off from the Church of England (Anglican) in an effort to create a more popularly relevant Christianity. Wesley targeted his message toward the new industrial poor produced by Britain's Industrial Revolution. When Methodism spread to British North America in the eighteenth century, it emphasized revivalism and an emotional, experiential religion that came to be associated with the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States. Although Canadian Methodists eventually embraced the more conservative creed of the British Wesleyans in 1833, it was not immune to the occasional episodes of religious revivalism throughout the nineteenth century. Many of those who found an outlet in mission work had been deemed unsuitable for the home ministry because of their yearning for the old-style camp meetings, itinerant preaching by charismatic figures, and inspiring signs of the direct hand of God in a Christian's daily life. Among aboriginal people however, especially groups like the Tsimshian who had a predisposition towards dramatic transformative experiences, many Methodists found a receptive audience for their enthusiastic ministerings.

Fort Simpson had been pioneered by Tsimshian Christians for several years prior to the arrival of an official representative of the Methodist church. The high-ranking and chiefly family of Elizabeth “Diex” Lawson and her son and daughter in-law, Alfred and Katherine Dudoward, was instrumental in securing a permanent mission for their village. After Duncan withdrew to

---

40Nancy Christie, “‘In These Times of Democratic Rage and Delusion’: Popular Religion and the Challenge to the Established Order, 1760-1815,” in The Invention of Tradition: Readings in Pre-Confederation History, ed. Chad Gaffield (Toronto: Copp Clark Ltd., 1994), 240-270.
Metlakatla, Native Christians like the Dudowards maintained evangelical Christianity at Fort Simpson.\(^{42}\) Thus, the founding of the Methodist mission among the Tsimshian is truly a story of Native initiative. From the standpoint of "official" Methodist Church involvement, however, it began when Rev. William Pollard responded to the Dudowards' request for a missionary, and arrived in 1874 with a young Fort Simpson convert of Scottish and Tsimshian ancestry, William Henry Pierce, who acted as translator. Pollard was replaced by another Englishman, Rev. Charles M. Tate, who had worked on the Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland area since 1870. Native Christians—the Dudowards, Pierce (who would remain as interpreter), Philip (Clah) McKay, and other Methodist Tsimshian, who had already been converted to evangelicalism and had anxiously requested more formal involvement in the area by the missionary society—greeted Tate warmly.\(^{43}\) Itinerant mission work and evangelistic tours began to the Nass and Skeena Rivers later that same year. Rev. Thomas Crosby and his new wife, Emma (née Douse) Crosby arrived in the summer of 1874 to take charge of the Fort Simpson mission.

Rev. Thomas Crosby was certainly the most influential Euro-Canadian missionary connected with Fort/Port Simpson in the mid-nineteenth century. Crosby was a Methodist whose style of preaching and religious convictions harkened back to the frontier itinerant evangelism of the early nineteenth century. Originally from England, he moved to Woodstock Ontario with his family as a teenager, and then to British Columbia in 1862. He spent ten years as a missionary on Vancouver Island and the Lower Fraser valley area, particularly around Chilliwack, before heading north in 1874, where he remained for the next twenty years. Like William Duncan, Crosby took a broad view of his responsibilities as a missionary. As Clarence Bolt observes, it was quite natural to Crosby that spreading religious values also meant disseminating commercial and technological ideas, and in his mind, Canada's "social structure and cultural values, complete with Christian symbols, formed an integrated whole...and was presented to the Native people as such."\(^{44}\)

\(^{42}\) Indeed, after Duncan had left for Metlakatla in 1862, he did not visit Fort Simpson again until after the Methodists arrived over a decade later, although some Tsimshian exhorters from Metlakatla periodically returned there. Archibald McDonald Greenaway, "The Challenge of Port Simpson" (B.Div. thesis, Vancouver School of Theology, 1955), 24.

\(^{43}\) Ibid., 165.

\(^{44}\) Ibid., 34.
In the space of ten years, Crosby expanded the Methodist mission network out from Fort/Port Simpson throughout the North Coast region and along the Skeena and Nass Rivers, composed of as many as ten missions with at least as many other preaching places and served by three ordained ministers and a contingent of Native assistants, preachers, and exhorters. He changed Native political and social structures by creating a municipal council, reorganizing the physical layout of the village at Fort/Port Simpson after a Victorian Canadian fashion (e.g. single-family dwellings, sidewalks, grid of streets, etc.), and creating companies of firemen, brass bands, and watchmen. Like Duncan at Metlakatla, Crosby prohibited the expression of Native forms of religion, insisted on Christian marriages, and in general, encouraged the adoption of Canadian-style industry. His wife, Emma Crosby, established a school for girls, which was later joined by a boys’ school at Port Simpson. Graduates from both schools further spread Methodism and Crosby’s influence when they, themselves, became teachers and mission workers throughout the region. In 1897, the Methodist Church divided its Northwest Coast mission district into two, creating the Port Simpson (Nass, Skeena, and Queen Charlotte Missions) and Bella Bella (Low’s Inlet to Cape Beal and around Vancouver Island) districts. This illustrates just how quickly the Methodist mission system had expanded in little over two decades. Crosby left Tsimshian territory that year, and took charge of Bella Bella District.

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, Methodist missionaries responded to invitations for their services and forayed into regions by canoe, mission steam ship, or on foot beyond the reaches of Fort/Port Simpson to wherever they believed their message might find a positive reception. In 1877, lay Methodist missionary A. E. Green and his wife established a Methodist foothold along the Nass River, at a mission site at Lackalzap, which later came to bear his name, Greenville. The Greens remained at this Nass River mission until their departure in

45In 1884, ten years after Crosby’s arrival, there were only 3 active ministers in the region (listed as Simpson, Bella Bella, and Nass) and a total of 67 Native mission or church workers (13 local preachers, 10 Local Exhorters, 18 Class Leaders, and 26 Stewards). BC Methodist Conference, “Minutes,” Annual Port Simpson District Meeting, 1884. UCABC. For statistical breakdown of the Methodist Port Simpson District 1883-1900, please see my Appendix D. Previous works have tended to underestimate Native participation in missionization, although many acknowledge how vastly outnumbered Euro-Canadian missionaries were.

46Downs, Sacred Places, 159.

47Rev. S. S. Osterhout succeeded him at his old mission. Mrs. Frederick C. Stephenson, One Hundred Years of Canadian Methodist Missions, 1824–1924, Vol. 1 (Toronto: The Missionary Society of the Methodist Church, the Young People’s Forward Movement, 1925), 212.
1890 for Port Simpson. Green had also been instrumental in developing Upper Skeena River Methodism in the late 1870s. The Methodists serviced the Upper Skeena area through itinerant missions until in 1885, when they sent William Henry Pierce to Kitseguecla. Within a year, Pierce was taking groups of Kitseguecla Christians on evangelistic tours to neighbouring villages, converting their fellow Tsimshians and Gitxsan peoples. Although no permanent mission existed yet at Kispiox, missionaries Dennis Jennings, Thomas Crosby, A. E. Green, and the Native assistant, Edward Sexsmith, visited the area. Finally, in 1888, Rev. J. C. Spenser moved there from Port Simpson. Clearly, the Upper Skeena Methodist missions owe much of their existence to the efforts of Native evangelists like Pierce and Sexsmith, as much as the efforts of Euro-Canadians.

Methodist missions to coastal communities also were developed in their formative stages by the inhabitants' own initiative and Native mission workers. Pierce, for example, was one of several Tsimshian who served aboard the mission steamer *Glad Tidings*, the first of several such vessels in the Methodist marine missions to serve remote villages and camps, launched in November 1884. Although C. M. Tate was instrumental in establishing a mission at Bella Coola in 1884, it was with only with the assistance of Pierce, who remained there for a year. Some residents of Kitamaat led by Charlie Amos had begun their own services and evangelistic efforts before the arrival of an official missionary, Susan Lawrence, in the mid-1880s, or an ordained Methodist minister, Rev. G. H. Raley, who worked at Kitamaat from 1893 to 1906.

In a large mission area staffed by few Euro-Canadians, the continued reliance on Native missionaries such as William Henry Pierce, George Edgar, Philip McKay, Charlie Amos, Edward Sexsmith, and countless others remained essential. Foremost among them was William Henry Pierce. Constantly moved around by Crosby and church administrators, apparently in response to some "urgent cry" from a Native community for a missionary, Pierce was a paramount force in the establishment of Methodist missions along the Nass River in the 1870s and in the Upper Skeena region by the 1880s. He founded the Port Essington mission in 1877, and then went to Alaska for six months to spread the Methodist presence among aboriginal peoples already reached by fellow Tsimshian evangelist Philip McKay and other Native converts who had

48 Ibid., 186.
embarked on their own independent missionary endeavours there. Subsequently, in an official capacity working for the Methodists, Pierce went to Lackalzap (Greenville) on the Nass River for 2 years, spent 3 months among the Bella Bella, a year among the Bella Coola (1884), then moved back to the missions to the Tsimshian on the Skeena River (Kitseguecla 1886-1893, Kispiox 1895-1909), and served briefly aboard the mission-boat *Glad Tidings* (1894-1895). Pierce was ordained as a Methodist minister in 1887, and married a Canadian (non-Native) missionary and teacher, Maggie Hargraves, in 1890.

Pierce’s experience was much more typical than church histories have ever indicated. Several Methodist missions were exclusively pioneered by First Nation Christians. For example, in 1876 Gedanst, or Amos Russ, a Haida man converted at Victoria, returned to his home village of Skidegate to spread the message of evangelical Christianity and was later responsible for building Methodist churches at Klue, Heina and Skidegate. In 1877, he married Agnes Hubbs, who had been educated at the Crosby Home for Girls at Port Simpson, and the couple continued their work on the Queen Charlotte Islands.

Likewise, the mission at Kitamaat owes its inception to the work and faith of Wauksgumalayou or Charlie Amos, who also was converted in 1876 on a visit to Victoria. By 1877, converts at Kitamaat had built their own church. Other Christians from Port Simpson visited them, including Tsimshian George Edgar and his family, who acted as teachers and preachers. George Edgar was the second person of Tsimshian descent to receive ordination from the Methodist Church. Like Pierce, he frequently pioneered new mission fields or operated in areas serviced by only itinerant preaching. For instance, he had been sent to the Gitlakdamiks and Gitwinsksihlkw on the Nass River during the late 1870s, before his posting as the teacher and missionary at Kitamaat between 1878 and 1880. He was sent to Gold Harbour (Heina) on the Queen Charlottes in the 1880s, as well as to Methodist missions on the Upper Skeena, primarily based at Hagwilget 1887 to 1890. Edgar’s long-term work was centred around the Southern

---

49 Imbert Orchard in conversation with Agnes Russ, Grace Stevens, (daughter of Haida missionaries Agnes and Amos Russ) and Rev. Peter Kelly, excerpt from Interview by Imbert Orchard, “The Queen Charlotte Islands—The Agnes Russ Story,” *People in Landscape, Educational Series—Transcript*, Accession No. 2424, Tape No. 1, Track No. 1 (Victoria: Aural History Programme, Provincial Archives of British Columbia, nd.), 12.

50 Amos Russ married Agnes Hubbs, November 10, 1877 according to the records of the Wesleyan Mission at Fort Simpson, 1874-1912 BCA #31A. I thank Jean Barman for supplying me with this reference.
Tsimshian coastal community at Hartley Bay, where was served as missionary between 1890 and 1900, and below Tsimshian territory at the Heiltsuk village of Klemtu (China Hat), spanning the years 1900-1905 and 1906-1933.

**Salvation Army**

At the end of the nineteenth century, social activism was a powerful trend informing the life and work of Protestant churches in Europe and North America. The Salvation Army was a new church and altruistic movement born from this need to make Christianity more socially relevant in an increasingly urban and industrialized society. William Booth, an evangelist and humanitarian living in mid-nineteenth century urban England, envisioned a new way to reform society and declare war on sin and poverty. By 1858 Booth had been ordained as Methodist minister, but soon resigned to practice a more robust revivalistic form of preaching using plain language, drama, and emotional fire. He incorporated uniforms, flags, and lively band music fully into worship. These very characteristics would make this form of Christianity very appealing to Tsimshianic peoples on the North Coast and along the Nass and Skeena Rivers. In 1878, Booth and his followers began to call themselves the Salvation Army and the movement continued to gain adherents in Great Britain, Europe and North America.

The Salvation Army was (and is) a church that drew on evangelical traditions, although the physical building where services were held was referred to as a citadel, temple, or hall, rather than a church. The Army did not practice the sacraments of baptism or communion, and it designated its clergy by military rank. The Salvation Army defined itself as “a fellowship of people who have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour and Lord and whose common aim is to induce others to subject themselves to the lordship of Christ,” thereby including the evangelistic impulse as a vital component of what it meant to belong to the church. From its very inception, and unique among other Christian organizations of the day, the Army had a policy of equality for men and women; this permitted women to become fully ordained officers.

---


52 Ibid., 59-60.
of the church. One of the founder's daughters, Evangeline (Eva) Booth, became the
Commissioner of the Canadian Salvation Army, and she personally visited the North Coast area
of British Columbia in 1898 to encourage official involvement of the church there.53

The new church had a difficult birth. Salvation Army soldiers were persecuted and
subjected to violent opposition which included imprisonment and even death. The advance of
the Salvation Army in northern British Columbia also provoked tension and conflict. The appeal
of the Salvation Army among the Tsimshianic First Nations was generally a phenomenon
affecting the second generation of Christians, because it arrived later to their region than the other
Protestant denominations. However, it provides a case example of the negotiated nature of
Christian conversion.

Tsimshians first experienced the Army's evangelical brand of church work and worship in
Victoria beginning in 1887. They carried its teachings northward when they returned home.
Salvation Army services held at Port Essington, Port Simpson, and Metlakatla as early as 1890,
were entirely Native initiatives. The Salvation Army's Field Commissioner of Canada Herbert
Booth expressed surprise and amazement at the lengths to which Natives had gone to create "a
Salvation Army of their own." He remarked:

It appears that a large number of these Indians at a place called Fort Simpson fell in with
the Army at Victoria, went back to their reserve and started operations on their own
account in the church....The natives have built a hall of their own. Have got drums,
tambourines and great deal of uniform which somehow or other came into their
possession notwithstanding the instructions I had given them they were not to be
supplied from our headquarters. They have sent considerable sums of money to us for
various articles, and are to all purposes a Salvation Army of their own.54

Eventually, a Salvation Army representative arrived in Port Simpson during the Spring of
1896.55 Hoping to encourage the Salvationists to establish themselves elsewhere, Thomas Crosby
was disappointed when they chose instead areas already being serviced by Methodist and
Anglican missions. Soon brass bands, flags, uniformed worshipers and outdoor services by the

Peter Martin Assoc. Ltd., 1977), 113.
54Herbert Booth, "Brief Relating to Canadian Affairs dictated and written by the Commandant on the Occasion of
Reinquishing his command [1892-1896] to Field Commissioner Eva Booth for her guidance in the Government of the
Salvation Army Throughout the Dominion of Canada, Nwffld, and North-Western America," typescript [1896] SAA,
Toronto. Herbert Booth, son of the founder of the Army was replaced by his sister Evangeline (Eva) Booth in 1896.
55Crosby, Up and Down the North Coast, 362.
Methodist Band of Christian Workers, Anglican Church Army, and the Salvation Army all competed for converts on the streets of Port Simpson. It must have been quite a sight.

The founding of the Salvation Army mission at Glen Vowell appears to have been directly related to Native revivals and interdenominational rivalry in the Upper Skeena River region in the early 1890s. A Salvation Army source reported that two Tsimshian converts from Port Simpson, William Young and his sister, journeyed up the Skeena River conducting revivalistic services along the way in the name of the Army.\(^5^6\) Clashes with Tsimshian Methodist missionary William Henry Pierce and his followers at Kispiox increased when, in 1898, a group returned from working at the Port Essington canneries infused with religious fervour for the Salvation Army.\(^5^7\) Apparently, the two groups came to blows and the Salvationists claimed they were physically driven from Kispiox. At that point, the Salvationists moved to the newly surveyed village of Glen Vowell on the Kispiox River, which immediately became the Army's centre of operations for the entire region. Salvation Army historian Robert Collins explained the move was prompted by Native church members, many of whom were of former Methodists who had become discontented about the limits placed on them within the more mainstream Protestant denomination:

The north was already rich in Methodists and when some natives broke away as Salvationists, the two groups came to blows. To keep the peace, the Indian agent sent a surveyor named Glen Vowell downriver to map out a new village. One wintry day in 1898 the breakaway Salvationists, smarting from their latest clash with the Methodists, marched down the ice with torn flag and broken flagpole singing a revival rouser, "We Are Out on the Ocean Sailing." They climbed a steep bank, camped under a spruce tree on Glen Vowell's site and built a communal log house. When Army headquarters heard of them it sent an ensign (a rank now non-existent) to work with them.\(^5^8\)

\(^{56}\)Moyles, Blood and Fire, 114.

\(^{57}\)Neither Pierce nor the Methodist Church are given by name, but it is clear from other sources, this was the reference. There may be more than merely denomination rivalry involved in this incident. The report continued with this odd reference to non-Christians involved with Pierce and presumably the Epworth League, which was active at the time at Kispiox: "When these Indians returned to Kish-piax, their enthusiasm led them to hold open-air meetings. To counter-act this, strange to say, the half-breed missionary, who accepted any as members without evidence of conversion, anxious to kill out what was termed The Salvation Army enthusiasm, organised a band in which all were styled as captains, with a major at their head, and, aided by the medicine man—a heathen, who was fearful of the Salvationists—the newly formed band actually fought the peaceful Salvationists as they marched out, tore their Flag, broke their drum, spoilt their clothing, dragged off their feet some of the women who were praying and drove them all out of the village, and threatened to shoot them if they returned." anonymous, "The Story of Glen Vowell," All the World 26, no. 9 (Sept 1905): 500.

\(^{58}\)Collins, Holy War of Sally Ann, 151; Moyles included this detail in his description of the division of Kispiox Christians: "At Kispiox...the Epworth League was also a dominant religious force, and the resulting clash of
Glen Vowell became a very important mission for the Salvationists and a "model" Christian village in the area. Collins notes, "Travelers of feeble faith would cache their booze and tobacco on the back trail, grumbling, 'We're going to the holy city'." 59

The Salvation Army's official entry into British Columbia occurred at the end of the period under study here, in 1898, and, as already discussed, was built on the groundwork laid by enthusiastic Native supporters. The Army opened formal missions at Metlakatla and Port Essington in 1899, and established an outpost at Port Simpson that same year. Prince Rupert would get a Salvation Army station in 1910, and interior posts followed in the first quarter of the twentieth century, spreading out from the centre of operations at Glen Vowell. 60 Denominational rivalries throughout the region meant that Native Christians could express their discontent with their church or mission by changing their allegiance to another Christian group. 61 Just as the Methodist Tsimshian and Gitxsan dissatisfied with their church had broken free through affiliation with the Salvation Army in the 1890s, the pattern was later repeated among the Nisga'a on the Nass River in the 1920s. William Moore, a member of the Anglican Church and captain in its Church Army, turned to the Salvation Army when the Anglican synod refused his community's calls for assistance in building a church. Many followed him to this new organization. When a church was finally built at Gitwinskihlkw (Canyon City) in 1927, it stood as a Salvation Army Hall instead of an Anglican building. 62

identities resounded throughout the Skeena valley. When the new Salvationists went to Port Essington to buy Army hat-bands (reading 'The Salvation Army'), the Epworth Leaguers countered with a similar design (reading 'Look Up, Lift Up'). Tension rapidly increased between the two factions and was finally brought to a head by the Indian agent, who, in an innocent attempt to pacify both parties, repainted the 'Blood and Fire' [the slogan of the SA] on the Army drum to read 'Love One Another.' Moyles, Blood and Fire, 114.

59 Moyles, Blood and Fire, 114.
60 Andimal or Skeening Crossing 1908; Cedarvale 1919, Prince George 1921, Hazelton 1922, Kitwanga 1922 and along the Nass river (Canyon City 1927 and Gitlakdamiks 1937. "List of Salvation Army and First Officiers in Northern British Columbia" and "The Salvation Army Corp Listing, Corps Officers, Canada & Bermuda Territory: Canada West-British Columbia-South Pacific," SAA, Toronto.
61 Grant, Moon of Wintertime, 135.
62 Collins, Holy War of Sally Ann, 153-154. Gitwinskihlkw (Canyon City) also boasted the largest flagpole in the world—the distinctive red, blue, and yellow flag of the Salvation Army. Salvation Army, "Canyon City clippings file," passim, SAA, Toronto.
Measures of Success

Because this study is concerned with the meaning of conversion and Christianization of the Tsimshian, I cannot avoid the obvious question: Did the Tsimshian become Christians or not? Statistics provide a conflicting answer. My initial interest in this subject was sparked by the overwhelming numerical accounts of Native Christianization by the turn of the twentieth century. The statistics persuaded one historian, Robin Fisher, to declare: “It is clear that by the turn of the century, when the influence of the missionaries was probably at its peak, most of the Indians of British Columbia were at least nominally Christian.” He points to the census data for 1900 compiled by the Department of Indian Affairs, which identified 19,504 Native Christians out of a total population of 24,696. The department classified the remaining aboriginals as either “unknown” (2,900) or “pagan” (2,696). Presumably, the latter term applied to those First Nations persons who risked openly declaring their adherence to “traditional” forms of spirituality. Analyzing this data, Fisher remarked that the largest groups still adhering to traditional beliefs were the Nuu-chah-nulth (ironically, the first group to receive missionary attention) and, to a lesser extent, the Kwakwaka’wakw, Tsimshian, and Haida (the latter two, missions deemed “successful” in the general Euro-Canadian discourse). By 1920, the pattern continued: 21,560 out of 25,694 were deemed Christian, with a mere 1,421 publicly declaring their religious affiliation as “aboriginal.” Fisher’s perspective echoes an earlier generation of scholarly interpretation of these statistics, notably that of the anthropologist Wilson Duff. Duff concluded that complete conversion in British Columbia was eventually accomplished because of the determination of the missionaries and of the inability of Natives to resist it. He wrote that “[b]y 1904, 90 per cent of the Indians of the Province were nominally Christian.” Duff and Fisher are still widely cited by historians.

---

63 Granted, an arrogant or naive reason to write the history of a people in terms of a historical problem, I was nonetheless very skeptical of the meaning of conversion statistics for British Columbia’s First Nations when I first encountered them.


66 Ibid.
However, the meaning of the term "nominally Christian" calls into question the absolute nature of these statistics, which mask a much more complicated process. There were significant pressures on a Native person at the end of the nineteenth century to report to government agents that s/he was a Christian. The fact that several First Nations' cultural institutions (identified by many non-Native Canadians in connection with "Indian religions"), were prohibited, is likely to have influenced the decision of aboriginal people to publicly and officially distance themselves from associations with anything but the sanctioned religion of the dominant colonial culture. Furthermore, it should be remembered that it was in the Department of Indian Affairs' best interests to reflect the apparent success of their programme in "civilizing Indians" through reports of rapid Native Christianization.

A more important question to ask about these data is whether they represent a replacement of Native religions at all. Surely non-Christian cultural continuity can also be present in enumerations in which some allowed themselves to counted "Christian" for reasons other than a matter of faith. The conceptualization of Native "resistance" to Christianity (or apparent lack thereof), to which Duff referred is a misleading one, at least for the Tsimshian case. Born perhaps out of the earlier romanticized anthropological perspective that viewed any acceptance of non-Native beliefs or practices as an erosion of the "pure" aboriginal, resistance was expected from "pure" traditionalists. Do the statistics bear out the variety of aboriginal responses to Christianity or the myriad of motivations that spawned them?

Statistical data on the number and natures of the people employed in mission work support the interpretation that First Nations were thoroughly involved as Christian missionaries to their own people. For the entire period under examination, ordained Euro-Canadian missionaries were consistently the minority of mission workers. Did the choice to become Christian necessarily entail a transformation which precluded retaining former identities? Not likely. Evangelical Protestantism may have found particular resonance among the Tsimshian peoples because of its continuity with prior spiritualities. But the demonstration of conversion to evangelical Christianity required that it be phrased as an opposition to one's former life and constant reflection on one's spiritual state. This requirement was based on the belief in the
transformative power of conversion according to the evangelical theology that dominated the Protestant missions that operated among the Tsimshian.

**Evangelicalism**

It is impossible to comprehend Protestant missionization on the North Pacific Coast without an understanding of evangelical Christianity, with which all the denominations operating in the region were indelibly marked. This interpretation of Christianity determined how Tsimshian mission work was conducted and how Christian faith was to be expressed. An evangelical interpretation assumed that Christianity was an emotional and experiential faith marked by a profound awareness of a personal relationship between an individual and God. Just as in Tsimshian “traditional” beliefs, the spiritual nature of human existence was a given. God was an active force in the world, one which was “constantly rewarding, admonishing, and punishing individuals. It was believed that God directly created fears, desires, hopes, and assurances regarding personal salvation.” Similarly, natural phenomena were interpreted to be indicative of God’s personal intervention in the lives of every Christian.

Methodists, Salvation Army, and many Anglicans believed in the essentially fallen nature of humankind. Eternal death and damnation awaited all human souls without the salvation of Jesus Christ. Only the conversion of the individual—the soul entered by God’s grace and a recognition of Christ as saviour—would restore God’s favour and ensure everlasting life. Thus, true conversion, according to evangelicals, was a “rebirth” through the willing participation and transformation of the individual. By definition the process of Christianization was not one of imposition. There were central ceremonies among the evangelical denominations which publicly marked the activation of this spiritual potential in an individual and acknowledged his or her salvation through Christ. Just as Tsimshian halait rituals activated naxnox (or symbolically recreated that activation), evangelical rites of baptism, confirmation, or communion celebrated the transformative power of spiritual forces—Father, Son, Holy Ghost—at work in the world.

---

Scholars define evangelicalism by five central components that make up its conceptual and theological core: conversionism (the sudden transformation of the individual or rebirth), revivalism (continual renewing and reaffirmation of one’s conversion), biblicism (a belief in the authority and validity of the Bible), activism (an obligation to spread the faith), and crucicentrism (a focus on Christ’s redeeming work on the cross). As David Marshall explains, “Although subscription to certain doctrines was an important element of the evangelical faith, a vivid and compelling religious experience and a sense of God’s abiding presence were paramount.” Only converts themselves could undergo the experience and recognize the presence of God. As Usher described evangelicalism, she likewise identified the element of personal choice: “The responsibility lay upon the individual to apprehend his [or her] state or natural sin in the eyes of God, and by studying His word, to accept individually the sacrifice of Christ.” An individual’s conversion experience was the central event marking this realization. This choice was frequently accompanied by physical manifestations such as fainting, ecstatic prostrations, and speaking in tongues. Revivalism could reinvigorate the intensity of the conversion experience as well as reaffirm the path the Christian convert had chosen because of it. The central nature of the Bible and the emphasis on experiential religion was reinforced by the practice of most evangelicals to preach using a highly emotional and extemporaneous style. This not only lent itself easily to Native expressions of Christianity, but also encouraged the development of a participatory style of mission work that included an active role for its converts.

On yet another level, Canadian evangelicalism must additionally be considered beyond Native-Missionary relations. It cannot be understood without an assessment of its impact within the larger context of Canadian society and how it adapted to change in the late nineteenth century. Religious institutions in late Victorian Canada were challenged by Darwinism and the...

---

73 “The major tenets of the evangelical faith were impressed upon congregations with intense zeal. Most evangelical sermons were preached extemporaneously. It was thought that the preacher delivering a spontaneous sermon or exhortation was guided by the Holy Spirit.” Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith*, 27.
new biological sciences, industrial capitalism, urbanization, and historical criticism of the Bible. For many Victorian Canadians “the experience of a dramatic conversion was full of doubt, and the sense of God’s direct and guiding role in their lives was not entirely certain.” Ramsay Cook, among others, argued that a crisis of “faith” occurred as a result, creating a rejection of traditional church solutions in Canadian society and a move towards social ethics. The unification of the sacred and secular roles of the church fostered a replacement of theology (the science of religion) with sociology (the science of society) manifested in the social gospel. Thus, the crisis was essentially intellectual in nature, with a scientific view of the world replacing a Christian one. According to this argument, the church ceased to be the moral authority it had once been, because in seeking to make itself more applicable in Canadian society, religious liberals actually hastened secularization by making it less religiously relevant.

Other scholars disagree. Michael Gauvreau, exploring the forms of evangelical Christianity in English Canada, concluded that while there were many things threatening the authority and position of the church, evangelical institutions stood firm. He argued that academic historical criticism of the Bible in the twentieth century was the first sign that the influence of Christianity was being questioned. Richard Allen explained that the operation of a social gospel as part of the turn of the century social reform movement is actually evidence of the triumph of evangelical Christianity. Other scholars agree that a change in social and religious relevancy among Protestant churches in this country need not be interpreted as a “crisis of faith.” Michael Gauvreau and Nancy Christie insist on the existence of a flourishing “full-orbed Christianity” and religiously-motivated society until the mid-twentieth century.

Regardless of the side one takes in the larger historiographical debate, what most historians seem to agree upon was that Protestantism responded to the socio-economic,

---

74This the central thesis of Ramsay Cook, The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).
75Marshall, Secularizing the Faith, 28.
76Cook, Regenerators, 228-232.
77Michael Gauvreau, The Evangelical Century: College and Creed in English Canada from the Great Revival to the Great Depression (Montreal and Kingston: Queen’s University Press, 1991), passim.
structural, and intellectual changes in Canadian society in the mid to late nineteenth century by reconceptualizing the individual in terms of social experience. Within evangelicalism, one’s personal relationship with God and the desire to recreate Canada’s social order based on the principles of Christianity were integrated. Evangelicalism of the industrial age also had a significant class dimension. The Victorian obsession with social order was particularly relevant to evangelical Protestantism, which readily identified groups in immediate need both in terms of the salvation of individuals and for the collective good of society. Methodism, for example, from its very inception, preached its message directly to the urban poor of England’s industrial working families, stressing values of self-reliance, self-discipline and hard work alongside the need for spiritual transformation. Particularly relevant here, many evangelical missionaries who worked among North Coast First Nations had come from these missions to the industrial poor in Great Britain and even in eastern Canada. Several were from working-class backgrounds themselves, most notably William Duncan and Thomas Crosby. The Salvation Army was almost entirely recognized by mainstream Canadian society as a religion of the working classes.

Canadian evangelicalism by the middle of the nineteenth century had become more mainstream, conservative, and even according to some historians, “hackneyed” and “losing its power and effectiveness.” But because evangelical doctrine implied all people were equal before God, it continued to have great appeal among the working classes, where the opportunity to find a voice in religion, to be assured of salvation in the next world and contentment in this one, were welcomed. Inner changes in individuals produced outward effects on society resulting in the social and spiritual betterment for all. This dimension may have been particularly appealing to Tsimshian individuals who were attempting to circumvent usual channels for increasing one’s social ranking. These quests were common during the nineteenth century when

---

80See explanatory endnote in ibid., 253 n. 8.
81Marshall, Secularizing the Faith, 29.
85Bolt, Thomas Crosby, 29.
the availability of new sources of wealth and the expansion of potlatching changed Native societies. Evangelicals saw a world in which religion and society were as inseparable as they were in Tsimshian cosmology.

Evangelicals could not understand their own society as separate from cultural, economic, and political systems, so it is not surprising that these notions were applied in their interactions with indigenous communities. Their application of colonialist restrictions upon First Nations directed at the control and alteration of that ethnic/racial group, was congruous with the conceptualization evangelicals held of society generally, and akin to those modifications which middle-class social reformers attempted to make upon working class families or individuals deemed deviant from the recognized social order. The point here is that evangelicals viewed the working masses and non-Christians ("heathens") as targets in their battle against sin and damnation, which in turn was an aspect of their struggle to maintain the hierarchical Victorian social order. Connections between working class evangelism and the missionaries' role(s) in British North American Indian policy were part of attitudes which permeated all of the British Empire in the Victorian period. Many evangelical missionaries applied international approaches to indigenous peoples, aimed at the maintenance of a social order of which they were not to remain a permanent part, namely the establishment of self-sustaining, independent Native churches. One of the most significant doctrines of the mid-nineteenth century Church Missionary Society, for example, was, at its most essential level, the fulfillment of evangelical Christianity.

Church Missionary Society

Laymen and clergy had founded the Church Missionary Society in England in 1799. Although most closely associated with Anglicanism, in practice, it was an organization which drew heavily on lay evangelical missionaries of diverse denominational affiliations. The C.M.S. can be placed among similar humanitarian movements which emerged during the nineteenth

---

century and were concerned with the extension of contemporary Christian social values to all corners of the globe (e.g. anti-slavery and emancipation movements, the colonizing of Sierra Leone, the Aborigines Protection Society). The C.M.S. was truly an international mission society of which Canada was only one field among many. In this respect, the C.M.S. operated independently of Canadian colonial administrations, and many of the notable C.M.S. missionaries active among the Tsimshian were English. With a general emphasis towards teaching skills as well as the development of candidates’ previous experience and prospective work, the Society trained its own members prior to their departure to their mission fields. The C.M.S. maintained financial support and provided information to its own personnel. It published the *Church Missionary Gleaner*, the *Church Missionary Record*, and the *Church Missionary Intelligencer*, and annually issued a report on all of its mission fields and summaries of subscriber contributions. By the early twentieth century, approximately one hundred years after the C.M.S. arrived to work among Canada’s First Nations, they withdrew from the North American field entirely and transferred their work to the Canadian Church Missionary Society.

One of the chief influences on C.M.S. operations in the mid-nineteenth century was the organization’s secretary and executive committee member, Reverend Henry Venn. In his capacity as secretary from 1841 until 1872, Venn envisioned the missionary enterprise as one consisting of stages of progress towards full independence for Native Christians. C.M.S. missionaries were instructed to evangelize indigenous peoples with the intention of building a local Native pastorate and establishing National Churches throughout the empire. Venn wrote in 1868, “[t]he object set before us is not only to induce a few individuals of every nation to flock into the Christian church, but that all nations should gradually adopt the Christian religion as their national profession of faith, and thus fill the universal Church by the accession of national churches.” The National Churches were supposed to replace the denominational affiliations which then demarcated missionary societies. Each missionary was to create a Native-run, self-

---


90 Ibid., 180.
supporting, self-governing Native church and then relinquish his or her authority in order to move on to new areas of proselytization.

Venn's policy at first appears quite progressive: "The Native Pastorate Scheme would... form the basis of a national Christian community which would become an integral part of the imperial church structure. Christianity would assume the position of a grass roots, indigenous religion rather than an exotic form imposed by an alien culture." However, in addition to conforming with evangelical emphases on the individual, social egalitarianism, and self-determination, there were purely pragmatic motivations behind the establishment of self-sufficient Native congregations and clergy. Chronic shortages of personnel, financial constraints, and the high mortality rate among Europeans in certain regions of the world, made the Native Church policy a practical procedure. The Christian community would be an expression of the Native Church, not the reverse, and European missionaries were charged with providing guidance rather than control for Native converts.

Somewhere along the way, the C.M.S. Native Church policy in British North America and Canada never reached fruition. Where the African mission routinely handed the control of schools and churches over to their Native congregations within a decade or so, the Canadian field reaped no such immediate indigenization of local church structures. As Margaret Whitehead asked, "Was the aim of these missionaries to create a viable native Church, or did they lose sight of their evangelical aim and create, instead, dependencies? Did the 'city set on the hill' become in fact merely an expression of European paternalism and ethnocentricity?" C.M.S. historian Eugene Stock argued that Venn's vision of an independent Native Church did not apply to colonies where European settlement dominated:

---

93 Margaret Whitehead cites the admission of one missionary in the mid-twentieth century, who lamented that the Anglican Church had refused to let its missions mature, alluding to the fact that First Nations also retained their pre-Christian beliefs even while they practiced Christianity: 'In Africa after anything from five to 10 years, natives have been running their own schools and become bishops. And right here we have... achieved nothing comparable. And it had been found that Indians are more tenacious at holding on to their ancestral way of life than any other race we have met.' Williams Lake Tribune, March 21, 1957; quoted in ibid., 4.
94 Whitehead, Now You Are My Brother, 17.
And where we see a broad distinction between the euthanasia of a mission colony—that is, in a colony such as Canada or New Zealand, in which the British Settlers become the majority of the population—and the euthanasia [sic] of a mission in China or India or Equatorial Africa, where the White Man is only a traveller or a sojourner. In the former case the Native Christians, necessarily, naturally, rightly, became absorbed in a Church the bulk of whose members are of British descent. The latter case is quite different, and far more complicated. The church to be organized should be, eventually at least, native in character. It is to this latter case that Venn’s principles and plans apply.95

Indeed, the very fact that the Anglican Church was unable to find a suitable Native candidate for the ministry in the province until the mid-twentieth century, despite an active mission to First Nations there for the better part of a century, graphically illustrates that the creation of a Native Church was never a priority of the C.M.S. in British Columbia.96

Nevertheless, C.M.S. policies influenced the practices of individual missionaries. Venn corresponded with C.M.S. missionaries working in First Nations fields in Canada advising them to apply the central principles of National Native Churches, the widespread use of Native evangelists, and the primacy of the Bible and self-education.97 Jean Usher contends that Metlakatla cannot be understood as merely the product of one individual missionary’s mind, but that it was the result of the “application to particular aboriginal group of the ideas and the theories inherent in much of Victorian reform and particularly the policies of the Church Missionary Society.”98 Following Venn’s policy, Duncan’s stated objectives for the industries at Metlakatla were: “to improve the temporal circumstance of the settlers in order that they may be able to meet the increased expenditure entailed upon them by their advancement in habits of civilized life; and secondly to make, and leave the Mission, that is the church and school, self-

97When the C.M.S established missions in the area which became British Columbia, they were part of the western Canadian mission field called “North-West America,” before they were separated as the “North Pacific Mission” area. Ian A. L. Getty wrote how Venn’s Native Church Policy was introduced to the North-West (Rupert’s Land) Indian Mission(s) with little modification, concluding it ultimately failed to reach fruition because of the isolation of its missionaries, lack of financial commitment, negative reaction of colonial bishops, unrealistic conception of conversion, and the lack of missionary understanding or respect for First Nations. Getty, “Failure of Native Church Policy,” 19-34. For a non-western example, Venn advised the application of the Native Church policy to Edward F. Wilson, missionary to the Ojibwa in northern Ontario, “Memoir of Rev. Henry Venn, Instructions of the Committee, June 30, 1868,” in Nock, *Victorian Missionary*, app. B, 184. Jean Usher argues convincingly that the principles behind Duncan’s Metlakatla were firmly rooted in Venn’s policy, however divergent they became in practice. Usher, *William Duncan*, passim.
supporting." Yet, the influence of Venn’s recommendations on Duncan did not extend to the toleration of indigenous nationality, customs, and cultural expressions. Duncan’s evocation of mission rules of obedience and cultural replacement accompanied by severe penalties for transgressors also contradict Venn’s avocation of gradual change. Fisher has argued that Duncan was quite consciously trying to replace Native structures with those of Victorian English society: “The site of Metlakatla may have been Indian, but the village itself was Victorian.”

There are, however, some indications that Venn’s policy of Native Churches received partial realization, not only among Anglicans, but among other Protestant groups. The dominance of an evangelical outlook on missionary work, with its emphasis on the adherence to conformity and a strict moral code, led to the creation of Christian Native villages isolated from non-Natives (i.e. National villages). The missionary discourse, Duncan’s included, is rife with complaints over lack of finances, personnel, and support mechanisms. The use of Native mission workers may have been a pragmatic solution to these internal difficulties, but current missionary precepts could also have been at work. Indeed, the missionaries’ heavy reliance on Native Christians in evangelistic work, in pioneering new missions, and even the daily functioning of missions, meant that the indigenization of evangelical churches in British Columbia occurred at the local level, especially in those organizations in which Native people had the most direct control (e.g. Band of Christian Workers, Epworth League, Church Army, etc.). Many Tsimshian regarded denominational boundaries as far more fluid than Euro-Canadians had intended. The mutability of church membership is a constant theme throughout this study. There were experiments in evangelical missions without denominational affiliation, suggesting that even Euro-Canadians struggled to find suitable Christian forms for specific Native groups. Duncan’s declaration of an independent Native Church at Metlakatla prior to the removal to Alaska was not an isolated case. The Reverends Price’s and Tomlinson’s creation of the non-partisan Christian village of Minskinisht on the Upper Skeena River in the late 1880s was another such experiment.

99 William Duncan to A. Musgrave, 16 Dec 1870, BCA/F498/24; quoted in ibid., 65.  
100 Fisher, Contact and Conflict, 132.  
101 Ibid., 133. For a list of these rules, please see Appendix A.  
102 Ibid.
Missionary Rationale

Missionaries were products of their times. In this regard, they—Euro-Canadian and Native alike—resembled, disseminated, and perpetuated the values of Euro-Canadian culture in the Victorian age, with all its contradictions and inconsistencies. The Victorian ethos which valued hard work, orderliness, thrift, punctuality, “common sense” and perseverance undoubtedly influenced the Euro-Canadian missionary’s vision of how missionization should proceed. William Duncan was a prime example of a man who improved his social standing through self-education and moral betterment. Duncan’s own journals reveal this arduous self-improvement and moral strengthening of a working class man. The call of the church, particularly missionary work, was a respectable choice and brought considerable numbers to British North America in this capacity. Jean Usher concluded that Duncan’s worldview was one shared by many other evangelical Victorians of the lower and middle classes, and certainly an attitude that informed the missionization of First Nations. Duncan firmly applied an evangelical agenda which replicated and reinforced the earthly social order of the mainstream culture while preparing converts for Christian eternity through a strict system of rules and regulations.

Efforts to convert First Nations to Christianity are deeply connected to the institutional and legislative structures of control and “assimilation,” which form the backbone of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Canadian Indian policy. For this reason, Christian missionization cannot be divested from colonial agendas in general, or as Ronald Niezen remarks, “[m]issions, medicine, and education acted together as complementary institutions of conversion.” From the perspective of the Tsimshian, as with many other Canadian aboriginal groups, the relationship between Christianity and Western medicine was probably a reasonable

103 Usher, William Duncan, 5.
104 Ibid., chapter 1, 3-10.
105 Ibid., 5.
106 See William Duncan, “A Plan for Conducting Christianizing and Civilizing Missions on the North Pacific Coast,” in Appendix A.
association given that "traditionally" religion and medicine were one and the same. My study does not look at medical missions in any great depth, nor at the impact of the imposition of scientific and biological models of healing on Tsimshian approaches to health care. However, I will explore some of the symbolic associations of disease and healing with missionaries later, as an aspect of the mission encounter and the process of hegemony.

Similarly, Euro-Canadian education was one of the key tools in the missionary repertoire. In the first generation of missionization on the North Coast, the Protestant denominations introduced day and Sunday schools to achieve their goals of conversion, incorporated industrial training and curriculum designed to forward their "civilizing" agenda, and eventually created the system of residential schools which has, among other things, been responsible for such a dark and enduring legacy of cultural genocide among Canada's First Peoples. Education throughout nineteenth century Canada was very much influenced by evangelical Christianity. The potential improvement through Christian salvation that lay within each individual could be achieved on a social level through discipline, regulation, and the development of the higher faculties (moral and intellectual). The complexity with which the tool of education was applied to First Nations is well beyond the scope of my inquiry. Like the medical aspects of missions, I will incorporate only selected educated-related themes, such as the symbolic impact of written language, later in my discussion of mission hegemony.

Missions to Tsimshian peoples incorporated an extensive reordering of social, economic, and political structures and a major assault on many cultural ones. Missionaries, such as William Duncan, viewed themselves as being much more than religious instructors; theirs was a duty to uplift and create self-supporting replicas of Victorian social order among their charges:

"Now with regard to his physical and temporal affairs. The trouble is, we leave the Indian down in the mud. We do not believe in a missionary as being only a teacher of religion, as such. A missionary should be a man who will look at the Indian as a whole; take him

108 For a full analysis of the latter for all of the province, see Mary-Ellen Kelm, Colonizing Bodies: Aboriginal Health and Healing in British Columbia, 1900-1950 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1998).
body and soul, and try to lift him up. My endeavors have been to make them self-supporting.”

Yet, it was the very evangelical emphasis on Christian transformation, moral uplift and self-reliance, which ensured that Native converts, catechists, and evangelists would play a central role in the process of missionization. The C.M.S. listed the number of Native lay teachers in their annual report as frequently exceeding the total number of Euro-Canadian mission workers.\footnote{William Duncan, “Mr. Duncan’s Address before the Board of Indian Commissioners, and the Conference of the Missionary Boards, and the Indian Rights Association, Washington, D.C., Jan. 6, 1887,” in The Story of Metlakahtla, by Henry S. Wellcome (New York: Saxon and Co., 1887), Appendix, 382.} The Methodist returns presented at the Annual Port Simpson District Meeting contained an even more dramatic listing of a wide scope of Native leadership roles within the mission context, including Native preachers and exhorters, church stewards, and lay leaders and assistants (Figure 6):

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Year & Ministers & Native Preachers & Native Exhorters & Stewards & Native Leaders & Assistants \\
\hline
1883 & 3 & 11 & 14 & 12 & 21 \\
1884 & 3 & 13 & 10 & 26 & 18 \\
1885 & 6 & 18 & 16 & 21 & 16 \\
1886 & 6 & 25 & 11 & 14 & 26 \\
1887 & 7 & 26 & 18 & 39 & 26 \\
1888 & 7 & 40 & 17 & 34 & 23 \\
1889 & 6 & 45 & 22 & 29 & 34 \\
1890 & 6 & 46 & 36 & 28 & 36 \\
1891 & 7 & 42 & 31 & 17 & 29 \\
1892 & 7 & 50 & 26 & 14 & 42 \\
1893 & 7 & N/A & N/A & N/A & N/A \\
1894 & 8 & 46 & 33 & 20 & 30 \\
1895 & 6 & 54 & 41 & 18 & 36 \\
1896 & 8 & 63 & 43 & 27 & 29 \\
1897 & 7 & 48 & 34 & 23 & 38 \\
1898 & 5 & 47 & 14 & 20 & 6 \\
1899 & N/A & 29 & 36 & 22 & 9 \\
1900 & N/A & 32 & 75 & 17 & 6 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Table of Methodist Missions in the Port Simpson District (North Coast, incl. QC, Nass, Skeena, Bella Coola)}\footnote{For C.M.S. Mission Statistics see Appendix C.}
\end{table}

\footnote{Methodist Church of Canada, BC Methodist Conference, “Minutes,” Annual Port Simpson District Meeting, 1883-1900, UCABC.}
Statistically Native Christians dominated the Methodist work. Clarence Bolt argued that the control over religious expression was expanded with increased membership in the Methodist Church: "Recognizing the need for Native religious expression and trying to stem the tide of dissatisfaction and restlessness growing among the Tsimshian, the missionaries permitted the formation of the Band of Christian Workers whose primary purpose was evangelism."

As Figure 7 illustrates, Euro-Canadian missionaries never achieved an outright replacement of Tsimshian spiritual groups and power structures.

For example, their attempts at the masculinization of hereditary structures failed when Christian patrilineal names were merely added to existing social identities, while the older matrilineage continued as a parallel branch. The basic social unit in villages never became exclusively the nuclear family unit, nor did it always define denominational affiliation. While there were many forces at work during the later half of the nineteenth century affecting Native economies,

---

113 Bolt, Thomas Crosby, 50.
114 Figure 7 is my adaptation of Jay Miller's diagram of Tsimshian culture.
territories, and work rhythms, the mission village, reserve, and church physically and psychologically imposed colonialist structures upon Tsimshian culture. Yet in the short-term, this did not mean the immediate replacement of former systems of power, status, and authority. Christian expressions might accommodate other functions, such as the potlatch.\(^{115}\)

In summary, what denominational distributions and a general overview of missionization along the North Pacific slope reveal is a dynamic pattern of Christianization among the Tsimshianic speaking peoples. The main theological emphasis within the Protestant church in the nineteenth century, especially as it was functioned as a mission church, was evangelicalism. Evangelical Christianity had vast implications for the Christians forms that emerged in Tsimshian communities. While Christian roles provided new outlets for spiritual leadership in the community, the older forms of halait continued, albeit less openly, despite missionary agitation. Evangelical Christianity was compatible with some "traditional" forms of Tsimshian spirituality that also emphasized the importance of transformation and human fulfillment through power acquisition. Protestant missions to the North Coast included prominent missionary roles for Native peoples, both by necessity and by design. Evangelicalism informed mission policy and shaped how international missionary societies, like the C.M.S., disseminated Christianity. It also influenced how individual Euro-Canadian missionaries, such as William Duncan or Thomas Crosby, interacted with various First Nations. In this respect, Christianity engendered profound social and cultural changes modeled on European ideals. This dialogue over the nature of religion and its relationship to society was an ongoing one in the later half of the nineteenth century. The presence of multiple forms of Christianity gave Native Christians the choice to shift denominational affiliation, in order to express dissatisfaction with their current missions, or to find Christian organizations more compatible with the pre-existing Native cultural structures. The Euro-Canadian and Native discourses on conversion and Christian identities reveal clearly that accommodation, resistance, selected acceptance, and indigenization all took place in Tsimshianic territories.

Chapter 4. Proselytizing from Within: the Native Christian and Catechist

Missionary propaganda, reminiscences, and other publications are packed with references to the essential support and initiative supplied by Native mission workers. These sources make it clear that nineteenth century missionaries acknowledged the essential contributions of Native catechists. A typical example is Methodist missionary Rev C. M. Tate's short sixteen page pamphlet *Our Indian Missions in British Columbia*, published at the turn of the century, where he named no fewer than seventeen Native catechists, teachers, and missionaries.¹ He also mentioned several other unnamed "Native agents," frequently describing how these individuals started and supported new missions before any Euro-Canadian missionaries had even arrived on the scene.² Tate depended heavily on their assistance even after the formal involvement of missionary campaigns, as the result of chronic under-staffing. In 1881, with two of the only three ordained Methodist missionaries on the North Coast absent, Tate confessed "I could have accomplished very little but for the assistance of the teachers, and the paramount work of the native preachers."³

"Proselytizing from within" was a strategy of survival and practical necessity for Christian missions in British Columbia. Yet, the Euro-Canadian missionary discourse on the process of Christianization on the North Pacific Slope is complex, contradictory, and above all, self-serving. This chapter will examine some aspects of this discussion ranging from the "generic" Native catechist to how missionaries wrote about individual Native evangelists, many of whom they worked alongside for decades. In looking at the first generation of converts and their representations in Euro-Canadian narratives, one recurrent theme in stands out: the hegemonic discourse that portrayed the widespread use of Native catechists as both a social action programme for missions (i.e. "proselytizing from within"), and as "faithful servants" who participated in and thereby justified Euro-Canadian missionization (i.e. Christian hegemony).

¹Rev. C. M. Tate, *Our Missions in British Columbia* (Toronto: published by the Methodist Young People's Forward Movement for Missions, Methodist Mission Rooms, [1900]).
²The statistics of mission workers cited in the previous chapter bear this out. See Appendices C and D.
What follows is an exploration of this perspective by considering how the missionary literature idealized Native Christians and created archetypes for their Tsimshian catechists.

Uncritically examined, nineteenth century missionary records interpret contact encounters from a perspective distorted by racism, Victorian idealism, and presumptions of cultural superiority. These Eurocentric perspectives on missions and First Nations reveal the underlying intellectual and moral assumptions that enable historians to interpret this Euro-Canadian missionary discourse composed of a scramble of objective data and subjective rhetoric and attitude. Indeed, this knowledge can be used to gain a fuller understanding of the history of missionization and on the Euro-Canadian role in that process. Missionaries, traders, and colonial officials shared certain stereotypes of First Nations, despite differences in the nature of their relationships with that aboriginal “Other” and their own diverse, often conflicting agendas. As Nicholas Thomas has suggested for another colonial environment, “there was the complex deployment of shared metaphors and ‘common ground’ in texts arising from distinct interests and practical projects that were in tension if not mutually contradictory.”

First Nations, particularly literate Christian converts, were also privy to these metaphors and could manipulate, reject, or contribute to that tension. Nor can the missionary record be separated from other colonial discourses which it at once created, reinforced, and contradicted. Textual and visual images of the colonized “Indian” abound, although the genres of representation may have been unique to a single colonial group. The exploration of these colonial constructions of “Other” has been covered far more extensively and effectively by other scholars, and because my focus is on the process of Christianization, it must remain outside the parameters of this study. Thus I will not consider in detail how the other colonial representations of Native Christians might contrast or compare with the missionary formula.


The complexity of the missionary discourse on this subject does, however, merit a few introductory comments. Some missionaries expressed a collective perspective about First Nations that viewed Native culture as a foil to their own, supposedly unquestionable “superior” civilization. Missionaries were obliged to conform to this image, as members of the “superior” society, because they believed it, or because they aimed to generate financial support from a public who believed it, even when it contradicted what they found in the mission field. As Sarah Carter points out, “[c]ontemporary readers of these stirring missionary accounts were left with the overall impression that the Indian was a member of a feeble, backward race, living in a world of ignorance, superstition and cruelty.” A colonial and hegemonic tone is transparent their presumptions.

In British Columbia, missionaries joined with settlers and colonial administrators in their attack on certain cultural practices prevalent in aboriginal Northwest Coast societies, such as slavery and the potlatch. However, when it came to the appropriation of Native lands and the denial of aboriginal land tenure in the province, the missionary stance was less predictable. In this crucial area, some missionaries, especially the Methodists, championed First Nations pursuing their legal land rights, while others discouraged such action. This was a sharp contrast from the usual missionary perspective that transformed attitudes and defined positions in terms of stark dichotomies. Far more common was the belief that what ever was most opposed by the mission, was deemed un-Christian and vice versa, so that Christianity, for example, became synonymous with anti-potlatching.

The public missionary discourse on First Nations and mission work, from the present-day vantage point, seems remarkably patronizing, prejudiced, and static; in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, it was unremarkable in its adherence to the common stereotypes and tropes that extended across nearly all colonial literature. For example, the following description of British Columbia’s First Nations from a Canadian Methodist mission history contains all the references one might expect in a mid-century first Native-missionary encounters. It is a

---

8 Douglas Cole and Ira Chaikin, An Iron Hand Upon the People. The Law Against the Potlatch on the Northwest Coast (Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1990), 45-47.
A retrospective account was written in the 1920s, more than half a century after actual mission work began in the province, and represents the blackest, most extreme of the images of Northwest Coast First Nations that missionaries frequently subscribed to in publication and propaganda:

The condition of the Indians at this time [1839-41] is almost indescribable. There were those who boasted of having stood ankle deep in the blood of their enemies; others who had seen almost whole bands either killed or taken captive; medicine men who held in terror all with whom they came in contact; dog-feasts where dogs were eaten and where human corpses were devoured; slavery and witchcraft with their cruelty and torture; helpless old people left to starve and die on lonely islands or in deserted camps; wars that either killed or made captive all the enemy; whiskey drinking by men, women and children with death following every debauch; no privacy of home life; women held as chattels to be sold or bartered; potlatching and debasing ceremonies; nothing in Paul's description of heathenism was omitted in the practices of the Coast Indians. It was little wonder that strong appeals were made for missionaries and for Christians who would go to British Columbia to help the Indians to a better life through the gospel. Other ways had been tried and failed. Men-of-war might suppress, but their cannon could not change standards; reform must come through changed lives.

Missionary conceptions of their Native catechists recently divorced from this (by European definitions) "uncivilized" past but never entirely removed from it, were informed by the general image of the "missionary's Indian," as the characteristics from the above example suggests; "Indians" were warlike, superstitious, cruel, inhumane, devilish, drunken, slavers, debased, and heathen.

Yet, if First Nations were so irredeemable, the project of missionization would have been pointless. "The prospect of failure would be matched by the undeserving character of barbarians," suggests Nicholas Thomas, "which is why mission discourse must at once emphasize savagery yet signal the essential humanity" of those being evangelized. Hence, missionary accounts of the Northwest Coast temper negative descriptions of indigenous cultures, with portrayals of admirable customs, work habits, cleanliness, respect of elders, and other characteristics which frequently allowed them to decry the decline of such values in their own societies. Duncan's first reports on the Tsimshian are an excellent example. While he includes some very negative and wildly exaggerated descriptions of Tsimshian rituals, these account for

---

9 Mrs. Frederick C. Stephenson, One Hundred Years of Canadian Methodist Missions, 1824-1924, Vol. 1 (Toronto: Missionary Society of the Methodist Church for the Young People's Forward Movement, 1925), 140-141.
10 Thomas, "Colonial Conversions," 374.
only a small portion of his extended ethnographic portrait of everyday Native life, which was generally quite positive.\textsuperscript{11}

Native Christians in the Euro-Canadian Missionary Discourse

Reform came "through changed lives," a central objective of Christian missions. As one scholar of missions, T. O. Beidelman, remarked: "[c]onversion, the aim and measure of the mission endeavour, was an activity embodying a dangerous mixture of sacred and secular affairs, as well as a process inextricably linked to the ways missionaries defined the person."\textsuperscript{12} Euro-Canadian missionaries wrote about Tsimshian mission workers in certain ways, oftentimes drawing on some generic typology that meshed with their own agendas. Sometimes, a specific quality of one individual separated them from the mass of proselytizers and the missionaries used this Native Christian as an ideal upon which others should model their lives. Regardless, Native Christians remained "Natives." The intermingling of positive and negative elements of their "aboriginality," reveals a degree of ambivalence within missionary accounts of these individuals. As Thomas describes it, the humanity of Native converts, "was in parts: some parts were condemned to the past, while others were drawn into creating a new Christian."\textsuperscript{13}

Historical sources have no shortage of glowing references to Native Christian converts and those of whom went on to actively participate in evangelism and mission work. How were Native catechists described? What characteristics were applied to first generation converts and Native evangelists? In many respects, missionaries wrote about their Native catechists as though they were the realization of the potential within all Christian converts. Not surprisingly, Native Christians were described in ways associated with Euro-Canadian definitions of conversion, which in the case of First Nations, uniformly and unequivocally meant a rejection of aboriginal culture, lifestyle and spiritual beliefs. Mission Christianity was at once inclusive and exclusive. From the missionary perspective, it provided an opportunity for spiritual transformation to


\textsuperscript{13}Thomas, "Colonial Conversions," 375.
102

anyone, but it was exclusive of any other belief system and professed to be intolerant towards non-Christian practices. This us/them dichotomy was pervasive throughout missions to groups throughout the province, and indeed extended across colonial literature generally. The true measure of a Native convert’s worth was how one knowing “what was right” stood up to criticism of “being one of them.” The contrast between “us” and “them” or rather, between “Christian” and “Native” in the most commonly used missionary dichotomy, was a major theme in descriptions of Tsimshian converts. Ironically, however, these were never fixed identities and reveal the contradictory character of missionary perspectives on Christianization. Thomas remarks, “missionaries had to confront the contradiction between the desirability of postulating human equality in certain contexts [i.e. presenting Christianity as an inclusive religion] and their will to control the process of conversion and the localized theocracies that were occasionally effectively established,” i.e. definitions of a Christianity exclusive of “traditional” Native culture.

Dependent on contributions and donations to fund their endeavours in British Columbia, missionary propaganda and publications generally were vital for support of missions. One of the favourite techniques employed to generate enthusiasm was to contrast the unconverted aboriginal doomed to a life of “barbarism” with the Christian’s redemption. This was remarkably self-serving, as Fisher remarked: “The darker the picture of Indian savagery, the greater the need for missionaries and the more God could be glorified by the Indians’ conversion.” Hence, contrast with non-Christian Native peoples or with the individual’s own past life were typical in the missionary discourse of Native catechists (i.e. their lives were portrayed in terms of dichotomies). The conversion experience itself was deemed emblematic of the “voluntary” decision to leave

---

14 One excellent and explicit example (albeit a non-Tsimshian one) can be found in a passage Reverend A. J. Hall wrote of one Native convert to the Anglican mission on Vancouver Island to the Kwakwaka'wakw: “On the Queen’s birthday, a band of disloyal Indians roughly handled several of our converts. On inquiry, I found that our people had defended the character of the Indian Agent, the Queen’s representative. One of them, whose clothing was torn, said, ‘I remember your words, that we were always to say what was right because it was right, and when appealed to, I contradicted what I knew to be false; and then a man seized me, saying You are one of them!’” Ninety-First Annual Report (1890) in Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society for the Year 1889-1890 (London: Church Missionary House, 1890), 254.

15 Thomas, “Colonial Conversions,” 387.

one’s former path and embark on the new path to salvation. Not surprisingly, therefore, confessions or testimonies allegedly recorded at the time of baptism or death are numerous in both the public and private writings of missionaries. Indeed, among missionaries around the globe there was the universal assumption whereby, although conversion itself was a sudden spiritual rebirth, in practice it “was gauged by radical change in behaviour and aggressive denunciation of pagan neighbours and kin.”

Hence, the conversion testimony almost always contained the moment of transformation when the individual’s past life was discarded as erroneous, wasted or even evil. These testimonies were far more common in descriptions of Native Christians generally than applied to individual Native evangelists, particularly in the case of deathbed confessions, which might not even record the actual name of the dying person.

The missionary discourse on dying, particularly deathbed testimonies, was a well-established genre by the nineteenth century, applied to both missionary and convert throughout official and informal writings around the globe. Perhaps morbid by current standards, the importance of a recognition of God’s hand in one’s life during one’s last moments was considered a suitable evidence that a death “died well” or that “triumphant deaths” encapsulated a life lived as a good Christian. One missionary cheerfully wrote: “Eleven have been called away by death but our loss is their gain for they all left a blessed testimony behind them that they loved Jesus. He was their support in death, and they have gone to be forever with the Lord.”

Methodist evangelist Thomas Crosby included sections devoted to descriptions of Native mission workers in both of his well-known books on missionization of British Columbia’s First Nations. In his memoir of the early years of Methodist mission work in colonial Vancouver Island and British Columbia, he entitled a chapter “Marvels of Grace,” which began with this

---

17 Beidelman, *Colonial Evangelism*, 152.
18 This is a speculative rather than quantitative conclusion on my part. Further below, I cite an example of the baptismal confession of Chief Paul Ligeex, who became recognized as a Christian leader in the community of Metlakatla.
revealing statement: “Among the crowning glories of all missionary endeavor are the living and
dying testimonies of men and women who have been reclaimed from vice and heathenism by the
power of Divine Grace...There are some, however, whose character and service caused them to
stand forth as mountain peaks, to whom we must refer.” In another chapter, “Indian Characters
and Triumphant Deaths,” which appeared in his second book on his reminiscences of North
Coast mission work, he similarly profiles a number of Native Christians and what he deemed
admirable in their behaviour. The descriptions read like stock scripts, beginning with the pre-
Christian life from which the individual has turned. Tsimshian individuals who “as a heathen,
had always been one of the most active and daring,” “lived long in the dark,” and were “initiated
into all the rites and ceremonies of paganism.” The convert’s life was then contrasted with what
s/he became because of conversion to Christianity. For example, one male convert showed
“earnest zeal” and became an independent evangelist during the summer fishing season. Crosby
notes he was a gifted preacher, well-versed in the Bible, tithed one tenth of his income to the
church, built an European-style house, reserving the largest room for class and prayer meetings.
He stubbornly refused to give up his evangelistic work despite ill health and died in the service of
the Lord. “All he regretted,” proclaimed Crosby, “was that he had not heard of Jesus sooner, that
he might have had a longer time to work for Him.”

Heroic Christians

Challenges to the missionary message not only occurred, but were eagerly expected. The
stock literary devise of how this conflict was resolved and won through Christian perseverance,
was the “showdown” narrative. The “showdown” pitted a Native chief or shaman against the
missionary and almost always the latter was triumphant in the mission literature. I will explore a
popular narrative concerning Anglican missionary William Duncan and Tsimshian chief Paul
Ligeex below, but almost any lengthy description of mission work in British Columbia contained

22 Crosby, Up and Down the North Coast, p. 371-388.
23 Ibid., 373, 374.
24 Ibid., 374.
a similar confrontation. The usual outcome was the conversion of the challengers. Christianity was synonymous with "civilized" in the missionary lexicon, and aboriginal peoples functioned as a foil, deliberately emblematic of wildness and barbarism. Thus, their efforts against such forces would be nothing short of "heroic." Just as the original Christians faced persecution from the Romans, the trials of recent converts functioned in a similar way: individuals faced discrimination, persecution, and opposition from friends, family, and neighbours yet remained steadfast to their new faith. Rev. G. H. Raley, while writing the biography of Kitamaat evangelist Wahuksgumalayou (Charlie Amos), described when this Native Christian first began evangelizing his own people, how he came into direct confrontation with the chiefs of the dance societies. Amos refused to abide by their orders to cease preaching and to instead participate in the dance society into which he had been initiated prior to his conversion. Of this Raley wrote:

"Whereupon they became enraged and persecution began, a bitter struggle between light and darkness. All evil was let loose on the little band of Christians. Sometimes they were pelted with red-hot stones by the fire-dancers, and others bitten by one of the man-eaters. The cedar roof of the large Indian lodge they occupied was torn off. They were forsaken by their friends. The tribal council again met and Wahuksgumalayou and his associates were condemned to death by witchcraft."

Ironically, although many Euro-Canadians denied the effectiveness of Native spiritual practices, Raley confessed that "open opposition ceased for a while, but secretly the doctors were at work with Indian poison and witchcraft. One after another, the early Christians died mysteriously." After all, if "darkness" had no real force, there was nothing for Christianity to triumph over. The social implications of the contest between "traditional" Native and Christian spiritualities were significant beyond the mere demonstration of convictions or the converting of a single Native individual. Anglican missionary Reverend Robert Doolan reported that when he publicly opposed Nisga'a Native healers, the resentment, suspicion, and skepticism it produced among the entire community was far greater than the reaction from the healers themselves.

The homily "virtue as its own reward" epitomized the "nobility" of Christian character. A variation on the theme was the deathbed confession, when the last words of the dying Christian

---

26 Ibid.
communicate the final moment of self-reflection before receiving the “reward” of everlasting life in the Kingdom of Heaven. The potential as “natural” Christians, “the long-slumbering offspring of Adam,” was something just waiting to be stirred by missionaries and their Native charges. Writing of the contact history of the Gitxsan on the Upper Skeena River, one Salvation Army enthusiast remarked:

> It is now forty-five years since these people came in contact with the first white man. Then they were in rank heathenism. In knowledge, they are still far behind the whites, but in Christian living they surpass many who profess greater things. They are natural Salvationists. They like to speak and sing, and glory in The Army and its uniform. They have suffered many hardships for their faith, but have stood firm through all.

While missionaries celebrated those who stood firm, they also accepted the humanness of their Native converts. The fallen yet recovered Native Christian was also a popular theme. The “backsliding” of Native converts was often lamented, even of Christians who had been mission workers. The Dudoward family of Port Simpson and their relationship with the Methodist church was that of founding family and upstanding church members; yet, they remained consistently scrutinized by missionary authorities, even at the very height of their evangelistic work. “Backsliding” was a label frequently used by Euro-Canadians to refer to not only a questioning of the validity of an individual’s faith or depth of belief, but to departures from what was deemed Christian behaviour (evidence of true conversion), as is clearly evident from this excerpt from a Salvation Army missionary:

> One Indian was converted while on my way to Port Essington, not from heathenism, but from the curse of liquor, and the sins that follow in its trail. He had been at one time a good worker in God’s work, but under stress of sorrow and temptation had fallen away, and during ten weeks he had 125 bottles of whiskey, and yet according to law he is prohibited from having it. He had a hard struggle to get the knowledge of his sins forgiven. Lying in bed, recovering from the delirium tremens, the devil seemed to be there in person, but faith in God brought victory.

The initiative of self-proselytization was a reality of the majority of colonial mission environments. The characteristics celebrated in this quotation—faithfulness, diligence, eager,

---

talented—but calls for continued instruction reveals the missionary's insistence on control and obedience in Native evangelists, despite an eager reception by "waiting" and "thirsty" tribes:

[At regular Metlakatla Sunday services] One or two of the young men exhort, making the two addresses I have given during the day the basis of their remarks. Nor is it only in our own settlement that good is being done. Wherever these Indians go they carry their religion with them, always assembling themselves together for worship on the Sunday, and getting as many of the heathen to join them as possible. An Indian of Ft Simpson, who has received a good deal of instruction from me (though he is not a resident at our new village), came here a few days ago, bringing seven young men with him from one of the highest villages up the Naas River, over 100 miles from here. He has been residing at this village as a fur trader, but he has also diligently employed his talents for God, setting forth the Gospel where it had never been preached before, and has met with great encouragement and apparent success. I had the whole party at my house last Wednesday evening, when I endeavoured very solemnly to impress upon their minds and hearts the first principles of the Gospel of Christ. Though intending to return home on the following day, they decided to remain over the Sunday, that they might receive further instruction to carry back with them to their waiting and thirsty tribe.

The Native Christian archetype of "the loyal Indian" who faces persecution for her/his Christian beliefs or associations harkened back to the trials faced by all early Christians. Loyalty was not only the brand of true conviction but proof of integrity in that Christian individual and a necessity for the survival of the Christian community. "From the time of his baptism," wrote one missionary of a Native catechist, "he has been a very useful man, firm and true, standing in dangerous times as the right arm of the missionary, and ever ready to help, when at the other time all the other Christians would be lured to the potlatch he remained steadfast." So while loyalty and bravery in being Christian in a non-Christian environment was a state frequently celebrated, so too was loyalty to the Euro-Canadian missionary. For example, David Leask was a Tsimshian of mixed heritage whose influence in the community far exceeded his traditional social ranking because of his leadership role in the church. Rev A. J. Hall wrote of Leask's capacity as interpreter and translator, "David is a spiritually minded man and he knew in his own soul the importance of the truths I offered and with native fervour he was well able with God's help to bring home the truths written on my paper to the hearts of the people." The missionary

31 This unnamed native catechist/teacher is likely Arthur Wellington Clah. [Duncan], Metlakatlah: Ten Years Work Among the Tsimshian Indians (Salisbury Square, London: Church Missionary House, 1869), 111.
celebrated the depth of Leask's faith, his enthusiasm, and his devotion to achieving the goals of the mission. Leask's convictions and loyalty to William Duncan during the dispute with the Anglican bishop, likewise was used in the pro-Duncan literature as evidence of an ennobled Christian character who refused the offer of bribes for the good of the Metlakatlan community Duncan had fostered:

On the very day of the rupture, 'His Lordship', tried to bribe the native teacher David Leask, by offering him the addition of £50. a year to his salary of £100, if he would forsake Mr. Duncan's leadership and accept work for the Society under his orders. David knew nothing of the rupture at the time of this interview with the Bishop, but suspected from the Bishop's words and manner that something was going wrong, stoutly rejected his overtures.34

Confessions and Testimonials

Confessions and testimonials provide additional insights into what Euro-Canadian missionaries expected of Native conversion and what evidence they sought in support of such transformation. The confession is a powerful and structured expression of the Christian identity. Whether a record of Native or non-Native conversion, the form of the confessional response was defined by missionary expectations. A missionary recording them noted, "[T]he answers have reference chiefly to the depth and source of penitence, and the knowledge and personal application of the healing truths of the Gospel."35 To question the accuracy or originality of these responses is to question the nature of conversion itself and to consider what identities were available to and/or desired by the new converts. The following is an example of a "confession before baptism" allegedly made by Tsimshian chief Paul Ligeex, which is frequently cited in the Anglican church literature36:

LEGAIC (principal chief), aged 40: -- Answers:-- We must put away all our evil ways. I want to take hold of God. I believe in God the Father, who made all things, and in Jesus Christ. I constantly cry for my sins when I remember them. I believe the good will sit near to God after death. Am anxious to walk in God's ways all my life. If I turn back it will be more bitter than before. I pray God to wipe out my sins; strengthen me to do right; pity me. My prayers are from my heart. I think sometimes God does not hear me,

---

35[William Duncan], Metlakahtla, 100-102.
36I follow the current accepted spelling of this name is Ligeex, except in direct quotation, where the more historical spelling of Legaic frequently appears.
because I do not give up all my sins. My sins are too heavy. I think we have not strength of ourselves.

Remarks:—Under instruction about nine months. On two occasions before attended for a short time, but fell away. Mr. Duncan says this man has made greater sacrifices than any other in the village. Is the principal chief, and has left his tribe and all greatness. Has been a most savage and desperate man; committed all crimes. Had the offer of forty blankets to return to his tribe. He now bears the ridicule of his former friends. Yet his temper, formerly ferocious, bears it patiently, and he returns kindness, so that some have melted and are ready to come with him.37

The evidence of true conversion seemed to be the “turning away” from the past. The past was characterized by “evil ways” and a sinful life, which were difficult to abandon and for which the pull to return was always strong. This conception of converting meant replacing former beliefs and conduct with Christian behaviour and attitudes. This idea apparently was not shared by First Nations. The remarks made by Bishop Hills emphasized the cost of Ligeex’s choice and of the separation from “traditional” Tsimshian culture that choice entailed.

However, the reward of such a conversion, according to the bishop, was manifest in the convert’s behaviour: from savagery, desperation, criminal activity and ferocious temper to patience, kindness, and leadership. “Speaking of Legaic’s reformation, the Bishop says:—‘He is industrious, and gains a good livelihood, and lives in a comfortable house of his own building, with good glass windows and a veranda. Chairs were set for visitors, and we had much talk about the Mission, and the work, and the tribe.’”38 The idea that Christian conversion was marked by physical and behavioural changes as well as spiritual ones, was a perspective propagated within the Euro-Canadian discourse on missions and by the actions of their evangelists in the field. In Ligeex’s case, material signs such as European style housing and furniture accompanied physical changes in his appearance and his behaviour. However, this raises a question: Does this appraisal of one convert’s testimony and conversion reflect the historical experience of Paul Ligeex?

Michael Robinson began his study of three historical Native chiefs of the Northwest Coast (Maquinna, Ligeex, and Kwah), by remarking that prominent Native heroes or heroines have been frequently omitted from a written history seemingly populated with only explorers, fur

37Welcome, Story of Metlakahtla, 51; and [Duncan], Metlakatlah, 100-102.
38Welcome, Story of Metlakahtla, 71-72.
traders, colonial administrators, and missionaries, despite the presence of widely documented Native peoples within the oral history of First Nations. According to Robinson, normally notable Natives appear in the Euro-Canadian history only “when they surrendered to white culture in exemplary fashion or when they fought back with what was usually termed ‘barbarous’ or ‘ungodly’ behaviour. The Indian hero who was of interest to white historians was basically the hero of acculturation.” The Tsimshian chiefs who held the name Ligeex were exceptions because they exist in both the oral and written, Native and non-Native records. There is little doubt, however, that the missionary accounts of Ligeex characterized him in terms of a specific discourse of Christian converts, as will be readily apparent in the descriptions that follow.

The title of “Ligeex” was a hereditary one and three Tsimshian chiefs took the name in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A fourth chief to held it in the first half of the twentieth century, but apparently by then it had passed through the female line to the Haisla at Kitamaat, although for the descendants of the first Christian chief Legaic has become a surname. Ligeex (historically: Legaic, Legex, Legaix, Legaik) was a chiefly title of the Gispaxlo’ots Tsimshian and of the Eagle clan (Laxsgiik). The name is of Heiltsuk (Bella Bella) origin, meaning “chief of the mountains” and was first taken up as a title when the son of a Tsimshian Eagle woman returned to Metlakatla to assume a chieftainship from his maternal uncle. “It was this Legaic who in the second half of the eighteenth century built the trade empire that was to bring great wealth to the Eagles.” Ligeex was also an important priest-chief (smhalait) of the Nulim (“Dog-eater”) secret society. The second Ligeex was the nephew of the first, and was responsible for solidifying an Eagle clan trading monopoly along the Skeena River. He faced challenges in doing so, but with the marriage of one of his daughters, Soudal, to a European trader, John Frederick Kennedy, Ligeex formed a powerful alliance with the Hudson’s Bay Company at Fort Simpson (Nass River). When the H.B.C. moved their fort to its present-day location (Port Simpson) in 1834, Ligeex moved his entire village from Metlakatla to Wild Rose Point, to be in closer proximity to the fort.

---

41Johnson, “Paul Legaic,” 551.
It is unclear exactly when the third Ligeex took up the title from his uncle, although he was firmly installed as a chief of the Gispaxlo'ots when William Duncan arrived on the North Coast in 1857. Several missionaries and Euro-Canadian writers described him as a “fierce barbarian” and “proud” and “powerful” chief who, nonetheless, still struggled to maintain his status among the other eight Tsimshian village-groups that lived in the area. Frequent and elaborate potlatching was cited as evidence of this power struggle. When he converted to Christianity after defying Duncan's efforts for several years, the Euro-Canadian discourse framed it as a great sacrifice and rejection of his past wealth, status, and livelihood:

This brutal murderer, who boasted of the number of lives he had taken—was at length humbled and led like a lamb. He had once...attempted to assassinate Mr. Duncan, and had never ceased to persecute and harass him and his followers, until now, like Saul when stricken, he was transformed into a faithful disciple of him whom he had bitterly reviled, and had mercilessly pursued. Likewise, as Saul, when baptized he chose the name Paul. He became a simple citizen of Metlakahtla, an industrious carpenter and cabinet-maker, a truly exemplary Christian.

Adopting the namesake of a disciple of Christ and a trade with a special appeal to Christians, Ligeex is ultimately transformed.

There is some confusion in the literature surrounding his death. Some accounts and indeed the Church of England’s Caledonia parish records and William Duncan himself report the death of Paul Ligeex at Fort Simpson on May 6, 1869 at the age of 55. One narrative of the event portrayed a dying Paul Ligeex asking for William Duncan to come to his side. This fit the common missionary literary device—the death-bed confession and repentance:

While he was away on an expedition to some tribes in the Nass River Country, he was taken with a fatal illness, and feeling that he was approaching death, he sent pleading letters to Mr. Duncan to come to his bedside; but to his great sorrow, circumstances rendered this impossible, and Mr. Duncan could only send comforting messages. Legaic's last words to Mr. Duncan, written down by his own daughter, were as follows: 'I want to see you. I always remember you in my mind. I shall be very sorry if I shall not see you before I go away, because you showed me the ladder that reaches to heaven, and I am on the top of that ladder now. I have nothing to trouble me; I only want to see you.' Then he passed peacefully away. Thus died the once haughty chieftain Legaic.

42Wellcome, Story of Metlakahtla, 39.
43Ibid., 39-40.
44Johnson, “Paul Legaic,” 552.
45Wellcome, Story of Metlakahtla, 40.
However, there exists conflicting evidence, not the least of which is a tombstone at Port Simpson that reads:

“In Memory of Chief Legaik, Died January 2, 1894, At Port Simpson—Age 95, Before he die he raise his eyes to the skies and he say, Please Lord give me two hours to live. Four hours later he die. The Lord gave him more than he ask for.”

According to this alternative timeline, Paul Ligeex did not follow William Duncan when he moved Metlakatla to Alaska, as was the case for several hereditary chiefs, and had returned to Port Simpson where more “traditional” clan memberships, wedding, and burial customs were resumed. Another Tsimshian evangelist’s journals supports this description. It may simply be that this confusion indicates that there were two Paul Ligeexs who were Christian residents of Metlakatla at this time. Regardless of accuracy, both death narratives reflect the Euro-Canadian missionary ideal of loyalty and steadfast adherence to Christianity even unto death.

From the missionary’s standpoint, Ligeex was an ideal candidate for conversion to Christianity with the added benefit of being a highly influential figure among his people. For the Tsimshian chief, Duncan was a significant addition to the Eagle clan. But did Ligeex, in fact, forsake entirely his title and position after his conversion and move to Metlakatla? Robinson suggested Ligeex “wanted umbrellas and admission to the Anglican church—not out of a desire to acculturate, but rather to gain the spiritual power of the whites to complement the powers he already controlled.” The umbrella was used on state occasions by several British Columbia First Nations as a symbol of power. Some Tsimshian oral traditions record that an umbrella was offered by Ligeex as a supernatural object owned by the Nulim (Dog-eaters) Society. It is logical that Ligeex wanted to continue his role as a spiritually empowered leader through his personal association with Christianity. Many individuals and families who had held politically and

---

46 Johnson, “Paul Legaic,” 552; and Robinson, Sea Otter Chiefs, 74; Each cites W. O’Neill’s memoirs.
47 Robinson, Sea Otter Chiefs, 73.
48 Arthur Wellington Clah’s journals describe chief Ligeex was active in “traditional” pursuits at Port Simpson. However, his journals give yet another set of dates for the death of “Paul Legaic”; The first in May 1869 and the second is Jan. 1891. AWCJ, Friday May 7, 1869 and several references throughout January 1891, NAC MG40 F11, #A-1711, A-1706.
49 Johnson, “Paul Legaic,” 551.
50 Robinson, Sea Otter Chiefs, 8.
51 In one narrative about Ligeex raiding the Upper Skeena village of Kispiox, Ligeex presents an umbrella as a new power possessed by the Nulim society in order to deceive local residents, draw them out of hiding, permitting his attack and subsequent destruction of the village. Ibid., 84.
economically important positions in the pre-Christian community, continued to do so, to some extent even within Metlakatla. The chief of the village police force was Paul Ligeex, and his constables were all former house chiefs.\(^52\) Although Ligeex resided at Metlakatla by 1868, "his title was still called at Fort Simpson feast as if he were there, and he was represented by his headman, who spoke for him and received gifts intended for him."\(^53\) He still maintained a home at Port Simpson, with a plaque with the inscription: "Legaic, my crest is the Eagle, the King of the Birds, February 27, 1858.\(^54\)

Furthermore, there is conflicting evidence which contradicts missionary's claims that Ligeex had given up his title, wealth, and membership in the *Nulim*-society. One biographer pointed out that Paul Ligeex in fact continued many "traditional" Tsimshian practices appropriate for a man of his position after his conversion and baptism as a Christian:

The chief remained leader of the Nuhlim Secret Society; his raising of the Eagle pole at Metlakatla in 1866 was a major celebration on the coast. The potlatch on that occasion brought chiefs of the Haida, Niska, Gitksan, and Carrier nations to the village to witness the ceremony. It is said that Legaic gave slaves to his honoured guests to show his great wealth and generosity.\(^55\)

Thus, although the Euro-Canadian missionary discourse emphasized persecution, sacrifice, and replacement of old allegiances—"He lost everything—has had to give up everything by his conversion to Christianity. It was with many of them literally a 'forsaking of all things to follow Christ.'"\(^56\)—in the case of Paul Ligeex, there is evidence to suggest that this idealized Christian outcome was not the historical reality.

**The “Showdown”**

Another "classic" literary device common to Euro-Canadian missionary writings was the "showdown" between the shaman and the missionary. While this undoubtedly occurred on occasion, it was also a rhetorical convention used by missionaries to represent the tension and conflict they and their missions had introduced. Missionary discourse abounds with examples of

---

\(^{52}\)Ibid., 69.  
\(^{53}\)Ibid., 72.  
\(^{54}\)Johnson, "Paul Legaic," 552; and Robinson, *Sea Otter Chiefs*, 72.  
\(^{55}\)Johnson, "Paul Legaic," 552.  
\(^{56}\)[Duncan], *Metlakatlah*, 105.
the conflict between the religious specialists of each culture. In the missionary literature, the "medicine men/women" or "witch-doctors" are cast as always resenting the intrusion of Christianity and perceiving the missionary as a threat to their authority and power. They frequently suffered humiliation or were discredited by the missionary, and sometimes even were converted to the "truth" of Christianity. In the heroic vein of missionary discourse, the missionaries always won the "showdown." A variation on this theme is exemplified by a narrative of an incident that involved the first missionary on the North Coast, William Duncan, the aforementioned Tsimshian convert chief Paul Ligeex, and another significant Native proselytizer, Arthur Wellington Clah.

Arthur Wellington Clah is the best known Tsimshian Christian and evangelist who figures prominently throughout this dissertation because of the rich documentary record on him, which includes his own voluminous autobiographical accounts of his role. He was directly involved in a confrontation between Duncan and Ligeex, coming to the defense of the missionary in a dramatic way. Before examining the narrative of the "showdown" itself, a brief introduction of this extraordinary Tsimshian man is merited. Clah traced his family to the Gidestsu Nation of Klemtu (China Hat) and inherited the Blackfish (Gispwudwada) clan and name Tamks (Hlax or Tdahmuks) from his maternal uncle.\(^7\) Through important connections through his adopted father’s lineage, Clah was a member of the Gispaxlo’ots Nation centred near Fort Simpson and he came to be a fur trader, leader, and preacher of apparent influence in the North Coast area throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century.\(^5\) Clah frequently appeared in the missionary literature, but his association with Euro-Canadians had actually begun earlier through his employment with the Hudson’s Bay Company. This was probably facilitated through his wife’s family connections.\(^5\)


\(^5\)Clah himself considered himself a member of the Gispaxlo’ots Nation. Arthur Wellington Clah, “Reminiscences,” 1. However, other scholars have classified otherwise. For example, E. Palmer Patterson wrote "He was a chief of the Gitando tribe of the Coast Tsimshian." E. P. Patterson, “Neshaki: Kinfolk and Trade,” Culture 10, no.2 (1990): 20.

\(^5\)His journals record reference to two wives which he continued to have even after his conversion to Christianity. The first and his principal wife was the niece of Nis’alk, named Dadks (baptised Dorcas Wellington). Clah also mentions a second wife, Habbeleken in 1867, but this marriage appears to have been very short-lived. Numerous
His wife's aunt was the remarkable Nisga'a chief Nis'akx (Martha McNeill) who married H.B.C. trader William McNeill in 1866.

Clah kept a journal, first as a means to learn English, but then to record his life. His journals span nearly fifty years, with regular daily entries almost unbroken, from 1861 to 1909. They provide invaluable insight into numerous aspects of Native-newcomer relations in the area from the rare perspective of a nineteenth century aboriginal person.

Clah worked as a translator and trader for the H.B.C. before being hired by William Duncan, when he first arrived on the North Coast. Clah is credited with teaching Duncan Sm'algyax (Coast Tsimshian). Although an early convert of Duncan's and presumably an adherent to a brand of evangelical Anglicanism, Clah chose to remain in the Fort Simpson area when Duncan moved to Metlakatla.

The narrative of the showdown between Ligeex and Duncan was an epic event that is featured in almost every account of the appearance of Christian missions to the Tsimshian, given it represented a clash with the oppositional forces of "heathen Indians" and the triumph of missionary endeavours. From the perspective of this study, there is no more ideal example. This particular "showdown" highlights the role of a Native Christian (Clah) en route to becoming a catechist, placed between the two oppositional forces (as they were consistently framed in the missionary literature) of Native and Euro-Canadian. One account from the late 1880s, is worth citing at length:

Mr. Duncan opened a school at the house of one of the chiefs. This school was eagerly attended both by children and adults. Finding the Indians so responsive, he, with the assistance of a few of the most zealous of followers, erected a log schoolhouse. In this new building his work prospered. Soon he had an attendance of about two hundred pupils, including children and adults, among the latter being numbered several chiefs... The Shamans, or medicine-chiefs, saw in Mr. Duncan's teachings the utter destruction of their craft, for with education and enlightenment ultimately the people would cease to believe in their empty sorceries; therefore they determined to thwart him. One day he received notice from Legaic, the head chief of all the tribes, to stop his school for a month during the season of the Medicine Feast. Recognizing that compliance would be regarded as a
surrender, he firmly refused to close his school so long as pupils came to be taught. Legaic threatened the lives of Mr. Duncan and his pupils if he did not yield.

Mr. Duncan fearlessly continued his work, and that day struck the steel which served as a bell to call the children together as usual. Finding he was not to be intimidated by threats, Legaic, followed by a party of medicine-men, all hideously painted and decked in feathers and charms, rushed into the school. The scholars fled from fear, but Mr. Duncan met Legaic face to face, and believing that they expected to overcome him by their humors and frightful appearance, he spoke in a calm and conciliatory tone; pointing out the evil of their ways, urging them to accept his teachings—at the same time assuring them that their threats would be without avail. Legaic, who was fired with drink, and in a furious passion savagely gesticulating, replied that he himself, and his companions were murderers, and the white man’s teachings could do them no good. Mr. Duncan continued to address them pacifically. At one moment Legaic appeared to weaken, but one of his confederates taunted him; and he demanded, if he had valor, then to cut off the white man’s head, and he would kick it on the beach. Legaic’s pride was stung by this and he drew his knife and was about to make a thrust, when suddenly his arm fell as if smitten with paralysis, and he cowed and slunk away.

Unknown to Mr. Duncan, Clah, his faithful pupil-teacher,—who had himself been a murderer previous to his conversion—heard of Legaic’s designs, had armed himself with a revolver and crept quietly into the school-house; just at the moment Legaic lifted his knife to strike, Clah stepped behind Mr. Duncan, and it was the sight of this defender that repulsed the would-be-assassin.

This narrative was graphically illustrated in Henry S. Wellcome’s *The Story of Metlakahtla*, (1887) again reinforcing the missionary perspective of how a “fierce savage Indian” violently confronted the heroic missionary and his loyal convert, resulting in eventual conversion of this hostile chief, transforming him into a model citizen of the mission village. In the Figure 8, entitled “Legaic, Chief of all the Tsimshean Chiefs, Attacking Mr. Duncan,” Ligeex and his group were stereotypically rather than historically portrayed.

---


63 Figure 8 is taken from Wellcome, *Story of Metlakahtla*, illustration facing p. 12.
Ligeex was rendered in the style of the European's image of the "Savage Indian," reminiscent of the generic Plains Indian type (indeed, one of the masks in the background looks distinctly like a buffalo head). Ligeex's facial expression is contorted with anger or madness, in profound contrast with the serene and calm countenances of Duncan and Clah. Ligeex was drawn in a confrontation pose, both in terms of his body position (i.e. arms tense and raised, approaching Duncan), and to his aggressive display of weapons. Ligeex's companion, continues this theme, drawn crouched low as if to strike, well-armed, and gesturing toward Duncan with a sinister expression on his face. Undoubtedly this character refers to the chief's "confederate" in the narrative who goaded Ligeex into nearly attacking the missionary. The crowd behind these two Native figures, likewise are characterized by angry looks and menacing gestures. The hand raised in the doorway more resembles a claw than a human hand, reinforcing the "frightful appearance" and "the evil of the their ways" referred to in the story. In contrast, Duncan and Clah are drawn in non-threatening poses, Duncan almost in making a conciliatory yet clearly non-defensive gesture, with his arms wide and his chest unprotected from the raised dagger. Clah, directly behind Duncan, has his arms folded, although we cannot see the pistol the narrative says he has hidden under his blanket.
Several pages later in the book, there is a second illustration of Ligeex (Figure 9),\textsuperscript{64} portraying the results after conversion to Christianity:

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{fig9.png}
\caption{“Legaic as a Simple Citizen and Carpenter of Metlakahtla”}
\end{figure}

“Legaic as a Simple Citizen and Carpenter of Metlakahtla” could not be a more opposite portrait than how he had been drawn in the previous illustration. Here, Ligeex with short hair is posed in European attire and has an expression of austerity and calm on his face. The subtitle informs us that Ligeex is now a “simple citizen” rather than a chief, and has an occupation readily approved by the Euro-Canadian authorities. The picture pronounces Christianity has not only saved Ligeex’s soul, but it has “civilized” him as well. The practice of “before” and “after” illustrations and photographs of Native converts was a typical missionary practice, used the world over.\textsuperscript{65} Contemporaries were well aware of the effectiveness of this tool as a propaganda device and this practice coincides with the missionaries need to see physical changes as a result of conversion.\textsuperscript{66} One missionary wrote of the effects of a revival in 1892 on the Port Simpson Native population: “Many, if photographed a few weeks ago and again now, would make good pairs of ‘before

\textsuperscript{64}Figure 9 is taken from Wellcome, \textit{Story of Metlakahtla}, illustration facing p. 40.
\textsuperscript{65}Thomas, “Colonial Conversions,” 366-389.
\textsuperscript{66}There is a comparable textual image of Arthur Wellington Clah as a recent convert. See Appendix B.
taking' and 'after taking'. Some young men in whose countenances I had never seen other than a look of lazy indifference are now lighted with a radiance which divine joy alone can give."

There is an important postscript to the story of the "showdown" between Ligeex and Duncan, that likewise reverberates with the "before and after" effects of Christianity. On an evangelical visit to Fort Simpson in February of 1864, Duncan wrote about the surprisingly warm reception to his preaching:

The most pleasing circumstance of all, and which I was not prepared to expect, was that Paul Legaic and Clah (the one in times past a formidable enemy and opposer, and the other one among the first to hear and greet the Gospel) sat by me, one on either side. After I had finished my address on each occasion they got up and spoke and spoke well... What a glorious change was this since my first going round the camp to preach the Gospel in fear and trembling. Now I had two important men gathered out and on my side, speaking more distinctly than I could those glorious and saving truths, and trying to enforce them. After they had finished I got up and pointed to these two as witnesses of the truth I had declared the years I had been here. The Indian audience seemed very much affected."

For Duncan, his victory was complete. His most loyal convert, Arthur Wellington Clah, who had saved the missionary's life, and his most fearful opposer, chief Paul Ligeex, who was necessary to win over for the mission among the Tsimshian to be truly successful, were now both in support. The "showdown" every missionary faced with the first generation of converts was considered finished, and Duncan, like other missionaries looked to the next task of "how to keep them

---

68Omitted section reads: "Legaic completely ashamed and confounded an old man, who, in replying to my address, had said that I had come too late to do him and other old people good; that had I come when the first white traders came, the Tsimshians had long since been good. But they had been allowed to grow up in sin; they seen nothing among the first whites who came amongst them to unsettle them in their old habits, but these had rather added to them fresh sins, and now their sins were deep laid they (he and other old people) could not change. Legaic interrupted him and said, 'I am a chief, a Tsimshian chief. You know I have been bad, very bad, as bad as anyone here. I have grown up and grown old in sin, but God has changed my heart, and He can change yours. Think not to excuse yourselves in your sins by saying you are too old and too bad to men. Nothing is impossible with God. Come to God; try His way; He can save you.' He then exhorted all to taste God's way, to give their hearts to Him, to leave all their sins; and then endeavoured to show them what they had to expect if they did so—not temporal good, not health, long life, or ease, or wealth, but God's favour here and happiness with God after death. Clah also spoke at great length. He said, from his youth he hated heathenism, and could never be prevailed upon, not even by threats, to join them in its follies. But he did not know of any better way; but by the time he became a man God sent His word to the Tsimshians. He soon saw that he and his people were in the dark, and that God's word was light, a great light shining in the darkness. He kept his eye fixed upon it, and started off towards it; he persevered till he grasped it; and now he found it to be good and sweet, a great light to his heart." [Duncan], Metlakatlah, 114.
converted:” “The Indians must be taught. Simply being good was not enough; they must be
good for something.”69

The motivations of Ligeex in directly confronting Duncan seem apparent in the Euro-
Canadian version of the “showdown.” Ligeex viewed Duncan as a challenge to his authority.
The school-house represented European-styled education and symbolized a new competition for
older spiritual ceremonials, such as the secret societies (wutahalait). There are several Tsimshian
versions of the event, however, that present an alternative viewpoint of the nature of religious
encounters, which thereby serve to emphasize and further highlight Clah’s participation in it.
One of the most important of these is that of his own family, recorded by Clah’s grandson,
William Beynon.70 Firstly, the relationship between Clah and Duncan is clearly defined as one of
equality—the Tsimshian called them “brothers.”71 It began with their close association during
language instruction, but continued despite differences in opinion regarding religion and Clah’s
refusal to follow Duncan to either of the Metlakatlas. The school was built with Clah’s assistance
and he used his enhanced social position at Fort Simpson, to combat prejudice against
Christianity and the new missionary.72

Secondly, according to the Tsimshian source, the teachings of Duncan were received as a
“new power” which both Duncan and Clah had access to. Beynon recorded that, “[a] great deal
of mystery was prevailing about Mr. Duncan’s activities. It was said that a new thing was about
to be shown, and only Duncan and Tamks [Clah] really knew what this power was going to be.
All were curious.”73 For Clah, the incentive to align himself with this new spiritual power of
Christianity and seek the protection with Duncan may have been a strong one indeed. Some
sources explain that Clah had been in hiding when the missionary first arrived on the North
Coast after he had allegedly killed a woman suspected of sorcery.74

69Stephenson, Canadian Methodist Missions, 188.
71Ibid., 210.
72This was due in part to Clah’s trading activities and position with the Hudson’s Bay Company, as well as his
association with Duncan: “Legaix’s influence had weakened while that of his tribesman Tamks, who was originally
of Gidestu origin (Klemtu), had enhance his position because of his strong character and open disregard for any that
opposed his views.” Ibid.
73Ibid.
74Jay Miller, Tsimshian Culture: A Light Through the Ages (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997),
180, n. 14.
Thirdly, the Tsimshian version explained Ligeex's motivation for confronting Duncan in deeply spiritual terms, not merely politics. Although the Wellcome narrative refers to Ligeex being “fired with drink,” a typical missionary reference to the erroneous belief that all feasting among First Nations was characterized by excessive consumption of alcohol, the narrative also makes a reference to the appearance of the Native group as “painted and decked in feathers and charms,” hardly usual attire. The location of Duncan’s school was spatial affront to “traditional” secret societies as it occupied a place used for initiation rites by those societies, “so that it was only be sheer disregard on the part of Tamks [Clah] and Duncan that they were able to build.” Those who were not initiated into the society holding the rites were physically endangered during its duration, hence control over the area and the ceremony by the “priest-chiefs” (smhalait) was paramount. In this case, as Ligeex headed the Nulim (“Dog-eaters”) society, it was his responsibility to ensure the safety of initiates and non-initiates alike.

The other issue, was the sound of the bell-ringing (“the striking of the steel”). Symbolically, the ringing of the bell regulated the day according to European work rhythms. According to Beynon’s informant (also the holder of the title Tamks), Ligeex had approached Duncan about this disruption by sending one of his headmen to request that the missionary close the school and stop the bell ringing. This was done to ensure the spiritual safety of the initiates undergoing important transformations. The dancers or initiates are brought into contact with naxnox, frequently indirectly through the intercession of the existing members in the secret society. The societies could only hold their ceremonies during the winter season because the “power in the secret society is available only at a given time and place.” Ligeex, as the chief of

---

75Wellington Clah (Tamks), “How Tamks Saved Duncan,” 210-211.
77“Legaix was angered because of the bell of the school would ring every day during the period of her [his daughter’s] initiation, and he wanted everything quiet. So he sent word by his headman Kamsnai to see Duncan. The headman came to Duncan, ‘Well! chief you will not ring your bell. It will be good that you close the school for a while. My master Legaix is worried regarding his daughter.’ Duncan replied, ‘I shall continue the school and will ring the bell every day.’ This reply incensed Legaix. On the day when his daughter was to make her reappearance from her journey to the heavens, he sent word to Duncan, ‘Do not ring the school bell today. This is an important day for me, and I must have it my way.’ Wellington Clah (Tamks), “How Tamks Saved Duncan,” 211.
the Eagles and in a position of authority within the *Nulim* secret society had both a valid reason and the authority to object to Duncan’s classes during the Tsimshian religious season.

Furthermore, his own daughter’s safety was at stake. In the Tsimshian cosmos, the arrival of spirits at the winter dances was announced through whistles with a distinctive sound for each society. The constant bell-ringing upset this usual pattern and could prove potentially dangerous if the supernatural power arrived unexpectedly. In the non-Native versions, the bell was perceived as an annoyance to Ligeex, whereas in the Tsimshian version, it was a more significant spiritual threat.

While there may be marked differences in the emphasis of certain events in religious confrontations which graphically illustrate the contrast between non-Native and Native discourse, there is also ambiguity regarding the nature of Native reformation in Euro-Canadian writings, alone. Even in their most admired converts, non-Native missionaries recognized ulterior motives for conversion. For example, Clah was written about with some ambivalence by missionaries of the day and historians alike. All ask whether Clah was seeking to gain new power and authority in Tsimshian society through conversion to Christianity. Peter Murray, in his study of the two Metlakatlas, believes that Duncan’s writings reveal that Clah’s social standing among the Tsimshian was dubious and that he abused his position as mission worker and constable for his own political ends. Clah had been Duncan’s constable at Fort Simpson, but was allegedly stripped of his duties because he “locked up anyone who offended him.” “He became a trader on the Nass and Skeena Rivers, and to Duncan’s disgust, began paying for furs with liquor and extending credit to native customers.” E. Palmer Patterson suggests that Clah’s trading in the 1860s even rivaled that of the legendary Ligeex chiefs. Robert Galois summarizes the difficulties Euro-Canadian contemporaries of Clah had fitting him into any one stereotype:

He was neither a “lazy Indian” nor unable to adjust to changing circumstances; nor did he “wander about.” Most remarked on his intelligence but had reservations of about his character. Doolan, a missionary, mistrusted Clah and thought him a “strange man”;

---

80 Peter Murray, *The Devil and Mr. Duncan: The History of the Two Metlakatlas* (Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1985), 105.
81 Ibid.
82 Patterson, “Neshaki,” p. 20.
Chismore, a visitor, described him as a consummate rascal; and Butler of the COT [Collins Overland Telegraph], viewed him as an “underhanded, double-dealing rogue.” The common denominator underlying these remarks is that Clah had not acted in conformity with the wishes of the observer. By denying deference he was branded as morally inadequate.\(^3\)

Jay Miller alludes to Clah’s killing of a woman suspected of sorcery as a central factor in why he aligned himself with Duncan. Clah’s close affiliation with Duncan through his capacity as his primary language teacher may have helped him avoid retribution or other dangers inherent with the purported slaying.\(^4\) Yet he eventually had a falling out with Duncan, leading the missionary to label Clah an enemy, “a hardened sinner” and demanded that he relinquish his position as constable. The break had as much to do with Clah’s growing spiritual influence as it did with any of Clah’s behaviour.\(^5\)

Regardless of the specific motivations for his initial conversion, what is clear is that Clah’s status was elevated among his fellow Tsimshian through his association with Christianity and his position as an evangelist. For the purposes of this study, Clah is an immensely important historical personage. His own written records leave a unique insider’s perspective on missionization, but Clah’s involvement in a wide variety of activities in the North Coast area made him a character difficult for First Nations or Euro-Canadians to ignore. Clah’s devotion to and expressions of Christianity were far from deferential to official missionary agendas, something which will be explored in a subsequent chapter. However, there were other Native evangelists who conformed more specifically to Euro-Canadian ideals about what it meant to be Christian. They build on many of the characteristics, hitherto I have associated with how non-Native missionaries wrote about their Native converts. In most respects, the generic Native catechist further amplified these qualities and traits.

The Ideal Native Catechist: Philip McKay/Clah, the “David Sallosalton” of the North

What elements were employed in a typical history of the North Coast Native mission worker? Two examples by Methodist Thomas Crosby encapsulate the “ideal” Native assistant. A

\(^3\)Galois, “Colonial Encounters,” 145.
prime example of the Native catechist archetype, appearing in the missionary literature can be found in descriptions of a Coast Salish youth, David Sallosalton. I would argue that he epitomizes the literary model of the Native catechist in the Euro-Canadian discourse. Although he never proselytized on the North Coast, Sallosalton does present the archetype through which Methodist Native workers in the area were compared, particularly by Rev. Thomas Crosby. Missionary descriptions of the Tsimshian catechist Philip "Clah" McKay, who evangelized in the North Coast region and throughout Alaska, draw heavily on the literary typology established in the literature on Sallosalton. Hence, before proceeding to McKay as a catechist archetype on the North Pacific Coast, I will first explore how Sallosalton was perceived and conceived in the missionary discourse.

David Sallosalton was born in 1853 and viewed by Crosby as the ideal native catechist. Crosby devoted considerable attention to him in his autobiographical book Among the An-ko-me-nums and in a separate booklet he devoted exclusively to Sallosalton. The latter was a veritable hagiographic biography. Although Crosby is able to convey a sense of what he felt was Sallosalton's "true" character in these two works—his unflinching faith, his commitment to Christianity and proselytization, or his oratorical skills—on one level, David Sallosalton represents a Native catechist archetype. According to Crosby, Sallosalton worked tirelessly as an inspired evangelist and he died in the field at the tender age of nineteen in 1873 of an illness brought on by his ceaseless labours. Even though his life was brief, Crosby managed to elevate certain elements of the catechist's life, transposing them into stock characteristics of how Euro-Canadians portrayed and perhaps viewed their Native counterparts.

Crosby set his story of Sallosalton against the stark backdrop of "uncivilized" Native lifestyle with careful attention to dress and manners that were especially unusual or considered symbols of barbarism to Euro-Canadians (e.g. head-flattening, shamanism, and alleged cannibalism). Crosby claims that a ten year old native boy called Sa-ta-na stepped out of this environment and asked if he could live with the missionary to avoid having to follow "Indian old

---

86 Portions of the following section on David Sallosalton are taken from Susan Neylan, "Shamans, Missionaries, and Prophets: Comparative Perspectives on Nineteenth Century Religious Encounters in British Columbia," Historical Papers 1994: Canadian Society of Church History, 43-63.
ways.” This event characterizes the first element in the Euro-Canadian ideal of the Native catechist: total rejection of aboriginal culture and lifestyle. On his deathbed, when surrounded by family members pleading to take him to be healed by a Native healer, Sallosalton adamantly refused their requests. He remained steadfastly devoted to the ways of a Christian. For nearly a decade before his death, this native boy, baptized David Sallosalton, had travelled with Thomas Crosby and other Methodist missionaries, working as translator, exhorter, and then as a class leader. He assisted Rev. Edward White at the Chilliwack revivals, preaching with considerable zeal and talent to Natives and non-Natives alike.88

Crosby describes Sallosalton’s archetypal encounters with a Native “witch-doctor” and a Roman Catholic priest, portraying them as confrontational showdowns in which he demonstrates his superior beliefs and unwavering piety.89 As I have already demonstrated, these “showdowns” are stock elements in missionary biographical literature, and Crosby’s use of them suggests he saw his Native assistant as an essential counterpart rather than merely an adjunct. In many respects, David Sallosalton represents the “all or nothing” view of religious contact. For Crosby, there was no possibility of religious dualism or syncretism; religious convergence was the means to “win souls,” not mediate belief systems. In many missionaries’ eyes, including Crosby’s, an aboriginal person was either a Christian or a “heathen.” The two terms were mutually exclusive. For most Native communities, however, there was no such dichotomy; one could be a “good Christian” and still uphold more “traditional” belief systems and obligations.

The David Sallosalton of the North Coast was Tsimshian Philip McKay (Wil-um-clah). Like Sallosalton, missionaries conceived McKay as the archetypal Native catechist—a tireless hero for Christ, a lay worker who evangelized on his own initiative, and courageously died in the service of Christian missions on the North Coast. In the Euro-Canadian discourse on North Coast missions, he was almost universally described as a devoted and charismatic figure, admired by both Euro-Canadian and Native alike. Methodist Thomas Crosby and Presbyterian Sheldon Jackson both called him the “Apostle of Alaska,” and just as with Sallosalton, Crosby devoted a

---

88Crosby includes a brief account of Sallosalton’s sermon and audience reaction in Crosby, Among the An-ko-me-nums, 210-213.
89Ibid., 215-217.
chapter in his mission history by paying homage to his “noble” efforts. The elements contained in Crosby’s life history of Philip McKay are familiar ones. Wil-um-clah was a member of the Gispaxlo’ots nation, born in 1848 and lived in the area around Fort Simpson. Clah as he was better known was of the Eagle clan (*Laxsgiik*) and had been initiated into the *Nulim* (“Dog-Eater”) secret society.

To emphasize the triumph of Christian missionization and the devotion of its “true converts,” Crosby begins with a portrait of McKay’s childhood in a uncivilized and dark past out of which Christianity offered an escape. He wrote: “During his boyhood he was compelled to go through all the terrible usages and customs then prevalent among the Tsimshians—tattooing, fasting, dancing, and dog eating...He took part in all the dark deeds of his people which ruined so many of their youth.” The “terrible usages and customs” refer to those practices regarded as the most un-European-like to Crosby and other missionaries and were considered the measure of Tsimshian barbarism.

Like many other Tsimshian of the mid-nineteenth century, McKay travelled south to Victoria to find work. Crosby recounted this phase of McKay’s life to paint his pre-Christian life as one wrought with corruption and degradation, where “his hard-earned wages were usually spent in liquor and revelling” and “[h]e passed some time in jail.” McKay attended the revivalistic Methodist meetings held in a former saloon, although he did not convert to Christianity immediately. In fact, McKay and his wife were both converted by Native Christians after returning home to Fort Simpson. Both were baptized in 1873. Crosby emphasized the transformation in their behaviour as the positive result of their conversion. “They became very earnest in the work of God.” McKay “was a diligent student” “fond of class-meeting” and “of committing Scripture texts to memory in his own language.” For like many other missionaries, Crosby assumed that a religious change would manifest itself in profound physical changes in an

---

91 Not to be confused with Arthur Wellington Clah.
92 Crosby, *Up and Down the North Coast*, 165.
93 Ibid., 166.
94 Ibid., 167.
individual: "his experience was often noticed by his teachers for its clearness, his life meanwhile bearing witness to his quiet devotion to his Saviour."\(^{95}\)

Despite " scoffs and jeers" from many to whom he preached, McKay became a self-styled evangelist and with several other Tsimshian converts, commenced proselytizing throughout Alaska, and especially in the area of Fort Wrangell. Crosby remarked, "During the summer of 1876 Captain Jocelyn wrote a letter to me at Fort Simpson urging me to come and see what the boys were doing. He declared that this band of native Christians was doing more good and having a more blessed effect than his whole company of soldiers";\(^{96}\) The "boys" (an example of a typical infantilization of the "Indian" by Euro-Canadians, as McKay would have been 27 or 28 years of age at this time) and at least one wife (Annie McKay) are reported to have made much headway in this "dying world," and later Crosby used the metaphor of "kindling the fire" to assess McKay and the other Native evangelists' work in the north.\(^{97}\) Another missionary remarked, "Some of that holy fire which stirred the heart of Paul when he entered the heathen cities burned in the soul of Philip McKay."\(^{98}\)

As with many missions at the time, the demand for formal involvement seemed urgent and yet there were too few Euro-Canadians to service large regions. Native catechists like McKay were forced to remain in areas they might otherwise have left. It is clear that they received no pay for their evangelism. McKay demanded assistance from Crosby and the Methodist mission, but never received personnel. "Still Philip remained, preaching and teaching as best he could, although he was in delicate health."\(^{99}\) Just as with David Sallosalton, McKay continued at mission work despite poor health, refusing to leave his post: "I cannot go and leave them until Jesus calls me" and his eventual death as a result, was considered "triumphant."\(^{100}\)

\(^{95}\)Ibid.  
\(^{96}\)Ibid., 168.  
\(^{97}\)Ibid., 168, 176.  
\(^{98}\)Julia McNair Wright, Among the Alaskans; quoted in ibid., 175-176.  
\(^{99}\)Crosby, Up and Down the North Coast, 171.  
\(^{100}\)Ibid., p. 175.
Conclusion

While not all Euro-Canadians might have been as optimistic in their appraisal of McKay’s accomplishments, most missionaries used the example of such individuals as an ideal to which other Native catechists might aspire:

Thus, in the wonderful ordering of the providence of God, through these humble workmen who had recently accepted the faith of Christ in British Columbia, and were seeking for more light without the aid of any accredited missionary teacher, the kingdom of God came, without observation, to Alaska. They were the honored messengers to whom the holy Spirit gave the privilege of publishing the gospel story to the ignorant and degraded natives in advance of all the churches and missionary societies of our land.¹⁰¹

Thus, idealized Native evangelists like David Sallosalton and Philip McKay were represented in the missionary literature as ideal Christians, the virtual embodiment of several of the chief characteristics of the generic catechist. Both supposedly rejected aboriginal culture and lifestyle, reforming their life through their new found faith, persevering through trials and tests, demonstrating both loyalty and initiative within the mission context, and finally becoming martyrs for their cause of mission work.

While the Euro-Canadian discourse celebrated its Native workers, it also focused on their irrevocable alteration, utilizing their conversion narratives to demonstrate what attributes it valued and sought out in its Native proselytes. Thus, the ways in which Native Christians and subsequently Native mission workers were conceptualized in missionary accounts emphasizes an all-encompassing transformation because of conversion to Christianity. The both practical and effective policy of “proselytizing from within” also confirmed an unequal power relationship set up through missionization—a Christian hegemony that sought through Native participation in the process to bring “heathens out of the darkness.” It was a “voluntary” participation because evangelical theology defined as the centre piece of religious awakening. For the Euro-Canadian, conversion revealed a stark contrast between “Native” and “Christian”; representatives of each side frequently squared off against one another in confrontation “showdowns,” or so the missionary discourse would have its audience believe. In practice, the personal “choice” to renounce the past and embark upon a new path was more about conformity. According to non-

Natives, this new path was to be modeled after and directed by Euro-Canadian society, and these standards were actively enforced through coercion and even imposition within the mission sphere of influence. However, also informing the parameters of "good Native Christian" and "loyal catechist" were the gender types diffused through both the social agenda(s) of the mission and in a patriarchal discourse on gender and the family which permeated missionary rhetoric and practice. Native Christians and catechists were engendered as they were defined in the Euro-Canadian discourse.
Chapter 5. Engendering Tsimshian Women

The Euro-Canadian missionary discourse on female Native Christians differed markedly from that of males. As discussed earlier, "traditional" Tsimshian society was stratified by class or rank and clan and house affiliation more than any other divisions. However, gender was another social category which became more accentuated after contact with European traders, colonial officials, and missionaries. Missionaries encouraged profound socio-cultural restrictions upon Tsimshian people, and women in particular, through the introduction of patriarchal and Western definitions of the family and social value system. The latter sought to establish a Christian hegemony through conformity in gender roles as well as adherence to a Victorian patriarchal definition of family and its function in Christian society. These notions were in stark contrast to the Tsimshian concept of family as a matrilineal collective residing in a single or cluster of longhouses, whereby the matrilineal household was the social structure around which all resource use, production, consumption, political power, property relations, and material life revolved. This chapter examines how this missionary imposition influenced Tsimshian women who converted to Christianity. Some of the changes were not what missionaries intended. Euro-Canadians had difficulty reconciling the position of high-ranking Tsimshian women to the specific gender roles they conceptualized all Native women assuming upon conversion to Christianity. I also explore the degree to which the family was utilized in the programme to "proselytize from within."

Non-Native missionary conceptions of Native mission workers were infused with Western notions of gender, which translated into different roles for their male and female converts within their respective communities and the church itself. These notions permeated the discourse of Native mission workers: while male Christian converts were conceived of in terms of their work, their actions and their relationship with the missionary (e.g. challenging, loyal, taking initiative, assistant, etc.), Native women who became Christians were conceptualized according to Victorian models of femininity, domestic and maternal duty, and as morally and sexually vulnerable beings. In other words, while both male and female converts were
envisioned through the broad image of the missionary's "Indian," Native men were primarily recognized for what they did as mission workers. In contrast, female Native interpreters, preachers, and teachers were seen first and foremost as women, then as Natives not Christians, and frequently celebrated in the Euro-Canadian discourse for characteristics associated with their womanhood (female gender roles) rather than their contributions to the mission or to depth of faith. When Euro-Canadian missionaries described female Christians and Native women mission workers through the categories of wife, mother, or daughter, they remained blind to the continuance of other spheres of power available to these women, especially in political and spiritual realms. Paradoxically, evidence of these continuing roles are found in the subtext of the missionary discourse on Native women.

In defiance of the "before and after" Euro-Canadian conceptualization of the Native convert, some Tsimshian women continued their role as healers (shamans) or political leaders (chiefs) through their pursuit of missionary-approved Christian activities. Contrary to the missionaries' intentions, the mission environment provided Native women with new opportunities to exercise power and influence, opportunities which were being challenged or restricted in other social milieus. While the mission hegemony introduced new mechanisms of bodily control and discipline, they also may have fulfilled an important social function for higher ranking women, by providing a new venue in which they could receive public acknowledgment and sanction of rank and power. It was common for missionaries to write about high-ranking women and their decision to convert to Christianity. They assumed it was to break with the past; but in fact, it will be obvious from a few examples, that they offered women new ways to maintain and expand pre-existing roles within their communities.

Scholarly opinion over the impact of sustained European contact on Northwest Coast aboriginal women is divided. Some arguments point to a significant loss of power for Native women. For example, Jo-Anne Fiske argues that in terms of political and economic power, the position of Tsimshian women declined drastically as a result of contact with Europeans.¹

¹Jo-Anne Fiske, "Colonization and the Decline of Women's Status: The Tsimshian Case," Feminist Studies 17, no. 3 (Fall 1991): 509-535. Jo-Anne Fiske based her conclusions on perceived post-contact shifts in productive roles and political power. Thus, her theoretical approach is decidedly Marxist, as she assumes that female control over the means of production, resources, and property assured women a voice and influence in community politics and
Certainly missions contributed to this subordination. However, the process was long underway by the time missionaries brought pressure on Native women. It began with the fur trade and intensified with the introduction of the wage economy in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Fiske traced a post-contact elevation of high ranking Tsimshian men through both the economic advantages of the fur trade and political preference bestowed upon them by patriarchal colonial and missionary authorities: “As noblemen gained economic advantage they rationalized claims to social and political prerogatives that crystallized around new notions of male stewardship over lineage resources and new assumptions of male authority and leadership.” Indeed, under the mission regime, nearly all offices of authority and/or prestige within the community and church were held, at least nominally, by men. The disciplinary institution function of the mission environment may have been particularly coercive and damaging to female power. As missions sought to liberate women from the “sexual slavery” of arranged marriages, polygyny, and prostitution, they imposed new demands and restrictions upon girls and women.

However, other scholars such as Carol Cooper, Marjorie Mitchell and Anna Franklin argue that the creation of the fur trade with Europeans and the accompanying new sources for wealth placed high-ranking Northwest Coast Native women in an advantageous position. I have come to a similar conclusion regarding the place of high-ranking women within the mission environment. Like male chiefs, women reinforced “traditional” sources of power and authority through active participation in church activities. With the arrival of the industrial salmon fishery and paid-wage labour, some of these new avenues to wealth were opened to a larger class range of Native women, as were some of the leadership roles within the church.

decision making. In the Tsimshian case, the matrilineal nature of their society was one device by which high ranking women could practice patronage and build political support. So long as a noblewoman had enough resources and property to affirm her status through potlatches, and to maintain her position in decision making through patronage and political participation, she would continue to maintain a position of power and influence.

2Ibid., 509.


Both Loraine Littlefield and Jean Barman have injected another perspective into this academic discussion by examining the discourse used by non-Natives about Aboriginal women.\(^6\) Littlefield saw a progression of images in eighteenth and nineteenth century historical literature that illustrated how ideas about "native women reflect not only the cultural other but also an historical discourse in the cultural construction of gender."\(^7\) She traced the application of the image of the "savage," the "squaw," and the "victim" to Native women in Northwest Coast societies. According to her periodization, by the mid-nineteenth century the image of the "squaw," a racially defined category that "centred upon her physical characteristics, intelligence and reproductive ability," had gained prominence.\(^8\) By the 1870s, the missionary discourse categorized Native women as "passive, powerless victims." This was based on the erroneous assumption that "traditional" Native societies in British Columbia were misogynous by nature and characterized by "domestic oppression, sexual degradation and intellectual deprivation" of women.\(^9\) Sarah Carter discusses representations of Plains aboriginal women in the "colonial imagination."\(^10\) She arrives at similar conclusions about how negative images of prairie Native women confirmed a racist message of cultural difference, justified the need for repressive "Indian" policies, and symbolized the perceived shortcomings of Native societies.\(^11\)

I found that the images with which Euro-Canadian missionaries conceptualized Tsimshian Christian women were those associated with any woman in the late Victorian period, but especially those defined by the dominant middle class and applied to working class women. Young female converts attending the industrial school at Metlakatla were described by the visiting Anglican bishop as being "devout," "well-behaved," and as "tender plants" whom the missionary "guards... from too early or ill-advised exposure to the blasts and storms of the

---


\(^{7}\) Littlefield, "Images of Native Women," 1.

\(^{8}\) Ibid., 6.

\(^{9}\) Ibid., 9.


\(^{11}\) Ibid., 160.
voyages of life.” Upon marriage, women’s schooling ceased and they assumed their role as wives and especially as “the future mothers of a new generation.” In other words, Native women were categorized as “poor” women rather than exclusively “ethnic” women. Jean Barman provides further insight into how the Native women of British Columbia were made to conform to Victorian ideals about womanhood through a rhetoric that “tamed” female aboriginal sexuality. She concluded that sexuality entered into public discourse *vis à vis* a condemnation of Native prostitution and polygamy, because sexuality itself could not be talked about openly: “In other words, sexuality had to [be] wilded into prostitution or possible concubinage, cohabitation outside marriage, in order for it to be tamable.”

**Prostitution and the “Saved Woman”**

Conversion could be the means to becoming a “saved women,” both spiritually and morally. It is not surprising therefore, that concerns over poverty, prostitution, slavery, and abuse were to be found in the writings of Euro-Canadian missionaries about Native women, as they were also found in many discourses on non-Native women by Canadian urban reformers and social gospellers alike. As one sociologist observed, “the backbone of Victorian sexuality was the successful promotion of women’s sexuality, an ideal of purity and sexual innocence well fitted to the separation of spheres that underpinned the patriarchal power” in society. Missionaries

---

12"The Bishop of Columbia writes: ‘I had observed on Sunday a row of well-behaved and devout young girls with Bibles in their hands. As I gave out my text they found the passage. On Sunday evening I heard them read the Bible, and they sang chants and hymns, some in English, and some in Tsimshian. To-day I examined several of them reading, and was much pleased by the accurate and devout manner in which they read the Word of God.’ These were to be the future mothers of a new generation. Already has he seen one set go forth from the institution well and respectfully married to young men who had proved worthy of the Christian profession. Those new in the institution are the second set, several of whom are about to be married, and there are others waiting to come and supply their place. So great is Mr. Duncan’s influence, that none are married without his consent, and he is entirely trusted by the parents. Constantly is he applied to by the many young men who desire this or that one for a partner; and not a little interesting, if not amusing, are the accounts he can relate of the care and watchfulness with which he guards the tender plants from too early or ill-advised exposure to the blasts and storms of the voyages of life.” J. J. Halcombe, *Stranger Than Fiction*, reprints from *Mission Life* 3 (Nov. 1871): 616.

13Ibid. For a discussion of Anglo-Canadian middle class values of motherhood as a national duty, see Marianna Valverde, “‘When the Mother of the Race is Free’: Race, Reproduction, and Sexuality in First-Wave Feminism,” in *Gender Conflicts: New Conflicts in Women’s History*, ed. Franca Iacovetta and Marianna Valverde (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 3-26.


were especially attuned to this threatening aspect of women and how conversion could provide a solution, such as this one example from the popular nineteenth century serial *Mission Life*:

A single letter written by one of the first set of scholars will serve to show the amount of intelligence and good feeling which prevailed amongst them. It was given to Mr. Duncan by a young woman to send down in the schooner to her sister, who was leading an evil life in Victoria. She had before succeeded in reclaiming one of her sisters, and hence her letter to this one:

‘MY DEAR SISTER—I send this little news to you. I very much wish to see you, my sister. I tell you sometimes I very much cry because I remember your way not right. I want you to hear what I speak to you. Come now, my sister, I hope you will return and live in your own place. Do not you persevere to follow bad ways. You must try to forsake your way; repent from your heart. You hear our Saviour Jesus Christ. Cast all your bad ways on Jesus. He know to save us when we die. I very happy because I see my brother and sister come again. I thank God because He hear always cry about you. —I am, your crying Sister, “Eliza Paley.”’

Another source, citing this same example, goes further to explore what the missionaries believed their work was producing in their converts:

A letter written by one of Mr. Duncan’s first set of scholars, illustrated, how efficaciously he had cultivated in them, the affectionate ties of brothers and sisters. It was a part of his plan, to create in them a love of home, and a love of each other, and purity of relationship....Many are Magdalens whom Mr. Duncan has fully reclaimed from degradation.

References to prostitution (“Magdalens”), unhappy arranged marriages and polygamy were ways through which Euro-Canadian missionaries often portrayed Native women as promiscuous, degraded, or abused. Historians of Northwest Coast First Nations frequently note how common missionary claims were that all Native women, regardless of status, were victims of such abuse. This excerpt from Anglican Bishop George Hills journal, confirms that even the adoption of the “appearances of civilization” was suspect: “Yet alas how soon will corruption destroy it all [Duncan’s mission]. Even alas this very gathering gave proofs of corruption. There were some of the young women decked out in every sort of vulgar finery - even to the wearing of crinoline & hoops. They were the unmarried wives of white men - & worse instances were there than even this.”

---

However, prostitution may not have been as widespread as the missionaries claimed. Mitchell and Franklin point out the historical evidence does not support such assertions:

"Victoria City Police charge books for the period 1880-1910 yields a total of only six arrests of Indian women for street-walking as compared to much larger numbers of arrests of White, Chinese, and Black prostitutes. Most arrests of Native women are alcohol-related charges." Nor were missionaries able to prove that Native fathers and other male relatives sold their daughters, sisters, and wives to obtain goods for potlatches (although missionaries frequently accused them of doing so). "The Department of Indian Affairs investigated such charges beginning in 1891, and found that they were largely unfounded." However, examination of the earlier gold rush era, with its significant influx of non-Native men into British Columbia, might reveal a very different story.

Yet despite the lack of proof for or against large scale Native prostitution, the prostitute image remained a powerful one throughout the 1800s, and was neither new nor unique to British Columbia. Rayna Green has extensively surveyed the image of "Indian" women in American folklore and literature. In "The Pocahontas Perplex," she identifies a binary image of aboriginal women: "The beautiful 'Indian princess' who saved or aided white men while remaining aloof and virtuous in a woodland paradise was the positive side of the image; but there was her opposite, the squalid and immoral 'squaw' who lived in a shack on the edge of town and whose 'physical removal or destruction was understood as necessary to the progress of civilization.'" In British Columbia, from the mid-nineteenth century onward, the latter image of a "degraded" Native woman was deemed a threat to the success of missionary efforts and the elimination of female prostitution, slavery, and abuse cited as justification for missionary intervention.

---

19"Male customers and/or observers of the time invariably refer to prostitutes or to any Native women who took their fancy as 'chief's daughters' or as 'Indian princesses,' although the lack of distinguishing symbols of high status, such as lip ornaments, belies the first designation, while the second is a political impossibility on the northwest coast. The implications of the use of low-ranking or slave women in prostitution would indicate that not only were some women forced into this occupation, but that Haida men did not prostitute women of high status." Mitchell and Franklin, p. 59. "Lineage members would not permit their kinswomen to be treated as chattel for sale by husbands and fathers, since such treatment would reflect poorly upon the status of the entire lineage." Cooper, "Native Women," p. 58.

20Ibid., 59.

Crosby wrote: “Woman was always the slave or burden-bearer until the Gospel came and lifted her into her true social position.” Indeed, there were several missionaries who offered evidence of this alleged beneficial influence of Christianity on the women of Northwest Coast cultures. Some exploration of the context by which Tsimshian women were defined is necessary. Native Christians were engendered, particularly women, through a discourse of the family and the functions this social unit served in the process of missionization.

The Missionary Perception on the Importance of Family

As much as Euro-Canadian missionaries categorized women in terms of their gender and “race,” it would be misleading to suggest they invariably considered the female convert as a separate category. The family for First Nations (as with Euro-Canadians), was (and is) the smallest unit of society, and thus the base from which the missionary could build up a new social order. This “new order” was precisely what the missionaries had in mind when they spoke of “civilizing,” “uplifting,” and “saving.” Christianity may have been spread through encounters with “Other” religious specialists (e.g. shamans, prophets) and through revivals, but it has always been maintained at the family level, however the family is defined. Therefore, missionaries were acutely aware of the importance of kinship in the process of change they sought to create. They were attuned to how the family of an individual Native Christian responded to the conversion of one of her/his members. Missionaries often used narratives of the reaction of Native families to converts as a sort of gauge to measure the success or failure of their missions. For example, in remarks after witnessing a recent convert’s confession at baptism, Anglican Bishop George Hills commented that:

Nayahk, the wife of Lipplighcumlee, a sorcerer...suffered much from the mockery of her husband. At her earnest demand he gave up devilry. Under eighteen months regular instruction. Been consistent in the midst of opposition; adhered to the Mission when many were against. Has a blessing of her family, all of whom have renounced heathenism. Her husband, the sorcerer, laments his past life, and would be the first to put his foot upon the evil system.

---

Here, one family represents both the impediment to conversion (i.e. the shaman's mockery, the environment of an unconverted community) and the perseverance and eventual triumph of the faithful (i.e. Nayahk convinced her husband to convert, her family remained supportive). The influence of family, thus, had the potential to be the missionary's greatest ally.

Euro-Canadian missionaries were correct in their determination that family ties could have the greatest power in resisting and rejecting their proselytizing efforts. But they also viewed the family as their most effective tool in spreading the Gospel beyond the mission's reach and maintaining Christianity on the North Coast. This was because kinship ties were central to Tsimshian social organization, where the principal divisions were delineated through lineage. Another clergyman, Rev. R. Dundas, wrote of hearing an elderly Native woman's testimony, remarking:

This woman, who cannot be less than fifty, has had no instruction, save what she has heard in the church. It has come chiefly from her own daughter of fifteen, who is one of the Mission-house inmates, and has been with Mr. Duncan for four years, his best and most promising young convert. She has been baptized by the Bishop, and has now been the instructor of her parents, both of whom will be baptized by me to-morrow.24

Not only could Christianizing occur internally, but when individuals became particularly devout members of the church and active missionaries themselves, family connections would remain important. Many of the best-known Native mission workers on the North Coast were related by blood or marriage as well as denominational affiliation. Hence, entire families became leaders of the church, not simply individuals. Methodist Native missionaries provide good examples of this phenomenon. Arthur Wellington Clah was the uncle of both the Rev. William Henry Pierce (through adoption) and Boas's collaborator, Henry W. Tate, and all were noted Christians within their communities. The Haida mission family of Amos (Gedanst) and Agnes Russ, and their son-in-law, Rev. Peter Kelly, likewise used family connections to promote Christianity. However, the best example of the significance of family, both as a mission strategy

---

24 He writes that she confessed: "I want to take hold of the hand of God. He is willing to pity me; our sins killed Jesus; but His blood saves us. I must leave all my sins, for Jesus suffered for them. We shall stand before God; we must see God's righteousness. He will give His hand to the good, but He will put the wicked away from Him." Ibid., 77.
and a story exploited in the missionary discourse as a triumph of Christian hegemony, is the history of the founding of the Methodist mission on the North Coast by the Dudoward family.

Thomas Crosby recounts with pride in several publications, the so-called "Great Revival" experienced by British Columbia's coastal Natives in the 1860s and 1870s. On British Columbia's North Coast, this event was repeatedly the result of Native family initiative. The founding of the Methodist Mission at Fort Simpson in 1874 figures prominently in the Euro-Canadian missionary discourse as an example of the role of family evangelization and the importance of the conversion of high-ranking families to the work of Christianization. In March of 1873 in Victoria, an evangelical revival occurred that led to the conversion of many First Nations from all over the province, including a number of Tsimshian, Nisga'a, Heiltsuk, and Haida people from the North Coast area. It began in a mission hall which had been converted from an old bar room. The recently converted disseminated Christian teachings rapidly. Missionary books and pamphlets are littered with references to the story of the bar-room mission and the central role played by its Native converts in spreading Christianity throughout the colony/province.

The principal figures in the typical missionary narrative about the founding of the denomination on the North Coast were the Coast Tsimshian woman, Diex or Mrs. Elizabeth Lawson, whom Rev. C. M. Tate called "the mother of Methodism among the Tsimpshean tribes," and her son Alfred Dudoward (Chief Skagwait).

On the night of her conversion she commenced to pray for her son, Alfred Dudoire [Dudoward], one of the chiefs at Port Simpson, six hundred miles north. In three weeks he arrived in Victoria in a large war canoe capable of carrying three or four tons. He was not at all pleased with the state of affairs, and set about testing the new converts, but in the operation he himself was converted, and the next morning wanted to take brother Tate in his canoe, and start home to tell his people the glad tidings of salvation. But, as Brother

---

25 Actually the term is a bit of misnomer, as it properly should be considered a "Great awakening" because it was the introduction of a Christianity to the peoples rather than a rekindling of Christian faith. Although it was "revivalistic" in form, Thomas Crosby, frequently used both terms (Great Awakening and Great Revival) in his publications. For example: "It is a remarkable fact that between the years 1839-41 a great spiritual awakening, which marvellously affected even heathen tribes, spread across the whole continent." Crosby, Among the An-ko-me-nums, 17. References to revivals, awakenings, and related phenomena are common throughout Crosby, Up and Down the North Pacific Coast by Canoe and Mission Ship (Toronto: Methodist Mission Rooms for the Missionary Society of the Methodist Church, The Young People’s Forward Movement, 1914), passim.

26 Rev. C. M. Tate, Our Missions in British Columbia (Toronto: published by the Methodist Young People's Forward Movement for Missions, Methodist Mission Rooms, [1900]), 4.
Tate could not leave the work, he advised Alfred to go himself, which he did, taking some of the new converts with him, and instead of carrying a cargo of rum, which he intended, he took Bibles and hymn-books, wherewith to carry on the work of God among his people.27

In his personal reminiscences, Tate remarked:

Can you picture a canoe load of painted savages coming to Victoria, in order to procure a thousand dollars worth of the white man's rum, wherewith to make more devilish, a projected heathen feast, and that same canoe filled with converted baptized Indian people, singing the songs of salvation, which had filled their hearts with joy and gladness, thus becoming the first missionaries to the tribes of the far north, under the auspices of the Canadian Methodist Church?28

The visual imagery Tate used recalls the marked physical and behavioural changes Euro-Canadian missionaries in general ascribed to individual converts. Just as missionary texts abound with evidence of "true conversion," they also expected (and represented in their discourse) changed attitudes, especially the "turning away" from "traditional" Native culture (i.e. "painted savages" and "devilish feasts") towards Christian behaviour (i.e. "singing songs of salvation" and with hearts "filled with joy" at "becoming missionaries").

According to Tate, the conversion of Diex and her son Alfred was the direct result of the Methodist missionaries who had conducted revival meetings in the converted bar in Victoria. Tate emphasized how he attempted to get Alfred to join his mother in services but made little headway until "he finally landed one night in the mission and was brought under conviction that his life was wrong."29 Clearly the assumption is that by converting to Christianity, Alfred changed his behaviour and had forsaken his Tsimshian obligations, such as supplying alcohol for feasting. The description of a canoe loaded with bibles instead of a "cargo of rum" was a powerful metaphor for what successful mission work could achieve. This image was echoed in at least one other narrative of the conversion of a Native catechist. Rev. G. H. Raley wrote of how Kitamaat Native Wahuksgumalayou or Charlie Amos was similarly converted on a trip to Victoria.30

27 Ibid., 4-5.
28 C. M. Tate, "Reminiscences, 1852-1933," typescript, Tate Family Collection, BCA Add. MSS. 303, Box 1, File 2, p. 11.
29 Ibid.
30 "Following the strong impulse of a heart bursting with newly conceived love, and eager to repeat the good news to his fellow-tribesmen, he determined to make the return journey to Kitamaat without delay. Instead of a cargo of whiskey in his canoes, he carried 'God's letter' [i.e. the Bible], a flag (British Ensign), and a paper signed by Mr. Pollard [a Methodist missionary], stating that Wahuksgumalayou had become a Christian, and asking anybody to
The tendency to see the missionary as some sort of nexus around which all Christian activity revolved was a central assumption in the mission literature, and indeed the subsequent historiography about missionaries. To justify their presence, to ensure their continued support, and perhaps to reinforce their own sense of purpose, the missionary sometimes downplayed Native initiative when it did not entail formal involvement by the same denomination or the Euro-Canadian worker/writer. Yes, Native converts carried the Word north, but in Tate’s narrative, this was a result of the direct efforts of Euro-Canadian missionary work in Victoria.

This pattern of self-proselytizing preceding formal denominational involvement seems to have been the rule rather than the exception on the North Coast. Missions at Port Simpson, Kitamaat, Kitkatla, and China Hat were “founded” by First Nations and several were in fact, staffed in their formative years by Native missionaries and teachers. The founding of Methodist missions on the North Coast, with its origins in a revival in Victoria, was echoed twenty years later with the entry of the Salvation Army into the region. Once again, the mission was able to get its start through enthusiasm generated by Native revivals in Victoria and Native peoples who carried the message northward. The missionaries however, preferred to see themselves as the impetus behind mission establishment, and their narratives reflect this egocentric view of the process (such as was the case for the Dudoward family’s role in establishing the mission at Port Simpson).

As with the “showdown” between Ligeex and Duncan, Native oral traditions of the event provide contrasting evidence and points of detail. More biographical information on the Tsimshian involved reveal that the “conversion” of Alfred Dudoward occurred prior to his attendance at Victoria’s bar-room services. Duncan’s own school registry for Fort Simpson in 1857 listed an Alfred Dudoire as one of his pupils. Archibald Greenaway’s graduate thesis on the Port Simpson mission gives a little more background on Katherine Dudoward, based on the whom the paper might be shown to give the bearer a kind word of encouragement.” G. H. Raley, “Wahuksgumalayou (Charlie Amos),” Missionary Outlook 17, no. 5 (May 1898): 69.

31 John Webster Grant, Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter since 1534 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 135-136.
oral history of the Dudoward family. Katherine was the daughter of a Tsimshian mother and a non-Native customs officer named Holmes, although apparently her parents parted company. Her mother was employed as a domestic servant and for a time Katherine lived in Victoria. In 1870 her mother was called back to Fort Simpson to assume the title and rank in her family, as there was no clear male heir. Katherine was left behind in the care of Roman Catholic nuns. However, her mother and the delegation who had been sent to bring her back to the North Coast were attacked en route and killed. The fourteen year old Katherine was installed as chief instead. She began teaching other Tsimshian (particularly her kinswomen and slaves) what she knew of Christianity. She married Alfred Dudoward in 1871.

Tsimshian oral history also provides some different details about the couple's eventful conversion at the Victoria revivals in 1873. Like his wife, Alfred had a mixed Native and European heritage. He, too, had lived for a while in Victoria while his mother, Elizabeth Lawson, was employed as a domestic. He assumed a chieftainship necessitating his return to the North Coast, while his mother remained in Victoria. When the couple visited the city in 1872, with their first child, Alfred's mother had already been converted to Methodism. Thus, unlike, Euro-Canadian narratives, Katherine and Alfred Dudoward clearly had been exposed to Christianity as children. Katherine in particular had already begun evangelizing on her own before and after her marriage. The couple continued to increase their familiarity with Christian teachings and with the Methodist denomination during their ten month stay in the city, before returning home to Fort Simpson in 1873 with bibles and hymnals.

Over the next year, Katherine organized and led classes in Christian instruction, in addition to conducting worship services every Sunday. However, an "urgent" invitation was sent to the Methodists to request formal missionary involvement only after a rival Tsimshian group composed of those who had converted to Anglicanism, had left to live in Metlakatla. Katherine's evangelism then sparked widespread interest. These sudden and mass conversions

---

34 Ibid., 25-26.
35 Alfred was the son of H.B.C. employee (Fort Simpson) Felix Dudoire. Galois, "Colonial Encounters," 141, n. 133.
37 Ibid., 28.
of entire communities do not come as a surprise when "traditional" Tsimshian methods of power acquisition are taken into account. The realization of one’s superhuman potential through spiritual transformation commonly belonged within the framework of lineage organization. With the exception of shamanic powers, power acquisition was controlled by house and clan traditions. As Guédon explains, “[a]mong these powers are, of course, those which are received by house ancestors, but new powers can always be added to the ones owned by the houses.38

Kate Dudoward worked for decades as an interpreter, teacher, and even preacher for the Methodist mission there. In the early years, her “traditional” position was quite influential, but regardless, she remained active in Christian organizations throughout her life. A church historian remarked that "Kate Dudoward became the official translator for numerous missionaries until at least the mid-1930’s." "The Dudowards were also sometimes sent to open or hold work in distant places. They were for a time missionaries to the Kitamaats. For most of their lives they were the anchors of the church in Port Simpson.”39 Because she was from a high-ranking family in the community, and had been designated a “chief” before she had married, she already held a socially powerful position. Her husband sat on the village council and both of them were class leaders for the weekly study meetings, in the early 1870s.

However, her status as a Christian, at least as defined by the missionary Thomas Crosby, was in doubt. Crosby removed both Kate and Alfred from the membership rolls, placed them “on-trial,” and thereby, indicated that their status as full members in the Methodist Church was being challenged. Because of this skepticism concerning their standing, Alfred lost his position as class leader. Reinstatements and removals of both their church memberships continued throughout the 1880s. For example, in 1881, a year after her husband was placed “on-trial,” the church removed Kate from her position as class leader. Alfred was eventually reinstated in 1889, but in the following year was removed once again. Likewise, Kate became a class leader once more, sometime in the late 1880s, only to lose her post in 1890. By 1892, the Methodist church

listed Alfred and Katherine Dudoward as “on trial.” Having had enough, in 1893 the Dudowards, arguably the most influential Methodist family in the village, threatened to leave the church permanently. Alfred, at least, made good on this threat and joined the Salvation Army in 1895. It is with great irony that the questioning of the Dudowards’ “official” status within the church occurred at the very height of their most active involvement in mission work. Thus, although the missionary discourse on Native Christians desired a specific code of conduct, even the most active and motivated Native Christians altered, challenged, and defied these expectations. It may also indicate, that “traditional” chiefs who became Christians could be rivals to Euro-Canadian missionaries, a position that the missionaries were not prepared to accept.

The emphases on differing roles for Elizabeth, Alfred, and Katherine in the missionary narrative and in Native oral accounts of the founding of the Methodist mission on the North Coast are illuminating. While acknowledging the contributions of a mother, the missionary narrative ultimately attributes the actual transmission of Methodist Christianity to Port Simpson to the heroic Alfred, who defies his original obligations to secure feasting supplies, bringing back “Christian faith” instead. However, the emphasis on the unified family transformation—mother, son, and wife—conforms with the mission model of the family and its function for the church. In contrast, the Native accounts attribute far greater independent action and initiative to Katherine Dudoward, both before and after her marriage to Alfred. Such breadth of activity did not conform to the wifely role the Euro-Canadian discourse ascribed to Katherine, whereas her supportive role after the establishment of an official Methodist mission in the region (i.e. translator, interpreter, class leader), was more in line with the prescribed gender model.

The ways in which other Christian Tsimshian wives, mothers, and daughters were constructed in the missionary writings also reveal a similar conceptualization of female Christians in terms of their gender and role within their family. These works present Tsimshian women as “female” archetypes rather than “Christian” ones. However, it is evident in the subtext of these same descriptions that high-ranking Tsimshian women retained “traditional” sources of power.

40Methodist Church of Canada, British Columbia Conference, Port Simpson District, Port Simpson Church Register, 1874-96, UCABC; Greenaway, “Challenge of Port Simpson,” 60, 75; and Clarence Bolt, Thomas Crosby and the Tsimshian: Small Shoes for Feet Too Large (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1992), 48.
41Bolt, Thomas Crosby, 48.
and authority (some which did not conform to Euro-Canadian notions of womanly behaviour) and in some instances, used Christianity to achieve this. In the remainder of this chapter, I will demonstrate this argument through an examination of several other prominent female converts and the Euro-Canadian discourse about them. Rather than focusing on their conversion experience, my emphasis centres on the missionary's perceptions of the results of such a transformation over a lifetime.

**Nis’akx / Martha McNeill**

One remarkable Nisga’a woman of this period, was Nis’akx (Neshaki), known more frequently in the written record by her married and Christian name, Martha McNeill. Nis’akx “belonged to the Wolf clan [Laxgibuu] group lead by the chiefs Sgat’iiin and Niskinwat’k”\(^{42}\) In the early nineteenth century, these two chiefs gained many economic and political benefits from the fur trade and emerged as important leaders in the Nass River area. Nis’akx continued this legacy, becoming a leading trader herself by the 1850s and 1860s.\(^{43}\) She married Sagawan (Sakau’wan or “Sharp Teeth”) known in English as Chief Mountain, thus forming a powerful alliance with his Eagle clan (Laxsgiik) and kin connections along the lower Nass River. This alliance was only temporary however, and there was a falling out. Nis’akx left Sagawan and married a recently widowed H.B.C. officer, Captain William Henry McNeill. Nis’akx became a Christian, baptized in 1863 and formally married McNeill in a church ceremony in 1866.\(^{44}\) Nis’akx “would have added to her power and status by her links to the new religion and her marriage to ...McNeill.”\(^{45}\) McNeill’s first wife had been a high ranking Haida named Mathilda, and Martha took the responsibility of McNeill’s children from that earlier marriage.\(^{46}\) The couple moved to Victoria,

---


\(^{43}\)“The earliest mention of Neshaki appears in the journal of Fort Simpson for 17 May 1855. The context suggests that she was already a well-known and established trader.” E. Palmer Patterson, “Neshaki: Kinfolk and Trade,” *Culture* 10, no. 2 (1990), 16.

\(^{44}\)Ibid., 16-17.

\(^{45}\)Ibid., 15.

where Nis’akx/Martha McNeill “established for herself and her family an equally prestigious position in an entirely different setting.”

What is most significant about this woman, in terms of how becoming Christian transformed the lives of Native women, is how inaccurate (or rather, omissive) the missionary perspective on Nis’akx was concerning her obligations and power in “traditional” Nisga’a society. Despite her marriage to a non-Native, her conversion to Christianity, and her removal to a residence outside her traditional territory, Nis’akx continued to wield tremendous political power and influence among her people. Her life as the wife of a retired H.B.C. Factor in Victoria may have altered her domestic situation, but she continued to amass a personal fortune, engaged in and won a battle of wealth and prestige with her former husband, and eventually assumed the leadership of the powerful Nisga’a Wolf clan. Her former husband, chief Sagawan, had been disgraced by his wife’s desertion and embarked upon a shaming competition with Nis’akx. He called her “woman of the bleached Victoria tribe” and taunted her through a feast and the gift of ten marten skins. Nis’akx responded to the challenge, with the help of her brother Niskinwatk (Neeskinwaetk), by giving Sagawan at an equally elaborate feast, a large Haida canoe decorated with her own emblem, the bear. Sagawan reportedly retaliated with another potlatch, in which he gave away a huge fortune with the aim to discredit Nis’akx among the Nisga’a and announced he had “cast her off” in a taunting song. Nis’akx would not be outdone and both returned the insult and removed her disgrace by erecting a totem pole in memory of her recently deceased brother. She hired the most talented carver of the region, Oyai, and raised the pole he had carved at a huge feast at which she took on her brother’s name and title, Niskinwatk. She thus assumed the leadership of the Wolf clan and restored her honour at Sagawan’s expense.

---

48 At the feast he had composed a special song of challenge (although the skins he sent her were actually marten, not beaver): “Wait and see what a chief can do! Wait, sweetheart, that you may learn how I have raised my head again! Wait, O flighty one, before you send me word of how you pine once more for my love! Time is now ripe, woman of the bleached Victoria tribe, for you to send me a bottle of Old Tom (whisky) [sic]. That is why I now dispatch to you this handful of beaver skins.” Marius Barbeau, Totem Poles according to Crests and Topics, Bulletin no. 119, vol. 1, Anthropological Series no. 30 (Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, n.d.), 10.
49 Ibid., 11.
50 Ibid. Barbeau found the totem pole erected by Nis’akx at Ankida (Angyadae) where it had stood some 70 years before he purchased and sold it to the Musée de l’Homme, Paris, France.
One of Nis’aax’s sisters was the mother of Dadks (also called Darcas, Dorcas, Cathrine [sic] Datacks) who married Arthur Wellington Clah, and became active as a Christian, particularly in the Salvation Army after her children were grown. Like her aunt Nis’aax, Dadks operated as a trader and a politically powerful, high ranking Nisga’a woman separate from her husband. Dadks’s choice of the Salvation Army (although baptized a Methodist) stood in contrast to her husband Clah’s close affiliation with the Methodist church for many years. The missionary idea that Christian women were docile, apolitical, or economically weak simply did not fit with women like Nis’aax or her niece. Nis’aax used Christianity and a marriage to an outsider to enhance her power and wealth, but in so doing, she did not forsake former responsibilities or alliances.

Continuity of social and spiritual roles before and after conversion was possible for some converts, but particularly for women. They did not disappear with marriages, nor did they diminish previous social responsibilities of Native women in their communities. For example, in this quotation, a Nisga’a woman’s former association with religious devotion and healing expertise did not contradict the non-Native image of the female Christian.

...But God has blessed our people, and a week ago last Sabbath I baptized a woman who was formerly a medicine woman and was the leader of those who opposed the Gospel in the village of Kitwansil [sic=KitwinsiIth]; but God’s Holy Spirit touched her heart, and she

51 Arthur Wellington Clah married Dadks or Cathrine [sic] Datacks in a Christian ceremony in April 1875; she was baptized Dorcas Wellington by Thomas Crosby on January 23, 1881. In 1891, he explained his wife’s genealogy: “3 sisters one Brother martha mcNeill and Pihin indian my wife’s mother lagh and Agh-de-poo an [sic=and] one Brother Na-nah, also my mother in law’s children first Daughter yads and Dadks my wife. an [sic=and] Needle-ky. 3 Sister. one Brother Kah-Kash....my wife’s fathers name Shaamahason. Chiefe of nass river. Kelah-tamax [sic=Gitlaxdamks].” AWCJ, Monday May 6, 1891, NAC MG40 F11 #A-1713. Clah’s journals reference these family connections throughout, but especially in regard to his frequent trips to Victoria during the 1890s (and continuing for the next decade and half), where he consulted lawyers about a portion of “Martha McNeill’s land” which his wife was to receive as an inheritance. See his many visits to Victoria on this issue: AWCJ, April 1891, 1892, Nov 1893, July 1895, April 1896, Dec 1896, Sept 1900, Feb 1902, Jan 1903, Feb 1904, Sept 1905, Dec 1906, NAC MG 40 F11 #A-1713, A-1706, A-1707, A-1708. Geographer R. M. Galois, citing as his source Susan Marsden’s extensive knowledge of Nisga’a genealogy, likewise remarked that Clah’s wife’s family were powerful in the Nass region. Dadks’ family was part of the Gitgansnat Laxgibuu (Wolf), whose leading chief was Sgat’iun. Galois, “Colonial Encounters,” 111 n. 23 and Appendix A “Clah’s family.

52 It is from this lineage, that the famous Tsimshian ethnographer, William Beynon, was descended. He inherited his wolf clan affiliation from his mother, Rebecca Wellington Beynon, (daughter of Arthur Wellington Clah and Dadks), and eventually assumed his uncle Albert Wellington’s (son of Clah and Dadks) name Gusgain.

53 Patterson notes that the Fort Simpson journal indicated in February of 1859, without the furs traded from and through Nis’aakx and her family, the intake would have been “meagre” or “none at all.” (p. 18). While Nis’aakx appears frequently in the post journals (as do her brothers), her sister Shoodahsl, and her niece’s husband Arthur Wellington Clah, were also mentioned as important fur traders. Patterson, “Neshaki.” 20.
came here and found Jesus, and now clothed and in her right mind, sits at Jesus' feet
learning of Him. We named her Katherine Derrick. Our people were greatly encouraged
when they saw this woman received into membership with the Church.\(^5^4\)

As with Katherine Derrick, another Nisga’a shaman, Nox Stabah, continued her role as healer
through her involvement with the Anglican White Cross at Aiyansh. In her examination of
Native women on the North Pacific Coast, Carol Cooper concluded “that because nursing was
considered women’s work and not within the proper sphere of activities for males, female
shamans such as Nox Stabah had more opportunities than male shamans to continue their roles
and influence as healers.”\(^5^5\) Thus, as with some chiefs, the decision to convert to Christianity
could enforce the power and influence of existing social roles, rather than diminish them.

**Nishlkumik or Sudalth/Victoria Young**

In Thomas Crosby’s sketch of “Indian characters and triumphant deaths,” he described
Tsimshian Chief Neastle-meague (Nishlkumik) and her life as a Christian convert.\(^5^6\) She is shown
photographed with him in Figure 16 with Thomas Crosby. Also known as Sudalth (“New
Woman”) and later baptized Victoria Young (Yonge), she was a high ranking woman of
considerable influence along the North Coast in the latter half of the nineteenth century.\(^5^7\) Crosby
characterized her as “a strong determined character,” “calm, dignified and deliberate, and often a
great help to the Missionary in counsel and advice among the people.”\(^5^8\) She offered her house as
the place to hold class meetings, sheltered a Japanese evangelist named Okamato, and “was a


\(^{5^5}\)Cooper, “Native Women,” 64.

\(^{5^6}\)Crosby, *Up and Down the North Coast*, 383-388.

\(^{5^7}\)Patterson identified “Shoodahsl, the wife of Clah” (who was baptized by Bishop Hills in 1863) as being “Sudalth”
and the sister of Nis’akx (Neshaki)/Martha McNeill and cites Crosby’s description of Sudalth or Victoria Young as
she became known. Patterson, “Neshaki,” 19. I disagree that Shoodahsl, Sudalth, and Victoria Young are one and
the same person. I base this assumption on the descriptions of Young which appear in Clah’s own journals. Clah
frequently mentions his wife Dadks (Darcas), the mother of his children, as being the daughter of the sister to
Nis’akx/Martha McNeill. It is unlikely that Victoria Young was related to Nis’akx, either as her sister or her
daughter, because of their different clan affiliations (Young was a Blackfish/Orca, while Nis’akx was a Wolf).
Furthermore, Clah’s descriptions of Victoria Young never referred to a kinship connection. Historical confusion over
the identities of these women may have been further complicated by the fact that both Soudal’s and Sudalth’s
(Nishlkumik/Victoria Young) had a direct connection to Chief Ligeex. Soudal was the daughter of (the second) chief
Ligeex and she married H.B.C trader John Kennedy sometime in the 1830s. Sudalth /Victoria Young was married
for a brief time to Ligeex, most likely the third chief to hold the title.

\(^{5^8}\)Crosby, *Up and Down the North Coast*, 383.
faithful attendant in the preaching of the Word and prayer.” Crosby wrote that she had no children of her own, but had adopted a number of children. He also remarked that she kept slaves, even after the mission opened. Crosby certainly casts Victoria Young in the role of caregiver and mother-like figure for the entire community:

For some years she was at the head of a visiting committee whose duty it was to find out all the sick and poor, especially in the winter, and carry them food and such things as they needed from the Mission House supplied and a poor fund provided by the people. She was generally glad, when she had the means to help in any benevolent object. When our first church was built she had no money, her donation was a musket and some furs; and, as the years passed by, she generally gave something to the Missionary cause and other Church collections.⁵⁹

Her interest in helping out church and community extended to encouragement of proselytizing for the Mission. “As the Mission work went on, she, like others, became very much interested in the well-being of the heathen tribes around and urged the young people off on trips with the Missionary to carry the Gospel to distant places.”⁶⁰ Nishlkumik/Victoria Young would later participate directly in one of these tours, when she captained the crew which took Rev. Amos Russ to the Nass River which saw the renown Chief Mountain (Sagawan) baptized.⁶¹ “On a number of times, she with other leading people addressed large congregations at our missionary meetings.”⁶² In this respect, Crosby’s discourse on Young is remarkably akin to his representations of the contributions of her male counterparts.

Yet Crosby was cautious to cast Young within the limits of female gender roles as defined by Euro-Canadian society. He described her “motherly advice” and “dignified way” of making her opinions known, even within the non-feminine forum of the Village council: “Her good sensible advice was like the casting of oil on troubled waters. Being a woman she did not always sit in council, although, on account of being chief, she was often requested to do so.”⁶³ However, Crosby noted that Victoria Young only actively participated on the village council when there

⁵⁹Ibid., 386.
⁶⁰Ibid., 384.
⁶¹Ibid., 384-385.
⁶²Ibid., 386.
⁶³Ibid., 385.
was a tie vote.\textsuperscript{64} He seems to have viewed her as a matriarchal figure who made her opinions known through persuasion and influence rather than confrontation and activism. Perhaps Crosby was uncertain of how to describe behaviour, which from his Euro-Canadian perspective did not fit the feminine model which ignored the formal exercise of political power by women.

It is, however, quite clear that Nishlkumik/Victoria Young had wielded considerable political power long before her conversion to Christianity. Indeed, she had participated in the "politics" of her community for decades before Crosby's arrival. She married Chief Ligeex, but their alliance was brief and she did not marry again.\textsuperscript{65} Her adoption of two children may be interpreted as a means of fulfilling her clan and house obligations and assuring that her name Nishlkumik was passed on. Adoption was a common practice to address inheritance of titles without appropriate blood heirs and Nishlkumik/Victoria Young followed this custom. Her adopted son was, in fact, her brother's son, therefore a blood relation but not of the same clan. While she was a Blackfish (Gispwudwada), her adopted son was a Wolf (Laxgibuu) and he eventually assumed the name of Nishlkumik, thereby letting the name pass out of the hereditary lineage and into a line of men adopted into the lineage. She also adopted a girl who was reportedly a distant blood relation, and from yet another clan, Eagle (Laxsgiik). This daughter's son would inherit the name Nishlkumik from his uncle, which would take the name into an Eagle matriline.\textsuperscript{66}

Furthermore, Nishlkumik/Victorian Young defied convention in other matters. This woman may have been an extraordinary chief in ways that transcended gendered boundaries. For example, Cooper noted that it was not unusual for high-ranking Nisga'a and Tsimshian women to participate in warfare, although few engaged in battle. Victoria Young was the exception and "despite taboos upon the use of weaponry, Nishlkumik employed guns and knives in a struggle with another Tsimshian group in the 1850s."\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{64}ibid. Loraine Littlefield remarked upon this reference as being exemplary of how missionaries tended to explain actions of women when they contradicted the image of passive victim they conceived applied to Native women. See Littlefield, "Images of Native Women," 14.

\textsuperscript{65}Viola E. Garfield, \textit{Tsimshian Clan and Society}, University of Washington Publications in Anthropology 7, no 3 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, Feb 1939), 188.

\textsuperscript{66}ibid., 188-189.

\textsuperscript{67}Cooper, "Native Women," 49. See also Crosby, \textit{Up and Down the North Coast}, 384.
Her political power after her conversion is much more apparent in observations made in Clah’s journals. Clah identified Victoria Young as one of the four elders who voted against Crosby’s participation in a foundation-laying service for the Salvation Army. 68 Clah later designated her one of the “head chiefs” (along with another woman, Martha Ligeex) approached by William Henry Pierce to aid in the collection of money from the community to finish the inside of the Methodist church. 69 Undoubtedly this woman had considerable say in local church affairs. But Clah also remarked on her guidance in more “traditionally” Tsimshian matters. For example, he recorded one instance of a meeting with two “chief women,” Victoria Young and Elizabeth Theks, when Young recounted the Tsimshian flood story for him. 70 Victoria Young died in 1898 in Port Simpson (Clquah Callams), and by 1901, the community had raised a stone grave-marker in her memory. 71

Ligeex’s Daughters: Soudal/Mrs. Kennedy and Sarah Ligeex

If Native wives and mothers had diverse roles after Christianization, so, too, did daughters. As previously mentioned, the prominence of the Tsimshian chiefs who successively held the name Ligeex was considerable in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was during this time that the second chief to hold this name established a monopoly of trade for himself and his Eagle clan, all along the Lower Skeena River and control of virtually all trade with the H.B.C. The latter “was accomplished through the marriage in 1832 of the second Chief Ligeex’s daughter to Dr. John Frederick Kennedy of the H.B.C.” 72 Soudal (Shoudal) continued to host potlatches after her marriage to Kennedy, including one in memory of her brother in 1841, which was noted in the H.B.C. Fort Simpson journal. 73 These feasts functioned to maintain her social rank as well as demonstrating the hostess’s wealth, honour, and generosity. “Madame

68 AWCJ, Thursday November 30, 1893, NAC MG40 F11 #A-1706.
69 AWCJ, October 25, 1894, NAC MG40 F11 #A-1706.
70 Clah goes on to remark how after the discussion of the flood story, “Elesebeth Theks” preached about how the twelve tribes of Israel had two chiefs, apparently drawing a parallel between Tsimshian and biblical history. AWCJ, Sunday July 10, 1898, NAC MG40 F11 #A-1707.
71 AWCJ, Saturday August 13, 1898 and Saturday December 1, 1901, NAC MG40 F11 #A-1707.
73 Fort Simpson (Nass) Journal, 29 Nov. 1841, HBCA B201/a.5; cited in Cooper, “Native Women,” 50.
Arthur, another Tsimshian woman of high rank, conducted such a feast in opposition to Soudal’s potlatch in 1841.\textsuperscript{74} As the wife of a H.B.C. factor, Soudal must have received at least some exposure to Christian teachings, although it is uncertain to what exact degree she may have been responsible in disseminating such teachings. Like Nis’akx, Soudal/Mrs. Kennedy was able to maintain a certain level of “traditional” power and authority as a result of her social position within Tsimshian society. But she also wielded new sources of power and influence through her marriage to a non-Native trader.

Another of Ligeex’s daughters wielded a similar socially powerful position because of alliances made between “traditional” and Christian Tsimshian worlds. The incident in 1858 in which (the third Tsimshian) Ligeex threatened Duncan’s life in the schoolhouse, was not only a power struggle over who had greater authority in the village, but also had to do with this (Paul) Ligeex’s daughter and her initiation into the \textit{Nulim} (“Dog-eater”) society. “The girl was secreted away for many days during her initiation and then returned in an elaborate and costly display in order to demonstrate her newly-gained spirit ‘power’.\textsuperscript{75} This young girl also added Christianity to her other sacred powers, when she was baptized Sarah Legaie (sic).\textsuperscript{76} Descriptions of young Sarah by Euro-Canadian missionaries cast her in the “reformed Native” role, as well as being an intelligent and promising catechist-pupil. The Anglican Bishop described an adolescent Sarah Ligeex as “one of the most promising girls of the Mission-house,” while Rev. R. Dundas describe the fourteen year old as “a modest-looking, pleasing child, very intelligent” and “one of the first class in the school.”\textsuperscript{77} Dundas goes on to allude to the incident between her father and Duncan, writing: “She did not look like one who had been ‘possessed by the devil’; and yet this is the child whom three years ago her teacher saw naked in the midst of a howling band, tearing and devouring a bleeding dog. How changed! She who ‘had the unclean spirit sits now at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in her right mind.’”\textsuperscript{78} Note Dundas’s references to Sarah Ligeex’s change in appearance (from nakedness to clothed) as well in spirit (from unclean to one who was “in her

\textsuperscript{74}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{75}Ibid., 51.
\textsuperscript{76}William Duncan, Journal, 20 November 1858, CMSP C.2/App. C. #A-105.
\textsuperscript{77}Wellcome, \textit{Story of Metlakathla}, 71, 72.
\textsuperscript{78}Ibid., p. 72.
right mind,” presumably because she had become a Christian), typical of the Euro-Canadian
generic description of Native converts.

As daughter of the most powerful chief of the Tsimshian and then as one of the most
influential of Duncan’s converts, Sarah Ligeex played a significant role in mission life at
Metlakatla as she grew into adulthood. In the late 1870s, she assisted in the school and translated
hymns into the Sm'algyax (Coast Tsimshian language). In 1897, she was a captain in the
Anglican Church Army. She had a practical approach to Christianity. For example, Arthur
Wellington Clah described an incident in which he almost drowned. He spent the night
recovering at Sarah’s house, although there had been much discussion between Sarah and her
mother over concerns that because a “sickness” was raging at the time in Port Simpson where
Clah had just come, it might not be safe to allow him lodging. Clah reasoned that faith in Jesus
would afford all the protection they might need. Sarah replied that was not the primary role she
envisioned the Christian God providing: “Our God not sent his son to take away sickness.”
Sarah Ligeex was influential enough a chief to be considered by the tribal elders as one possible
person to assume the name Ligeex and the title of head chief of the Gispaxlo’ots tribe. Thus, as
with the previous account, it would seem that some Native women retained much of their
political power despite the influence of missions and churches in their respective communities,
and their accommodations to these.

Conclusion

Clearly, the Euro-Canadian discourse conceptualized Native mission workers in diverse
ways. It portrayed many Tsimshian converts as players in the larger game of cultural imperialism
and Christian invasion. This perspective cast them as “savages” saved through Christ, who threw
off their “dark” pasts and underwent a profound transformation in respect to their spirit,
behaviour and appearance. Invariably, the missionaries won their showdowns with the shamans;

Papers [hereafter cited as CMSP], C.1./L.4:1875-1879, #A-106.
80 AWCJ, Friday February 5, 1897. NAC MG40 F11 #A-1707.
81 AWCJ, Wednesday February 5, 1896. NAC MG40 F11 #A-1706.
82 AWCJ, Friday November 28, and Wednesday December 24, 1902. NAC MG40 F11 #A-1708.
Native Christians persevered amidst hostilities; and in the end, they “died well.” The discourse reveals significant differences in perceptions of Native men and women. While there was a heroic formula to portraits of male mission workers, female Tsimshian converts and catechists appeared primarily as representatives of Christian women. This is not to say there was a shortage of historical praise for individual catechists and evangelists who became missionaries in their own rights. Philip McKay, Paul Ligeex, Arthur Wellington Clah, the Dudowards, Victoria Young, or Sarah Ligeex were much more than generic characterizations. Their biographies attest to the necessary and valuable contributions made to mission work by Native individuals as active participants, rather than merely as objects of missionary agendas.

Individually, both Tsimshian men and women diverged from the missionary typology. Were they resisting Christian hegemony? Perhaps this old question is the wrong one to ask. As Clara Sue Kidwell remarked, “[t]he very regimentation of action by missionaries may allow any behaviour that deviated from missionary norms to be read as resistance in contemporary, post-colonialist discourse.” Moreover, the resistance model does not consider the extent to which Christianity gave the Tsimshian new mechanisms to deal with outsiders. As my study demonstrates, encounters with Christianity were more about acceptance and creativity, whereby Tsimshian converts incorporated “traditional” and Christian beliefs and practices into their daily lives. Indeed, the idea of “proselytizing from within,” with its incumbent discourse of hegemony and gender, was not the only means to conceptualize Tsimshian Christianization. Native converts themselves had a perspective on what it meant to be Christian and what meaning they ascribed to their own conversions. These mission workers also left a written discourse on conversion to Christianity and the process of missionization that, in some respects, both echoed and inverted the dominant missionary dialogue.

Chapter 6. The Self-Reflections of Arthur Wellington Clah

MOSES NEAS-NOW-AH, (Chief)—"I wish to tell the people how happy I am—how I thank God for the light that has come to Fort Simpson. It looks like this to me—there are two mountains, one little one and one big one—not much sun on the little one, for it is hidden from the sun by the big one, but not much snow on the big one, for the sun takes it all away. That seems like us; a long time ago it was very dark and cold, but now see what God has done; it seems to me that all light now, and all the frost and darkness are going."\(^1\)

Missionary discourse was fluid; for nineteenth century Native missionaries this was especially true, as their perceptions on what it meant to be Christian were shifting ones. Euro-Canadian missionaries portrayed Christianization as a profound transformation of the self, manifested both inwardly and outwardly. From this perspective, it was through this change in individuals, or so they hoped, that a subsequent collective change in Native society would occur, encouraged and nurtured by the mission environment. But how did Native Christians view their own conversions? How did they record this transformation?

The Tsimshian concept of personhood was a complex intermingling of house, crest, and privilege.\(^2\) Transformations engaging human and non-human dimensions and powers in "traditional" culture was routine, conventional, and even expected. Tsimshian self-identities as Christians were shaped by these culturally embedded concepts of transformation. Yet, Christianity was almost always defined by Euro-Canadians as a rejection of the past and a new power that would supersede the old. Hence, several Native Christians adopted aspects of the dominant missionary discourse. However, this was not an unquestioned acceptance of a pre-packaged Christianity. Tsimshian Christians often inverted the images and metaphors of this hegemonic script, using it to critique the very missionaries who used it and the missionization process, itself. Consequently, the Native discourse on Christianity was a complex dialogue. I argue that the Native discourse on conversion, particularly by Native missionaries themselves, draws on both indigenous and Christian roots.

---


\(^2\) A central theme throughout John Cove, Shattered Images: Dialogues and Meditations on Tsimshian Narratives (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1987); and Jay Miller, Tsimshian Culture: A Light Through the Ages (Lincoln and London: Nebraska University Press, 1997).
Conversion to Christianity on the North Pacific Coast was an engagement in which participants from two diverse cultural worlds brought different understandings to the encounter. Here, I explore the role Native missionaries assumed in the struggle Jo-Anne Fiske calls the “im/moral frontier.” This intentionally ambiguous term perfectly captures the meaning of morality in colonial frontier environments as simultaneously an imposed and a negotiated process. Indeed, as Fiske suggests, often what was moral for colonizers was immoral for the objects of their attention. Non-Native missionaries undertook Christianization of First Nations along the North Pacific Coast not only for the salvation of souls, but also as part of a larger process of Westernization. Both objectives were genuine. In effect, missions facilitated an invasion—political, economic, cultural and metaphysical—or what some scholars refer to as “the invasion of the heart.” But is this how Native Christians viewed it when they wrote of their people being “all light now, and all the frost and darkness are going”?

If Christian conversion was a “turning,” characterized by spiritual and moral changes in an individual’s voluntarily recognition of a sinful life now changed because of God, at the personal level, and for those Protestant denominations heavily influenced by evangelicalism, conversion was often a sudden and profound transformation resulting in nothing less than a rebirth. In the context of colonialism, conversion was the first of a series of goals missionaries sought through their work. In fact, the secular associations of Christianity with European and Euro-Canadian society was also part of its appeal. The material benefits of the Christian village with its new political, economic and cultural structures convinced many Tsimshian to “convert.” It would be, however, erroneous to dismiss the theological beliefs of missionaries. While

---

3 Jo-Anne Fiske makes a salient comment about the nature of this particular colonial frontier: “[I]t is necessary to understand the colonial frontier as the continuing encounter of moral strangers, the continuing saga of moral clashes and contests that expose the immorality of the colonizer and the struggles of the colonized to assert a new moral accountability.” Jo-Anne Fiske, “Pocahontas’s Granddaughters: Spiritual Transition and the Tradition of Carrier Women of British Columbia,” *Ethnohistory* 43, no. 4 (Fall 1996): 664-665.

4 The “invasion of the heart” is a powerful metaphor for conversion itself: “Although the story of the invasion of the Americas was not new [in the mid-nineteenth century], it assumed many forms. Some were clean and swift, like a knife. Others were subtle, even exquisite, in the masking of their mode of destruction. The most profound was the most intimate: the invasion of the heart.” Jacqueline Peterson, *Sacred Encounters: Father De Smet and the Indians of the Rocky Mountain West*, with Laura Peers (Norman: The De Smet Project, Washington State University in association with the University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 22.

documentary and oral evidence of the material appeal of Christianity, as well as support for the external changes accompanying internal spiritual transformations, abound, many Native texts reveal a genuine spiritual fascination with evangelical Christianity. Appealing to the heart rather than the head, evangelical conversion was an emotional turning "from dark to light," as the widespread mission metaphor described it.

The Light (goypah, goypax), a transformative power associated with well being, life, potency, and Heaven, was one concept where Tsimshian and Christian cultures found common ground; transformation was another. For the Tsimshian, the method of receiving spiritual power through an experiential transformation was not a new idea, as I have previously shown. However, the notion of a Christian identity as something that separated one from the larger Tsimshian society (a turning from the "old ways") was a very new and difficult one for converts, and one which Native Christians often grappled with in their writings. In Tsimshian culture, an individual's identity was not so much one of "self," as one of belonging and assuming a specific place and role within their social group and community. "For the Tsimshian," writes Jay Miller, "human descendants circulated through a series of fixed identities," recorded in sacred house histories where "people, events, and places were interlinked through successive reincarnations within a household." Briefly in review, all of the social categories identified in John Cove's study on the nature of Tsimshian concepts of humanness were perpetuated through the transformations of individuals. Totemic aspects of Tsimshian culture were manifested through crests (p'teex), which were "filled" or given form by individuals when they assumed names, wealth, and performed the rituals and responsibilities within the matrilineal group. Shamanic transformations occurred when individuals came into contact with and were themselves altered by superhuman powers and wonders (naxnox). Shamans then became intermediaries between varieties of beings and species. Lastly, the form of Tsimshian culture which Cove labeled as privilege was connected to chiefs who had been made halait through initiation into the secret

---

7 Jay Miller, Tsimshian Culture, 129.
8 John Cove, Shattered Images, chapters 2, 3 and 4, passim.
societies (*wutahalait*). The human form was common to all Tsimshian. But some individuals were
thought to be capable of being transformed into more-than-human—becoming "real people" or
essentially superhuman—through the addition of souls, names, crests, wonders (*naxnox*) and
powers. Initiated chiefly nobles were the most "real" of all because only royalty could be initiated
into all the secret orders. Clearly, a Christian identity was understood by a Tsimshian
individual without abandoning prior definitions of humanness.

Selections from Native autobiographical accounts on missions and missionization allow
me to explore Native perspectives on Christian conversion. What is most apparent is that many
of these Native missionaries occupied a liminal state—historical agents straddling two cultures.
Their dialogues on their own "inbetweenness" are not always easy to decipher, because the texts
they produced were truly heteroglossic—rife with understandings and representations of voices
both Native and missionary.

Two prominent themes arise from an analysis of these selected Native writings. The first
focuses on the Christian and indigenous discussions of transformation that permeate these texts.
On the one hand, the Native discourse on Christianity illustrates not mimicry of Euro-Canadian
models, but genuine evangelical understanding. Many of the metaphors and archetypes utilized
by Tsimshian Christians conform to the general typologies identified by David Murray in his
research on Native autobiographies. On the other hand, the Native discussion on Christianity is
not exclusively evangelical. There is also a discernible indigenous discourse on conversion that
draws strongly on conventional Tsimshian understandings of transformative experiences.

The second theme, which structures this chapter and the next, concentrates on the
different kinds of "inbetweenness" revealed in the lives and words of Native missionaries. At
one end of the spectrum are voluntary evangelists like Arthur Wellington Clah, the focus of this
chapter. While attached to the Anglican and Methodist missions and intimately connected to
Euro-Canadian missionaries like William Duncan and Thomas Crosby, Clah was a missionary
outside "official" circles for most of his life. His bridging of "traditional" and "Christian" cultures

---

9 Jay Miller, *Tsimshian Culture*, 130.
10 David Murray, *Forked Tongues: Speech, Writing, and Representation in Native American Texts* (London: Pinter
Publishers, 1991), passim.
was frequently self-directed. Through his writings there is evidence of both indigenous and evangelical understandings of what it meant to be a Christian. His indignation at the failure of missions to adhere to his expectations and his criticisms of the limits placed upon his spiritual expression reflect the im/moral frontier at work. After my discussion of Clah, the following chapter contains a brief examination of other Native evangelists like him, and a short exploration of Tsimshian interpreters. On a certain level, interpreters are emblematic of the process of "translation" (literally and figuratively) that worked to alter both indigenous and Christianity forms during missionization. At the other end of the range of "inbetweenness" are those Tsimshian missionaries who operated as part of official mission structures, usually as paid employees. William Henry Pierce, David Leask, and George Edgar were men of mixed Native-European backgrounds but raised in "traditional" Tsimshian societies, these individuals create a compelling example of those who worked "within" the mission system. The use of both evangelical and indigenous expressions to describe Christian conversion span the entire "outside-inside" spectrum, demonstrating the "inbetweenness" of Native missionaries.

Confessions of a Tsimshian Evangelist: Clah's Journals

Native catechists and converts left behind tantalizing glimpses on conversion and what Christianity itself, meant to them. Some Native evangelists were unofficial and unpaid, and wrote of their own work as a sense of moral obligation, Christian duty, sanctioned only by their personal devotion and depth of faith. Others, dubbed "official" in the eyes of the mission societies who paid their salaries, wrote like missionaries, and described how the "foundation of darkness has been shaking [sic] up by God's mighty power," and the process by which their people were converted as a virtual triumph of Christian colonialism. "Our people," wrote the Native mission worker at Kispiox in 1888, "...are eating the angels' food, even the Word of Life. Two of the head chiefs of this tribe are willing that their people should forsake their evil ways and

---

11For a discussion of translation as a form of transcultural communication see James Clifford, Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).
walk in the new living way." These multi-faceted texts produced by Native Christians enrich our knowledge of the historical changes taking place during early missionization and what role within those changes Native evangelists envisioned for themselves.

Arthur Wellington Clah was a unique man who reflected upon what it meant to be both a Tsimshian and a Christian in nearly fifty years of journal keeping. For most of life, his contributions to the dissemination of evangelical Christianity was done on a voluntary basis. His journals were a private record, allowing him the ability to reflect upon Christianization from within. Yet, it also placed him in a position that enabled him to critique the process. He remained inbetween "traditional" and colonial societies. Despite being Duncan's language instructor and his early convert to Anglicanism, Clah demonstrated an independent mind from the outset. He never moved to Metlakatla, but stayed at Port Simpson and became associated with Methodism by the early 1870s. When Clah began to preach Sunday services on his own, and travel around during the week holding services and study sessions, his old friend Duncan became quite concerned:

...to day preaching walkd round the places to teaching what Gods words on the bible also News Come up yesterday [from Metlakatla] to Say [William] Duncan laugh at me Because I Teach the people in truth. I making to understan how to Prayer and to Thank God for god looking upon us He gaves us all We want. Some News Said to me If I got licence alright I can preach the people Now I think his Uttie mistake God gave the Licence in our hearts he gaves us One Soul in our hearts to Teach us to love Him an to know him with all our hearts and Keep his commandments Jesus Teach us how to Prayer and how to thank God. He teach us everything.

Clah's comments illustrate both a kind of Native initiative and evangelical understanding of Christianity, but also the typical reaction such perceptions provoked in non-Native missionaries. When challenged by Duncan's opinion that formal training and official sanction were necessary before Clah would be "licensed" to preach to his fellow Tsimshian, Clah replied that his license

\[13\]bid.

\[14\]AWCJ, Sunday January 18, 1874, NAC MG 40 F11 #A-1711. The excerpts taken from Arthur Wellington Clah's journals have not been edited, unless the meaning of the misspelled word is not apparent. Clah's first language was Tsimshian and the journal he kept for nearly 50 years was his attempt to improve his writing and communication skills in English. Despite his attempts, Clah's Euro-Canadian education was limited and his use of written English very poor. His grammar is awkward, his capitalization and punctuation erratic, and his spelling of words, unique. As language is central to understanding the Native discourse on missions and Christianity, I feel it is important to keep all the Native written sources in forms as close to their originals, whenever possible. I have chosen, therefore, to leave these journal entries in their original form. However, as the quality of both the handwriting and preservation of the paper on which it was written is poor, I apologize for any words I may have unintentionally misinterpreted.
had been granted directly by God. For him there was no need for a church-sanctioned license to preach; he did not need to be told by any church official how he was supposed to deal with this faith or how to express it.

Clah's thinking on this aspect of Christianity was best exemplified in his daily prayer, hymn singing, and his frequent preaching. Christianity became part of his daily routine, one that extended well beyond the spatial confines of the church and mission, and certainly outside the influence of "official" missionaries. Arthur Wellington Clah was a missionary in his own right and a devoted Christian. Crosby noted the man's zeal in 1875, transcribing this confessional-style speech by Clah. The imagery Clah used invokes both indigenous and Christian themes: tracks in the snow as a metaphor for his search for God; and references to his spiritual transformation in terms of new way of seeing:

God knows my heart. About three years ago I heard about God; then I travelled about five hundred miles to find Jesus. Another year I went North again, and when I came back I found just what I wished. It was as when the snow comes down from heaven; I saw a track and did not know what it was—now I find it was Jesus. I say now, to all my friends, "Come." If I am in a great storm I know it cannot hurt me. And now I do thank God that he has sent the Missionary, and I thank the good people of Canada for their help. I pray much that I may see the house of God put up. Long ago I was blind, and now God has opened my eyes. I hope the good people of Canada will still pray for us, for we are very dark; 

Catechisms or baptismal examinations were designed to prompt confessional responses and denunciation, especially of non-Christian practices. This confessional/denunciatory model was embraced by Native converts in their own written works as a way of expressing their depth of faith. For Clah, that measure was to found in his constant search for Jesus, paralleled by his own evangelist travels to find enlightenment. As Margaret Seguin Anderson and Tammy

---

15Geographer Robert Galois graphed Clah's seasonal occupational routines over the course of two years. Because he was interested in primarily economic occupations, I believe the figure underrepresents Clah's evangelism, although in his discussion, Galois does specify that Clah's devotion to Christianity was a characteristic that permeated all aspects of daily life. R. M. Galois, "Colonial Encounters: The Worlds of Arthur Wellington Clah, 1855-1881," BC Studies nos. 115/116 (Autumn/Winter 1997/98): Figures 2 and 3, pp. 130-131.
16Clah, Speech recorded in Thomas Crosby, "Letter dated Fort Simpson, B.C., January 20, 1875," Missionary Notices of the Methodist Church of Canada 3d series, no. 2 (April 1875): 38. It is possible that this quotation is by another man called Clah, Philip McKay, but in spirit, it is certainly in keeping with either man's expressed beliefs.
17T. O. Beidelman, Colonial Evangelism: A Socio-Historical Study of an East-African Mission at the Grassroots (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 104-105. Of course, when Native Christians addressed non-Natives, did they have any other choice than to frame their transformation as a denunciation of their past lives if they wanted to be considered "true" Christians?
Anderson Blumhagen have noted, "neither the 'confessional' nor 'expose' genres are indigenous to Tsimshian public discourse (though they are probably as widely practiced privately among the Tsimshian as anywhere else)." While there was no apparent tradition of public confession among pre-Christian Tsimshian, it was very common to recount and even recreate transformative experiences. Clah's metaphor of tracking Jesus and encountering a physical presence of him is reminiscent of "traditional" Tsimshian narratives of encounters with non-humans or wonders, during solitary vision quests.

Scholars have examined the relationship between public confession and religious enthusiasm in the larger mission context, but may have under-emphasized a similar association in written discourses at the individual level. For example, David Murray, analyzing the rhetorical expression of confessional modes of writing as they appeared in Native autobiographies, connected this kind of expression to the much broader context of imbalanced power relationships endemic to colonial missionization of First Nations. Murray pursues the complex relation between self-expression in Native autobiographies, freedom, and power. For Michel Foucault, confession is an expression of social power relations and "a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession..." In Protestant Christianity, in particular, confession is an important recognition of the social self (publicly proclaiming one's Christianity) or the personal self (privately praying before God). Even the power of the minister or preacher conformed to his or her ability to remain a supplicant before self, congregation, and God.

In a way, Clah's journal itself was a confessional history. Especially later in life, Clah increasingly defined his purpose behind his daily entries in terms of the recording of history, but a history that was one of moral and spiritual "evolution" for his people. Each new booklet was

---

19 David Murray, Forked Tongues, 48-53.
inscribed with a brief description of Clah’s sense of a history of profound change on the North Coast. In journals from the late 1890s and early 1900s, he even included rather lengthy headers for each separate page, with similar confessional gloss. These descriptions recurring throughout his journals reiterate the paramount significance he allotted to, as Clah termed it, the “conversion of the old and new peoples”:

all the Names reported an Sealed for I always keeping truth...I reported of New and old people. Old people and New. the same trouble. Red an black and whit trouble the same. no peace. no truth. that make our great God angry. every days and every year in all our life. We never See him But he Sees us every day an night. Jesus Christ with us every days and every night. But we don t know Him. Jesus give us all we want But we never thank the Father and the Son and the Holy ghost. amen. Bless the lord that make us good every day. this writen for our life reported by Arthur Wellington Clah. his the first man to learning about our great God and about our Saviour Jesus Christ and the Holy ghost. Amen. Bless the lord.21

Literacy was a mark of “civilization” to many Canadians in the late-Victorian period. Clah’s objective of locating where the Tsimshian were in time suggests historical consciousness. As Robert Galois describes, “Clah’s position at the intersection of Tsimshian, fort, and missionary worlds” gave him a perspective on how Christianity influenced and contributed to that change;22 his journals are unique for their vantage point because of when and where this Tsimshian Christian stood.

What was the meaning of conversion to Clah? How did he express Christianity and being Christian? Unlike many missionary records, which may chronicle the daily operations of the mission but include little of the missionary’s personal thoughts on religion, Clah’s journals reveal that he frequently reflected on theological matters and how they affected his people. Throughout his writings, Clah often uses the metaphor of the heart to describe one’s spiritual affiliation. Giving one’s heart to Jesus Christ was conversion to Christianity. In the typical missionary rhetoric, conversion was literally “turning” towards God and away from the old ways of sin:

...some the houses were played last night. some Dancing some Play like old people. Now I think myself is not right to Play like old persons. Because We promise Before God to Leave all Bad ways. and We wants to Be a good We all promise. Before Jesus Christ to take away all our Sins and asks Him to clearm [sic=clean] our hearts and We give our

21 AWCJ, Cover page for booklet: May 1 1897-Jan 1 1898, NAC MG 40 F11 # A-1707.
22 Galois, “Colonial Encounters,” 139-140.
hearts to Him and He will take care of us when We Die and We all live in good place and Be happy for ever.\textsuperscript{23}

Clah thus described conversion to Christianity in seemingly Euro-Canadian terms, employing the image of a dark and heavy heart to represent non-Christian Tsimshian spirituality and a light heart, both in weight and in illumination, to describe one's Christian conviction.\textsuperscript{24}

While preaching God's words, he frequently described the "light of God," as a physically, as well as symbolic force—a "[g]reat light came down from heaven."\textsuperscript{25} Clah's fascinating entry for December 30, 1886 utilizes the light/heavy heart imagery, as well as biblical references:

...I walk round the houses to ask who wants Be Christian are who want take Jesus Name or who want be Baptized Because some friends were Believe Gods Commandments, but they hearts Very heavy. some friends heart weigh 10 or some 20 lb. some weigh 30 pound some hundred pound. I remeber when the flood was Drown everybody round the world they all Drown Because there hearts Very heavy. noah an all his family there hearts Very light. Because Noah and all his family Believe Gods commandments. they went into the ark. the great God Save them lifes flooding in the ark. But all the heavy heart Drown. why Sodom and Gommoragh not run away when them 2 Big places Burn up. why the friends not run fast. Because they hearts Very heavy weigh hundred lb. some weight 50 pound. why lot and all his family run Very fast. Because they hearts Very light. why Because Believe Gods Commandments. why lots wife running ways few miles and she tight she look Back. Because she had 50 pound in her heart. she Break Gods commandments the great God make here [sic=her] shame. lot he had no power to tell almighty God to not make Salt his wife. Becuse God had power Himself to makes anyone shame who break his law and shame for ever. there were good meting that night. Jesus Bless set our meeting.\textsuperscript{26}

The dark/light imagery is especially common to Euro-Canadian mythology and Christian theology, while the emphasis on weight in association to "traditional" culture recalls the Tsimshian concept of filling the waab (house) with wealth, names, and property.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{23}AWCJ, Saturday January 2 1875, NAC MG 40 F11 #A-1711. The image of the "clean heart" is common to the missionary rhetoric or simply may be a biblical reference, for example: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then I will teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted" Psalms 51:10-13.

\textsuperscript{24}Clah was not alone in his use of heart imagery. For example, E. Palmer Patterson described the work of Nisga'a Chief Abraham Wright, who was "a leader of a group of Aiyansh native missionaries, called 'strong hearts', who conducted services at the mouth of the Nass fishery each spring, and marched to nearby Gitlakdamiks from Aiyansh on Sundays to hold open-air services there." Palmer Patterson, "Native Missionaries of the North Pacific Coast: Philip McKay and Others," \textit{Pacific Historian} 30, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 27.

\textsuperscript{25}"Great light came down from heaven. Pray to Jesus... He is the only King of all kings. In this world. He came down from Heaven to Save Sinners. Help the pline [sic=blind] and the poor. Help the Sick healed and raised the death shed His Blood in our Dark hearts and cleanse us from our Sins and for ever He Commanded us to love one another." AWCJ, Sunday January 3, Tuesday January 5, and Sunday January 10, 1875, NAC MG40 F11 #A-1711.

\textsuperscript{26}AWCJ, Thursday December 30, 1886, NAC MG40 F11 #A-1714.

\textsuperscript{27}The container motif in connection to Tsimshian culture is also discussed in further detail in chapters 9 and 10.
This use of light and dark symbolism is very typical of colonial missionary rhetoric. The light of the Lord, literally blinding its converts, is the basis of the prototype for Christian conversion: Saul's (St. Paul) transformation on the road to Damascus. But Clah's passage is not merely derivative or imitative of Christian culture, because there are also associations of light and whiteness with otherworldliness in Tsimshian cosmology. Tsimshian and Nisga'a missionaries may have been assisted in their proselytization efforts by indigenous traditions that identified the Nass River as the home of the Chief of Heaven (the Chief of the Sky). Light itself, was brought into the world by Raven, stolen from the Chief of Heaven, and therefore, was first released in the home territories of Tsimshianic-speaking peoples. Blindness and seeing were also key metaphors prevalent throughout pre-Christian Tsimshian culture, manifested in both mythic narratives and material culture.

Clah's use of the dual images of mass destruction—the Flood story and the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, both from Genesis—are notable, as they are instances of God's wrath exercised to an extreme because of humankind's sinful ways. This may reflect Clah's concerns over the historical realities of First Nations in the late nineteenth century, caught in massive upheaval of change, with many negative results for Natives. The Tsimshian also had a Flood tale in their mythology, which like the biblical flood, destroyed most of the population. Survivors were then responsible for populating different tribal areas. Ironically, Clah alters his version of "the Raven brings light story," through his Christian beliefs. Rather than associating Raven with Christ (bringer of Light), he represents him almost entirely as trickster figure and so he replaces the Tsimshian culture hero Tkamshim (Txamsen or Raven) with Satan. Christ was decidedly not a trickster figure, although within the Native context he was associated with the gifts bestowed upon the Tsimshian peoples: candlefish or eulachon (haalmmoot) in the Tsimshian.

28 The biblical passage described Saul on the road to Damascus where “suddenly there shined round him a light from heaven,” and he was struck down blind. After receiving the message from God, that he was his “chosen vessel,” and “straight away he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.” Acts IX:3-20.
29 Patterson, "Native Missionaries," 25.
31 Arthur Wellington Clah, “Reminiscences of Arthur Wellington Clah of the Tsimpshean Indian Nation including tribal legends of the time before the Flood, and the coming of the white men, and other Indian lore, etc.,” Typescript [microfilmed with his journals], 4, NAC MG40 F11 #1709; see also Ralph Maud, ed., The Porcupine Hunter and Other Stories: The Original Tsimshian Texts of Henry Tate (Vancouver: Talon Books, 1993), 95-103.
32 Clah, “Reminiscences of Tsimpshean Nation,” 2-3, NAC MG40 F11 #1709.
language means “saviour,” and this same word was later applied to Jesus Christ. It is tempting to interpret Clah’s quotation as metaphor for the historical situation: a past left behind, replaced by something new—the “new peoples.”

In the Christian context, negativity was akin to weight and one’s heart was made heavy by sin. However, “traditional” Tsimshian culture itself used metaphors of “containedness.” Houses (waab) were filled or made heavy through food, wealth and “real” people. Clah’s comments about his neighbours possessing heavy hearts may be a direct reference to their adherence to “traditional” Tsimshian culture and beliefs. Consequently, having a light heart was akin to being generous and referred to the process of emptying the house through the potlatch (yaawk). The process of perpetuating the house cannot be accomplished without this dynamic of filling and emptying, making heavy and then becoming light. To become too weighty through continual acquisition prevents the continuance of one’s kin group and socially is a source of shame. In this respect, although Clah does explicitly mention following God’s laws will prevent shame, his reasoning seems to draw on both Tsimshian and Christian contexts.

Although ambivalent in places, Clah’s writings suggest that he did not view accepting a new faith as necessarily replacement of an old one. While he commonly censures the “old ways,” condemning “traditional” dancing, potlatching, or the patronage of shamans as immoral—identified by David Murray as the other side of the confessional mode, known as “the denunciation”—he simultaneously acknowledges their continuance after conversion to Christianity. Yet, the ambiguity and variety of definitions of being “two-hearted” were not a contradiction to Clah, much in the same way that he criticized and praised both the old and new belief systems which existed simultaneously in Tsimshian culture in the late nineteenth century. He frequently wrote of “two-hearted people,” and used the metaphor in a variety of contexts: to contrast Christian and non-Christian behaviour within a single individual, to distinguish successful convert from “backslider,” and to emphasize the effect of Christianity upon the

---

35For a discussion of types of self-expression in Christian Native texts, see Murray, Forked Tongues, chapter 4, 49-64.
Tsimshian peoples, either as a good influence or a two-faced deception by missionaries who fell short of Native expectations. In other words, “two-hearted people” epitomized both the conversion of the Tsimshian and the colonial conditions in which it happened.

Clah raised the issue of “two hearts” several times throughout his journal. In the following example, Clah paraphrases this passage from Matthew: “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.”

On another level, however, this passage may apply to Clah’s own reception as a Christian evangelist among the Tsimshian. Clah’s understanding of the Spirit of God as a physical manifestation, draws on both Christian teachings about his own calling to do God’s work, and on the long-held Tsimshian belief in non-human helpers. In February 1893, he wrote in his journal:

...Salvation army Blame one to another Because temptation came inside meeting, the Holy Spirit leave them the womens Blame one to another the men. Blame one to another they Says you Brought temptation one Said you Brought Bad Spirit inside meeting. Because the Spirits of God works inside the heart the Christian. Some Christians carry two hearts inside Church. Some Christian Speakes right with his mouth. But them hearts two. one good. one bad. Because Jesus Said. Matthew XV 8.9.10.11.

As we have seen above, the negative reception of the individual missionary was a feature of the Non-Native missionary discourse, that served to highlight that individual missionary’s devotion, righteousness, and eventual success. As truly “inbetween” indigenous and Christian cultures, Native missionaries had the potential to be doubly rejected. The first was accomplished through an alienation from elements of their own culture by their choice to become Christian; the second was an alienation through their subordinated, even suspected status as non-“whites” in the Christian culture. David Murray identified this uncertainty of status as a central motif in the writings of many Native Christians.

Clah was certainly “bad-mouthed” by some because of his choice to become a Christian and to evangelize to his own people. If this persecution disturbed Clah or caused self-doubt, he rarely wrote about it. In fact, throughout his journals, the only instances of introspective observations about his own “backsliding,” were references to his occasional failure to observe the

---

36 Matthew XVI:8.
37 AWCJ, Thursday February 9, 1893, NAC MG40 F11 #A-1706.
38 David Murray, Forked Tongues, 52-53, 56.
Sabbath while travelling, drinking alcohol, or fighting with his wife. However, he frequently pointed to his persecution for his Christianity by others as a source of personal strength and inspiration. He wore it as a kind of badge of his faith, often using the story of his association with Duncan in the late 1850s and early 1860s, as the symbolic testimony of his perseverance in the face of opposition:

also this sames last night. I told the people to about almighty God. Father doing to me when I was younger. that I have Seen His Salvation. about every where all the Dancing people wants put me in Deep water or in Dark place. to kill and Smash my flesh. Because I Break them Dance law. Canibel Dog eat all kind Dances. But I Believe almighty God Helping me. Jesus His with me. not one hurt me. when I with them. Jesus Christ with me. We told me to stop all Kind Dances some He told me to give me good News to preach the people words of God. Jesus told me in my heart to put all the chiefs out in every tribe. Because thee Spend all people goods. Keeping dances evey year and big Potlache.

While the incident Clah's describes strongly resembles his role in the showdown between Duncan and Ligeex, or perhaps even modelled after the Apostles, Tsimshian narrative traditions often emphasized the difficulty of acquiring (spiritual) powers and the physical dangers which accompanied all humans attempt to become more-than-human through transformation.

For Clah, conversion of his people to Christianity was intimately related to the missionary's ability, and this connection allows us a glimpse at Clah's more critical perspective on missions, that of an exposure of an im/moral colonial frontier. While his journals contain numerous examples of the sudden conversions of First Nations through the direct intercession of the Holy Spirit, he also associated conversion with power vested in the individuals who ran the missions. In some respects, this is in direct contrast to how Euro-Canadian missionaries saw it—"conversion itself was considered due to God's intervention rather than missionary skill." Euro-Canadian missionaries viewed themselves as "public" Christians, living examples of the faithful. But for evangelicals, the absence of spiritual transformation meant no true converts in their missions. The Tsimshian, and indeed other First Nations of the area, did not necessarily view their potential conversion apart from the skill of the missionary. Indeed, there was a cultural precedence for this association, through the role chiefs played in the initiation of all members of the community into secret societies (wutahalait) which they themselves headed.

39AWCJ, Saturday November 21, 1891, NAC MG 40 F11 # A-1713.
40Beidelman, Colonial Evangelism, 100.
The following passage from the entry for 4 January 1893 expresses fears about interdenominational rivalry (Methodists and Salvation Army), but also the connection between Tsimshian faithfulness and their missionary (in this case, the fear of Port Simpson residents losing their religion while Crosby and his Native assistants were evangelizing elsewhere, despite the fact that a Christian mission had existed at Port Simpson since 1858):

...also str [sic=steamer] Glad Tidings went up the nass river to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. thomas Crosby the priest and Some new Christians who Been Borne in the Spirits of this year 1893. god the Father of our lord Jesus Christ. they will promising to burn [sic?] all the places on nass River. In the Spirit of almighty God. the Father of our Saviour jesus. Amen. Bless the lord. God. Some promising If they had had [sic] time to get up the River. But came back Next week: thomas Crosby open his mouth about his two heart. some he wants gone up nass river. Some not want about yesterday Because he thinks If he gone up and he thinks some Christians with him they might lost all them Religion. But go back old ways. he fraiden [sic=afraid]. to Salvation army taken all the young men who Right [sic=write] the names to Joind the methodist Church. Keep weasel [sic=whistle] the steamer 4.5 times. Because some young men who will promising to gone up with him. Now they back out some Says no mony on the gone up in heavy bad weather. 41

Beyond obvious rivalry, this passage also reveals how some Tsimshian may have regarded participation in evangelistic tours as an occupational matter more than a demonstration of their spiritual convictions. Native Christians were not opposed to complaining about working conditions and inadequate pay when expectations were not met. 42

If Euro-Canadian missionaries were indeed representatives of “white culture” and Christian teachers upon whom the continuance of Christianity in any community was dependent, how did Native missionaries view themselves, in this respect? First and foremost, Native missionaries preached out of a sense of personal conviction as Christians. I have no reason to

41AWCJ, Wednesday January 4, 1893, NAC MG40 F11 #A-1706. The reference to “promising to burn” could refer to a convert’s religious convictions (i.e. burning with the fire of the Christian spirit). Or it could refer to the burning and destruction of traditional regalia as a sign of one’s conversion. However, Clah may have misspelled “born” and the phrase could talk about “promising to be re-born” through Christianity (i.e. Christian rebirth).

42Although this example refers to Thomas Crosby and the Methodist Church, the attitude that Native workers should be paid less than non-Native workers or not at all, was pervasive among Church Missionary Society Anglicans. C.M.S. Secretary Henry Venn directly instructed one missionary to the First Nations of northern Ontario: “The system of paid agency should always be regarded as secondary...to the voluntary agency sustained by love...for the extension of Christianity.” Doubtless, missionaries in the North Coast region received similar advice. CMSP, Venn to Wilson, 29 August 1871, NAC #A-76; quoted in David A. Nock, A Victorian Missionary and Canadian Indian Policy: Cultural Synthesis vs Cultural Replacement (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press for the Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion/Corporation Canadienne des Sciences Religieuses, 1988), 52.
question the depth of their religious beliefs. Clah clearly writes of his evangelistic work in terms
of a far-ranging and life-long pursuit, driven not by wages or fame, but faith:

T. Crosby told me why no help the Church. I Said to him. I dont do it Because you take my
wages from God. Because english Society Teach me well about almighty God and about our
saviour Jesus Christ.... Duncan teaching me about the Holy Bible about our saviour Jesus
Christ the only son of god. so when I felt stronger in Spirit of God I start walk. By foot to
trad [sic=trade] Skin up interior. Crosting head Skeenah River from head nass river 100
miles. Crosting [sic=Crossing] I keep the Holy Bible with me to tell the people about Jesus
Christ the lord. Because Jesus Said... go ye therefore and teach all nations. So I Believe
what God will Said in my heart to teach the poor people. alrounds sometimes I walk 200
miles. Some 300. some 400 miles. 8 hundred miles round trips from Cassier. Sometimes go
ways up north an alaska u.s.a. telling the friends about our saviour Jesus. But sometimes I
came back 3 months. Some came back 4 months. when I came home.43

Native evangelists expected no less from non-Natives and the failure of Euro-Canadian
missionaries to live up to these expectations was not taken lightly. "The changing social
environment in which conversion so often unfolds is not simply a product of material forces,"
Robert Hefner writes. "Its effects register not only in actors' material well-being but also in their
sense of self-worth and community and in their efforts to create institutions for the sustenance of
both. This problem of dignity and self-identification in a pluralized and politically imbalanced
world lies at the heart of many conversion histories." 44

Clah's right to preach, his right to express his own interpretation of what it meant to be
Christian did not go unchallenged, either by non-believers or by the non-Native missionaries
themselves. Just as Duncan was perturbed by Clah's unsupervised activities, Thomas Crosby's
own evangelical Methodism had its limits when it came to Clah's insistence that he too, should be
allowed to preach, not just pray, in the church:

...I went in mission house...Mr. crosby told me why I not prayer. [sic=pray?] I Never See
you Prayer in meeting [sic=either in prayer meeting or praying in meeting]. why whats
[sic=what's] the matter. so I told him his wife stand Behine [sic=behind] him. see
laughing at me. Because her man Charge to me why not Pray so I told him well. If you
wanted me I preach in the Church and you listen to me not only the prayer. I preach very
much. he Says Very good. but you not Preach Very longer. so I thinks his [sic=he is]
fraiden [sic=afraid] to me. Because he not I preach longer.45

43AWCJ, Wednesday January 4, 1893, NAC MG40 F11 #A-1706.
44Robert W. Hefner, "World Building and the Rationality of Conversion," in Conversion to Christiannity: Historical and
Anthropological Perspectives on the Great Transformation, ed. Robert W. Hefner (Berkeley: University of California Press,
1993), 25.
45AWCJ, Saturday February 17, 1883, NAC MG 40 F11 # A-1713.
Clah's evangelizing does not necessarily benefit the mission or the Church, after all he was not in the pay or under the direct supervision of the church throughout most of his career as a missionary. But Clah does see his efforts as directly related to the mission, because he, like others, regarded Christianity as a type of moral force with the power to equip First Nations with the tools they needed to survive the tremendous change assaulting their cultures.

Clah certainly recognized the challenge he posed for the “official” missionary. In fact, the tension between “official” and “unofficial” forms of Christian proselytization led to conflict, particularly over the financial recognition of such efforts, which Clah seemed to view when he complained about the lack of pay for Native preaching efforts. In one journal entry, Clah described having just returned from an evangelistic trip. He recounts his many successes to resident missionary Crosby, who in turn, includes Clah’s work in the mission report to the Methodist officials: “But Society paid him more paid. so I told him, he take my wages from god. But my Father paid me good. He gives my poor children little food my wife. to live with. But T. Crosby had good paid from Society and from government for teaching children. take paid at marrying, take paid Baptized.”

The literary motif of the poor Indian was a stereotype often inverted to criticize “whites” for their failure to live up to their Christian obligations. However, there was clearly some resentment between the inability of Native evangelists to “make a living” preaching the word of God, while Euro-Canadians like Thomas Crosby, continued to receive a living wage from both church organizations and local Native support. (In his journals, Clah even implied that Crosby’s departure from Port Simpson was not unrelated to money matters.) Clah notes that Native evangelists simply sought an income for their services: “Crosby calling 50 young men to be elders and some church hall others to be teacher. T. Crosby Said first Christian friends I want Some of yous gone up nass river to preach the Holy Ghost to the nass people.”

---

46AWCJ, Wednesday January 4, 1893, NAC MG40 F11 #A-1706.
47Several scholars have explored this stereotype of the “Poor Indian.” See Penny Petrone, Native Literature in Canada: From the Oral Tradition to the Present (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 69; and David Murray, Forked Tongues, 54.
48Prior to Crosby’s departure in the 1897, Clah’s journal entries indicate that Port Simpson people were tired of Crosby’s weekly collections in church, believing that he received enough financial support already. For example, see AWCJ, Nov 26, 1890, Jan 13, Feb 6, Sept 18, 1893, and Oct 25 1894, NAC MG40 F11 #A-1706.
49AWCJ, Sunday January 1, 1893, NAC MG40 F11 #A-1706.
recounts their defiant reply: “but the young men said. Sir we dont gone up empty. you give us good pay. Because you do this same. mission Society paid you good everyday. but you never paid us preaching.” In “traditional” Tsimshian society, shamans received fees or gifts as payment for their services and the chiefs who headed the secret societies benefited from “tributes” from initiates. In part, this recognized the level of skill of the spiritual specialist, something that as a Christian, Clah felt he was due.

But beyond the issue of recognition, Clah’s complaints over lack of monetary compensation evolved into criticisms over the services of the mission and the skill of the missionary, in particular. Clah had no trouble motivating a revivalistic response at Port Essington, but he directly related the failure of missions to convert other Native communities to Christianity to the fact that “some priests preach the people slow.” He compares the missionaries to Judas, once again raising the issue of pay:

...Preach about Jesus... good many Christian were converted in church. I gave Speach Before all people in Church. I telling them to what I have Seen on the way about all Christian in every places on the way. some Christianity one place slow Believe other place lazy [sic?] there hearts [—?] heavy. Very few who will called Christian. Because Some Priests preach the people slow.... Juda [sic=Judas] he takes mony from wicket people to take Jesus. But Juda lost own Lord. Because he likes mony and hates Jesus. this [is the same with] same with people in my place. some wicked chiefs in my place hate Beginnings [—?] I stand up. tell to peoples all christian friends I Have Seen when I was in Essington. the Spirit of great God came upon all the people. O Friends came to Jesus on when I came here... the Spirit of God was upon the people all the Salvation arrive. they not gone out. Singing in Prayer. God Bless in our meeting. Salvation arrive. walk out Cry to the lord Jesus. stand out Preach the people Nearly all night.

In another journal entry, Clah identified inadequacies in Euro-Canadian educational practices and argued that missionaries failed to live up to their promises, even in terms of explicitly Christian teachings:

...City people. all there hearts fly away. at methodist priest Spoil them lead the people an rought ways methodis makes many an indians for preach in around the Coast. teach the

50Ibid.
52AWCJ, Sunday December 29, 1889, NAC MG40 F11 #A-1706.
Indians very little an Bible and teach the Children Very Small. That make the Indians Very low in every where, lazy teacher. Our God not expect them work. Not teach the Indians good. Teaching Very Small in Bible, we all known what them Priest work.\footnote{AWCJ, Tuesday May 12, 1896, NAC MG40 F11 #A-1707.}

There can be no ambivalence in Clah’s assertion of the existence of an dishonest agenda behind Christian missions and their “two-hearted” missionaries. He even declared openly “If methodis mission dont give us what we want then we will have to preach the people about Jesus. we will have run to own book,” probably meaning to create their own membership rolls for their own Native-run church.\footnote{AWCJ, Friday April 21, 1893, NAC MG40 F11 #A-1706.} In an entry dated November 7, 1894, Clah wrote in his usual lyrical sounding syntax: “I had told the friends in Councils meeting that methodis Priest is wrong upon our Citizen people. them priest is [sic=priests’] mouths Very clean When thee wants anything to us. Speaks right them Eyes Sweet. laughing them mouths Clean. But them hearts is wrong and Dark.”\footnote{AWCJ, Wednesday November 7, 1894, NAC MG40 F11 #A-1706.}

Scholars like Krupat or Murray might identify Clah’s complaints as merely representative of a narrative discourse common to many Aboriginal writings, “part aggressive, part conciliatory and submissive, to whites with power.”\footnote{David Murray, \textit{Forked Tongues}, 56.} However, Clah’s discussion exposes the dialogic nature of mission relations British Columbia’s North Coast. Native Christians were not always satisfied with the neatly packaged Christianity offered through the missions and their spokespersons. Personal or communal criticism often resulted in a reworking of forms and institutions or the removal of offending individuals (such as was eventually the case for Crosby from Port Simpson). The competition between Protestant missions allowed First Nations to reject unsuitable forms of Christianity and experiment with different ones. For example, nowhere was this more evident than in the history of the establishment of the Salvation Army because of dissatisfaction with Methodism or in the case of the Nisga’a, with unfilled expectations of the Anglican Church Army. Martin Jarrett-Kerr, in his classic and broad study of the patterns of conversion, remarked that within a certain stage of missionization, in which a people have been exposed to missionaries for some time and thus have become “on their own” more or less, there
are two ways Christianity continues: through reproducing or transposing.\textsuperscript{57} When allowed a degree of independent expression of Christianity, individual converts either accepted the forms as given and continued to reproduce them, which is particularly relevant in terms of how colonial hegemony worked; or converts, drawing perhaps on previous spiritual knowledge, transposed and transformed Christianity into forms more suitable and productive in order for them to thrive in their social environments. Certainly Clah seems inclined to see himself “inbetween,” accepting of both the old and new, choosing a personal path of salvation, sharing it with others, but not necessarily believing that path to be the only one for all Native peoples, or that one must eliminate all of the old ways for the new. He was not alone, and the sheer variety of types of “inbetweenness” are readily apparent as I now shift my discussion to include the texts of other Native missionaries who worked in Tsimshian territory.

Chapter 7. Of Native Missionaries

Clah’s extensive writings afford analysis of his particular literary style, his blending of Christian and Tsimshian narrative references, and his personal interpretation of Christianity, in ways that other North Coast Native Christians’ writings can not. However, there were other Native workers, both official and unofficial, who shared Clah’s sense of evangelicalism and demonstrate indigenous interpretation of Christianity in their writings. While interpreters “translated” Christianity in creative ways, there were some Native Christians who preached as “official” spokespersons for the mission. These types of intermediaries are best illustrated through the collective biography of mission workers William Henry Pierce, David Leask, and George Edgar, who represent a different kind of “inbetweenness,” distinct from Clah’s Christian identity.

Daily self-reflection was actively promoted by missionaries, especially with respect to encouraging journal keeping by their charges, effectively introducing the Victorian mode of self-examination. Different values were making an impact on the Tsimshian, best illustrated in writings where converts deliberated over what their Christian identity really meant. More apparent than the introduction of Christian concepts like sin and guilt, was the “inbetweenness” many writers conveyed. Through common textual motifs and rhetorical expressions, examples of this sense of ambivalent identity or uncertainty of status appear. This frequently manifested itself in a negative assessment of indigenous culture or a critique of the mission’s failure to “transform” Tsimshians into a Christian society. One of the most common literary devices employed in this discourse of Christian identity was reference to the direct intervention of the Christian God, either in a protective or wrathful role. I will explore a few examples of this “active” God in the lives of Christians. From a “traditional” Tsimshian point of view, direct intervention of non-human powers in the world was a common occurrence.

For example, Jean Usher’s examination of some of the journal entries made by Duncan’s first convert Shooquanah (Samuel Marsden), led her to conclude they reveal new “values that were being impressed on the Tsimshian, the emphasis that was put on the importance of work. It also indicates the sense of sin, or guilt, so necessary to Christian salvation, that had been introduced into the Tsimshian mentality.” Jean Usher, “The Long Slumbering Offspring of Adam: The Evangelical Approach to the Tsimshian,” Anthropologica 13 (1971): 48-49.
The Native discussion on two specific activities performed by Native catechists—
evangelizing and interpreting—reveal the range of Native choices and initiatives in mission work.
Native Christians transformed their communities based on personal and cultural predispositions.
Yet, they were not immune to the cognitive reformations which occurred as they lived through
colonial change. Indeed, they became part of that process because of their part in
Christianization. In the end, choice and initiative may ultimately clarify the issue and
demonstrate the "voluntary" nature of conversion in this region for this period. Many scholars
and theologians have grappled over the meaning of Christian conversion. Was it ultimately
influenced by pre-existing cosmologically (internal conversion) or was the adoption of imported
conceptualization about the process of converting to a new religion (external conversion) the
primary impetus? Murray remarked that Western culture's "models of voluntary conversion
have been social rather than psychocultural, focused on such variables as political power and
ethnicity (and hence the "strategies" of conversion) rather than on the converting of an
individual's sense of well-being or of place in the cosmos."
He identified motifs of the "poor Indian" and the "Christian gentleman/woman" within Native American autobiographies as
being symbolic of this ambivalence of status, somewhere between "Indian" and "white." In
other words, narrative strategies were used, whereby the convert located him/herself either with
their own supposedly "inferior" or genuinely suffering cultures: "the poor Indian"; or the Native
writer saw him/herself alienated from their culture and even their historical past, through a
social as well as spiritual uplifting, (i.e. "the Christian gentleman/woman" or the "educated
Indian," as the case may be). Some Native Christians assumed this identity to such an extent in
their texts, that they located their family or tribal histories within Christian references. For
example, throughout his journals, Clah sometimes used biblical stories as analogies to what was
happening around the North Coast, in this case, the erection of a stone monument in 1887: "...also

---

2 See the debate between Humphrey J. Fisher and Robin Horton. Humphrey J. Fisher, "The Juggernaut's Apologia:
Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Transformation, ed. Robert Hefner (Berkeley: University of
4 David Murray, Forked Tongues: Speech, Writing, and Representation in Native American Texts (London: Pinter
invite to day todays [sic] all tribes in Kitandoo to stand up image in about on Bible. when Nebuchadnezzarr was big King, set up image, invited all the chiefs in Babylon when set up god image. Just like Kitandoo place. Alfred wants to be king, set up stone to shewed [sic=show] everybody. how Rich people in his place. they have stone cost 5 hundred dollars and given 300 dollars to all Chiefs at 40 dollars.”

Not all Native mission workers portrayed their “textual selves” in such bi-polar terms (although this was often the case for those Christians who held a more formal, “official” status in the mission, as we shall see was the case for ordained Tsimshians William Henry Pierce, George Edgar, and Edward Marsden). Louis Gray, for example, was a Tsimshian employed as a Native assistant by the Methodist mission at Kitseguecla, on the Upper Skeena River. In a 1898 letter published in the Missionary Outlook, Gray wrote of his work in terms of harmonious relations in between Christians and the unconverted in his Native village, a refreshing change from the typical non-Native missionary rhetoric that perceived perpetual conflict between “traditionalist” and Christian:

I am glad to say that the Lord is helping us over the rough places. We had a very happy Christmas, the Christians enjoy themselves, and trying to lead their heathen friends to Jesus, who has done so much for them. Our meetings and school for the young and children have been attended well all this winter. The Christians have strong hearts to follow the teaching of the bible. We have no division in our village; all have worked together with the church. The heathen people had a big time here with their “potlatch” totem poles. Five of them have to be set up yet. We had Brother Pierce with us last Sunday. The good Spirit was felt during the services. At the morning service six children were baptized, and eleven adults in the evening service. The people are in good spirit, and the work is in good condition. The people have decided to built a new church, so they will start to saw lumber for the building this week. We want all the friends to pray for us up here, so that we may be strong to fight against the devil.

While some of the expected missionary allusions are there, with all the contrasts between “heathenism” and Christianity, Gray also seems to portray an acceptance of “traditionalist” and Christian Tsimshian culture. It is not surprising that this individual evangelist in particular, should view the situation in terms of coexistence of belief systems. Louis Gray wielded (spiritual) power both as a Christian and in a more “traditional” Tsimshian sense, as a shaman. While

5AWCJ, Wednesday December 28, 1887, NAC MG40 F11 #A-1714.
6Louis Gray, “Letter dated Kitzegucla, B.C., January 10th, 1898,” Missionary Outlook 17, no. 6 (June 1898): 85.
officially connected to Christian mission work, he was hired by a number of Native families to identify the cause behind illnesses and to predict deaths. Are the internal and external models of conversion relevant to Gray? The changes in spiritual beliefs which lead to his individual conversion motivated Gray to participate fully in the process of missionization. Yet the transformation allowed him to accept an active role defined by the older belief system. Pre-existing worldview obviously shaped his Christianity, but it did not preclude him from accepting a new cosmology which he accessed as an additional, although not necessarily competing religious system.

"Destroy them...Because They Not Believe Thy Holy Spirit"8

No where is the conflict over the Indian and Christian ("white") self more apparent, than with the frequent use of the protection/wrath of God imagery. The protective or punishing God motif is central to much of Christian literature. Thus, although not exclusive to Native Christian texts, it nonetheless was employed with particular zeal by Northwest Coast converts. According to David Murray, a common pattern of the conversion narrative involved describing one's life, "after many lapses and tribulations" and living with "rum and degradation," in terms of a rescue by Christianity.9 On the individual level, God saves one's life as well as one's soul. It is therefore not surprising that there should be numerous instances of God being acknowledged for his protective intervention in specific events. For example, Clah often referred to narrow escapes in storms at sea or an end to warfare between the Tsimshian and the Nisga'a, and attributed them expressly to God's will or to Clah's strength of belief in that will.10 In his autobiography, the Rev. William Henry Pierce, with his Scottish-Tsimshian ancestry, also draws upon this motif through his reconstructed speech supposedly given by Chief Kleumlaka ("walking between heaven and earth") upon Pierce's arrival at Kispiox in 1895:

---

7For a further discussion of Gray as a Christian and a shaman, see chapter 8.
8"...I was in Henry Taite house one of the Shalvation arner [sic=Salvation army] people Bring News to me about Shalvation prayer. lord God take all the childrens in the our city and the Childrens Fathers they will know. your had power. an [sic=and] they will stop big feast. destroy them children lord. destroy Because they not Believe thy Holy Spirit..." AWCJ, Tuesday December 18, 1888, NAC MG40 F11 #A-1714.
9David Murray, Forked Tongues, 57. Of course, the imagery of God throwing one a "life-line" was a common theme in hymns sung during prayer meetings or during revivals.
10See AWCJ, Sunday December 30, 1883, Friday March 14, 1884, Tuesday February 14, 1890, NAC MG40 F11 #A-1713, 1706.
My dear friends, listen to me and look at my arm. This came as a punishment from God, who sent the bear to attack me and bring me to my senses. While struggling with the bear on the ground and feeling that my limbs were going to be torn off piece by piece, I called upon God for help and promised Him right there that if He would spare my life I would give myself to Him and confess Him publicly before my people. As I was praying and promising my son Joseph shot the bear and I was saved. Now, my people as you look at my arm I want you to acknowledge God’s power and yield yourselves to Him as I had done.  

In Tsimshian culture, encounters with “real” beings, non-humans, and wonders (naxnox) had the potential to transform, but physical danger was an ever-present element in transdimensional communication required to complete the transformation. Scholars like John Cove and Marie-Françoise Guédon reveal through their summaries of the acquisition of shamanic powers the notion that a superhuman being (like the Christian God) was a power that tested individuals, helped them, or destroyed them. Individual power acquisition, through a vision quest, throwing rituals, or initiation into secret societies, likewise carried stages in which the would-be received was endangered, tested, and then either accepted or rejected, the latter frequently resulting in death. This indigenous understanding of Christianity also comes through in Tsimshian writings on a destructive God.

The other side of the image of a protective God is the wrathful, punishing God. This was a popular Euro-Canadian missionary viewpoint, for it could easily be used to justify the moral and spiritual superiority of “whites” over “Indians” who were being punished for their “wicked ways.” Hence the insistence that both Christianity and “civilization” was the solution to the nineteenth century “Indian problem.” Native converts internalized this “white” attitude and invoked it to account for the tremendous hardships endured by First Nations, especially in

13Persecutions against the Christian faithful by other groups, were also sometimes viewed as manifestations of the will of God, and accordingly penalized. For example, Clah suggested in one journal entry, that God had punished the United States and caused the Civil War, because Americans had enslaved Africans, which like the plight of the Tsimshian, resulted in the loss of lands. Attempting to compare the contemporary appropriation of First Nations’ land to the plight of black Americans, Clah implied that Africans owned the land in the Americas before they were
explaining the devastating impact of epidemics. Perhaps Natives were dying from illness because
they were not Christian? Rather than merely associating Christian missions with access to Euro-
Canadian medicine and treatment, (which frequently occurred), many Native Christians reasoned
death rates due to disease were the direct result of a Christian God who punished non-believers. 14

In their zeal over the new converts these epidemics sometimes brought the mission,
Native missionaries almost celebrated disease as an instrument of God. For example, a measles
outbreak on the Upper Skeena River in the winter of 1887-1888 was explained by Native teacher
George Edgar as a blessing, literally the answer to his prayers, even though it cost him the life of
his son:

We have been praying that God would trouble the hearts of the heathen around us; and
God answered our prayer in sending the great sickness among us. About two hundred
children died with measles in six weeks on this river. My dear little boy was amongst the
number, twenty-two months of age; and now he is with Jesus. 15

Edgar was not alone in viewpoint of seeing epidemics as signs from God. Rev. Pierce, who was
stationed at a nearby Methodist mission, also remarked in 1888 upon the bounty wrought
through this deadly plague:

Our Father in heaven has brought us safely through another year, and many blessing He
has given us. ...our people were much encouraged to walk in the new way that leads to
life everlasting. On Sabbath-day the power of Jesus' Gospel was felt, and two heathen
were lead to Jesus. But the poor interior people suffered very much this winter. Great
sickness came, and in six weeks' time over two hundred had been swept away, mostly
children and young people. On Christmas day I held services in chief's house, and
baptized five adults and seven infants. The old chief is building a Christian house; he
wants to accept the Gospel. Many of his people are seeking the Saviour now. The word of
life we have carried to other tribes. Kish-pi-axe [Kispiox] Mission is going ahead; two of
the head chiefs and the young people are asking very strongly that a white missionary be
sent to lead them on to God's road, that reaches up to heaven. Many of our young school-
people died happy and trusting in Jesus' name; I heard them asking their heathen fathers
and mothers to give God their old hearts, and that they will meet them again in heaven. I

 enslaved. Despite this erroneous assumption, Clah's perspective on things is far from "local." AWCJ, Saturday
December 8, 1883, NAC MG 40 F11 #A-1713.

14Galois cites another passage from Clah's journals (June 21, 1862) referring to the initial reaction to the smallpox
epidemic at Fort Simpson in 1862. This "psychic shock" resulted in a rejection of halait intermediaries and the
destruction of physical manifestations of them (halait, in this case specifically masks). R. M. Galois, "Colonial
136-137.

Outlook, 8, no. 7 (July 1888): 111.
trust this great sickness will be a means of salvation to many on this river. Bro. G. Edgar
lost one of his dear boys. Over twenty of the “hag-wil-get” people died with fever.\(^\text{16}\)

This fear of God’s-wrath-as-disease was a powerful and potent symbol, or as Pierce
phrased it, “a means to salvation” for the unconverted. The solution of Christianity resolved the
impact of disease, whatever the outcome. Christianity might ensure survival, because the
Christian God punished non-believers. However, there is possibly an indigenous side to this
discourse on disease. Illness on this magnitude would have previously been described as
witchcraft (by a haldaugit) or even the work of an enemy-shaman. The calls for a “white
missionary” instead of a “white doctor” is in keeping with Tsimshian tradition of regarding
sickness as a holistic problem requiring the services of a spiritual specialist.\(^\text{17}\) Clah’s response to
an outbreak of smallpox in 1898 was to insist that prayer and conversion provided protection
from the disease and even ensured longevity: “...the prayer is it Very good medicine for us. make
use wiser anyone. Keep Prayer life longer. anyone lock up his mouth to prayer to our God is Very
short life and lost his life. anyone not follow Jesus him go other way. walk his own rough way.”\(^\text{18}\)
Christian prayer, like shamanic drumming and singing before its introduction, provided healing
through power. If converts died from illness, from the Christian perspective, they were assured
an eternal place in heaven because they were Christians, and therefore still better off than
“heathens.” The emphasis on a testing or punishing God was something that connected
Christians to their God. Thus, God was not a seen as disinterested force or one who required a
ritualistic activation before involving Himself with the affairs of mortals, but rather an influential
and supreme power affecting and effecting the very lives and deaths of true believers. The
similarities between this and indigenous concepts of transformation through direct contact with
non-human entities is striking.

\(^{16}\)Rev. W. H. Pierce, “Letter from Native Missionary, dated Kit-Zeguclla, Upper Skeena, B.C., Feb. 27, 1888,”
Missionary Outlook 8, no. 7 (July 1888): 110.
\(^{17}\)However, an argument could be made that missionaries by Tsimshian definitions practiced healing, and that
employing Western biomedical distinctions between healing a soul and healing a body do not apply. See chapter 9
for an exploration of this theme.
\(^{18}\)AWCJ, Saturday Sept 24, 1898, NAC MG40 F11 #A-1707.
Choice and Initiative: Native Evangelists

The evangelism of Euro-Canadian missionaries was indivisible from its context of evangelical Christianity. This statement also holds true for Native missionaries on British Columbia’s North Coast. As I shift from the type of “inbetweenness” represented by Clah to that exemplified by other Native catechists, there remains that same compelling discussion on Native Christian identity. Personal conviction manifested itself in a deep-felt need to convert others. Native preachers, class leaders, evangelists, teachers, and ordained ministers were all effective missionaries of Christianity. While many were employed directly by the various denominations, most were simply lay workers. Their motivations were varied, ranging from zealous and self-righteousness to desiring a social status unavailable to them through the “traditional” Tsimshian structures. However, what is striking on paper is how many proclaimed that the sole inspirations for their evangelism was a personal conviction and a sense of spiritual duty. In the Tsimshian shamanic model, one’s “calling” is never sought out, but once received it cannot be refused without dying. However, in the case of initiation into the secret societies, all members of society are expected and required to participate. Hence, the element of “choice” in religious vocation may be distinctly Christian.

The following is a letter by Samuel Pelham, an early Native convert of Duncan's and an “authorized” preacher at Metlakatla for a number of years. Prior to the conversion of the Tsimshian, Pelham had been a hereditary chief, and he continued this role at the Metlakatla, where he served on the village council until the schism between Duncan and the C.M.S.; at that point, he sided with Bishop Ridley.  

Pelham’s letter was written around 1874 to the C.M.S. in London:

Allow me to send you a few word to thank you for your great kindness in sending Mr. Duncan our Missionary to teach us about the Almighty God. Thank God it has done us some good as we (natives) are all trying to go in the right way. This is done all through your great kindness. I want to tell you that I and some other brothers are trying to preach to our other fellow (natives[]) about God; who have never heard of Him. I am happy to say that there is a hundred & ninety that seems to hear us, but there is twenty three have gone down to Metlakahtla (our place) live three [there] altogether. Mr. Duncan did not send us to do it, we do it of our own free will, we are not paid to do it we do it just

---

because we want all our fellow natives to go with us in god’s ways. And we know that God will give us our reward for doing it and that He helps us in this work. This is all I go to say...\textsuperscript{20}

Pelham’s insistence on the voluntary aspect of both conversion and evangelism seems to be a feature of the Native discourse on missions. Just as Clah insisted that he received his wages from God, Pelham also referred to a personal rather than monetary reward for preaching services. This also served to demonstrate Pelham’s “virtue” as an evangelist in ways that were extremely Christian: he placed personal sacrifice and duty above materialism. This attitude marks a significant departure from the “traditional” Tsimshian practice of paying religious specialists a fee for successful services rendered.

Another Native convert of Duncan’s who also became a self-styled evangelist from Metlakatla, was John Tait. As with Pelham, Tait reasoned that conversion was a process that began before the arrival of an “official” missionary. Communicating the message of salvation was a barrier for Euro-Canadian missionaries, (at least until they had mastery of the indigenous languages) in a way that it was not true for Native missionaries. Equally important was a receptive audience for the message being offered. Early efforts were met by a wide range of responses ranging from curiosity to hostility, but when Christian evangelists had been explicitly invited, they frequently were well received. In early April of 1877, Tait left Metlakatla on board the steamer \textit{Otter}, bound for Fort Rupert on the northeast coast of Vancouver Island:

\textit{Tuesday 3rd [April 1877]} I told them why I had come to them that I was sent to ask one or two persons to go back with me on the return of the \textit{Otter} to teach Mr. Duncan their language. When they all had heard the message, they replied, we have no answer to give against this message. One thing we say very good; very good, we will receive the teaching when we see it is the truth. We have our eyes to see with and our hearts to understand; to consider the truth that is in Christianity. We only want that a person who will teach us the truth itself and not false teaching.

\textit{Sunday 8th [April 1877]} When the service was over, then some of them came to me and said we will take hold of what is right. Then one of the Chiefs said I will not follow God’s way. I will stand to my own way, no matter if a church is built amongst us I will enlarge my house and will give away my property in our usual way. The name of chief is

Tsooachwiddy. But the rest of the chiefs Wahcahsh Quahquah dahkallah and others, and also many of the people said “we want to know Gods way.”

Tait recorded his evangelistic tour, paying special attention to the reception he received from the Kwakwaka'wakw. He described their interest in Christianity as an attraction to the spiritual content of the religion, rather than the material benefits or “surplus” meanings Christianity held through its association with Western culture and economies. Tait offered a “message” which they evaluated for its “truth.” When he met resistance, he attributed the reasons for it to Chief Tsooachwiddy's objections which were not related to the message of Christianity per se, but rather to the aspects of social control (specifically, the discouragement of communal longhouses and the potlatch) that accompanied the message.

Another salient point is revealed in the response Tait allegedly received from another chief, and it concerns the evangelist's own spiritual knowledge and level of expertise: “When I ended my address and closed the meeting, the chief [Clah kow glass] said all this what you have said is truly [sic] indeed; it is by the teaching of the gospel you have got to know it and also we see that you have got a friend in Jesus. What can we say about this invitation. When it comes to us, we will go.”

Tait's personal commitment and convictions to Christianity were central to him as an evangelist and he utilized his depth of faith to impress upon his listeners the validity of its message. But it was through his proselytizing and teaching of the gospel to others that he refined his own understanding of it. Like Samuel Pelham, Tait acknowledged the connection between free choice and the success of any missionary endeavour. When the invitation was made, Native Christians were obliged to answer because of the choice they had already made when the converted to Christianity.

Given the scant sources, it is difficult to come to any general conclusions about the activities and personal motivations of Native evangelists on the North Pacific Coast. We are only permitted tantalizing glimpses of some unofficial activities of several Native Christians through their own written words. Already we have seen that unauthorized preaching was often instrumental to introducing Christian teachings to new areas in preparation to opening missions.

---

22 Ibid. Sunday April 15, 1877.
Such was the case for Alaskan Natives who received a considerable portion of their initial exposure to Protestant Christianity through contact with Nisga’a, Tsimshian, and Haida Christians. Thomas Crosby proclaimed, that while there had long been contact between Alaskan Native groups and Christianized groups further south, “it was not until our converted young men began to preach to the Stikines at Wrangell that Missionary work commenced among this long-neglected people.” Likewise, William Henry Pierce described the work of Philip McKay and other self-motivated Tsimshian evangelists, using the typical missionary rhetoric: “On reaching that place [Fort Wrangell, Alaska] they found the natives in such a dark, degraded condition that they longed to remain amongst them and preach the old, old story. Fortunately, they found plenty of employment, so their hearts’ desire was granted in being able to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation.”

John Ryan, was among those Tsimshian converts who travelled to Alaska in the mid-1870s with the likes of Philip McKay, Andrew Moss, and Louis Gosnell, and he wrote of their evangelistic tour: “We did not go to make money or get great names, but to carry the word of God to others.” It is interesting that Ryan was willing to forego both wages and names, which were symbolic of “wealth” in the colonial era and in the pre-contact Tsimshian world, respectively. Louis Gosnell, another Tsimshian from the Port Simpson area, also described Native evangelism as prelude to official church involvement and whose duty it was “to keep the fires burning” until Euro-Canadian missionaries arrived. He travelled to Alaska, in one of the Native preaching brigades accompanying Crosby in the late 1870s, and remained there over the winter after Crosby had returned to British Columbia. “From this small, but consecrated beginning,” wrote Gosnell, “the good work spread all through that great North Land.”

---

23 Thomas Crosby, *Up and Down the North Pacific Coast by Canoe and Mission Ship* (Toronto: Methodist Mission Rooms for the Missionary Society of the Methodist Church, the Young People's Forward Movement, 1914), 68.
24 Pierce, who was partially employed by the Methodist mission in the area, would later be called to continue the work begun by McKay and others. Pierce, *From Potlatch to Pulpit*, 23.
26 Louis Gosnell [sic], *Western Methodist Recorder*, March 1914: 16; quoted in ibid., 31.
27 Ibid.
The letters for both Ryan and Gosnell are significant, because, like Clah’s journals, they reveal how some Native evangelists viewed themselves in relation to the process of missionization and in terms of where they fit into the mission institutional structure. Ryan explained that they were not received as missionaries, but merely as Christians. Their preaching was done of their own free will and without reward, (or at least, as he puts it, without interest in fortune or fame). Similarly, Gosnell defined the work in terms of being “messengers,” which like Tait’s account of his Fort Rupert proselytizing, indicated the emphasis on the Gospel itself (the message) and not necessarily the “surplus” material accruements of missions. However, Gosnell’s account of the response he and Crosby received among the potential converts does suggest that the lure of Christianity was more than exclusively spiritual. Demands for access to Western education and “white” missionaries were also priorities. He described that “[a]fter the [first church] service was held, he [Crosby] asked them if they wanted a church or a school. They replied, ‘we want both.’”

The aboriginal preacher most associated with the Native initiative in this area was Philip McKay, devoted, charismatic, and well established in the Euro-Canadian mission literature as an archetypal Native catechist. He was received by non-Christians as a spiritually powerful person, whose use of ritual and oratory demonstrated that power. McKay recounted his reception among the Tlingit peoples of the Stikine River, writing: “In July [1872] I went away to look for some salmon and stopped all night at a Stikine camp. I read some out of the Bible and the poor Stikines thought, when they saw me pray, that some great monster was about to come up from the ground.” His choice and initiative to evangelize First Nations stemmed from this depth of faith and sense of conviction. But the local reception he describes confirms him as a more-than-human specialist with potential ability to cross dimensions and summon non-human powers.

Although they received no income, McKay, his wife Annie, and the other Tsimshian missionaries taught school and conducted services in the Fort Wrangell area:

...We reached this place about the first of June on our way to Cassiar mines. We stopped on Sabbath and found the people here in utter darkness as regards the Saviour and His

28 Ibid.
love. We held services on the Sabbath Day and, as we found employment here for our party, we decided to remain and work for the sake of Christ, trying to lead the Stikines and Hydas living here to the truth. We have held services every Sabbath and twice on week nights and God is blessing our feeble efforts.\(^\text{30}\)

Pierce would be sent by Crosby to replace McKay, upon his death, although like the others, his efforts were wholly voluntary and without remuneration. Pierce described the work of his fellow Tsimshian evangelist using the dominant mission discourse of the “faithful covert” who worked hard for the faith and died in the field:

Phillip McKay was the leader. For many months he continued the good work and led many souls to Christ. At last he sickened and died. His loss to the people was great. They were then left without help of any kind. A letter was sent to the Rev. T. Crosby at Fort Simpson urging him to send some one. He called for volunteers, but no one responded to the call. Finally it was impressed on my mind that I should offer myself for that field. There was no salary in the bargain, but that did not trouble me. I believed that if God were leading me there He would supply all my needs.\(^\text{31}\)

Translating Christianity: Interpreting the “Word of God” (and the Missionary)

Like some evangelists, Native interpreters worked very closely within the mission’s institutional structure and personally with the missionary. Frequently they received wages for their work, although just as often they performed their duties without financial reward. Yet within this environment, they were allotted and seized tremendous power and influence, especially in the formative years of the mission when language and cross-cultural communication depended heavily upon their services. Interpretation of missionaries and of Christianity itself was a form of dialogue, affecting meaning, content, and context. Obviously a practical issue when Euro-Canadian missionaries could not yet speak or speak fluently the indigenous languages of their proselytes, there was a Tsimshian tradition of “talking chiefs” who spoke on behalf of those who had been transformed by direct contact with other than human powers.\(^\text{32}\)

The type of “inbetweenness” interpreters represented in the dialogue was quite literally between

\(^{30}\)“Letter dated Fort Wrangell, Alaska, August 27, 1876, signed George Weeget, A. Moss, Philip (Clah) McKay, John Neas-quo-juo-luck,” reprinted in Crosby, *Up and Down the North Pacific Coast*, 169. Crosby mentions “this letter was written for them by a white man.”
\(^{31}\)Pierce, *From Potlatch to Pulpit*, 23.
\(^{32}\)Cove, *Shattered Images*, 143.
worlds: as a bridge between the Tsimshian and Euro-Canadian, and between a "real person" and humans.

There was significant power placed in the hands of Native individuals who acted as interpreters for Euro-Canadian missionaries who had not yet mastered the languages of their congregations. The daily operations of the entire mission filtered through these individuals. Even the very message of Christianity, whether in sermons from the pulpit or in the study done in smaller class meetings, was frequently disseminated through Native intermediaries. Oral histories, rather than documentary records, are probably more comprehensive storehouses for a sense of how the relationship between interpreter as religious go-between and missionary historically functioned. The role of interpreter as mouthpiece for missionary was especially characteristic of newly opened missions or of newly appointed Euro-Canadian missionaries. Native interpreters and assistants wielded the greatest control while the missionaries were dependent on them for the simplest of tasks, beginning with the announcement to the community as to why they had come.

Missionaries might have been oblivious to just how much control their assistants had over the form and content of their proselytizing. Mrs. Constance Cox's account of Thomas Wade, a Native interpreter for Rev. John Field at an Anglican mission (mostly likely Hazeiton), told to Marius Barbeau in 1920, describes the process of translation as one that ultimately altered meaning:

Thomas Wade was the interpreter. Although he was born in Gitammaks [sic], he was raised at the Nass where he arrived his education to become an interpreter. He was not by necessity too good interpreter. He would say exactly what he would like. Of course you couldn't [sic] blame him. [h]e would not interpret Mr. Field's high flown lingo as he expected so there he was addressing and directing congregation. And old Thomas would make such a muddle of the interpreting that he would put his think [sic?] over the shoulder towards Mr. Field who stayed a little higher on the platform. And about a foot [sic] behind him. And he would say every sentience [sic]: "So he says" pretending not wanting to assume the blame. And Mr. Field would go on with his sing song sermon not knowing that all the blame was being lain on him.33

33Informant: Mrs. Cox, 1920, Marius Barbeau, Northwest Coast Files, B-F-321.7: notes re: problems with translator and a Salvation Army meeting: Mr. Field's Interpreter, M. Barbeau orig., fn, 1920, pp. 23-25; 2 typed copies, 2p., BCA (Add.Mss. 1201), #A-1421. Mrs. Constance Cox, daughter of Mrs. R. E. Loring and the Hazelton Indian agent, was acknowledged as the first "white" child born at Hazelton. While her maternal grandfather was Thomas Hankin, who established the trading post at Hazelton in 1867, her maternal grandmother was a Tlingit Alaskan. Laurence Nowry,
"Muddle" or not, while archives might preserve sermon notes or lists of topics discussed at class meetings, there were significant liberties taken by those who spoke on behalf of the missionaries before their congregations, as Mrs. Cox was well aware. In some respects, the Christian minister's preachings and sermons to his congregations can be deemed as performances of sorts. In Tsimshian performances, especially those which dealt with communicating (or re-creating such communication) with non-human or "real" powers, the use of "trickery" or deception was acceptable. To what extent this may have influenced church "performances", we will never fully know. But clearly, interpreting the word of God was a transposition of Christianity through the active participation of the Native interpreters. Unconsciously performed or not, this interpreting of both the Word and the missionary for Native peoples enabled an indigenous expression of Christianity rarely acknowledged in the historical literature.

Given pre-Christian Tsimshian styles of oratory, having someone else "speak" for a person endowed with spiritual power was a common occurrence. There were sub-categories of chiefs, including chief's assistant or literally "talking chief" (galdmalgyax). Cove observes that "Head chiefs at feasts ideally do not speak, but have lower ranking chief or elder talk for them." Of course, the "talking chief" as mouthpiece for the silent, but powerful head chief, and the missionary interpreter's translating a sermon given in English into a language that allows that sermon to be understood by the congregation were different roles in different contexts. However, the associations of both the chief and the minister with spiritual power, might have highlighted similarities between the two figures (chief and minister; talking chief and interpreter) from a Tsimshian cultural point of view. Cove writes that in the context of some feasts, "chiefs are being-powers of another kind. They have put on, actualized, crests and names, and they are thereby


Perhaps "trickery" or deception are misleading words. The secret society of artists known as gitsontk constructed halait materials and the mechanical devices used in secret society initiations, the items themselves and the execution of the empowering performance were not fake. They became "real" and halait in their context. See my prior discussion of the Gitsontk in chapter 2; see also Audrey Shane, "Power in Their Hands: The Gitsontk," in The Tsimshian: Images of the Past; Views for the Present, ed. Margaret Seguin (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1993), 160-173.


Cove, Shattered Images, 43.
transformed into supernatural entities...Their silence is a sign of stability.”\(^{37}\) Similarly, demands by a Christian community for a reliable missionary (an ordained minister who did not leave the mission for extended periods of time evangelizing elsewhere, or even in some instances, a Euro-Canadian rather than a Native person), were in effect, calls for stability and permanence.

As seen in the previous chapter, non-missionaries recognized the central role played by the Dudowards in the establishment of a successful Methodist mission at Port Simpson in the 1870s. Katherine Dudoward, founder of the Methodist mission at Port Simpson was an official translator for several missions and denominations until the mid-1930s. As one church historian wrote, “She would listen carefully to a full sermon and then repeat its content in Tsimshian. Her translation often taking as long as the original sermon. There were some skeptics who held that Kate’s translations reflected more of what Kate felt her people should hear than what the missionary had said.”\(^{38}\) This description provides a window on how interpretation occurred during a service. The fact that Katherine did not translate small phrases but waited until the entire sermon was complete before speaking points to either her own extraordinary interpretative abilities, or her very central role in the creation of Christian theology at the local level. The potential for an indigenized Christianity to be disseminated in Katherine’s version of the sermon was considerable, and given her other contributions to Methodism (recall that together with her husband, she had taught at Kitamaat before a formal mission had been established and both were class leaders at Port Simpson throughout the 1870s), her authority on such matters made her highly influential.

Although the Dudowards’ membership in the church waxed and waned—Alfred and Katherine actually left the Methodist church for a brief time, on more than one occasion—nonetheless, they combined their high-ranking status as chiefs with their community work based through the Christian church. Their identities as Natives and Christians were sometimes the source of tension. In a letter to missionaries recently departed from Port Simpson and under whose tenure the Dudowards returned to the Methodist church after a two year self-imposed

---

\(^{37}\) Ibid.

absence, Katherine describes what she perceived as a second-class status given to Native mission workers. Her own daughter was passed over for an appointment to teach, although she had performed her duties satisfactorily under the previous missionaries. Katherine was told that there were too few students to merit two teachers. “[b]ut all this while his sister was helping him with the few pupils at last Mr. Ousterhout found out that he had given his sister-in-law the place of the Native assistant teacher, and that a lady was coming out for the Boys home.” Katherine declares the irony of the situation by outlining the busy work she and her husband were doing on behalf of the church. The subtext revealed in her tone, is one of criticism of the racial prejudice exhibited by some missionaries:

I am really sorry for Mr. Richards he doesn’t seem to know that hes [sic] doing wrong to others. Still I help in the Sunday S. at Rivers Inlet. I had a very large Sunday School for all our people were there this time we were in Greens Cannery with half out people and Mr. Dudoward with the other half at the Brunswick and there I held our sunday School. So you can just imagine a Boat-load of Children with us go up to the other Cannery and youd [sic] see Children awaiting us there, then if the Weather is very bad the young people in their turn come down to our place they seen to enjoy it very much..."40

She underlines her under-utilization, by commenting to the Robsons: “I have interpreted but once since you left...”41 Just as Clah believed his loyalty and contributions as a Christian merited some “official” acknowledgment through payment for services or recognition of his efforts equal to what Euro-Canadian missionaries received, Katherine Dudoward was critical of the situation where she found Native labour undervalued.

While Euro-Canadian missionaries remained dependent on Native interpreters in the early years of a mission, those who remained for long periods of time at one or two missions among a single First Nation eventually acquired enough skill that they did not require translators.42 Moreover, not all Native Christians viewed the use of indigenous languages as a

39Mrs. M. C. Dudoward, Letter to Mr. and Mrs. Robson, Dec 9, 1898 from Port Simpson, Ebebenzer Robson Collection, BCA H D R57 D86.
40Ibid.
41Ibid.
42For the Protestant denominations active in the North Pacific Coast area there does not appear to have been an immediate proscription against the use of indigenous languages in schools or church services. The same was not true for other areas of the Coast or for different denominations. For example, Presbyterians in nearby Alaska rooted out Native languages from the outset of their missions and schools, later adopted by the American government when it took over education of First Nations in 1895. Rosita Worl, “History of Southeastern Alaska Since 1867,” in Handbook of North American Indians: Vol. 7, Northwest Coast, ed. Wayne Suttles (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1990), 151.
positive aspect of missions. Edward Marsden wanted William Duncan to prohibit the use of Native languages in school and teach exclusively in English.\textsuperscript{43} Literacy and education in the English language was deemed desirable in the climate of colonial change. Yet, the interest in the English language as a means to retain power and gain access to Canadian and American political and economic systems was soon perverted by the calculated agenda of cultural replacement which violently attacked Native languages through the day and residential school systems. Missionaries no longer reliant on Native interpreters, were free to assume their own control over the dissemination of Christian teaching. However, for the early period of missionization, the language barrier ensured that most Native peoples learned of Christianity from other First Nation evangelists.

In Between Cultures: William Henry Pierce, George Edgar, and David Leask

In considering the extent to which Native writings are different from “traditional” oral narratives, Murray concludes that “[t]he concept of an individual life as an unfolding story which can be isolated, recalled, and retold, made into a product for contemplation, is not one necessarily shared by other cultures, and in particular not by oral cultures.”\textsuperscript{44} On a certain level, this may be true. However, given the emphasis on the transformative quality of evangelical Christianity and the pre-existing Tsimshian tradition of retelling or recreating in performances one’s contact with “real” powers or wonders (\textit{naaxnox}), the textual contemplation of religious conversion likely draws on both indigenous and Christian foundations. From even a brief selection of writings by Native evangelists, it is clear that the Tsimshian did not view being Native and being Christian as mutually exclusive aspects.

“Native missionary” is an awkward concept, Winona Stevenson reminds us, “because most often ‘Native’ and ‘missionary’ are considered conflicting terms. Not only is ‘Aboriginal’ perceived as something distinctly Other (opposite to) than a ‘missionary,’ but there is also inherent inequity in Aboriginal-missionary relations which manifests itself in the subjugation of

\textsuperscript{44}David Murray, \textit{Forked Tongues}, 65.
the former to the domination of the latter.” This imbalance in power relations seems that it would lead to a questioning of social identity: where does one belong? Yet, time and time again, this stark dichotomy was rejected by First Nations, even those converts who were commissioned officially as missionaries. “Voice” in these texts represent a “textual self” situated between cultures. Many Native missionaries wrote, as Euro-Canadians did, to justify their efforts, instilling an appropriate level of success in terms of convert-counting, but also pleading the immediacy of their needs in terms of financial, staffing, and moral support for that same mission.

Church officials kept a watchful eye on the developments in missionization on the North Coast in the late nineteenth century, as did colonial administrators. There were questions about the time and effort of active mission engagement with First Nations who seemed, at least to some, to lack the depth and quality of Christians elsewhere. For Native mission workers, it is understandable how they may have internalized this skepticism, projecting it inwardly to themselves as Native persons, and outwardly as Christians onto the Native peoples whom they evangelized and worked with in the missions. Nowhere was this process of identity formation more significant than for those men of mixed cultural heritage. William Henry Pierce, David Leask, and George Edgar were raised in “traditional” Tsimshian culture and became devout Christians who worked extensively in “official” mission structures. Through a collective and more overtly autobiographical portrait, the indigenous and evangelical characteristics of their Christian discourse come through, as much as in writings by “unofficial” evangelists like Clah or McKay.

Rev. William Henry Pierce

William Henry Pierce was Arthur Wellington Clah’s nephew, and in many respects, his expression and pursuit of Christianity contrasts with Clah’s work. Whereas Clah, preferring to function as a Christian evangelist on his own terms, never operated exclusively within the


46 “Presbyterian S. Hall Young was...skeptical of the depth and quality of Christianity introduced by the Tsimshian evangelists and their Tlingit disciples. Not surprisingly, Young’s view was also Anglican Bishop William Ridley’s view of Methodist conversions among Nishga and Tsimshian people at about the same time.” Patterson, “Native Missionaries,” 35.
“official” mission system, Pierce was ordained in the Methodist Church of Canada in 1887. With his non-Native missionary-teacher wife, Maggie Hargraves, and his mixed Tsimshian and Scottish heritage he achieved a fuller integration into the “white world,” even when assigned to remote areas in the North Pacific slope region. Similarly, the archival records I uncovered for Pierce were primary materials which had been filtered through non-Native influences (the “Indian autobiography” in Krupa’s typology). Pierce began his official missionary work in 1877 as an assistant to Crosby at Port Simpson. Unofficially, as his published autobiography recounts, he had taken his own initiative as an evangelist much earlier. While working in the American town of Ludlow (Laidlow), Washington State, he was struck with the degree of alcohol abuse among the hundreds of natives who were employed at the local sawmill. He organized a temperance campaign, and it was at those meetings that a number of future Native missionaries were introduced or converted to Christianity: Philip McKay, Kitamaat Tsimshian Charles Amos, Bella Bella Jack, and Nisga’a George Tait. Pierce wrote: “That was a revival, but we did not realize it at the time. God’s Spirit spoke to the hearts of the people in such a manner that they could not resist. It was while working here that I became convinced that my life work was to be a missionary among the natives.”

It is also significant to note that all of these Native people were converted to Christianity and mission work by another Native person, without direct European influence. As with Clah and other Native evangelicals, Pierce’s need to evangelize was directly connected, perhaps even motivated, by his own personal transformation.

For Pierce, the impact of Christianity upon the Tsimshian was nothing short of an upheaval, akin to a Great Awakening or “Great Revival,” as Crosby termed it. In a 1888 letter, just one year after his own ordination as a Methodist minister, Pierce evokes the same dark/light imagery typical of official missionary rhetoric:

Dear Bro. in Jesus—Since I returned from our Conference, I have been very busy with our meetings. You will be glad when I tell you that crowds of people from heathen villages are coming to Jesus now. Every Sabbath our church is well filled, and there was a gracious influence of the Holy Spirit felt in our midst which caused our hearts to rejoice. Well, brother, God has turned our villages upside down. He has put down heathenism by His might [sic?] arm and His Gospel hammer has broken the strong hearts of the people to pieces. Old and young have declared for the new way. Prayer and praise come for those

47Pierce, From Potlatch to Pulpit, 16.
who seem too far gone to recover. Bless the Lords, the days of miracles and wonders have not ceased. May our blessed Master carry on His great work until all my poor brothers shall be turned from their darkness to light and liberty of Jesus Christ our only Saviour....Please tell all my white Christian friends that our training school will be built soon, and we hope and pray that many of the young Indians will make great preachers amongst their countrymen.48

Rhetorically this letter is rife with missionary zeal, references to the Bible and hymns and to general gospel fervour. The heart imagery also appears. However, unlike Clah’s application, Pierce chooses to describe non-Christian beliefs in terms of strength and defiance (i.e. “strong hearts”), which have to be literally shattered before a new way of Christianity might be established.

Pierce wrote of Christianity’s impact on the North Pacific slope region as the something akin to Horton’s “juggernaut” effect. Later in life when he wrote his autobiography, Pierce had long been involved in Native land claims issues and had worked to unionize Native fishery workers. Thus, when he reflected back upon the arrival of Christianity, he could not help but describe it in terms of an imposed will. In a 1877 tour of coastal communities, the Governor-General Lord Dufferin and his wife had stopped at Alert Bay where dance societies were performing. Pierce was also aboard the ship that had brought them there, and he acted as interpreter for Lord Dufferin who had indicated his intent to halt such cultural practices. Pierce wrote that Dufferin “offered the Indians their choice of going to Victoria as prisoners, or accepting Christianity. They chose the latter.”49 Whether the incident reflects historical events accurately or not, Pierce’s conviction of the morality of the process of missionization and the validity of Christianity itself was characteristic of his writings. For example, he reported to the Methodist Home department of the need for committed evangelists for the North Coast area:

If the spiritual part of the Indian work is neglected, the whole is stagnant and the Indian has no ambition to reach out and help himself, or go ahead in Christian life without receiving help and encouragement from some other source higher than himself. It is no wonder the Potlatch or any other evil is creeping in some of our mission fields, take the Bella Mission and Kishpiax, one chief at Bella Bella gave away $6000.00 cash in potlatching and $4000.00 Kishpiax people give away last winter and no money from them to the Missionary Society. What a disgrace! Do not think that I am discouraged or weak

49 Pierce, From Potlatch to Pulpit, 17.
hearted. My faith is in God. I believe a better day is coming. This is our daily prayer. But my firm belief is that if we wish this Indian work to be a success, new plans must be employed to reach and keep the natives. Times have changed and our methods ought to change. Our Church has spent a vast sum of money on this Indian work on this coast. God has honored that work. It has been successful, in spite of the many drawbacks and discouragements.50

Pierce's certainty in the benefits of Christianity had always permeated and inspired his missionary work from the very beginning. In 1882, he wrote of the encouraging work, employing pastoral imagery, which given Pierce's Tsimshian upbringing, was obviously a borrowed literary device.

Our English school is getting very well, the Kit-See-bass people are not afraid of Bible instruction. Every Sabbath morning at 10 o'clock our Bible class meet. It has been very refreshing to our spirits. The arm of the lord seems now to be made bare in the sight of these dark tribes. A bright and glorious day is dawning upon people on this West coast that have been so long covered with gross darkness....Still there are several villages on the Upper River that have no one to tell them of Jesus and His Great love.... I love my field of labour and hoping that, if I should be removed far away or laid low beneath the dust of British Columbia, others may reap where I have sown, and the time will come when both sower and reaper will rejoice together. Neither is he that planteth anything, neither is he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.51

And, unlike some of the voluntary evangelists like McKay or Ryan, the positive influence of Christianity extended well beyond the spiritual guidance and moral code contained in the commandments. Like many Euro-Canadian missionaries, Pierce included reformation of Native culture as a chief objective of his missionary endeavours:

Our people took up a subscription for a large bell, so that all their heathen friends may hear it when it rings on Sunday, and God's truth reach them in their houses. One of our village was shot down dead on the trail through Potlatch a few week [sic] ago. Sorry that the law is too weak to stop this great evil in our land. Along the river the seed of God's truth has not been scattered in vain, but here and there it is taking root in the hearts of those that heard it. We are praying and trusting Jesus that the might Spirit of God may go forth with us to the pulling down of the strongholds of Satan, and building up the knowledge of God along this river. The far Indians in the interior are wishing to hear about Jesus's great name, and we are looking forward to the time when every tribe shall be brought to God through the preaching of Christ and His mighty love to all mankind.52

50William Henry Pierce, typescript copy of a letter to Rev. F. C. Stephenson (Toronto), dated Sept 26 1913, Port Essington, B.C., Methodist Church of Canada, Methodist Church Missionary Society, Board of Home Missions: Home Department Records, Accession #78.099C. MCC BMH Box 8: Indian work; File 10: 1906-1916, UCA.
As Murray remarked of Native autobiographical texts: "The difficulties of talking about self-expression and power can be seen particularly clearly in the intermingling, in the early writings of Indians, of their perceptions of their own inferiority and the injustices done to them."\(^{53}\) While Pierce firmly believed in Christianity's moral influence, he was not opposed to suggesting that Euro-Canadian society had much to live up to in terms of practicing what it preached:

> I will try by God's help to go and tell them of Him who saith I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. I witness many of our members as they are passing away saying that Jesus has power on earth to forgive sin. My work is sometimes trying in this place by the white sinners. But I have the promise, I am with you even to the end of the world. Our almighty power and the grace of God keep them. We are praying for the outpour of the Holy Spirit as the people are coming home for their fishing.\(^{54}\)

The concept of "sin" was a revolutionary idea, with no apparent parallels in "traditional" Tsimshian culture. Judging from the Pierce's quotation, it was one that he had accepted as an important motivating factor for his own work. The psychological consequences of Native Christians perceiving themselves as sinners undoubtedly fed into the internalization of the colonial discourse on Indianness, which also identified them as inferior, vulnerable, and bad. This explains why Pierce, in his written texts at least, has distanced himself so far from his "Native" identity, that in reading his observations on missions in the North Pacific region it is very easy to forget his Tsimshian heritage. Unlike Arthur Wellington Clah, Pierce appears less comfortable with the seemingly contradictory identification of being both Native and Christian.

Rev. George Edgar

George Edgar was another convert of mixed cultural heritage, born in 1854 to Fort Simpson Tsimshian Susan Moody and Magnus Edgar, a Scotsman who lived in Nanaimo. Like Pierce, Edgar was raised in the traditional culture on the North Coast by his mother and her Tsimshian husband, Richard Moody.\(^{55}\) Edgar was the second Tsimshian person from the region

---

\(^{53}\)David Murray, *Forked Tongues*, 52.

\(^{54}\)William Henry Pierce, Letter to Dr. Sutherland, dated Port Essington, BC, Oct 12th 1882, "Missionary Outlook " 2, no. 10 (October 1882): 174.

\(^{55}\)It is unclear why or when George assumed the surname Edgar rather than Moody. It could be perhaps that at the time of his birth, his adopted father Richard Moody had not yet been married to Susan (George's mother) in a Christian ceremony (although neither had Magnus Edgar and Susan), and thus had assumed the name only
to be ordained by the Methodist Church. Described as a “most earnest and indefatigable worker,” Edgar like many Native assistants and mission workers, was frequently moved as needs demanded, and he served as a missionary at Gitlakdamiks, Greenville, Kitamaat, Haina (Gold Harbour), Hagwilget, Hartley Bay, Klemtu (China Hat), and Kitseguecla. Edgar had been exposed to Christianity as a young adolescent after his mother and step-father were converted and moved to Metlakatla. Although he was baptized by Anglican Bishop Hills sometime in the mid-1870s, Edgar apparently was not initially a particularly devout Christian. He sought work elsewhere and even spent time with his biological father, Magnus Edgar, who wanted him to join him on his farm on the Gulf Islands. George Edgar’s dramatic “conversion” to Christianity occurred through his attendance at Methodist revival meetings in Victoria and through the influence of fellow Native Christians.

Pierce claimed that on the very night of his own conversion, he sought out his friend George Edgar to share “the good news” and to ask him “to accept the truth also.” In 1876-1877 Edgar and Pierce spent several months in each others’ company in Victoria and regularly attended the services at the Pandora Avenue Methodist Church given by Reverend William Pollard. Edgar’s description of his conversion experience and first public confession in Victoria before a number of Tsimshian peers, encapsulates the pervasiveness of his sense faith and how it would affect his life:

When I a little boy my people no church, no school, no Jesus, no God like you, only pray to god in tree, fish, mountain and seas. What you people learn in Sunday School I not know. But like our old women who have two baskets, a big one in the back and a little in front. They fill the little basket with all kind of berries, red, blue, purple and black, then put in big basket. When both basket full they put big basket on back and go home. I have two baskets, a little one and a big one. I fill the little one from you people about Jesus, in temporarily until he came of age. Or George may have reverted to using the surname of his biological father when Moody died at Metlakatla.

57In apparent disapproval of the common-law marriage between the Susan and Magnus Edgar, Susan’s parents had encouraged a marriage with a Kitkatlan chief Richard Moody, so George Edgar grew up as George Moody. L. Morrice, “History of George and Mary Ann Edgar,” unpublished typescript, vertical file: George Edgar, UCABC.
58Ibid., 2.
59Ibid., 3-4; Howard, “Fire in the Belly,” 231.
60Pierce, From Potlatch to Pulpit, 13.
61Ibid., 14.
church, in Sunday School, in class-meeting, everywhere. I learn to read and to write. When my little basket full, I put into my big basket. When both full, I go home to my Father in Heaven.62

I find this description of Edgar’s Christian identity, particularly the mention of the two baskets, is a very obvious example of an indigenous discussion of Christianization. It is likely that Edgar denotes the meaning of basket in its customary sense, signifying a container.63 Baskets or containers were common and essential items in daily life (as Edgar’s references to Native women’s use of baskets for food transport illustrates) and was employed metaphorically in definitions of other things. The container motif permeated many cultural references in Tsimshian society. The Sm’algyax word meaning “to learn” (luudisk) can be translated as “store up food and wood for the winter,” which would have meant collecting those items into storage containers. A book (sa’awan) was something intimately associated with Euro-Canadian knowledge and because of the centrality of the bible, with evangelical Christianity. In the Tsimshian language literally meant “to put into a box, put more into a box, or to shake down and make settle in a box.”64

Undoubtedly the cultural significance of basket as a container associated with learning and knowledge reverberates through Edgar’s reference.

The author quoting Edgar’s comments believed that the little basket referred to Edgar’s “mind” and the big basket to his “heart”. This may be an accurate Christian reading of the narrative, which may have been overtly understood by Edgar himself. However, if the same narrative is located in its Tsimshian context, Edgar’s use of the two baskets can be interpreted to mean the position of the Native convert, his location and role in his house (waab), and his potential for transformation. The small basket was filled by Edgar’s acquisition of missionary teachings and Christian knowledge, or more precisely by attaining Christian powers and wealth. Because Edgar’s Tsimshian identity is connected to his position and status within his community, he fulfills his social responsibilities by putting the power and wealth (perhaps a metaphor for his own evangelism) into the big basket, his Tsimshian group. This is how he achieves a spiritual

62 An unreferenced source (possibly taken Dr. Spenser’s notes or letters and testimony from T. Crosby) contained in L. Morrice, “History of George and Mary Ann Edgar,” p. 4, unpublished typescript, vertical file: George Edgar, UCABC.


64 Dunn, Dictionary of Coast Tsimshian Language, s.v. “learn,” “book.”
transformation, not only for himself, but to the benefit of his house and community. His reference
to ascension into Heaven ("I go home to my Father in Heaven") after the filling process is
complete corresponds to Edgar's attainment of superhuman or more-than-human powers.

Much of Edgar's official correspondence published in Methodist journals such as the
Missionary Outlook, was characterized by his use of colourful metaphors for his mission work. For
example in this lyric passage Edgar refers to the perception of earthquake activity on the Queen
Charlotte Islands:

Everything is moving out of place at Queen Charlotte Islands, by earthquakes. On the
24th of February, about ten minutes to nine in the morning, we had a terrible shake;
everybody ran out of their houses, some praying to God, and some poor old women
praying to the earthquake; some looking up to the sky to see if the Son of God [sic] coming
in the clouds. Some of the young people were standing on the street. I heard some of
them say: "the Lord is coming." Some asked God to help them, and some praised the
Lord. I was told in the village that one of the old women said, "I think the Christian
people asked God to shake [sic] this island, because we don't listen enough when the
teacher is preaching." Not only the rocks and trees that slide down from the hills, but also
the houses are moving out of their foundations; stoves and lamps are falling down in the
houses. And not only these things are moving, but also the hearts of the people towards
God, knowing that there is a God in heaven who shakes the world. Some came to me and
asked me what Jesus said to His disciples about the last day. I told them. One man ran
and rang the bell and we all went to the church, and oh, I thought the church would fall
down for the noise of the people praying. We had another shake while we were in the
church. We had many shakes after this, and we had another shake on the first of the
month.65

On one level, this earthquake activity was written about as if it were a prelude to Christianity's
arrival among the Haida people or a warning that the preacher's message was being neglected.
The earthquakes helped his evangelism by convincing potential converts of the religion's great
power. On another level, Edgar further develops the image by applying it to the process of
conversion itself ("the hearts of the people moving toward God") and by creating a parallel effect
in the hands of the converts themselves, whose praying echoes the power of God's earthquakes.

Like fellow Tsimshian William Henry Pierce, after his conversion in Victoria, Edgar
returned to the North Coast as Christian convert and a self-proclaimed evangelist, before
receiving paid work as a Native assistant and translator, and eventually as an ordained minister.

---

65George Edgar, "Letter from George Edgar, Native Teacher, dated Gold Harbor, Queen Charlotte Islands, May 2nd,
and missionary. Although he was moved around to several different missions on the coast, the Skeena and Nass Rivers, and even to the Queen Charlotte Islands, Edgar consistently accepted his work as an extension of his own Christian duty.

Dear Dr. Sutherland, I never forget your preaching at Port Essington at that time interpreting to Bro. Jennings, it was my duty first year on this mission work, and after I was sent over to Queen Charlotte Islands to teach and preach the Gospel to Haida tribes at Gold Harbour. God has blessed His own work over that country. Again I was sent to the Upper Naas people to teach them how God loves the poor Indians; and now I am up here with my wife and my four children to work for Christ, and to lead the poor lost souls to the foot of the cross. We need all the prayers of our white Christian friends, that we may be faithful unto death. We send our, Christian love to all white brothers.66

Apparently suffering from rheumatism most of his life, Edgar drew on his faith to sustain him, and in a style typical of the “Christian supplicant” wrote:

We got there [Port Simpson] on Saturday evening [in July 1889]. I was thinking to speak to my own people on the Lord’s Day, but I was not able to get up for prayer meeting. I was very sick that morning with rheumatism. This was on the 10th of August, and I was not well till some time in October. It pleased God to give me strength again, so that I may go out and work for Him. When my people knew that I was ready to go out again for the Master’s name, they told me that I was not strong enough, and that I was not well for me to die or to be more sick in other places. But I told them if Christ made the man well that had the infirmity for thirty-eight years, He can make me well too. Praise the Lord.67

However, things were not always easy for this Native missionary. As a Christian of mixed heritage, Edgar’s ethnicity sometimes influenced his reception at his various postings. In 1885, a new Methodist mission was planned for Haina (then called Gold Harbour, Queen Charlotte Islands) in response to Haida requests for a missionary. Haida Methodist Amos Russ (Gedanst) had already begun his own brand of evangelizing on the islands after he too, was converted to Christianity during a stay in Victoria. Missionaries frequently made trips from the mainland to the Queen Charlottes, but the Haida were anxious to receive a more permanent Methodist involvement in their territory. A Methodist mission at Skidegate had been established in 1883, but the people of Haina (Gold Harbour) requested a missionary of their own, and Thomas Crosby appointed Edgar to this position.68 In May 1885, the mission ship The Glad

68Crosby, Up and Down the North Coast, 265-267.
Tidings dropped Edgar and his family unceremoniously on the beach and they were forced to secure shelter in a secondary chief's home until a decision was made about accepting him as the missionary. At first, the people of Haina were reluctant to agree to have an evangelist of Scottish and Tsimshian ancestry as their missionary, rather than a "white man," although with the help of Amos Russ, he eventually won over their respect. Edgar was stationed at Haina for two years (1885-1887), but he returned again at the end of the decade for another appointment (1888-1890).

In a similar incident, Edgar was initially met with some suspicion and disappointment that he was not Euro-Canadian by a neighbouring Tsimshian nation. In 1891 George Edgar was sent to Hartley Bay, a Southern Tsimshian community. Hartley Bay was a newly established village, created by Kitka'ata ("People of the Cane") Christians who had converted and moved to live at Metlakatla until Duncan's departure in 1887. Some chose not to follow Duncan to Alaska and returned to their traditional homeland, where they founded Hartley Bay. Edgar wrote of his arrival at Hartley as a disappointment to those who had requested a missionary and expected a Euro-Canadian and had been sent a Native one:

We are well, thanks to the Giver of all good. We have been very busy since we came here. Brother Crosby landed us here on the 26th of August last year, and a mission house was put up. We found very few people at home, so I went up to where they camp, about twenty miles from here. First, the people were not quite satisfied because I was not a white man, but after a while they turned and thanked god for having answered their prayer, for this people have been asking for a teacher for a long time. The school did not commence till the 1st of October. My wife has eighteen children who attend day school and Sunday-school as well. The Sabbath services are well attended, and also weekly meetings and Bible-class on Saturday night. Thank God for sending me to this people for I can use my own language to them.

---

69 Howard, "Fire in the Belly," 231.
70 The Haida of Skidegate and Haina had expressed a similar displeasure with the first permanent missionary appointment by the Anglicans in 1877. Edward Mathers a Tsimshian man from Metlakatla was sent to Skidegate as a teacher, but the Haida appealed to Duncan for a "white teacher," which there were no funds available to supply. In frustration, they turned to Crosby and the Methodists, who did establish a mission at Skidegate in 1883. R. W. Henderson, These Hundred Years. The United Church of Canada in the Queen Charlotte Islands, 1884-1984 (n.p.: United Church of Canada, 1985), 1.
Edgar's wife Mary Ann was an obvious asset to him in his capacity as a missionary. The reference to Edgar's happiness to be able to use his own language requires a brief explanation. The Kitka'ata had once been speakers of a Southern Tsimshian language (*Skuumxs*). However, at Metlakatla, Duncan used the more widely spoken Coast Tsimshian (*Sm'algyax*), and so the inhabitants of Hartley Bay adopted Edgar's Native language rather than that of their ancestors.

The position of inbetweenness which Native missionaries frequently represented could hinder as well as help their proselytizing efforts, but men like George Edgar would have been ideally suited for the needs of the mission propaganda machine. Men like Pierce or Edgar were "Indian" but they were not. Perhaps their success at overcoming the prejudice initially faced in some of their mission postings because they were not the requested "white" missionary, is owing to their own abilities to effectively interpret this new religion, Christianity.

**David Leask**

Born to a Tsimshian woman and an Orkney Islander who was stationed at Fort Simpson as an employee of the H.B.C, David Leask was a pillar of the mission communities at Metlakatla and later New Metlakatla. Jean Usher identified David Leask as "a half-breed, and one of Duncan's earliest pupils at Fort Simpson." Leask married a Tsimshian woman and they raised a family of nine as Christian Metlakatlans. He kept the books and was in charge of Duncan's store as well as a number of other enterprises at the mission. He was secretary for Metlakatla's Native Council, an Elder in the church, and a primary school teacher. Leask's close relationship with William Duncan aided his rise in social status at Metlakatla, perhaps more than he might have achieved in the "traditional" Tsimshian context. It was even reported that Duncan was to have Leask ordained, but he never was. In fact, the Anglican Church did not ordain any British Columbian aboriginal or "mixed-blood" persons until the mid-twentieth century, although in the Yukon and on the Canadian prairies this was commonplace. As secretary for the Native council

---

73 Campbell, "Hartley Bay," 8.
at Metlakatla, Leask’s name frequently appears in official mission correspondence and petitions to government or church administrators. In some instances it is difficult to distinguish Leask as something other than a mouthpiece for Duncan, especially in matters related to the schism in the Anglican church and later in the overt tensions between Duncan and Bishop Ridley. For example, in a March 1877 letter to the Bishop of Columbia Reverend George Hills, which was signed by Leask on behalf of “The Christians of Metlakathla,” he wrote:

We do not forget that you have visited us years ago to help us in following God’s way. We were then thankful and glad to see you, but now our feelings are changed toward you as the Bishop because you have persecuted Mr. Cridge a servant of God for warning his congregation against false teaching. This is now the word we all wish you to know before you come again to minister to us in God’s Name. We say, Let the Bishop first be reconciled to Mr. Cridge, and then it will be good for him to come to Metlakahtla.78

The alliance between Reverend Edward Cridge of Victoria and William Duncan was well-known, and barely a decade after the establishment of Metlakatla, the seeds of discontent with Anglican church authorities were already being sown. The clear statement by “The Christians of Metlakahtla” on which side of the dispute they stood was significant, given that Duncan would depart Metlakatla that summer with the intention to establish other missions.79 Leask and his fellow Tsimshian Christians pronounced their loyalty to Duncan’s position in this dispute over the forms and practice of Anglicanism in the colony.

Leask also spoke out against the restraints of colonial legislation and land rights. In 1883, with exacting and cutting irony he quipped that the Indian Act was akin to putting “a small pair of shoes on feet too large for them. It would only cramp our feet and prevent us from walking as fast as we did without such regulations.”80 According to Leask, Christianity was a route to achieve and maintain independence as a Native nation in the colonial world. Well after his departure to New Metlakatla in Alaska, Leask’s belief in the benefits of Christian mission,

---

79 The ramifications of Duncan’s absence during a revival which swept the mission in the fall and winter of 1877-1878 are explored in chapter 7. Ironically, Leask’s request to discourage Hills from visiting Metlakatla, did not stop the Bishop of Athabasca, Rev. W. C. Bompas from spending the winter of 1877-1878 at the mission. Bompas then issued a critical report on Duncan’s disregard of the principles and doctrine of the Church of England. Usher, William Duncan, 104.
especially education in colonial law, remained firm, as this letter he wrote to encourage fellow Tsimshian Edward Marsden to stay and pursue his studies at Marietta College in Ohio, illustrates:

[It should be remembered our generation is a growing one....As Christians we must know the law of the land so that native may have to be shielded from that law from injustice. You are fully aware what led us into trouble and loss and imprisonment under British power because we were ignorant of the laws of the land, and our people suffer injustices for being ignorant. I pray God to make you humble and be an instrument for his praise and glory.]

Leask’s name appeared on numerous pleas to American authorities and the Alaskan government concerning the property and land rights of Tsimshians on Annette Island. His view on the connection between the process of missionization and the ability to survive as First Nations people was clear.

Leask challenged the idea of an unequal distribution of power and authority in the mission village and the fact that the Tsimshian were not always permitted to determine what was best for themselves. For example, according to Marsden biographer William Gilbert Beattie, privately Leask and his fellow Tsimshian evangelist Edward Marsden were critical of Duncan’s authoritarian management of the mission. “The Leask-Marsden correspondence shows that they both felt Duncan was too secretive regarding matters in which the community had a right to be interested.” Indeed, these two Tsimshian Christians thoroughly praised one another’s contributions to the quality of life for their people and for contributions to their church. He wrote of his younger friend and confident Edward Marsden as an “unsung” hero, as doubtless many Native Christians from their perspective. Upon Marsden’s receipt of American citizenship in 1894, Leask wrote to him:

I am thankful to God, Edward, that by His mercy has promoted you to become of the United States faithful citizen, and that your taken may be for the glory of God and for the benefit of your fellow man especially your own people. I say this because you be ready, and be filled with the Spirit that will enable you to walk humbly with your God in

---

81 The incident the letter refers to is the removal of Canadian government survey stakes by Natives at Metlakatla which resulted in the imprisonment of seven of them for several months at a Victoria jail. Duncan claimed this act was done without any of his prompting, although government officials blamed the missionary. David Leask, “Letter to Edward Marsden,” n.d. [mid-1890s?]; quoted in Beattie, Marsden of Alaska, 66-67.
82 Beattie, Marsden of Alaska, 46, 48, 49.
83 Ibid., 40.
whatever work He has put you to. In working for the honor of God and for the good of your fellow men you will suffer hardships as the Master Himself. You will receive no honor for your work[,] neither praise for what you have done for your people. I tell you this because you should put on the whole armor of God, and put the yoke of Christ upon you.84

In turn, Marsden described Leask as “one my best friends who, more than anyone else, was responsible for my becoming an active Christian.”85 He told Leask, “God has called you to be the constant adviser and comforter of our people, a servant in the truest, highest sense.”86 Edward Marsden was the son of one of Duncan’s first converts, Shooqaanaht, who was baptized with the name of the famous Anglican missionary Samuel Marsden, and a Tsimshian woman, Catherine Kitlahn, who became Duncan’s housekeeper and an interpreter for the mission. Under the sponsorship of Alaskan Presbyterian missionary Sheldon Jackson, Marsden obtained a high school and college education in the United States and became an American citizen before returning to New Metlakatla, in the territory of Alaska. Duncan had a bitter falling out over Marsden’s educational and religious decisions (specifically his choice to attend schools far from Duncan’s reach and his becoming an ordained Presbyterian minister in 1897), and the ensuing battle over education on the reserve nearly tore the community apart. Thus, Marsden is an important yet complex figure, but a detailed exploration of his role at New Metlakatla in early twentieth century is beyond the scope of this inquiry into missionization within British Columbia.87 For Marsden, just as it was for men like Pierce, Edgar, and Leask, the assuming of responsibility for the welfare and continuance of Tsimshian Christian communities was something shared in common by those whose ethnic identities placed them in between cultures.

85 Unreferenced source in the Leask-Marsden correspondence; quoted in Beattie, Marsden of Alaska, 35.
86 Edward Marsden, Letter to David Leask, 1895; quoted in Beattie, Marsden of Alaska, 72.
87 When Marsden attended the Carlisle Indian School he was undoubtedly indoctrinated with the racial attitudes of the day, that encouraged him to become more like Euro-Americans in order to be considered a “success.” H. David Brumble identified Marsden’s published letters during the early 1890s when he attended this school, as a classic example of the “Carlisle Success Story”: as an impoverished Indian, “steadily applying himself to work and to learning practical trades and by virtue of what he learned at Carlisle” he eventually makes good. H. David Brumble, ed. American Indian Autobiography (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 240, 241. Marsden wrote to the Tsimshians at New Metlakatla while still at Carlisle: “Let me call your attention to the raising of the house. I have often thought that we, as workers and advocates of Christianity and civilization, are like jack-screws. These instruments are molded and patterned by a certain factory. So are we; and it makes no difference what educational factory we are, as long as we are of iron and steel, and our purpose is to raise heavy weights. Let us see to it that we place our instruments on something solid, that we turn them in the right direction, and that we raise our Indian brethren to the common level of Christianity and civilization.” Unreferenced letter, n.d.; quoted in Beattie, Marsden of Alaska, 74.
Conclusion: Evangelical Tsimshians

In the written record and through their actions, Native catechists and mission workers proved and verified their identities as Christians and as Tsimshian. Their “turning to” Christianity was not necessarily conceptualized as a “turning away” from the belief systems that came before, but certainly Native missionaries were often required to couch their work in official correspondence, in those same terms. It is likely some even agreed with the either/or dichotomy, while others did not. For several, their own mixed cultural heritage made it difficult to define their identity in every context as being wholly Native or entirely Christian—they were both.

Similarly, the conversion experience Native Christians frequently wrote about was also a “traditional,” even conventional, transition for the majority of Tsimshian; the form and context was different, but the process by which humans achieved their potential involved an encounter with a non-human, sometimes otherworldly being. The choice to determine what it meant to be a spiritually powerful person drew heavily upon the evangelical heritage of nineteenth century Protestantism, but it also built upon pre-existing Tsimshian understandings of transformation.

Native converts and missionaries located themselves within Christian history, a place which they believed, through the grace of God’s covenant and through Christ’s death and resurrection, they had been granted in this eternal narrative. The Bible had other powerful and meaningful symbolic significance for Native Christians, but the freedom to read and interpret Christianity through scripture apart from church doctrine, may have been a quality that attracted converts to this imported religion. It was a central component of evangelicalism and it gave Tsimshian Christians a vital role to play in that translation. Native texts demonstrate this

88“Protestant Christianity, then, was a religion of salvation rooted in a distinctive representation of the whole of human history. The past, present, and future were drawn together through a series of strong teleological assumptions. When people read the Bible they assumed that the past foretold the present and that the future would fulfill the prophecies of the past. The eternal present was placed in turn at a critical juncture in this structure of time, standing on the precipice between separation and reconciliation. Although people were still sinners, suffering under the enormous weight of their ancestors’ transgressions, they could be saved and the world made into something new. When the Bible was read in this way, it gave time and place a distinct form and meaning.” William Westfall, Two Worlds: The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth Century Ontario (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1989), 29.

89The Bible connected to literacy and Euro-Canadian style education is a theme further explored in chapter 9.
evangelical discourse; they were not merely "derivative and imitative" in style, as one scholar of Native literature concluded.90

At the individual level, conversion was a remaking of the self and such redefining came at a cost, often manifested in an internal conflict—"I feel struggle in my mind but persevere," as one convert confessed.91 The choices might include a "turning" from the past: the violent destruction of the old as Pierce wrote, "God has turned our villages upside down... His Gospel hammer has broken the strong hearts of the people to pieces."92 To him, mission work was nothing less than a "fight with the devil in British Columbia" and he proclaimed, "I expect to be on this great battlefield till the last hour of my life."93 To many Native missionaries, the call to evangelism often evoked serious personal introspection, and despite the rhetoric adopted by Tsimshian like Pierce, Edgar, or Leask, their "inbetween" nature as both Native and missionary, and Tsimshian and Euro-Canadian, was sometimes a difficult definition of selfhood to bear. Native Christian identities also could be made to promote individuals or entire communities in ways unforeseen and unexpected by the churches who influenced their creation. Indigenized forms of Christian teachings manifested in prophet movements were the pre-mission prelude to a dissemination of Christianity through revivalism and unsupervised group evangelism, which together, took the Native Christian identity and placed it in the service of the First Nations.

90 Penny Petrone, Native Literature in Canada: From the Oral Tradition to the Present (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 69.
91 Church of England; Confession before baptism of Shoodahsl (Wife of Clah), Fifth Annual Report of the Columbia Mission for the year 1863 (London: Rivingtons, 1864), 32.
Chapter 8: Prophets, Revivals, and Evangelists

The power of Christianity to transform the soul, mind, and body was a central missionary message to the Tsimshianic speaking peoples. Prophets, revivals, and evangelistic groups were three forms of experiential activity capable of transmitting this message. The transformation involved reordering social behaviour to remake the world into an improved place, and reinvigorating communities with religious enthusiasm. Much of this was accomplished beyond the reach of Euro-Canadian missionaries and mission societies. While very disparate in form, these three expressions of transformative power shared some similar objectives and functions. They must be considered a significant part of the process of Christianization on the North Pacific slope.

This chapter examines Native forms of disseminating Christian power which remained outside the immediate control of missionaries. Informing two participatory forms of mission Christianity, revivalism and group evangelism, is the pervasive indigenous theme of transformation, best exemplified in prophet movements and specifically with the case of the pre-missionary nineteenth century non-Tsimshian prophet(s) Bini, because of its overt Christian elements. Prophet movements revolve around a spiritually empowered individual, who attempts to revitalize or recreate a society in crisis, through modifying “traditional” or new religious responses. The prophet accomplishes this through contact, communication with and subsequent transformation by a superhuman power or being. Using this indigenous framework for understanding transformation and the subsequent agenda of social change that comes as result of it, throughout this chapter I consider how prophets shared social functions in common with Christian revivalism and group evangelism. After the introduction of missionaries, evangelical revivals operated as popular transformative experiences in Native communities. Usually referring to Christian phenomena, revivals were revitalizations of religious emotion and conviction in a group setting.¹ My case study of the revival at Metlakatla in 1877 is grounded in

¹This is how I will utilize the term throughout this chapter, although when one examines the definition of such events, there is no reason to suggest that the word should only apply exclusively to Christianity.
excellent documentary records, thus provides a level of detail simply unavailable in the written sources for other religious events. Hitherto, I have focused upon the contributions of individual evangelists, but the practice of groups of Tsimshian embarking upon itinerant proselytizing missions was typical for this region and period. Ultimately, prophets, revivals, and groups of evangelists aimed to spiritually empower their participants. When the spirituality was Christian in form, this empowerment could and did occur beyond the control of the Euro-Canadian missionary, a point not missed by missionaries in the field.

Older Spiritual Forms: Pre-Mission Prophets

A universal concern of most denominations throughout the country was “backsliding.” This was especially so in the context of Native missions where church officials envisaged conversion as inseparable from the colonial agenda of “civilizing.” “Backsliding” refers to a perceived falling away from Christian faith and reduction in the intensity of belief and/or Christian behaviour. It was a phrase applied to any Christian, Native or non-Native. For missions to First Nations, the term was employed when Euro-Canadian missionaries perceived a reversion to, or recreation of, “traditional” forms of Native spiritual expression. The frequency at which “backsliding” appears throughout the mission literature lends credence to the idea that the “old ways” and the “Christian ways” co-existed throughout the period. Hitherto, my emphasis has refuted the notion of Christian conversion as constituting a replacement of former belief systems. Additive or syncretic responses to Christian teachings were far more common. The missionary’s use of this term “backsliding” also serves to emphasize that Christianization was an ongoing process. And contrary to Euro-Canadian missionary assumptions, “old ways” structured Native understanding of the “new” Christian ways of spiritual transformation. The Tsimshian used conventional, pre-Christian frameworks to interpret and understand evangelical conversion. Just like missionaries, shamans, prophets, and priestly-chiefs (smhalait) appeared in Tsimshian narratives explaining how transformations effected human lives. First Nations sought

---

2This section draws heavily upon Susan Neylan, “Shamans, Missionaries, and Prophets: Comparative Perspectives on Nineteenth Century Religious Encounters in British Columbia,” Historical Papers 1994: Canadian Society of Church History, 43-63.
to balance new and older spiritual forms, rather than merely rejecting or accepting the "package" offered by missionaries. Prophet narratives became a cognitive strategy to understand these spiritual shifts.

We have seen that Euro-Canadian missionaries viewed the active role Native people played in Christianization with ambivalence and suspicion. When those contributions were made by Native peoples outside the missionary's control, they were even less likely to consider these efforts in a positive light or concede religious authority. It seems most likely that the Protestant and Evangelical revivals of the late nineteenth century, which Euro-Canadian missionaries attributed to the appeal of the "superior faith," were due in large part to the familiarity of the message. Christianity offered power and a way into the "white" world—and some Native people had had access to it for a number of years. Before the formal introduction of missions and in the earliest days of their work, Native prophets played an important role in the process of the Christianization of aboriginal British Columbia. This was partly because prophet narratives were in themselves ways of understanding change. Julie Cruikshank came to this conclusion for Yukon prophecy narratives. For the Tsimshian, prophets provided recognition for the active role Natives assumed in the dissemination of Christian knowledge in ways that aided the stability of their communities.

In the Tsimshian context, prophets and shamans were very closely related in terms of their means of transformation. Indeed, prophecy could be a signifier of shamanic powers, as it employed supernatural means to predict or foresee events. Cove writes that "[p]rophecy can be a specialization and its practitioners were called laxelth," although it is not clear whether all prophets must be shamans. Regardless, the acquisition of the abilities to see into the future follows a similar narrative structure. An individual undergoes a "separation" from the usual world, either physically removed from one's peers or cognitively removed by falling into a trance state or an illness that resembles death. The second stage is an initiation through which the

---

4This category sometimes included astrologers, although they relied on the moon and stars for their predictions not upon supernatural means. John Cove, *Shattered Images: Dialogues and Meditations on Tsimshian Narratives* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1987), 225.
human learns to understand the relations between humans and other beings (non-human, superhuman, wonders) in a new light. This is usually accompanied with the acquisition of "powers," names, songs, and superhuman helpers. The final stage—a return to the human world—completes the transformation, and is eventually marked by a social recognition of the individual's acquisition of shamanic powers by the community at large. Shamans may continue to experience similar patterns of separation, initiation, and return throughout their life and in their work as healers. Cove explains these continuing shamanic transformations:

Shamans also experience supernatural attacks...Since such exposures can result in serious illness or death, very few people deliberately choose to become shamans...Survival of these attacks is what makes a person a shaman. Normally it cannot be done alone, but requires the assistance of supernatural helpers, often working in conjunction with other shamans. While in a possession state, the victim encounters beings seemingly willing to give aid. The individual learns from them, and is cured when the being-powers, which were the source of illness or death, are themselves killed or sent back to their place of origin. In the process of being cured, shamans received supernatural powers and knowledge which enable them to do two things—move between the human and non-human realms and see into the future. Together, these capacities provide freedom from the normal restrictions associated with the immobility of real being, and of corporeal existence in general. They also make it possible to heal, prophesize, provide food, and change external conditions. In essence, they represent the potential for completing the transformation expressed by the new order exemplified totemically.\(^5\)

According to many prophet narratives, prophets recover from their illness without the aid of other shamans, as was usual. This human isolation is one notable difference between prophets and shamans.

There exist relatively few studies specifically on prophet movements in British Columbia. One notable exception is the 1935 classic study by Leslie Spier, *The Prophet Dance of the Northwest and Its Derivatives: The Source of the Ghost Dance*.\(^6\) Spier focused on a distinctive complex he called the "Prophet Dance," which like the better known Ghost Dance (which Spier believed was its antecedent), involved widespread pan-tribal participation with regional variations.\(^7\) The Prophet

---

\(^5\)Ibid., 227.


\(^7\)"It can be shown that among these peoples there was an old belief in the impending destruction and renewal of the world, when the dead would return, in conjunction with which there was a dance based on supposed imitation of the dances of the dead, and a conviction that intense preoccupation with the dance would hasten the happy day. From time to time men [and women] 'died' and returned to life with renewed assurances of the truth of the doctrine;" Ibid., 5.
Dance diffused widely among Northwest Coast, Plateau and Cordilleran First Nations in at least two distinct waves (circa 1800-1820, 1820-1836). Spier also identified the chief characteristic of the Prophet Dance as a prophet figure (an individual who had “died” and travelled to the land of the dead or some dimension), who returned with a message that foretold future events and in particular, about the impending destruction of world. This is the conventional pattern of shamanic power acquisition. This apocalyptic vision of destruction would bring about a renewal of the world, including the return of the dead. This process could be hastened through dancing (often circular group dancing with distinctive prayer-like arm movements), moral living, and through other preparations that frequently were connected to the return of the Old One and Coyote (mythic transformer figures of the Plateau culture area, one a creator and the other a trickster). “Proselytizing also should not be overlooked as a specific element common to the Prophet...Dance. It appeared in the Northwest in the prophets who travelled from village to village, from tribe to tribe, spreading their gospel.” This latter proselytization, set this prophet movement apart from usual shamanic activity.

Spier concluded that the Prophet Dance was an entirely indigenous form of religious expression, but he identified a second phase of prophet dancing in the 1820s and 1830s that was characterized by its overlay of Christian elements. These varied greatly, but generally identifiably Christian practices included observance of the Sabbath and some holy days and the sign of the cross or a Christian posture in prayer. Indeed, one of Spier’s most insightful conclusions came out of his comparison of these two forms of Prophet Dance. Far from being in opposition to one another, he viewed them as parallel doctrines: “So far as the natives were concerned then the new religion from the east was confirmation and stimulus to existing beliefs.” He believed that this exposure to Christian symbols and practices explained “both the ready acceptance of

---

8While Spier gives a definite date to the second Christianized phase, he is less precise about the first form of the Prophet Dance, which, depending on the region and Native group, ranged from 1770-1870s.
9"This is a most unusual characteristic for an Indian cult. While ceremonies undeniably spread, there is, as a rule, no definite proselytizing urge. This might be looked on a Christian derivative were it not that it seems to be involved in the very nature of the doctrine and the specific documentation for it in the Northwest as a pre-Christian practice."
Spier, Prophet Dance, 12.
10Ibid., 20.
11Ibid., 35.
Christianity at its point of introduction and its rapid spread. In this respect, Bini the Wet’suwet’en prophet was both contemporary to and part of the second phase or Christianized Prophet Dancing which diffused northward from its origins in the Columbia-Snake region to reach the Wet’suwet’en, Gitxsan, Nisga’a Tsimshian, and Tlingit in the north.

There are several studies which focus on the Prophet Dance as it appeared in individual British Columbia First Nations, but most of the research on British Columbia prophet movements is centred around the Plateau culture area. Clearly historians should not always view Christianity as being in absolute opposition to indigenous religious traditions. The influence of these movements extending into British Columbia was sometimes very long-lasting, and their existence aided First Nations in their conceptualization of Christian conversion and social changes introduced through missionization. My interpretation of prophets as connected to the religious encounters between Christian missionaries and Native spirituality is only one among many. The view of prophets as important religious mediators is a model useful to my inquiry into the nature of the Native role in Christianization. Early nineteenth century prophet narratives incorporated post-contact cultural changes, but remained set within the context of “traditional” oral literature, following all the prescribed forms or patterns regardless of Christian elements within the stories. Later distinctively post-missionary Christian forms of collective

12Ibid., 30.
14Much of this stems from an interest in American-based movements, especially that of the Ghost Dance(s) of the 1890s. Spier’s study on the Prophet Dance, various works on the Smohalla cult (a prophet movement along the Columbia River circa 1870s with decidedly nativistic, anti-white features), and several monographs on the origins of the Shaker Church (an institutionalized prophet movement originating in the southern Puget sound region in the 1880s), fall into this category.
15The belief in prophets and the use of prophecy continues today in many Native communities. Although prophets play many different roles and may be interpreted in a variety of ways, it is useful to my examination to consider prophets as one of two religious mediators. My emphasis here is to avoid the usual dichotomy employed when examining the question of religion in the colonial British Columbia (i.e. shaman vs. missionary) in favour of those Native figures who mediated the two extremes: prophets incorporating Christian elements and catechists.
16Julie Cruikshank’s perspectives on prophecy have been very helpful to my own understanding of where prophet movements fit into Tsimshian Christianization. Her extensive collaborative work with Yukon elders and aboriginal
activity, like revivals and evangelism, drew on pre-existing transformative experiences like prophet movements.

One of the foci of some kinds of indigenous prophecy was the belief in the coming destruction of the world. This was not a negative event but, as with the Christian Millennium, combined massive upheaval and catastrophe with renewal, rebirth and the return of powerful beings to the earth. The anticipation of this time appeared all the more imminent to many First Nations, as the nineteenth century was ripe with signs and portents that the end of the world was near: epidemics, wars, rapid change, and encounters with strange new technologies, religions, and peoples. Material benefits accompanying lifestyle changes may have stimulated a “cargo cult-like” religious response, but massive depopulation and the failure of ancient healing solutions in the wake of new diseases indicated a larger spiritual imbalance at work. The relationship of prophecy to disease was an important theme in many of these prophet movements.

In some instances, prophet movements were attempts to cope with the physical and cultural ravages of post-contact epidemics. As with many Europeans at the time, most eighteenth and early nineteenth century aboriginal groups in British Columbia did not understand that external contagion caused disease and death. For the Fraser-Columbia plateau groups, writes Elizabeth Vibert, “[s]mallpox, and other serious diseases, signaled an imbalance or power struggle among the personal spirit partners that animated the spiritual universe of the Plateau.

women in Northern Canada led her to an acute awareness of the integral nature of the cultural or narrative “scaffolding” has to conceptualizing and expressing Native history. In western subarctic cultures she has found that prophecy “has long provided a routine, conventional kind of explanation that makes sense of complex changes in familiar ways.” See Cruikshank, “Claiming Legitimacy,” 50. The reception of prophets and subsequent Tsimshian understandings of the Christian messages they brought, can be seen in a similar light.

17 Cargo cults were defined by anthropologists working in the post-World War II South Pacific (especially Melanesia), as a particular form of millenarianism, whereby indigenous peoples believed that their ancestors would be transformed into powerful supernatural beings. They were expected to return to life, bringing with them Western material goods (airplanes, steamships, etc.). The material objects themselves were sometimes worshipped as a way of facilitating this return and to initiate the new social order, when indigenous peoples would regain property and power in their homelands. For example, see Kenelm Burridge, Mambu: A Study of Melanesian Cargo Movements and their Social and Ideological Background (New York: Harper and Row, 1960); and Kenelm Burridge, New Heaven, New Earth: A Study of Millenarian Activities (New York: Schocken Books, 1969). Recently, however, scholars have questioned the concept of “cargo cults” as an anthropological trope. James Clifford and G. E. Marcus, eds., Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Patrick Wolfe describes a similar phenomenon in how anthropologists have written about the Dreamtime in studies of the Koori (an aboriginal group in southeastern Australia): Patrick Wolfe, “On Being Woken Up: The Dreamtime in Anthropology and in Australian Settler Culture,” Comparative Studies in Society and History 33, no. 2 (April 1991): 197-224.
Smallpox was read as a spiritual crisis within Plateau societies. Accordingly, spiritual healers attempted to affect cures using “traditional” ceremonies and rituals, but these proved ineffective against the new highly contagious diseases. Prophets arose as a challenge to conventional healing methods. Drawing on both older traditions, especially on apocalyptic narratives (the end of the world, the resurrection of the dead and the return of the Old One and Coyote), and innovation (incorporating “whites” or Christian elements in their prophecies), prophets aimed to correct the spiritual imbalance causing pestilence and to repair, renew, and revitalize Native societies. Parallels can be drawn between the challenge prophets represented to shamanic power and authority, and the reception of Christianity as a new power that both shored up and clashed with “traditional” forms. Prophets furthered the process of Christianization by spreading knowledge about Christianity and sometimes, making use of Christian symbols and practices. One such prophet movement originated outside Tsimshian territory proper, but nonetheless, exerted considerable influence upon them. It provides a clear example of how Christian teachings were accepted among Tsimshian people with the intervention of empowered Native individuals.

Bini, the Prophet

I died and ascended to heaven, but God made me alive again and sent me back to earth to teach you what you must do. You must chant my songs, for they are prayers; and you must make the sign of the cross. Things are going to change.

—attributed to the prophet Bini

Bini was one of many mid-century British Columbia prophets, also called Beni, Beeney, Benee, Peni, Kwis, Kwes, the Bulkley River Prophet or the Carrier Prophet. Spier identified him as part of the larger Prophet Dance complex, although this definition is likely too narrow, and I consider Bini as a figure in the process of Christianization. As with many nineteenth century prophets, documentary references to Bini are usually brief and scattered. Most are derived from

---

18Vibert, “Natives were Strong to Live,” 199.
20Marius Barbeau, Indian Days in the Canadian Rockies (Toronto: Macmillan Co. of Canada Ltd., 1923), 17-58; Spier, Prophet Dance, 62-63; Jenness, Carrier Indians, 547-559; and Jay Miller, “Tsimshian Religion in Historical Perspective:
oral sources collected by ethnographers early in the twentieth century. Although information is often conflicting, it is known that Bini was a Wet'suwet'en from the Bulkley River area. He taught a syncretic form of religion, which he claimed to have learned after dying and visiting “heaven.” Most accounts of Bini emphasize that he was not practicing shamanism in the “traditional” sense, and he began his work before the introduction of Christian missions into the colony. It is clear that Bini’s movement had considerable influence among a wide variety of Native groups, including the Tsimshian and must be considered a cross-cultural phenomena. Bini was known as far north as Haines Alaska, as far south as Vancouver Island, and as far east, as the plains over the Rockies.

Common elements in multiple versions of the Bini narrative include, his death and subsequent resurrection, his ascent to heaven, and his meeting with a strange people dressed in white or who resembled ghosts, known as the “sky people.” In some narratives Bini is a follower of another prophet before him, Uzakle. Kwis, as Bini was called before he became a prophet, was a gambler, and in one account “a rake.” His moral reformation occurred through a near-death or death-trance experience. His change of name to Bini, meaning “mind-all-over-the world” or “his own mind,” signified this transformation. Upon his revival, Bini is said to have


I am basing my general comments about the form and content of Bini’s prophecies, his reception, and death on a variety of secondary sources (Morice, Collison, Barbeau, Spier, Jenness, Whitehead, and Jay Miller) and a number of oral narratives on Bini recorded by Marius Barbeau and William Beynon. In particular: Joseph Bradley, “When the Bini teachings reached all the tribes,” William Beynon Manuscripts, vol. 3, no. 55 pp. 1-22, UBCL #AW1 R7173 no. 1/4; and 16 selected Bini narratives contained in Marius Barbeau Northwest Coast Files, B-F-198.1-18: “Bini, the Carrier Seer,” and B-F-322.1-20: “Bini the Prophet: The Seer,” BCA Add. MSS. 2102, #A-1418, 1421. See Appendix E for a list of similarities and characteristics of these selected Bini narratives.

While several accounts insist that Bini lived to see the coming of the white missionaries, it is unclear exactly when in the nineteenth century this took place because Bini had a number of disciples and most likely imitators who took his name. Some suggest Bini gained influence around 1800, although the 1820s-1840s is the most common time-frame estimate. Several accounts pinpoint his final death in the 1870s.


The reference to “white” or light strangers associated with the sky is a common reference in prophet narratives of neighbouring First Nations. For example, the title reference to Dunne-za belief in “Swan People”; see Ridington, Swan People; Yukon Tutchone references to “Cloud People”; see Cruikshank, “Claiming Legitimacy,” 153-154.

Spier, Prophet Dance, 63; Barbeau, Indian Days, 31; and William Henry Collison, In the Wake of the War Canoe: a stirring record of forty years’ successful labour, peril and adventure amongst the savage Indian tribes of the Pacific coast, and the piratical head-hunting Haida of the Queen Charlotte Islands, British Columbia [1915], ed. Charles Lillard (Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1981), 90.
acted differently and spoke a strange language, which had to be interpreted by an assistant, sometimes identified as his nephew. Bini travelled widely among many Native groups, preaching what the “sky people” had taught him, including, many obviously Christian elements: the sign of the cross, special songs and dances, use of a wooden cross, forms of baptism, confession, the concept of penance, and the “Five Commandments.” In many versions, miracles are attributed to him, and almost all refer to confrontations with Native shamans.

He predicted the coming of the “sky people,” said to dwell in the east and the south and anticipated the arrival of European trade goods, horses, telegraphs, steamboats, disease, and of newcomers who would also teach this new religion. This suggests that the movement occurred in the late eighteenth or very early nineteenth century, before the entry of non-indigenous traders into the region. Frank Nawxs recalled in later years that, “Bini could tell you about the wolverine. He was like a school man today. Bini knew everything before it happened. He told things before they happened.”

Reverend W. Collison witnessed a reenactment by one who had been one of Bini’s followers: “An old man who was quite blind, and whose memory of the Peni [Bini] was very vivid, went through the entire performance for my benefit on one occasion, in my headquarters at the Nass Eulachon Fishery. He commenced with a low, mournful chant, crossed himself, prayed, sang again, and danced. With it he also combined the incantations of the shaman.” Collison’s reaction to this was mixed. He wrote that the movement “was a strange combination, not wholly devoid of good. It revealed the religious desire in man. It was a reaching out for something above and beyond them.”

With his predictions about the material benefits to be brought about by the arrival of European culture, Bini's prophecies are reminiscent of “cargo cults” documented elsewhere in the world, where the acquisition of technology and material possessions is a primary objective.

---

27 Collison, Wake of the War Canoe, 190-191.
28 Ibid., 191.
following indirect or direct contact with new or "other" cultures. They are also reminiscent of the material attractions that would be sought by some Natives through conversion to Christianity. Bini both predicted the coming of a new religion (Christianity) and part of the process of Christianization itself. Although he may have disseminated merely Christian symbols and practices without the same meaning they would later have under direct missionary instruction, they nonetheless functioned in the same manner in terms of giving practitioners a powerful new identity (as halait; a Christian; as a religious person) and in revitalizing, to some extent, Native communities.

A common characteristic of Native person's journey to another dimension or non-human realm, was an inversion of the normal order of things. Indeed, this one was an important signifier to the person attempting a transformation that s/he had crossed over into another place and usual codes of behaviour or laws of causality seemed out of synchronization. Bini also predicted the reversal of things. The dead might be raised again through dancing (one factor of the Bini movement that convinced Spier that it was a manifestation of the Prophet Dance complex). Disease, the inverse of a balanced spiritual world was another such reversal. One Bini narrative specified the dance would make the participants "white," which could both reflect becoming halait associated with the white-beings Bini encountered in his journey to "heaven," or becoming as Europeans, presumably in possession of all those material goods anticipated by Bini. He also predicted that the poor would become rich and those who were wealthy, if they did not follow his message, would become poor. Later in life, Bini maintained an ongoing communication with the sky spirits.

In one account, very reminiscent of the Prophet Dance's attempts to raise the dead, Bini's followers tried to resurrect a dead child by dancing as Bini had taught them. All attempts failed. Messages from non-human or superhuman sources always had the potential for danger, especially if the prophet was not strong enough or if followers did not comply with the doctrine

---

29See note 17, above.
Johnny Patsy attributed Bini's death to his failure to follow his own prescriptions. Bini used a shaman's rattle in a healing ceremony, in addition to the sacred songs he had been taught by the sky-beings, and "[t]hat is why Bini died... Otherwise he would have lived forever." Just as he had been brought back from the dead during his first encounter with superhuman forces, he predicted that after he died a second time, he would also return. He left instructions with his followers not to cremate his remains and to listen carefully around his funeral box for any sounds. Several oral narratives record that while his followers did hear something before Bini's body was buried and/or cremated, they were too afraid to open the box. Hence, according to one informant from Hazelton, Bini died permanently four years before the arrival of Europeans into Wet'suwet'en territory.

The influence of Bini remained long after he was gone. Several oral histories and secondary sources claim Bini had a number of imitators, who may or may not have adopted his name. In discussing the significance of this prophet, Diamond Jenness wrote to Marius Barbeau: "He does not seem to have established anything like a hegemony even in [his] own tribe; his religion coexisted alongside of the old religion." While undoubtedly a challenge to other Native healers and shamans, as some narratives of Bini indeed emphasize, ultimately the "new" religion Bini offered was added to the spiritual powers and rituals of North Pacific slope First Nations. The familiar religion "Christianity" as introduced directly by Euro-Canadian missionaries would be treated similarly.

While the various Bini narratives give a breadth of detail of the form and function of the movement, positioning the Bini in his proper historical context is difficult, given the oral documentation. What is certain, is that Bini was a pre-mission phenomenon. Arthur Wellington

---

31 Interestingly enough, this fear applied to Christian power as well, as was the case for one example historian David Mulhall found recorded by Catholic missionary, Adrien Morice: "At Natlelh he found the whole band crying fretfully because a giant as big as a mountain had been seen walking on snow-shoes in the area. The Quesnel Carrier had heard that the Pope was predicting three days of complete darkness from which only those who possessed holy candles would emerge alive." A. G. Morice, Au pays de l'ours noir Chez les Sauvages de la Colombie Britannique (Paris-Lyon: Delhomme et Briguet, 1897), 249; quoted in David Mulhall, Will to Power: The Missionary Career of Father Morice (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), 113.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

Clah listed two pre-missionary “revivals” that reached the Coast Tsimshian around Fort Simpson sometime between 1834-1836 and another group of revivals in 1853 or 1855.35 The first “revival time” as Clah termed it, was what “we call mooden” and specifically involved dancing.36 The second revival Clah referred explicitly to as “Benee.” Clah’s grandson, ethnologist William Beynon wrote to Marius Barbeau concerning when Bini might have arrived among the Tsimshian. Referring to his grandfather’s notes he quoted: “agreat [sic] revival was on, at all the villages and among all the people there was much dancing and seeing of the Holy spirit, in 1834. And in 1837 small pox came and destroyed the many people at every place up North and....three thousand people have died.”37 The convergence of a smallpox epidemic may have figured into either the rise or the decline of the prophet movement. Anthropologists concur with this dating of the Bini prophet movement to the 1830s or 1840s, making the prophet’s predictions about European material cultures not prophetic at all.38 However, Clah’s alternate dates for Bini’s arrival on the coast in the mid-1850s can be substantiated by William Duncan’s correspondence. Shortly after his arrival on the North Coast in 1857, Duncan learned from Hudson Bay Company officers of a prophet from the interior who had arrived at Fort Simpson, several years earlier in the Spring. He claimed to have been given a message by an Angel to “bring the word of God” to the Tsimshian.

The sum total of his teaching amounted to a few popish ceremonies, mixed with Indian customs. Cross-bowing—wearing crosses around the neck—singing and dancing without laughing—were all he demanded. The enthusiasm of the man was so great and his appearance and tenets so startling that the Indians almost to a man welcomed him and obeyed his injunctions.... The Officers in charge of the Fort were astoimded to see how readily they responded to this man’s call.39

Whether Bini appeared among the Tsimshian in 1834 or 1855 may be not as important as the fact that both dates precede direct missionary involvement in either Tsimshian or Wet’suwet’en

---

35 Arthur Wellington Clah, “Diary and Notes relating to Arthur Wellington Clah,” George Henry Raley Collection, BCA H D R13. There are also several examples of Clah’s chronologies throughout his journals. See AWCJ, Aug-Dec, 1887, NAC MG40 F11 #A-1714.
36 This could be a reference to the Prophet Dance, or as William Beynon believed, a new halalt dance.
37 William Beynon, typescript of letter to Marius Barbeau, dated March 27, 1923, Port Simpson, BC, Marius Barbeau, Northwest Coast Files, B-F-197.6. BCA Add. MSS. 2101, #A-1418.
territory. The multiple appearances of a Bini, give credence to the claim that a number of prophets assumed the name throughout the century and that Bini may be considered a harbinger of a form of Prophet Dance bringing Christian elements to the Wet'suwet'en and their neighbours, especially the Tsimshian. The passing on of the same name to other prophets was in keeping with Bini as a “traditional” chief.

Studies of Bini and similar prophet movements that combine Native and Christian elements, question the source of the Christian ideas. Bini likely knew of Europeans and their goods through Native trading networks. Indigenous sources trace the movement from east to west from Wet’suwet’en territory along “traditional” trade routes to the coast and then further diffusion, north and south along the coast. Beynon observed that several oral narratives on Bini suggested that Bini was not as popular among his own people, the Wet’suwet’en at Hagwilget (Tse-kya), as he was among the Gitxsan and the Coast Tsimshian. Even if the distribution is not exclusively east to west, the message was carried from First Nation to First Nation. Bini’s songs were passed from the Kitkatla to the Haida of Skidegate and even as far south as the Cowichan, in the Nanaimo area whose oral records reference Bini’s teachings. Euro-Canadian narratives on the Bini prophet, on the other hand, emphasize the role of non-Native missionaries in the

---

40 In addition to dates provided by eyewitness or anecdotal evidence, it is likely that Bini arose to power around the mid-nineteenth century because of a unique event in his clan history. Bini was originally from the Tsayu [Tsah-yu] clan of the Hagwilget people which amalgamated with the Larhtsamesuyh clan in the mid-nineteenth century. He became the second chief of this reconstituted clan. A totem pole belonging to Bini was erected at mid-century (by him or one of his successors in his commemoration), or at least before the Western Union Telegraph line was being constructed, whose crews noted the pole was standing at Hagwilget in 1866. A beaver crest that was formerly part of the pole came to be placed on Bini’s grave. Marius Barbeau, Totem Poles of the Gitksan, Upper Skeena River, British Columbia, Anthropological Series no. 12, Bulletin no. 16 (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, n.d.), 143; and William Beynon, “Notes on Bini” following narrative “When the Bini teaching reached all Tribes,” informant: Joseph Bradley, William Beynon Manuscripts, vol. 3, no. 55 p. 22, UBCL #AW1 R7173, 1/4.

41 After examining a collection of Tsimshian oral literature, anthropologist Louis Allaire reconstructed the Native “mental or cognitive” map of Tsimshian villages. He found that coastal villages were metaphorically designated “containers” while interior groups were “food.” Louis Allaire, “A Native Mental Map of Coast Tsimshian Villages,” in The Tsimshian: Images of the Past; Views for the Present, ed. Margaret Seguin (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1993), 82-98. Allaire only comments on the exchange of ceremonial items (neither container, nor food) as coming from the south. Yet, given the importance of the east-west/food-container orientation (which was economically, ceremonially, and symbolically reproduced), it seems appropriate that a religious movement arising in the interior should be well received on the coast. The area he describes was, in fact, an ancient aboriginal trade route that connected the Skeena, Upper Fraser, and Peace Rivers.


43 Thomas Crosby, Among the An-ko-me-nums, or Flathead Tribes of Indians of the Pacific Coast (Toronto: William Briggs, 1907), 18-19; and Spier, Prophet Dance, 39.
diffusion of religious knowledge. Missionaries attributed the movement to itinerant Roman Catholic activity in the area or from missions in the central and western subarctic, as Duncan’s comment on “popish ceremonies” in the above quotation attests. Anglican William Henry Collison, for example, dated the Bini “excitement” to 1849, which he saw as directly related to Father Nobili’s visit to the Stuart Lake area in 1846-47. Father Adrien Morice reported that “after Father Nobili’s departure, numerous pseudo-priests or, would-be prophets, sprang up from all places, who on the strength of dreams, real or pretended, claimed supernatural powers, preaches after a way, made people dance when they did not know how to make them pray, gave new names to their adherents, and otherwise counterfeited the work of the missionaries.”

Both Leslie Spier and Marius Barbeau theorized that Christian Métis and Iroquois employed in the fur trade, living as far away as Montana or as close as the Cariboo district (at Tête Jaune Cache), disseminated ideas about Christianity, which the prophet then copied. When H.B.C. trader William Brown arrived at Babine Lake in 1821 (opening Fort Kilmaurs/Old Fort Babine the following year), with him was at least one Iroquois employed by the company, who subsequently married a local Native woman. These explanations support the strength of Native initiative and innovation characteristic in the later mission period, and stress the importance of “traditional” religious specialists in communicating Christian teachings.

Another interesting theory postulated by Methodist missionary Rev. George H. Raley suggested that knowledge about Christianity came from the north directly from Russian Orthodox missionaries. This idea was also explored in a graduate thesis by Hilary E. Rumley.

---

44 There were Roman Catholic missions further east (e.g. Bear Lake) in the subarctic. There were also itinerant missionaries who passed through the area around Fort St. James and Fort Alexandria. Jay Miller, “Tsimshian Religion,” 142.

45 Collison, Wake of the War Canoe, 190.


47 Spier believed that these Caughnawaga Iroquois now living in Montana might have been exposed to the Handsome Lake prophet movement before moving westward. Spier, Prophet Dance, 35-36; Marius Barbeau, “Letter to L. Spier re: B-F-198.9, March 27, 1933” carbon copy, Marius Barbeau, Northwest Coast Files, B-F-198.10, BCA (Add. MSS. 2102), #A-1418; and Margaret Whitehead, The Cariboo Mission: A History of the Oblates (Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1981), 33.


While stationed at Kitamaat, Raley learned how missionized Alaskan Native groups transmitted knowledge of Christianity to some of the First Nations of British Columbia during spring eulachon fisheries. He discovered that Beni was an abbreviation of the name of one of the best known of these eighteenth century Russian missionaries, Innocentus Veniaminoff. Raley’s informant, Abpsileahkus, related to the missionary his father’s message “that the great spirit had sent Beni with a strange and wonderful message to this effect the chief of above is our father. He wishes us to be good, if we do good and live in peace he will reward us; if we do evil he will punish us.” Raley also heard the same story circulated among the Coast Tsimshian. This version held that Veniaminoff, “in his travels by canoe visited various tribes on the Stikine. The Stikine Indians contacted the Tsimsheans on the Skeena.” Once again, although Euro-Canadians deemed themselves the original source of Christianity, the actual transmission of Christian elements occurred through indigenous forms in the pre-mission period.

Prophet movements like Bini’s were one of the ways Christian knowledge was acquired. This emphasis is almost always made in Native sources, even recent ones, such as the History of Tse’kya (Hagwilget) published by the Wet’suwet’en tribal group:

The prophets learned some of their ideas from others who had seen Roman Catholic missionaries preaching elsewhere....The prophets told of the arrival of the priests and what the priests would say. They were also told of the kinds of things which would please the new god, teaching such things as the sign of the cross and the keeping of the Sabbath.

It is significant that Native informants told versions of the Bini prophet that always closely connected him to Christianity or some kind of syncretic melding of Native and Christian beliefs. Prophets display the indigenous openness to new kinds of spiritual transformation. It supports the findings of this thesis that Native groups have never viewed themselves as passive recipients of Christianity. It also confirms the evidence amassed here that Native peoples rarely accepted Christianity as an “all or nothing” proposition, at the individual level or for group and communal transformations.

---

52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
54 Cassidy, Gathering Place, 26.
Revivals

After the initial dissemination of the new religion, sustaining Christian fervour and practice was not easy. After the establishment of extensive networks of missions throughout British Columbia in the second half of the nineteenth century, Native and non-Native alike identified being Christian with certain behavioural and physical manifestations. Sustained piety was problematic in First Nations cultures that previously held a concept of distinct religious seasonality, in addition to belief in universal, a-temporal spiritual powers. Christianity had been placed into this pre-existing context, as this entry from Clah's journal so clearly captures:

Some people were converted not taste molases anymore. Friends promising in Salvation house to stop Smoking tobacco and stop council. methodis ran the church Bell. one man open his mouth about all Christ. he Says our religion just like Bear in winter time. Bear had good furs. But in summer time Bear lost his furs. this same our religion. every winter time our mouth is clean in church of God. good convarding [sic=converting]. But in Summer time we all losted run world for evil others Drinking every where.^^

After the initial sweetness of enthusiastic faith had worn off, there arose the very real problem of maintaining a level of Christianity during the spiritual “off-season” of summer, when material pursuits occupied the many and scattered mission villages which lay beyond any single missionary’s reach. When a community of individuals was recognized as “backsliding” one remedy, particularly among evangelical Protestant denominations, was revivalism.

Revivals were emotionally charged group meetings where one’s religious convictions and personal faith in evangelical Christianity were renewed, restored, or created. These revelations of faith involved mass participation, where a group of individuals were isolated from the outside world and subjected to a continuous flood of religion. Participants experienced a highly emotional exposure to religion, resulting in immediate and powerful personal transformation.^^

For a people like the Tsimshian, who already had a long-standing tradition of actively pursuing spiritual transformations as a method of achieving one’s more-than-human potential, (from shamans and prophets, or in ritualized group contexts such as the initiates to the secret societies

---

55AWCJ, Sunday October 28, 1894, NAC MG40 F11 #A-1706.
and receiving "real" names at a potlatch), access to this type dramatic Christian conversion was highly appealing.

Music almost always was a major expression at these gatherings. It is not surprising that many missions had their own choirs and brass bands (see Figure 10). Rev. William Henry Pierce once declared, "If I have, say a fine good singer with me, in a little time we shall have revival amongst the tribes, both inland and coast." In practice, these revivals carried an enthusiasm some missionaries aspired to and others dreaded. This description of the revivals during the winter of 1877-78 shows how such phenomena could be celebrated as evidence of the success of missionary endeavours:

Meetings were held for a number of weeks. Many flocked in from neighbouring tribes and from the mission at Fort Simpson, as well as from that on the Naas River, the messages of salvation were carried in advance of the missionary into distant places. Upon the shores of the Naas, where for ages had been heard the rattle and wild howling of incantations of medicine men, there were heard the sweet songs of Zion.

Not all missionaries agreed with this assessment. Some believed that extreme religious enthusiasm and excitement taken to such an extreme that Christians witnessed God's powers made manifest in the form of miracles (e.g. physical manifestations of God, Jesus, and the Holy Ghost, the appearance of angels and crosses) were signs that the mission was faltering. Revivals might be encouraged through the preaching of a particularly charismatic and gifted evangelist, but it was ultimately in the hands of the participants. These events could not be instigated or timed, yet many evangelical denominations depended on revivals to revitalize their membership. There were sometimes discernible patterns to their occurrence, related to deprivation or crisis within the community and to pre-existing beliefs on the seasonality of religious power. Revivals frequently occurred after a climactic event in the mission or the village, perhaps as an unconscious method of coping while renewing and rebuilding the faith. When a great storm destroyed the spire and tore the roof off the recently completed Methodist Church at Port Simpson in 1876, for example, the community responded first by physically rebuilding the

---

57 William Henry Pierce, typescript of letter to Rev. F. C. Stephenson (Toronto), dated Sept 26 1913, Port Essington, B.C, Methodist Church of Canada, Methodist Church Missionary Society, Board of Home Missions: Home Department Records, Accession #78.099C MCC BMH Box 8: Indian work; file 10: 1906-1916, UCA.
58 Alexander Begg, History of British Columbia from its Earliest Discovery to the Present-time (Toronto: William Briggs, 1894), 488-489.
structure and then by spiritual revitalizing the church through a revival, even though the resident missionary Thomas Crosby was absent. Similarly, after the intentional burning of the church at Kitkatla by traditionalist factions in 1885, to send a strong message against the Church Missionary Society, there were reportedly revivals in which even those who had participated in the destruction publicly repented. Then, when the Anglican church and a good portion of the Nisga’a village of Kincolith burned to the ground in September of 1893, its community rallied together to reconstruct the church and mission buildings entirely at their own expense. And, as Rev. William Henry Collison reported, again an intense regional revival broke out:

It was shortly after this great conflagration that an intense interest began to be manifested by the Indian Christians in spiritual matters. It spread rapidly to every town on the river. Even the heathen Indians partook of the same spirit. Services and meetings for prayer and the study of Scriptures were held daily, and continued often till past midnight. As the canoes passed up and down the river and along the inlets, songs of praise might be heard in the various languages. Numbers of men and women were to be found preaching and praying out-of-doors, at the fisheries and other camps.

Evangelism—the need to carry the intense experience to others—was a powerful by-product of revivals. Consequently, revivals could result in the destruction of “traditional” aboriginal practices, especially to sacred and historical artifacts. This extended not only to evangelical Protestant forms, but Catholic gatherings. For example, three days into a large Catholic réunion on July 28, 1901, religious enthusiasm prompted Native participants to burn all their “traditional” potlatch regalia. Catholic Natives may have done so in demonstration of their Christianity, although the Indian agent R. E. Loring reported that the action may have been openly encouraged by Fathers Morice and Wagner and the Bishop Dotenwill, all of whom were in attendance. The oral record is more explicit about the matter:

It was a beautiful evening and they lit a fire in front of where the bishop was standing to make a light. So the bishop said: —If you have real heathenness and have become Christians go and have your heathen regalia and all throw them into the [sic] fire. And the bishop said: —Do you burn them without regretting. And those that burn them said: -- Yes. And we would burn more for you sake. But they did not all jump up. Up good all the fire goes right up to heaven, you have taken it all from your house, but when the fire

59 Collison, Wake of War Canoe, 30; and Hugh McCullum and Karmel Taylor McCullum, Caledonia: 100 Years Ahead (Toronto: The Anglican Book Centre, 1979), 65.
60 Collison, Wake of War Canoe, 229.
61 Cassidy, Gathering Place, 34.
refuses to burn there are some left. And the Indians made several trips back and forth preaching to others... They were not afraid by the bishop or Father Morrice [sic] to burn them, it is only because the bishop taunted them, outside them. And they did it voluntarily. Father Godfrey said it was in 1902.63

In other words, missionaries provoked the destruction by publicly shaming the revival’s participants into burning their “traditional” regalia.64 In these ways the Christian identity, discovered or uncovered during a revival prompted or even demanded public announcement which could mean renouncing that which the missionaries and the churches openly opposed.

Revivals among North Coast peoples were limited in scope because of the difficulty in maintaining the intense level of religious excitement. Therefore, revivals were cyclical events in the history of British Columbia’s North Coast missions. While sometimes localized, revivals often spread in their scope, both spatially and temporally. The revivalism that surfaced in 1876-1878 on the Lower Skeena was centred around Fort Simpson and Metlakatla, and again in the same area in late-1882, which unfortunately ended in a deadly outbreak of measles. In the early 1890s revivalistic activity spread widely along the Nass River corridor and did not dissipate until mid-decade. The next cycle of revivals apparently occurred in the region in the early twentieth century, with reports of revivals on the Lower Skeena in 1915 and again at the close of the decade, and on the Upper Nass River in the winter of 1917 or 1918.

In addition to being cyclical, revivals were frequently seasonal. Bolt suggests that, because revivals were predominantly winter phenomena, the Tsimshian considered them partial “substitutes for the old winter ceremonial complex, which, to the consternation of the missionaries, resurfaced more strongly when there were no revivals.”65 As explained in chapter 2, among the Tsimshian peoples there was a predisposition to perceive a certain seasonality to revivalistic religion. In the pre-Christian cosmology of the Tsimshian peoples, while spiritual power was available to shamans (swansk halait) any time of year, certain naxnox and other

64Apparently, this trend continued well into the nineteenth century. Marius Barbeau reported that revivals at other locations also induced individuals to destroy their family or clan totem poles, such as was the case at Gitlakdamiks on the upper Nass river in the winter of 1917 or 1918 and at Port Simpson a few years later. Barbeau, Totem Poles of the Gitksan, 1. I will explore the relationship of totem poles to Christian missions in chapter 9.
superhuman phenomena were most active in the late Fall and Winter. These are often called winter ceremonials or winter dance complexes, imported from the Heiltsuk cultural centre, which the Tsimshian called wiitsdaa. The four secret societies and a series of dances and performances owned by lineage chiefs occurred only during the winter season when spiritual power (naxnox) was available, and could be turned on and off through the appropriate ritual, presentation, and ceremony. They all featured dramatic representations of superhuman beings, dramatized ancestral contact with those beings, and demonstrations of "real" powers. Bolt postulated that "Crosby saw revivals as antidotes to 'pagan, heathen' rituals and celebrations and, as noted above, complaints about the lack of revivals coincided with the despair which Crosby felt about the persistence of traditional religious practices." However, one could draw another conclusion, and simply regard winter as a social and religious season. One of Marius Barbeau's informants in the Upper Skeena area discussed revivalistic activity of the Epworth League, and the Salvation and Church Armies frequently occurred during the winter. Thus, just as prophet movements like Bini provide an indigenous discourse about the dissemination of Christian knowledge, winter revivals recalled a pre-existing tradition of acquiring transformations at specific times of the year.

Two prominent strains that also found representation in the North Coast area, are what William Westfall's examination of Protestant culture elsewhere in Canada has identified as the "religion of order" and the "religion of experience." The former views God "as a divine rational intelligence conducting a learned discourse for humanity through the intermediary of nature." Conversion was therefore an education in the logic of God's ordered universe—through restraint and gradual advancement, "one gained knowledge of the religious and social principles that

69Bolt, Thomas Crosby, 50.
70"And they sang and prayed, and these revivals lasted for three days and they were so hoarse from singing and praying they could not talk at all, they were all singing and whispering. This thing often happened during the winter months. An Indian was a very good christian in the winter months when he had nothing else to do. And during the summer when he goes fishing he is never man altogether." Informant: Mrs. Cox, Hazelton, B-F-321.15 "anecdote re: missionary contacts," M. Barbeau orig. fn., n.d. pp. 13-19, 2 typed copies, p. 2. Marius Barbeau, Northwest Coast Files, BCA Add. MSS. 1201, #A-1421.
71Westfall, Two Worlds, 38.
helped one to lead a virtuous and rational life.” From this perspective, missions in British Columbia were more than mere vehicles for conversion to Christianity, they served to facilitate the re-ordering of First Nations cultures into, what Homi Bhabha terms “colonial mimicries.” In the context of North Coast missions, the “religion of order” concept can be applied to the generic “civilizing” agenda of all missions, regardless of denomination.

The other concept, the “religion of experience,” expresses the power of God not as creator of an ordered universe, but as saviour of humankind. “[A]s Christ suffered to save the world, so must all undergo an intense physical and emotional experience in order to save their souls.” Christianity was not a process to be learned, but a faith to be experienced. Whereas the “religion of order” encouraged conformity and the suppression of passion, the “religion of experience” called for just the opposite. Christianity had to be personally felt. Conversion was the establishment of a personal relationship with the Saviour Christ. Although the latter is usually associated with evangelical religions, possibly all Protestant denominations operating “Indian” missions expected their converts to undergo a significant personal transformation as a result of becoming Christian. The revivalism of Native Methodism or Salvation Army was undoubtedly influenced by an experiential understanding of Christianity.

Christianity generally was force for change and part of a colonial hegemony that invaded from without and within. However, inter-denominational rivalry induced tensions among the missionized. The alleged “one true religion” was offered in a variety of forms. How First Nations utilized these rivalries within Protestantism will be explored following chapters. The conflict between the “religion of order” and the “religion of experience” can be demonstrated in how a single event, such as Metlakatla’s evangelical revival in 1877, illustrates the Native hunger for both the order and personal experience offered by Christianity, a hunger that was denied by missionaries, who were committed to only one or the other concept for their mission.

72 Ibid.
73 As Homi Bhabha defined this hegemonic process, “...colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite... Mimicry is...the sign of the double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which ‘appropriates’ the Other as it visualizes power.” Homi Bhabba, “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” in Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 153.
74 Westfall, Two Worlds, 38.
Metlakatla's "Religious Excitement" in 1877

Metlakatla was the most formalized Christian village in the region, supposedly a veritable microcosm of British civilization and Victorian order. Yet even at Metlakatla, "emotional outbursts" of faith took place. When William Duncan temporarily left Metlakatla in August 1877, his inexperienced replacement, Rev. A. J. Hall could not yet speak or understand the Coast Tsimshian language (Sm'algyax). As a result, the control of the mission, worship, and the larger community itself was entirely given over to the resident Tsimshian. This was a profound departure from the far-reaching authoritarian role Duncan had hitherto assumed in the village. Native catechists and teachers held all the religious services and within a matter of a few days, a revival was underway. By all accounts, this revival was very similar to evangelical revivals elsewhere in Protestant Canada. Yet non-Natives labelled it "superstition," "backsliding," and a lack of a deep understanding of Christianity. They did not accept it as a "true" outpouring of evangelical faith. Duncan's friend, Henry S. Wellcome, gave this colourful description in his 1887 book on Metlakatla:

At one time, Mr. Duncan entirely abdicated the mission to an ordained clergyman sent out by the Society and had only been absent a few weeks, preparing for a new mission, when Metlakatla was thrown into dreadful confusion; and the organization well-nigh wrecked the unwise ecclesiastical enthusiasm of the new missionary; the effects of those methods, upon many of the still superstitious minds, was to create a fanatical cyclone. Some were led in their delirium, to declare that they witnessed miracles, beheld and held conversation with the Holy Spirit; and that angels hovered about the village.\(^7\)

Here the minister preaches about miracles, yet those who experienced similar phenomena were denounced. Why were Anglican missionaries so averse to labelling the movement a genuine outpouring of Christian belief? Some of this hesitancy gives us insight into the function revivalism had in the process of Christianization throughout the region.

Duncan and other missionaries largely described the events of 1877, after the fact. They were attempting to explain the revival to their superiors at the Church Missionary Society and to the formal investigation held by Duncan after his return to Metlakatla. Reverend A. J. Hall and the lay leader, Henry Schutt were the two Euro-Canadian missionaries who were present during the actual revival. Schutt, a Yorkshireman, who had arrived at Metlakatla in 1876 with his wife

and children, and took up the post as the mission school teacher and lay leader. During his time there, Schutt learned to speak some Coast Tsimshian, while Hall, who had arrived in the summer of 1877, had not yet mastered enough of the Native language to effectively communicate. To address Hall's linguistic deficiencies, before his departure Duncan had appointed one of Metlakatla's leading Christian converts, Tsimshian David Leask, as Hall's chief interpreter. Other Native Christians and elders translated Hall's sermons, preached to their fellow Tsimshians at evening services, and conducted their own prayer meetings. Hall explained that shortly after Duncan's departure, a number of Tsimshian who had experienced a renewed interest in the Christian faith approached him. This group of men "asked permission to have a meeting for prayer and reading of the Bible in the school among themselves." These became regular weekly meetings and soon a group of Native women requested the same. "[T]his was also granted and experienced women or an elder presided and occasionally Mrs. Schutt spoke a few words to them." Hall never attended these meetings, and with the exception of the reference to his wife's participation, it seems the study sessions were conducted entirely by the Tsimshian, unsupervised by non-Natives. "On looking back with my greater knowledge of the people," wrote Hall to his superiors, "I am convinced it was wrong to allow these meetings to assemble. I was never present myself at one of them—I know little of the language and placed too much confidence in those who presided." Hall blamed the religious enthusiasm that followed on this lack of supervision and control.

Late one Sunday evening a group of five men had gone into the church to pray, when they perceived a "supernatural light," called others inside, and witnessed the appearance of Jesus.

These five state they heard a murmuring sound proceeding from near the communion table. Thinking it was some one at prayer, they prayed. After which they struck a match to see who it was but not being able to find any one in the Church they became awe struck—one fainted away & three they ran through the village declaring that the Spirit of God had visited the Church and that the voice they had heard was His voice. The people rushed to the Church and at 3 A. M., it was crowded...

---

77 ibid., 4.
78 ibid.
79 ibid.
Rather than consider the night's events in a positive light, Hall acted immediately to
denounce the reported sightings of supernatural appearances as an “error” and called out the
village police to enforce the suspension of all further meetings:81

On entering the church, I went straight to the reading desk, and by means of an
Interpreter told those present of their error, dismissed them and then locked the door. We
then took measure to stop all meetings. I also spoke in my addresses upon the inward
work of the Holy Spirit and the folly of expecting outward manifestations of God’s
presence.82

As for Henry Schutt, he interpreted the events as a reversion to “the old superstitious feelings of
the Indians,” although the community’s response was universally Christian in form.

Rev. W. C. Bompas, the Anglican Bishop of Athabasca, visited Metlakatla just after the
revival. In his strong letter to the C.M.S. he called the revival “a fanaticism,” “outburst,” “storm,”
“rebellion,” and “the superstition of fanakes [sic].”83 When a horrified William Duncan read
Victoria newspapers that reported that angels had been seen at Metlakatla and Fort Simpson, he
immediately returned to Metlakatla to conduct an investigation of this alleged revival. What
most disturbed Duncan, was what he described as the air of secrecy that surrounded the events:
“[M]any of both sexes wandered about the village and in the bush at all hours of the night,” and
allegedly a “party of young girls who had been roaming the bush at night, announced...they had
discovered the cross of Jesus.”84 Duncan promptly dismissed the latter as “nothing but a rotten
branch of a tree.”85 At the time of the “religious excitement,” some sixty men in six canoes had
left the mission and were well received in Fort Simpson, where a Methodist revival was
underway. Duncan unhappy that some Metlakatlans had seen fit to spread the news of what he
termed merely a “delusion” and was most outraged with their behaviour once returned: “This
party had worked themselves up into such a frenzy at Fort Simpson, (giving out that they had
seen Angels there) that they presented the appearance of being possessed, and one of the Native

82A. J. Hall, Letter to the CMS, 6 March 1878, Metlakatla, North Pacific Mission, p. 5, CMSP, C.1./L.4: 1875-1879, 210,
#A-106.
83Rt. Rev. William C. Bompas, Letter from Bishop of Athabasca to CMS, 29 January 1878, Metlakatla, British
85Ibid., 3.
teachers set about to exorcise them in the Name of Jesus." The Native teacher, was allegedly David Leask, the very Tsimshian man whom Duncan had appointed to assist Hall.

One explanation for why the Metlakatlans chose to express their religious convictions in such an emotional and enthusiastic manner, most likely had something to do with the preaching techniques of the missionary staff. Although an evangelical who encouraged a depth of faith, Duncan did not encourage highly emotional or demonstrative displays of it. Hall was much more evangelical in style as well as interpretation. This is obvious from Duncan's complaints that Hall was much too emotional and zealous when he preached: "Mr. Hall began to give the Indians very passionate addresses in English. So alarming were these Sermons that Mr. Schutt declares that on some occasions he could scarcely retain his seat." Bishop Bompas concurred, suggesting that Hall's "boisterous tones and gesticulations" and his "ardent temperament" and "excessive zeal" would be better served at another mission.

Equally important, was Hall's message itself. Hall admitted to preaching from texts that emphasized the need to be born again in Christ through belief and faith alone (John 3:16). He confessed to his superiors: "My own opinion is that the excitement with us was caused through allowing the natives to hold meetings for prayer and reading of the Scriptures among themselves when some were under conviction of sin and were sincerely seeking a more spiritual life." In addition to acknowledging the lack of missionary direction and control over prayer meetings as a major mistake, Hall seems to believe the underlying sentiments for the revival genuine and that the Tsimshian were merely striving to reinvigorate their Christian faith. The message of Hall's sermons, filtered through Native interpreters and then discussed separately at Tsimshian prayer meetings, may have influenced the form of their expression—in this case, an evangelical revival. The need to be reborn in Christ may have encouraged some to seek out signs of Christian power. From a Christian viewpoint, this was perfectly reasonable, given the missionaries' continual

---

86Ibid.
87Ibid., 2.
90Ibid.
insistence that Christians were transformed both inwardly and outwardly. This may have had a parallel in pre-Christian forms. From a “traditionally” Tsimshian perceptive, spiritual power bestowed upon individuals was preceded by a physical manifestation of that power—whether the arrival of supernatural beings at the winter ceremonials announced through whistles or the very concept of spiritual power (naxnox) manifest as through performance, song, in an object like a mask or in a person (halait).  

Hall’s particular choice of text many have contributed to the form of the Metlakatla revival. Drawing from the book of the prophet Joel, Hall preached from the passage:

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. (Joel 2:28)

This scripture features a Christian prophet foretelling the Last Days of Judgment, full of signs and portents and other examples of God’s physical presence and power made manifest. If indeed, many Tsimshian were eager for salvation and possible physical manifestations had been suggested to them by their own missionary, it is not surprising they had certain expectations of what might happen if the Christian God did “pour out spirit upon all flesh.” Duncan’s commented upon the significance of these sermon texts, writing in his investigation report that “[m]eetings were held till often midnight, at which dreams were related & any person allowed to speak.” Duncan seems to have perceived this emphasis on dreams as evidence of “backsliding” and an expression of pre-Christian Tsimshian beliefs. Yet, given Hall’s sermon text, specifically on prophecy, visions and dreams, there is no reason to believe that the revivalistic phenomena of 1877 was not authentic Christian behaviour, albeit one that was also reinforced by ancient Tsimshian religious practices.

Both Hall and Schutt agreed that the results of the revival were not altogether negative and had lasting effects upon some of its participants. Hall believed the sentiments expressed in the Metlakatla revival to be genuine, but disagreed with the appearance of physical

---

manifestations of Christian supernatural forces. In a letter to the C.M.S., Hall wrote: "I believe that God's Holy Spirit did work in the hearts of several of the people and that those results remain now."^4 For Schutt:

[W]hile some of the things were to be deplored, many incidents shine very brightly. I myself heard one of our well experienced Christians and an Elder say that the truths of the Gospel had so touched his heart, that now for the first time, he began to treat his wife kindly & speak to her as his wife. Another man came to say how glad he was that an evil temper which had troubled him for a long time, had fled & now he hoped for ever.^5

Statistics confirm a correlation between revivals and an increase in Christian conversions. Church membership increased for the Anglicans by 250 in 1877 over the previous year's return. While this increase was not as large as earlier mass conversions, the number of "Native Christians" in the Anglican's North Pacific Mission remained at its highest point of 1150 in the years 1877-1879.^6 It would not be surpassed until the mid-1890s when membership increases again coincided with revivalistic activity.^7

The ambivalent responses by church officials to the revival at Metlakatla—denunciation of the forms of religious enthusiasm and their authencity, while mindful of the positive effects on Tsimshian conversions and pro-mission sentiments in the area—extend to the social functions Christian meetings had exclusive from their spiritual ones. Among conservative Protestant denominations was the concern over "respectability" and how highly emotional behaviour and religious enthusiasm often expressed at revival meetings went against their conception of moral group behaviour. While not dismissing their religious component, revivals were also entertaining forms of socializing and celebration, just as "traditional" Tsimshian ceremonial had included theatricks and feasting in addition to the solemn transformative rituals.

Duncan, however was unrelenting. Usher's interpretation of the 1877 revival noted that this had been the first time Native peoples had challenged Duncan on matters of Scripture and


^5Henry Schutt, Letter to CMS, 4 March 1878, Metlakatla Station, p. 4. CMSP, C.1./L.4:1875-1879, #A-106.

^6Population figures for the Tsimshian in 1885 were 4550 and in 1895 estimates were 3550. The North Pacific Mission area also included the Haida, whose population was 800 in 1885 and 663 in 1895. Population data is from J. E. Michael Kew, "History of Coastal British Columbia Since 1846," in Handbook of North American Indians: Vol. 7, Northwest Coast, ed. Wayne Suttles (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1990), Table 2: "Population of British Columbia Coastal Tribes, 1885-1984," 165.

^7For C.M.S. Mission Statistics see Appendix C.
religious interpretation.\textsuperscript{98} Perhaps Duncan understood the depth of the challenge to his leadership in religious matters. During his investigation, Duncan believed that the details of what had happened in his absence were purposely being kept from him and identified four Elders who “had gone astray.”\textsuperscript{99} These he interrogated, along with the five men who had been present in the church the night Jesus had been seen or the Holy Spirit heard. He forced all of them to denounce their previous actions, suggesting that a misinterpretation of the Bible was the cause of their actions.\textsuperscript{100} Some of Duncan’s catechists and Christian leaders were reluctant to back down and several were punished through removal from their former offices. Usher describes the event as an “unfortunate incident” that disillusioned Duncan’s faith in his converts and diminished his own authority at Metlakatla\textsuperscript{101} Usher’s conclusions are supported by the comments of visiting Bishop Bompas, made when he arrived at Metlakatla shortly after the revival ended. Bompas wrote to the C.M.S. of a “rebellion” put down: “I trust you will excuse me from mentioning the indecent and superstitious excesses concealed [sic] with this outburst and though it is true that the storm has passly [sic] calmed itself in the prospect of Duncan’s return yet it took all his [Duncan’s] strong authority here to quell the rebellion on his arrival.”\textsuperscript{102}

There is another important subtext to consider when evaluating specifically William Duncan’s reaction to the revival at Metlakatla. Duncan’s own position within the region had been only recently challenged by the entry of the Methodist Church. Rev. Thomas Crosby and fellow Methodist missionaries favoured revivalistic expressions of Christianity, and their very positive response to the events of 1877 may have given Duncan an opportunity to openly criticize his competition without it sounding like a personal attack. Duncan’s current political situation and his growing authoritarianism at Metlakatla encouraged him to view other missionary efforts among “his” Tsimshian, as detrimental to his work, which he firmly believed would result in Native “backsliding.” He would repeat this refrain several years later to his own parent

\textsuperscript{98}Usher, William Duncan, 96.
\textsuperscript{99}William Duncan, Letter to CMS, 4 March 1878, Metlakatla, p. 3. CMSP, C.1./L.4: 1875-1879, 208, #A-106.
\textsuperscript{100}Duncan laid much of the blame on Hall’s “inexperience” and “zeal.” However, it is also clear that the challenge to Duncan’s own interpretation of Christianity was a factor behind his complaints that Hall’s supervised Bible study meetings distorted and “perverted” Christian meaning. Ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{101}Usher, William Duncan, 96.
missionary organization, the C.M.S., to rationalize his decision to withhold the sacrament of communion from Metlakatlan. Furthermore, Duncan’s over-reaction to the revival in 1877 may have also been influenced by the fact that it had been an ordained priest, Rev. A. J. Hall, the man sent to replace Duncan at the most prominent mission station on the North Coast, who had seemingly triggered the “excitement.” Duncan’s dramatic return and subsequent investigation of the causes behind this unwelcome occurrence, gave him the opportunity to promote his own indispensability to C.M.S. authorities back in England. Hall for his “misguided” actions was shipped off to a “difficult” mission posting on Vancouver Island, while Duncan was reinstated as the preeminent authority figure at Metlakatla.

The aftermath of the revival of 1877, or rather the reaction by Euro-Canadian church officials was a reassertion of colonial power and authority over the Native community: “a discourse at the crossroads of what is known and permissible and that which though known must be kept concealed; a discourse uttered between the lines and as such both against the rules and within them.”

Bhabha’s definition of “colonial mimicry” is applicable to the particular processes of Christianization on the North Pacific Coast precisely because the representation of difference or “Otherness” is always linked to the problem of how to establish and maintain colonial authority through contradictory discourses. Missionaries presented Christianity to First Nations as a new worldview and source of spiritual power. In practice, however, the Christianity offered in the mission context was a form of social control in conflict with many of the very doctrines it espoused, as the Metlakatla “religious excitement” events reveal. Christian revivalism, therefore, can be viewed as a rearticulation of religious authority away from autocratic Euro-Canadian missionaries and into the hands of Tsimshian converts.

The true meaning of the Metlakatla event lies not in what it signified to William Duncan or Bishop Bompas, but in how Tsimshian Christians expressed their beliefs. One historian, Andrew Rettig saw it as representing the convergence of two trends: the pre-colonial Tsimshian cultural development and their Christian colonization at Metlakatla. He proclaimed it a nativist movement, combining pre-existing beliefs about spirit power and new faith in the Christian spirit

---

103 Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man,” 156.
world. Convergence of two beliefs systems may have encouraged a predisposition to seasonal, revivalistic behaviour. During the initiation of new members to the secret societies (wutahalait) the arrival of spirit beings (naxnox) were announced by whistles and whose physical voices speak through whistles. In some other dance ceremonials (smhalait), a chief “catches the power in his hands and throws it to the guests or on the initiates-to-be.” Compare this with the often quoted account of the apostles at Pentecost:

And when the day of the Pentecost was fully come, they [the Apostles] were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as if a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared until them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts II:1-4)

Ultimately, this example of a revival reveals the importance of access to power, in this case, access to an emotional response which Duncan had discouraged while he was in charge, but which came to the forefront when Tsimshians were allowed to run the missions according to their own needs. Evangelical revivals were one way for Native communities to both express and revitalize power and authority. This worked on two levels: spiritual power available to the individual authorized to express it in a personal and emotional form; and power and authority for individuals in both their Tsimshian and Christian society. Simply put, revivalism allowed Tsimshian Christians to participate in, what Westfall called the “religion of experience.” This was a contentious point among C.M.S. missionaries after the Metlakatla incident. For example, Duncan’s associate on the Nass River, Robert Tomlinson, wrote about the events of the Fall of 1877, indicating that he believed that the Tsimshian and the Nisga’a were not yet sufficiently Christian enough to fully participate in all ceremonies of the church or have access of all information about the faith:

I do not think that these peoples... are sufficiently emancipated from the thraldom of superstition for them to receive many forms or ceremonies without damage to the growth of spiritual life in their hearts, nor do I think that it will be advisable to introduce these

---

105 Guédon, “Tsimshian Worldview,” 154, 156.
106 Ibid., 155-156.
107 A few verses later (Acts II: 16-21), there is an almost verbatim account of Joel’s prophecy (Joel 2: 28-32).
forms as a whole among them at any one time but that as they grow in knowledge a
gradual introduction that would be the only safe plan.\textsuperscript{108}

What Tomlinson and other Anglican missionaries failed to admit at the time, was that far from
being a isolated incident at Metlakatla alone, evangelical revivals were part of a larger regional
pattern that began in the winter of 1876-1877, beginning at Port Simpson. With the spread of
Methodist revivals, continued through the “religious excitement” at Metlakatla the following
year, the manifestation of religious enthusiasm soon triggered widespread revivals along the
coast, the Lower Skeena River, and on the Nass River at Methodist village of Greenville by the
winter of 1882. The similarities in terms of “form” of these revivalistic occurrences were striking.

For example, the description of the first Methodist revival at Port Simpson over the winter
of 1876-1877 strongly resembles accounts of the “religious excitement” at Metlakatla in 1877.
While Rev. Thomas Crosby was away from Port Simpson with a group of Tsimshian converts
evangelizing in another village, his wife Emma Crosby and an unnamed female teacher recounted
a revival that had taken place in his absence:

One night hundreds of people came up and wished to get into the Church. We advised
them to go home and pray, telling them that God would hear them in their homes; but
they said, “No, no, lady; please let us into the Church. We think that we shall find Jesus in
His house.” So, taking a lantern, we opened the door, and hundreds of people crowded
into the Church, where many of them fell on their faces on the floor, crying to God for
mercy. For some time that scene continued and many were blessed; then we advised
them to go home. On leaving the Church, as they were going down the hill, although a
terrible wind and rainstorm was raging, they nearly all fell down on the ground as if they
were under a strange spell and began pleading earnestly for God to have mercy upon
them. We now returned to rest, but were awakened early next morning by a crowd of
people singing....Their very faces were altered. Here they stood around, with tears in their
eyes singing, “Jesus paid it all”. Faithfully we exhorted them to stand fast in the faith. No
one could doubt the mighty change that had taken place in these hearts when he [Crosby]
saw how earnest they were and witnessed their anxiety to carry the good news to the
other tribes.\textsuperscript{109}

\textsuperscript{108} The context of this particular letter should be emphasized. Tomlinson had just refused an offer of ordination, and
like Duncan felt that many of the central sacraments of Anglicanism were not appropriate for First Nations so
recently converted. This included communion, the rite through which individuals receive redemption through the
1879, #A-106.

\textsuperscript{109} Thomas Crosby, \textit{Up and Down the North Pacific Coast by Canoe and Mission Ship} (Toronto: Methodist Mission
Rooms for the Missionary Society of the Methodist Church, The Young People’s Forward Movement, 1914), 48.
Thus, given the regional character of revivals of 1876-1882 throughout the North Coast area, the Metlakatla revival is demonstrative of the existence of a larger need by Native Christians to establish the form of worship and the nature of their relationship with the supernatural or superhuman (experiential religion). This need continued to be a priority in the lives of Native Christians as they sought to explore their faith through group evangelism, which like revivals, was similarly met with ambivalence by church officials.

**Group Evangelism**

Thank god for the great change!... now bands of Christians are moving to save their benighted brethren from sin.¹¹⁰

—Rev. William Henry Pierce

Although rank and class were central features of Tsimshian society, community cooperation was the foundation upon which it was based, because power was literally bestowed through public acknowledgment, display, redistribution, communal cooperation was common. As with pre-mission prophet movements and the later revivals during the direct period of missionization, transformative experiences could be collective activities. Hitherto, I have emphasized the contributions of individual mission workers, but evangelical Christianity offered new outlets for group activities. Various Christian organizations were popular throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century on the North Coast, and allowed First Nations to do mission work in small, often self-directed groups. The Methodist “Christian Band Workers” and Epworth Leagues, and the Anglican’s “Church Armies,” and Red and White Cross Associations, appear to have functioned as Native-led Christian groups closely associated with evangelism and community service.¹¹¹ These provided individuals with a communal response to Protestant evangelicalism in which they could retain at least partial control and direction over the groups’ emphasis and actions. Thus, Native communities could harness the excitement they had

---


¹¹¹ There were undoubtedly many more. For example, Jay Miller’s book on the Tsimshian features a photo of a Port Simpson Methodist group known as “Good Templars” with a distinctive sash of stars as their uniform. Photo credit: Prince Rupert City and Regional Archives, n.d. Jay Miller, Tsimshian Culture, 134.
experienced in revivals in a communal response, while satisfying individual desires to "spread the Good News" of Christianity.

One Methodist organization that gained particular appeal among the Tsimshian was the Epworth League. This "strong evangelical branch of the Methodist Church" was typically involved in evangelistic trips to neighbouring villages and outlying areas. In this way, mission circuits were maintained by both Native and non-Native resources. In missions such as Port Simpson, Christians formed the Epworth League to counteract the competition of the Salvation Army. The Epworth League employed the same type of popular evangelism, complete with uniforms, drums, and even lamps for street preaching at night. Yet, the formation of the League was in fact, bitterly opposed by another group of Methodists, known as the Band of Christian Workers, who regarded it as an unnecessary repetition of their duties (in particular, lay preaching and evangelism). Epworth Leagues actively ran missions and constructed mission halls and other buildings to aid both the community and the mission station. The motto of the Epworth League was "Look up, lift up for Christ and the Church" and its objectives were created and sanctioned through official constitutions:

The objects shall be to unite its young people in Christian fellowship and service; increase their spirituality by edification in Scripture truth and by prayer; instruct them in Methodist doctrine and Church history; enlist their co-operation in missionary activities through existing denominational organizations, and stimulate and interest them in the formation and development of Leagues.

Epworth Leagues elsewhere in Canada financially supported many British Columbia missions. Beyond church work, however, Epworth Leagues encouraged secular pursuits as well: patriotic work, municipal politics, temperance and prohibition work, and athletic clubs. In this

---

114 Viola E. Garfield, Tsimshian Clan and Society, University of Washington Publications in Anthropology vol. 7, no. 3 (Seattle: University of Washington, 1939), 318.
116 Methodist Church of Canada, The Doctrine and Discipline of the Methodist Church, 1910 (Toronto: William Briggs, 1911), 203.
117 Ibid., 210.
respect, they were typical Victorian Canadian institutions, modified for the context of missions to Native peoples. The mutability of evangelical Christianity can easily be seen in the dynamics between the parent church and its respective informal evangelical groups, like the Epworth League. For example, one Methodist report viewed the Port Simpson Epworth League as "a mixture of Salvation Army and Church Army...inclined to degenerate into a come outer movement in the north." The fact that for the Methodist Church this particular form of congregational organization had come to be identified on the North Coast with two other evangelical denominations operating in the same area, suggests its use by First Nations was not typical, or as church officials had intended. In other respects, as Viola Garfield noted, these Tsimshian Epworth Leagues took on distinctive, and decidedly Native characteristics. For example, in describing the formation of the Epworth League at Port Simpson in 1899, she remarked on the uncharacteristic exclusive nature of their membership: "New members were voted in by the old, thus creating a tendency towards exclusiveness, an idea considered foreign to the principles of the Epworth League elsewhere. A chief has always been honorary president with someone else taking the active position. Since the League has had much influence in church affairs the position of the president is a highly coveted one." The fundraising technique employed to raise the money necessary to open a new Epworth League Hall in the early twentieth century was strikingly similar to (then banned) potlatch traditions, including feasting, entertainments, gift-giving and the practice of donations being collected publicly.

The records of annual conferences of Methodist missions indicate that policy recommended that Epworth Leagues, and another Methodist evangelistic organization, Bands of Christian Workers, be established in every mission. Apparently, they were very popular among Native Methodists and by the closing decades of the nineteenth century there was veritable flourishing of such evangelistic groups. In 1893 statistics for the Methodist Port

---

119 Garfield, Tsimshian Clan and Society, 318.
120 Ibid., 319.
121 Methodist Church of Canada, Minutes, Simpson District, 1891, 1894; cited in Greenaway, "Challenge of Port Simpson," 68.
Simpson Mission District reported only 18 active Epworth League members throughout the North Pacific Coast region. By 1896, there were active Leagues at mission stations at Bella Bella, Queen Charlotte Islands, Upper Skeena River, Kitseguecla, and Bella Coola, with a total of 305 members. In 1900, Junior Epworth Leagues were reported and membership had increased to 404.122

Methodists' "Bands of Christian Workers," evangelical groups comprised of the most devoted of Native Christians largely for the purposes of evangelizing, were first formed sometime in the late 1880s. While these Bands existed under the supervision of the local missionary, they undoubtedly afforded a certain degree of independence and initiative in the projects Natives chose to pursue. Apparently, they were not as formally structured as Epworth Leagues and had a stronger emphasis on missionizing. Reverend Carman, who visited a number of Methodist missions in 1896 made the following observations about the Bands of Christian Workers. Once again the Euro-Canadian concern over "respectability" in worship rears its head, as it had over the 1877 revival at Metlakatla. Although a universal concern of church officials and ministers for their congregations, it was a special concern of missionaries to aboriginal people, who sought to reform Native behaviour and social expression:

The Bands have their flags, drums, tambourines, etc., and certainly are showy enough in their parades, and demonstrative in their worship. They have not used these instruments in the churches. Of course, doubt, apprehension and controversy have arisen as to the propriety of such means at all; but when it is remembered what these people were, and witness what they are, much criticism and severe judgment may well be deferred. There will, of course, in the worship be demonstrative and vociferous jubilations, but there are also solemn and impressive lulls. And the reading of the Word, and the instruction of the minister or teacher, are received with the closest attention and the deepest respect. Many have their Bibles and pencils in hand, and do their utmost to catch and retain the ideas given. I never elsewhere witnessed such hunger for the truth of God.123

Carman was insistent that certain forms of evangelism were accepted as congregational activities (e.g. use of flags and drums), but they were not always deemed appropriate behaviour for formal church services. The "religion of order" was preferred by some, like Carman and many Euro-Canadian church leaders. Yet by the close of the 1890s, Methodist missionaries reported great

---

122 For Methodist Mission Statistics see Appendix D.
123 Dr. A. Carman, Letter dated May 14, 1896; quoted in Crosby, Up and Down the North Pacific Coast, 59-60.
enthusiasm and participation in Bands of Christian Workers, especially in their capacity to get young people “to do Christian work.” Thomas Crosby described them:

The first of those Bands was composed of the most earnest Christian workers at Simpson. Others were formed at Kitamaat, Bella Bella, and on the Skeena. They generally carried on street preaching or open-air services in their own villages, and also took trips with their Missionary, or sometimes alone, to distant heathen villages. They were organized with a President and a Secretary. They also carried a banner or flag with the name of their organization, or Scripture texts on it, such as “God is Love” or “Seek ye the lord while He may be found.”

As their popularity spread, so did their evangelistic role within the Methodist missions. Tsimshian William Henry Pierce remarked upon how vital they had become in maintaining a missionary presence during fishing season, when many villagers scattered to fishing sites or canneries:

I am glad to say that the work is spreading; many of the heathen have been converted in the special meetings which the Band workers held down the coast during the summer months. They still have Jesus in their hearts and belong to Him by faith...We expect to have a large band of these converted men and women this winter to take the light to those who are still in darkness of their sins. Thank god for the great change! In the older times these tribes used to move by bands, fighting and cutting one another's heads off, but now bands of Christians are moving to save their benighted brethren from sin... However, by this time the Christian Workers were increasingly Tsimshian-run. One historian noted that the Band at Port Simpson was completely out of the control of the Euro-Canadian missionary as early as 1892, observing that by then it was “entirely managed” by the Tsimshian and had become “the gathering place for people disaffected from the church.” The Christian Workers built their own church—a Tsimshian church—and held their own independent services for many years. In 1911, it officially split from the Methodist Church of Canada, and as the Christian Band of Workers Gospel Army “was incorporated under the laws of Canada and [had] a lay minister and hall of its own.”

Methodist missionaries were not alone in introducing Native Christians to church-sanctioned organizations for evangelism that ultimately permitted a great deal of indigenous

---

124 Crosby, Up and Down the North Pacific Coast, 57.
126 Greenaway, “Challenge of Port Simpson,” 76.
127 Garfield, Tsimshian Clan and Society, 318.
control and authority in the dissemination of Christianity. The situation for Anglican group evangelism—through the Church Army—was similar, both in motivation, form, and in the wary reaction they received from church officials when they thrived unsupervised by Euro-Canadians. Archdeacon William Henry Collison started the Church Army at Kincolith in 1893, partly in response to Salvation Army incursions into Anglican territory and partly to create a lay organization in the community. It soon became a vital part of several aboriginal communities throughout the area, its “ministry is especially characterized by musical and evangelistic mission services.” Collison wrote that he had founded the Army in order to harness (or perhaps contain) a Christian revival which occurred along the Nass River late in 1893, and that interest in the organization found widespread appeal:

Fearing some abuse might arise unless the movement was properly directed, I convened a public meeting to which I invited the leaders of this unusual movement. I informed them of the organization known as the Church Army, the headquarters of which was in London. As some of them were desirous to engage in open-air methods, and to use the drum and other musical instruments which was in accordance with Church Army regulations, I was prepared to write and obtain the rules, should they desire to inaugurate a local branch. To this they unanimously agreed; and at a special service held in the old church... twelve men were admitted as an Indian branch of the Church Army. Philip Latimer, a senior Christian of many years’ standing, and of the most exemplary character, was appointed the first captain, with standard-bearers, lieutenants, &c. The organization rapidly spread and increased, until every mission station in connection with the Church Mission has now a Church Army evangelistic band.

Like its counterpart the Salvation Army, the Anglican “Church Army” had been born out of the urban, industrialized slums of England in 1882 by the Reverend William Carlile. It emphasized grassroots evangelism and was opposed at first by church authorities because of its

---

128 William Henry Collison, the man generally attributed with establishing a Native branch of the Church Army in British Columbia, records in his memoirs as occurring 1893. However, in those same memoirs he stated that another Anglican missionary at Massett, John Henry Keen had organized a Church Army there, a year earlier (1892). Collison, Wake of the War Canoe, 229 and 181. Rev. John Henry Keen, on the other hand, in his unpublished history of the diocese of Caledonia claims Collison established the first Church Army in 1893: John Henry Keen, “History of the Diocese of Caledonia to the year 1913,” manuscript, (1932?), ACCABC, Anglican Diocese of Caledonia Archives, Box 9/ #118. Curiously, a publication of the Church Army of Canada, states that Collison first began the Church Army in 1896. Grace Haldenby, Soldiers and Servants: the Church Army in Canada (Oshawa: General Printers Ltd., for the Church Army of Canada, 1970), 5.

129 Archivists of the Ecclesiastical Province of British Columbia and Yukon, Guide to the Holdings of the Archives of the Ecclesiastical Province of British Columbia and Yukon (Toronto: Anglican Church of Canada General Synod Archives, 1993), 84, item 142.

130 Collison, Wake of the War Canoe, 229.
unconventional methods and militaristic spirit to "fight the good fight." Uniforms and banners were popular badges of Christian identity (see Figure 11). In the British Columbia context, the form allowed for the integration of more "traditional" modes of expression, such as the incorporation of drumming into services. While many Natives reportedly found the use of the drum appealing, others did not. The C.M.S. Annual Reports for 1893-1894 noted the reaction of the unconverted members of the Nisga'a village of Gitlakdamix after eleven months of Church Army and other evangelistic activity along the "Gospel Road." Clearly Nisga'a "traditionalists" opposed the Christian appropriation of one of their symbols. The missionary Rev. J. B. McCullagh wrote:

...the Heathen took a dislike to the drum. Perhaps they thought it was too much à la medicine man, or perhaps they may have heard that I advised against the use of the drum. Be that as it may, they sent a deputation to me, asking me to stop the open-air preaching. If I would engage to stop that, they would give their very best attention to the preaching of the Gospel in their own houses." The deputation was refused, and the following Sunday, services were again held with the accompaniment of the drum. "Here they were met by a determined crowd, which completely blocked up their way, while certain of the baser sort made a rush with knives to do for the drum. Somehow the drum seemed to be charmed, for though T'Gak kept on beating it, they could not get their hands on it. For non-Native missionaries, the tension between the drum as a pre-Christian instrument with spiritual associations, and the drum as the tool of a Christian call to assembly and worship is evident, when it came to Native Christian services. Unsupervised evangelism, also permitted the movement of groups of Native Christians who, although trained by Euro-Canadian missionaries, undoubtedly enjoyed a freedom of expression for their beliefs, not necessarily welcome in the formal church environment, but which "proved beneficial to mission work and prevented schism." Syncretic forms such as the use of drumming likely enhanced this effect.

The lack of close supervision in this evangelistic group by non-Native church officials, offered many Native Christians an access to power and authority within the mission they had been so often denied. In some Christian communities, the Church Army, like the Band of Christian Workers, became a sort of rival church. This fact did not escape non-Native

131 "Fight the Good Fight" was adopted as the motto of the Church Army. Haldenby, Soldiers and Servants, 1-2.
133 Collison, Wake of the War Canoe, 229.
missionaries, who, at least on one level, came to fear this aspect of the Church Army. In 1897 for example, delegates to the annual Anglican Diocesan meeting and Church Missionary Society Conference at Port Essington, concluded: “It is the unanimous opinion of this Conference that the movement known as the ‘Church Army’ movement should not be openly opposed but its influence curtailed by counter acting attractions i.e. Evening classes for the young, lectures, gymnasium, bible classes, etc.”\textsuperscript{134} Similar reservations about Native leadership of the Church Army, were echoed a few years later, in concerns over the form or style of Christianity being taught: at Kitkatla, “Peter Haldane [a Native catechist] said the Church Army had taught the people to clap their hands when they feel the power of the Holy Spirit. I [unknown conference delegate] preached against this...”\textsuperscript{135} While not necessarily disagreeing with the “self-evangelistic” method,\textsuperscript{136} church officials wanted to restrict the limits of the organization’s successes, and indeed almost seem to express relief at the Church Army’s perceived decline in 1903: at Kincolith “[t]he CA is declining in zeal and there has been no fruit from its labours,” while the missionary for Kitkatla reported that “The decline of the CA is a good thing---it has taught them their weakness.” At Massett, the delegate to the conference proclaimed, “The CA have offered me their buildings, but my people advise me not to accept it.”\textsuperscript{137} Why would the Anglican mission distance itself from its own lay-organizations? The fact that the missionary to Massett, presumably this is Rev. William E. Collison, refused to use the Church Army Hall, suggests it involved the politics of proselytizing. It was not exclusively about “going forth and preaching the Good News,” but mission controlled and authorized news and forms only. Just as Euro-Canadian missionaries and church authorities had denounced prophet movements that appropriated Christian forms and revivals that took on a life of their own, control seems to have been the issue ultimately behind their complaints.

\textsuperscript{134} Anglican Diocese of Caledonia Archives, Minutes of the Diocesan and C.M.S. Conference, Port Essington, July 21-23, 1897, ACCABC, # 118/9, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{135} Anglican Diocese of Caledonia Archives, Minutes of the Diocesan and C.M.S. Conference, Metlakatla, May 23-24, 1901, ACCABC, # 118/9, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{136} This was the assessment for Aiyansh in 1902: “The zeal of CA [Church Army] preachers is cooling off but the best remain true. The people are prepared for self-help, because this has been taught them for 4 years.” Anglican Diocese of Caledonia Archives, Minutes of the Diocesan and C.M.S. Conference, Alert Bay, May 27-29, 1902, ACCABC, #118/9, p. 25.
\textsuperscript{137} Anglican Diocese of Caledonia Archives, Minutes of the Diocesan and C.M.S. Conference, Metlakatla, May 29-June 1, 1903, ACCABC, # 118/9, p. 32.
Nevertheless, many of these opportunities for increased Native autonomy in Christian organizations were begun in an effort to both reduce the expense of missionary services and to facilitate the expansion of successful evangelism with high Native involvement. Much easier to control were organizations whose work was primarily based in the community, itself, under the watchful eye of the non-Native missionaries. Similar to the Methodist Epworth Leagues, the Anglicans had the Red and White Cross associations. The uniforms worn by members of the latter, featured a red or white Maltese cross. These were auxiliary church and social organizations in which separate male and female memberships performed community service while supporting the local church’s or mission’s agendas.

The all-male Red Cross Association emerged in the mid-1880s, encouraged by Anglican missionaries who wanted to form another Church Army-like group for proselytizing among the unconverted. According to the rules established by Reverend J. B. McCullagh for the Nisga’a Red Cross Association at Aiyansh in 1885, they had additional duties: “should any male member of the community fall sick or cease to attend the Divine service, he at once comes under the care and ministrations of the Association.” This suggests that while they evangelized, they also acted as wardens within the mission itself, presumably at the missionary’s bidding, to prevent “backsliding” and to insure that all church members were looked after. The female counterpart organization was the White Cross Association. It appears that evangelism was not deemed an appropriate priority for a women’s group, although ironically the interaction the membership created produced new communication networks among women. As Margaret Blackman explains, “White Cross [women]...regularly met for Bible readings, hymn singing, sewing, and handiwork, put on basket socials to raise money for the church, tended to the dead, and assisted bereaved families. The group later evolved into the Women’s Auxiliary of the Anglican Church (today the Anglican Church Women).” At Aiyansh, the White Cross made moccasins to raise money for the church building fund. One of the leaders of this group, was a former Nisga’a shaman, Nox Stabah. “There was certain continuity in the spiritual aspects of her role,” writes

---

138 J. B. McCullagh, unknown source; cited in Raunet, Without Surrender, 71.
140 Ibid.
Carol Cooper, “for women actively sought Nox Stabah’s advice on sacred matters,” “conducted prayer groups for their benefit” and nursed the sick of the community.\footnote{Carol Cooper, “Native Women of the North Pacific Coast: An Historical Perspective, 1830-1900,” \textit{Journal of Canadian Studies} 27, no. 4 (1993): 64.}

The ability to determine and control public representations of Christianity was important to the collective identity of any Christian community, but it was difficult to achieve in Native Christian communities. Tsimshians and other First Nations on the North Coast were seeking an experiential religion from within a mission context that sometimes championed order, conformity and obedience to pre-determined ideas. This need was manifested in phenomena like revivals and group evangelism. Thus, it is important to remember there were other similar expressions of Christian or pseudo-Christian belief occurring outside the mission context in the indigenous form of Native prophets who utilized Christian symbols and practices in their mission to revitalize aboriginal societies, and through revivals and group evangelism.

\textbf{Conclusion}

Christianized prophet movements, revivalism, and group evangelism had a number of things in common. Transformation through religion occurred on a personal level among participants and for groups of individuals resulting in a spiritual reinvigoration for entire communities. Empowerment was a key characteristic; establishing an experiential religion was another. These goals of transformation and empowerment through a personal experience parallel both the indigenous discourse about shamanic/prophetic transformations and the evangelical discourse on the conversion experience. “Revelation and prophecy can be explosive material,” Westfall reminds us; “indeed the history of Christianity is filled with groups and individuals who have attempted to use their own interpretations of prophecy and revelation to transform their own lives and societies.”\footnote{Westfall, \textit{Two Worlds}, 30.}

Native peoples wielded this new Christian spiritual power simultaneously in both new and old ways. They were a Christian halait as much as any missionary. Prophets who employed Christian symbols and practices were important disseminators of Christianity. Participants of
revivalistic activity in “converted” Native villages like Metlakatla were not “backsliders” but true evangelicals. Christianization was not a passive process. Explanations of how Native peoples were missionized must include this active role for the converts. As Elizabeth Furniss found among the Shuswap, the same energy devoted to prophet dancing was later devoted to Christian ceremonies. This enthusiasm, whether derived from the indigenous or Christian form of religious fervour, contributed to a revitalization of group solidarity at a time when colonialism had brought rapid destabilization and demoralization to First Nations. In this respect, pre-mission prophet movements and post-mission revivalism and group evangelism share a common social function for Native peoples on the North Coast. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Tsimshian, like their aboriginal neighbours, sought to direct relationships with the supernatural/superhuman, whether by dancing the dead back to life or with a Christian God through the Holy Spirit “poured upon the flesh.” Spiritual and cultural empowerment was the result of revivalism and group evangelism, together with the ongoing prophet movements (and via the conceptual framework provided by these shamanic/prophet transformations)—not at the level of policy-making; nor in the relationship between converts and colonial and church powers; nor even in decision-making concerning church and mission institutions; but the way religion would be experienced by Native Christians, and in how that experiential religion led to the revitalization of spirituality within their communities.

---

Figure 10: Metlakatla's Brass Band [188?] (BCA A-00585)
Figure 11: Port Essington Revival Meeting, 1897 (BCA A-06191). Note the use of uniforms, drums, and flags in this outdoor service.
Chapter 9: The Politics of Everyday Life

One of the most embarrassing questions that was ever put to me by an Indian, was one that was put when I first went there. It was this: ‘What do you mean by 1858?’ I had to tell him that 1858 represented the number of years that we had the Gospel in the world. He said, ‘Why didn’t you tell us of this before? why were not our forefathers told of this?’ I looked upon that as a poser. He said to me, ‘Have you got the word of God?’ That in the English language would be equivalent to saying, ‘Have you got a letter from God?’ I said, ‘Yes, I have God’s letter.’ That would really be the idea that would reach the Indian. He said, ‘I want to see it.’ I then got my Bible. Remember, this was my first introduction. I wanted them to understand that I had not brought a message from the white man in England, or anywhere else, but a message from the KING of Kings, the GOD OF HEAVEN. They wanted to see that. It was rumoured all over the camp that I had a message from God. The man came into the house and I showed him the Bible. He put his finger very cautiously upon it and said, ‘Is that the Word?’ ‘Yes,’ I said, ‘it is.’ He said ‘He has sent it to us?’ I said, ‘He has, just as much as he has to me.’ ‘Are you going to tell the Indians that?’ I said, ‘I am.’ He said, ‘Good, that is very good.’

Now, you see, if I had gone out there in the name of a single party; if I had gone and told them I had come from the queen or a nation, immediately I would have created in that man’s mind a sort of antagonism; but as soon as I told him I had a message from God, who made him, he instantly began to pause and think, and wanted to know about the message. When I was able to tell those Indians in their own language the Word of God, it just had the same effect upon them, that it has had upon the white people, and their congregations are as earnest, as conscientious, and as indefatigable in their worship of God, as any congregation of white men. Their influence of this work has spread all over this country.1

The Tsimshian received non-Native missionaries as shamans and chiefs.2 Contrary to Duncan’s desire to portray himself solely as a messenger of God, like other missionaries, he played the part of both authority figure-teacher of a new religion, and acted as a harbinger of Euro-Canadian values, laws, and material culture. In one sense, missionaries were “chiefly.” They represented their particular denomination; they exercised particular observances peculiar to their land of origin (i.e. “white” society); and they extended their prestige and influence by gaining converts to the spiritual power (Christianity) they “owned.” Jay Miller claimed Duncan

---


2A full examination of Native perceptions of specific individual missionaries is beyond the scope of this thesis. Others have broached the subject for other missions in this area, for example, one historian concludes that Nass river missionary Rev. Robert Doolan was first viewed as a chief by the local Nisga’a. See E. Palmer Patterson, “Nisga’a Perceptions of their First Resident Missionary, the Reverend R. R. A. Doolan, (1864-1867),” Anthropologica 30, no. 2 (1990): 132.
was ultimately received as a chief by the Tsimshian, superseding the name-title of Ligeex, and
categorized the missionary in terms of his “marks” of chiefly status: “[h]is oratorical fluency in
the native language, his care for the welfare of his community, and his constant industry.” 3
Palmer Patterson explains that “[c]hiefs, as conduits for outside contacts, were the first to know or
know best the new ideas, ceremonies, and technology, encountered in contact with other cultural
groups.” 4 Thus, along the Nass River, missionaries such as Rev. R. A. A. Doolan were received by
high-ranking Nisga’a as “chiefs” introducing a new “chiefly privilege” through their teachings.

In another sense, particularly true for fundamental Protestant groups, the individualistic
response to the Christian message and the word of God conveyed the idea that missionaries were
in fact shamans who possessed the “whiteman’s” power (literally a white halait). It is fairly
obvious from much of the historical evidence that missionaries were considered healers by Native
peoples. The rhetoric with which they preached reinforced this: “saving grace” and “life
everlasting.” The medical aspects of their missions further led credence to their status. Following
epidemic outbreaks, the number of converts typically increased as Native people sought
protection from diseases which “traditional” healers and shamans had no power over. 5 To better
understand how Christianity (the new spiritual power) was incorporated into existing Tsimshian
culture and how missionaries themselves were fit into a Tsimshian society in transformation, one
must consider missionization as a political confrontation. Power and meaning were contested in
everyday symbols and practices.

In this chapter I seek to explore the common ground shared by Tsimshian and missionary
and the battles over symbols within these arenas of common concern. Boundaries of rule were
drawn and maintained through an ongoing dialogue. While rigid convictions and confrontation
characterized this conversation, so too did cooperation and acceptance. Here I ask, to what extent
do the politics of everyday life reveal the lived process of hegemony and multifaceted
colonialism? How were missionaries received in their capacity as harbingers of a new religion—

3Jay Miller, Tsimshian Culture: A Light for the Ages (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 144.
4Patterson, “Nishga Perceptions,” 134.
5William Duncan managed to gain considerable support, when his mission moved to Metlakatla and managed to
avoid the devastating impact of the smallpox epidemic of 1862. There is every indication that his decision to move to
a new site was influenced by news of the outbreak in the South.
were they conceptualized according to the pre-existing framework for spiritual power and viewed as shamans, chiefs, or witches? Or were new categories applied to them? I also explore the significant negotiations over the meaning of particular everyday practices and how, ultimately, they resulted in transformations of the Tsimshian body as well as the soul.

Symbolic Conversations and Arguments

In this "post-colonial age," the focus of studies of colonialism revolve around the constructions of boundaries of rule and how those boundaries are attained and maintained. In essence, it has become an approach that seeks to reduce neither colonizer nor colonized to merely "monolithic forces," "responsive agents," or "passive victims" in relation to each other. In this respect, recent concepts of cultural hegemony, seem especially appropriate theoretical frameworks for getting at the complex conversations between the diverse, contradictory and shifting roles of missionization in British Columbia.

An examination of selected symbolic practices and the discourse related to such practices also provides a way to interpret the politics of missionization. As Sergei Kan explains, "until fairly recently, most symbolic analyses of ritual, myth, and other ideational phenomena lacked an interest in the use of culture as an ideology legitimating the existing authority and justifying relations of asymmetry, inequality, and domination, by presenting them as natural, eternal, and unchangeable." Indeed, it seems that analytical frameworks which focus on those social processes which symbolically represent hegemony in the making are perfectly suited to gaining an understanding of the impact of colonialism on First Nations society. In this chapter, symbolic practices will have the broadest definition possible, referring to those social practices that are the means through which power and meanings are established and contested. Symbolic practices were the very sites of engagement in the colonial experience, in which different parties brought their own understandings and priorities. The negotiation over certain practices become illustrative of "a subtle interplay among action and reaction, event and interpretation, structure

---

6 One could argue that Canada has not entirely emerged from its colonial era. Its aboriginal peoples are still defined by special colonial status and policies.
and praxis, memory and representation, domination and resistance," which typified most post-contact histories of tribal cultures.8

I am following the example of Jean and John Comaroff, who have extensively examined hegemony as a process of living with the tensions wrought through colonization and missions in South Africa. They insist that the creation and maintenance of hegemony follows the Foucauldian understanding of surveillance which is most effective when it is lived as a daily experience, where it is much less obvious, or even visible, after it has been internalized. It is worth quoting a length how the Comaroffs have defined the central interplay between Christianity, colonialism and Native consciousness chiefly within symbolic practices:

...the making of hegemony involves the assertion of control over various modes of symbolic production: over such things as educational and ritual processes, patterns of socialization, political and legal procedures, canons of style and self-representation, public communication, health and bodily discipline, and so on. That control, however...must be sustained over time and in such a way that it becomes, to all intents and purposes, invisible. For it is only by repetition that signs and practices cease to be perceived or remarked; that they are so habituated, so deeply inscribed in everyday routine, that they may no longer be seen as forms of control—or seen at all. It is then that they come to be (un)spoken as custom, (dis)regarded as convention—and only disinterred, if at all, on ceremonial occasions, when they are symbolically invoked as eternal verities.9

"Yet," as the Comaroffs also concede, "the seeds of hegemony are never scattered on barren ground. They might establish themselves at the expense of prior forms, but they seldom succeed in totally supplanting what was there before."10 For the first generation to be indoctrinated with Christian teachings, but not the first to deal with the pressures accompanying sustained contact with Euro-Canadian culture, the Tsimshian in the late nineteenth century witnessed missionary challenges to many of their arenas of symbolic production. The political aspect of missions, the constant struggles over meaning for everyday forms, was at its most apparent with this first generation of Native Christians, and this is why the subject merits some exploration.

10Ibid.
Body and Soul

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. (1. Corinthians 6:19-20)

Christian missions to First Nations were intended to reform bodies and souls. The individual and social body were the most potent and immediate sites of power politics. Two carceral institutions designed for enforcing bodily discipline studied by Foucault—the prison and the clinic—reached their most efficient forms at precisely the same moment as colonization of British Columbia became the primary objective of Euro-Canadians and missions were expanding throughout the province. Obviously, disparate Euro-Canadian interests were at work. Colonial administrators, missionaries, cannery operators, and settlers engaged in both parallel and conflicting agendas towards indigenous bodies. Because, as one scholar put it, “the body creates (and recreates) the spatial and symbolic categories of a culture, which are expressed in other symbolic series,” it is an ideal focus for my inquiry. The “body of an individual” and the “body of society” became sites of hegemonic struggle directly connected to Christianization as process. How bodies were transformed by missions, in turn, showcases the dynamic processes by which boundaries were delineated, maintained, and challenged by the Tsimshian.

In a way, the view of bodies as containers of culture is a useful metaphor as it meshes with a major Tsimshian cultural concept of “containedness.” As noted earlier, on the grand social scale of the Tsimshian First Nation, according to Louis Allaire’s analysis of Tsimshian oral traditions, the coastal villages were identified mythically as the “containers,” while the Upper Skeena groups were deemed “food,” connected through five pairings to always ensure “full containers.” The central Tsimshian social unit, the house (waab), was likewise symbolically a box or container filled with food, wealth, and “real” people. As Margaret Seguin explains: “Lineage members were not ‘in a waab’; they were the waab....Becoming ‘real’ depended on lifelong participation in the property distributions of the yaokw [yauawk or Tsimshian potlatch]. The ‘members’ of a waab were

12Harkin, “Contested Bodies,” 590.
actually the ranked names, not the individuals who filled the names at any point in time." The potlatch (yaawk) "empties" the house (waab) as it simultaneously fills it through the incarnation of new name-holders. At the individual level, bodies were also containers, particularly for the soul. This notion is carried in the Coast Tsimshian language in its descriptions of human beings. Corpses were literally "open people" (luk'ahyet) and a coffin was an "empty box" (galgal'üütting), suggesting that the human body was conceived of an empty container after death.

The container motif is also central to understanding Tsimshian concepts of the "sick body." To greatly simplify for the sake of brevity, sickness in an individual was thought to have been caused by the injection of foreign or harmful objects into the bodily container. Conversely, healing was achieved through the removal of these objects, through purifying rituals or with the aid of a shaman. Traditionally, disease was often both an indicator and cause of a spiritual imbalance in the world. As I have previously stated in connection to prophet movements, disease was considered directly related to the moral state of the universe. The order of the world had somehow been disrupted by a dislocation of the self and context. The world was not right as the result of unintentional actions (failure to observe proper rituals, taboos, or carry out one's social responsibilities) or deliberate intent to cause harm (as was the case through witchcraft or the powers of an enemy shaman).

How both Tsimshian and missionaries coped with the "sick body" is a useful focus with which to examine the relationship between Christianity as a new halait and epidemic disease. The latter created one of the greatest challenges to First Nations as the impact of European pathogens touched all aspects of Native society, culture, and economy. In the face of such epidemics, missionaries were viewed as shamanic healers or as malevolent witches (depending on the

15 Ibid., 125.
16 According to Tsimshian, there were actually three souls: (i) baa'lx meaning “remains,” referred to a corpse or ghost that was the essence of a person which was eventually reincarnated into the matrilineal group; (ii) haayuk was closest in meaning to the idea of a Christian soul in that it was inert, fixed, closed and inclusive; and (iii) oo'tsn is glossed as spirit or "nothingness," representing the body as container for the void. Jay Miller, Tsimshian Culture, 129.
19 Harkin, "Contested Bodies," 589.
context), while some Native shamans became Christians to continue to function as healers within their own societies. As Miller explains: “Traditionally, for the Tsimshian, religion and medicine were one and the same, so it was logical for medical successes to be met with religious ones,” and missionaries did receive attention and success through the exercise of their medical skills. For the missionaries, medical work became an important source of authority for them. To the Tsimshian, they were interpreted as harbingers of a white halait. I will give a few examples to illuminate this connection between missionaries and health, and conversely, between missionaries and disease.

Other scholars have more thoroughly discussed the impact of virulent epidemic diseases on virgin soil populations. Outbreaks of European diseases such as smallpox, measles, whooping cough, influenza, and tuberculosis washed in recurrent waves over British Columbia’s aboriginal peoples throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Native villages were devastated with population reductions as high as perhaps ninety percent. Traditional healing techniques employed by shamans, frequently had little effect on this new type of bodily affliction. The body itself became a discourse of sorts, representative of the larger cosmological and sociological disorder brought by the European newcomers; the “sick body” prepared the way for missionary reform. By definition, shamans were healers, “not with herbs or manipulation, but through ‘power.’” It was logical that missionaries representing themselves as spiritual leaders should also be viewed as potential healers. As this excerpt from a history of the Methodist mission explains, this often translated into a very practical function for missionaries, such as vaccinating against certain diseases:

During the scourge of smallpox, in 1868 [1862?], which carried off many Indians, Crosby held services in the Chilliwack valley as well as among the tribes of Vancouver Island from Nanaimo to Victoria. He secured vaccine from the Government and after each

---

20 Jay Miller, *Tsimshian Culture*, 139.
24 Guédon, “Tsimshian Shamanic Images,” 175.
service spent some time in vaccinating. Hundreds came to the services to take advantage of the opportunity of being vaccinated, for they were without means of either isolation or of nursing their sick. Seeing the dead unburied and the sick unattended, Crosby longed for the day when medical missionaries would come to British Columbia. 25

Medical missions had long been an essential part of the missionary’s repertoire. C.M.S. missionary Robert Tomlinson had received medical training before arriving on the North Coast in the mid-1860s to evangelize to the Nisga’a. He was largely responsible for moving the mission station from Greenville and establishing Kincolith as the mission village. 26 Kincolith was considered a “Christian village,” but it almost always contained non-believers who had come to receive medical treatment. 27 Another Anglican medical practitioner, Dr. Bluett-Duncan spent several years at Metlakatla although it was not until Dr. Vernon Ardagh arrived at Metlakatla in 1889, that Western doctors began to permanently locate in the region to address the medical needs of First Nations. 28 Methodist missionary Dr. A. E. Bolton arrived at Port Simpson in 1889 and largely at his own expense, practiced medicine and opened a hospital in 1891. 29 Eventually he persuaded the Methodist church to take on more responsibility for the support of the hospital. The Tsimshian however, had always viewed the institution as a Christian one, recognizing that the staff and other hospital personnel were associated with the church. 30 Thus, this is another example, of how healers were recognized for both their medical and spiritual function. 31

Likewise, missionaries had to be considered spiritually powerful in order for their medical aid to be considered effective. This is explained by the Native conception of how sickness-health relationship was predicated on a balance of the proper order of things. John Cove described the central role of a shaman-healer as providing “a bridge between the transcendent and ordinary

25 Mrs. Frederick C. Stephenson, One Hundred Years of Canadian Methodist Missions, 1824–1924, Vol. 1 (Toronto: Missionary Society of the Methodist Church of Canada, for the Young People’s Forward Movement, 1925), 152.
28 Large, Skeena, 87.
29 Ibid., 100.
31 Another Methodist Church Missionary Board physician, also received authority through meshing medical and religious callings. Dr. H. C. Wrinch arrived to establish a medical mission at Port Essington in 1899, but moved the next year to Kispiox and then to Hazelton, where he founded a hospital and spent the remainder of his life in the service of church and medicine. Eldon Lee, Scalpels and Buggywhips: Medical Pioneers of Central B.C. (Surrey: Heritage House Publishing Co., 1997), 45.
realities. They know a person can become trapped in the other realm, and they can also refuse to return. Health is not substituting one reality for another, but learning how to articulate and move between the realities at will. There is the often told story of how William Duncan’s timing in establishing the mission at Metlakatla in 1862 gave him considerable credibility in the eyes of the Tsimshian and lent authority to the new religion he was preaching. With advance warning, Duncan was able to move his followers to the new site in advance of the smallpox epidemic. By practicing a policy of strict quarantine before admittance, Duncan was able to prevent his converts from suffering the full “virgin-soil” impact of the disease. Duncan wrote in his journal of the effects of the epidemic on any potential opposition to his mission:

Smallpox had struck and they were too afraid to stay with the sick or bury the dead. They desired me to undertake for them. They would not oppose my will. One of the chief speakers [of the Gitlan] said—we have fallen down and have no breath to answer you—do your will.

Shaman Christians, White Halait, and Missionary Witches

As Marie Françoise Guédon describes the flexibility of Native healing, she explains, Tsimshian “[t]radition...offers several techniques and a symbolic system; but tradition itself yields to necessity. A healer chooses his [or her] techniques not because they are sacred inheritances from the past, but because they work with and for him [or her].” Indeed, non-biomedical frameworks for understanding and treating disease are still in use among many First Nations to this day. Moreover, as much as the non-Native missionary discourse has recorded the friction and confrontation between Native spiritual specialists and the newcomer missionaries, (such as the archetypal Shaman-Missionary showdown, as outlined in chapter 3),

33Even Duncan’s language teacher Clah was prevented entrance, AWCJ, June 1862, NAC MG40 F11 #A-1711.
36Maureen Schwarz, “The Explanatory and Predictive Power of History: Coping with the ‘Mystery Illness’, 1993,” Ethnohistory 42, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 375-401. This article examines how Navajo communities turned to their own history for answers and ways of coping with a mysterious illness that affected the American southwest in 1993. Ultimately both biomedical theory (postulated by outside authorities) and Navajo oral history identified deer mice as the source of the sickness—the former blaming a virus carried by the mice; the latter, believing mice were illness-bearers and disease, the monster caused by disharmony.
some shamans willingly became Christians. Many did so, to continue, not abandon, their traditional role as healers. In other words, “they shifted their spiritual references rather than their gift of healing.” Carol Cooper briefly explores the role of female shamans in missionization and concluded that when many of these women did convert, they often played central roles in the new Christian village. Not only did these former shamans provide spiritual guidance, but Cooper offers some evidence to suggest that healing remained a part of their roles within their communities. For example the Nisga’a shaman, Nox Stabah converted to Anglicanism and became a member and leader of the White Cross, the women’s group at Aiyansh. The White Cross made it their duty to nurse the sick in the area. Cooper writes, “It is ironic that because nursing was considered women’s work and not within the proper sphere of activities for males, female shamans such as Nox Stabah had more opportunities than male shamans to continue their roles and influence as healers.”

Male evangelists were sometimes healers in association with their function as spiritual leaders. Clah’s journals reveal that he occasionally practiced “traditional” healing as an adjunct to his evangelism. Tsimshian Louis Gray found employment as a Native assistant in the pay of the Methodist Church while he continued his role as shaman, suggesting that spiritual power transcended specific categories of “Christian” and “medicine man.” The individual was gifted regardless of the form of spirituality they practiced. Gray himself remarked that his spiritual maturity as a shaman paralleled his conversion to Christianity. He described entering into a trance state through praying to the Christian God: “It was when I was first sent up as a missionary to Ketseucla [Kitseguecla] that I first saw lights. I prayed for God to openm [sic] my

---

39 Ibid., 64.
40 It is likely that this man is the same Lewis Gray who became an informant for anthropologist Viola Garfield during her fieldwork at Port Simpson in 1932. She describes him: “Lewis Gray, who was born in Port Simpson about 1857, served as an informant in 1932. He died early in 1934. He was raised in one of the more conservative families, was initiated into a secret society when very young and had a deep interest in the esoteric aspects of his own culture. He was a shaman whose ability was recognized among the Nass River tribes, as well as among his own and the upper Skeena River people. Mr Gray believed that he was destined from birth to become a shaman, since he was born with a caul, which is considered a sign of unusual supernatural powers.” Viola E. Garfield, Tsimshian Clan and Society, University of Washington Publications in Anthropology, vol. 7, no. 3 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1939), 169.
eyes to show me things I didn’t know. They gave me Bylaws for Ketseucla and I didn’t know what to say. Mr. Crosby told me to pray when I wanted to get things straight.”

One of the most dangerous states, according to Tsimshian beliefs, was when a soul became separated from its living body, because it is most vulnerable to attacks by hostile forces. A body whose soul has been lost or where more than one soul has entered the same body required the immediate attention of shaman or death would result. While the missionary discourse is characterized by frequent references to confrontations with Native healers and shamans, which strongly points to missionaries’ attempts to usurp the role of healers in the community, the old ways continued. However, Euro-Canadian missionaries sometimes succumbed to disease as well. Many lost children to illnesses or fell seriously ill themselves, which must have undermined some of their credibility in the eyes of marginal converts. Rev. William Henry Pierce gives this story in which the missionary was made patient. In this excerpt Pierce alludes to the Tsimshian belief concerning the association of bodily illness and a wandering soul, and how the spiritual healing techniques of a shaman was needed when the missionary’s powers failed:

I remember one time when Rev. T. Crosby was very ill at Fort Simpson. An old conjurer, named Neasbeans, went into the mission house and said, “Don’t be alarmed, Sir, I found your soul last night lying in the gutter all covered with filth. I got my stick and poked it, rolling it over into a dry place. You need not be afraid that you will die; in a few days more you will be well again.” Sure enough at the time specified by the old man took the soul to the mission house and was desirous of placing it on Mr. Crosby’s head.

“Halait” refers to any shamanic or ritual manifestation of power. It is both the dance and the dancer, the person manifesting power as well as the ritual event within which the

---

41 Edward H. T. Hyde, “Tsimshian Witchcraft Trial Transcript,” typescript, n.d. [1915/1916] BCA Add. MSS. 1873, Vol. 1. File 2. This court transcript from an early twentieth century witchcraft-slander trial is an interesting example of how Christianity practically fit into Tsimshian cognitive frameworks for disease, and above all, how the fit was nowhere near a replacement of former beliefs. The transcript is contained in the collection of the Postmaster, Customs Officer and Coroner at Anyox BC, Edward Hicks Tavner Hyde (BCA Add. MSS1873 Vol. 1, File 2). Despite numerous attempts to verify the authenticity of this transcript, I was unable to find any reference to the case in the country court records of Prince Rupert (BCA GR-1629 #B7373), nor to any “police court” records of Port Simpson, but I believe the document to be authentic given the nature of the other original papers contained in the Hyde’s files and his standing as a colonial official.

42 William Henry Pierce, From Potlatch to Pulpit: Being the Autobiography of the Rev. William Henry Pierce, Native Missionary to the Indian Tribes of the Northwest Coast of British Columbia, ed. Rev. J. P. Hicks (Vancouver: Vancouver Bindery Ltd., 1933), 120.
manifestation occurs." It is safe to assume that certain evangelical notions of receiving the Holy Spirit sounded quite familiar to Tsimshian followers, and conversion was likely conceived as something akin to becoming halait through a Christian naxnox. I have already argued for the logical connection Tsimshian made between missionaries as potential healers. However, the opposite could be assumed, and this new "white halait" was also interpreted to be a "harming power." The inability for traditional Tsimshian cures to succeed against these devastating epidemics may have been interpreted as symptomatic of cultural limitations in other matters as well. One common response to the bodily crisis was an increase in witchcraft accusations, both as a means to express internal social discontent and to comprehend new external threats to Native societies. Exactly how widespread witchcraft accusations were in the face of these new epidemics is, in itself, difficult to measure with the absence of a baseline for "normal" levels of witchcraft accusations and given the overemphasis placed on witches generally because of prohibitions against witchcraft by the non-Native culture. Harkin noted that among the Tsimshian's neighbours to the south, the Heiltsuk, "[s]mallpox was called, in English, the 'White Man's Sick,' and was viewed as the product of witchcraft by hostile Euro-Canadians." 45

Unlike, the power (naxnox) used by shamans (swansk halait) or chiefs (smgigi/et) during secret societies rituals, the practitioner of witchcraft did not draw upon either aforementioned powers. Witchcraft involved corrupting the bodily container or subverting the integrity of the container by filling a box with hair and nail clippings and personal effects of the potential victim. Although shamans could cause ill and all magic was not necessarily defined as evil, witches were "described as working against other people's well being," often in secret, "plotting to kill or at least sicken their neighbours." 46 And, while witchcraft accusations in times of disorganization

---


44Mary-Ellen Kelm contends that aboriginal ill-health was created by colonial polices and governmental practices, not merely by pathogens. See Mary-Ellen Kelm, Colonizing Bodies: Aboriginal Health and Healing in British Columbia, 1900-50 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1998).

45I have not come across a explicitly Tsimshian reference. For a Heiltsuk example; see Harkin, "Contested Bodies," 589.

and transition could themselves become a disease of society, among the Tsimshian "witchcraft belief also serves to explain at least some of the sicknesses affecting people." 47

This "cosmological and sociological disorder" represented in witchcraft accusations is reproduced at the personal level, in the turmoil experienced by individuals who exist in the liminality between Christian and "traditional" Tsimshian worldviews. Witchcraft accusations were not necessarily unusual events in post-contact indigenous cultures, and as many scholars have suggested, their presence may be symptomatic of social discord and upheaval within their respective communities. The confluence of competing judicial systems, rivalry between missions and a measles epidemic of 1887 on Upper Skeena, for example, perhaps manifested themselves in fears over witchcraft resulting in what history books remember as the Kitwancool Jim incident in 1888. 48 Another example occurred in Port Simpson in 1891. Clah's 13 year old daughter died after being treated by Dr. Bolton, and Clah publicly blamed both Bolton and the resident Methodist missionary (Crosby) for killing his daughter with their medicine. Bolton replied that the government had sent them "bad medicine." Although Bolton meant this literally, that the medicine supplied by the government had "gone bad," his meaning also works at a symbolic level, given the degree of disorder then facing Clah's village. At the time of his daughter's death, the village council was in a heated debate over how the Methodist Church had failed the Tsimshian in land claims with the provincial government. The entire village was undecided over what would be the most effective course of action to take, as reserve surveyors were arriving daily on their land. 49 The health of the individual and the well-being of the nation were suffering from this "bad medicine."

Tsimshian belief in the connection between illness and witchcraft, also contributed to their suspicion over the possible negative intentions by followers of Christianity. Essentially witch-hunting sought out social deviancy and the sources of malevolent intent within Native society. It is, therefore, not surprising that Euro-Canadians or Native Christians—that is, "spiritually

47Ibid.
48Kitwancool Jim was a Gitxsan who killed a man whom he suspected of practicing witchcraft, and was subsequently shot by a special constable enforcing "British justice." Fisher, Contact and Conflict, 208; and Stephenson, One Hundred Years, 186-7.
49AWCJ, November 16-30, 1891, NAC MG 40 F11, #A-1713.
altered” from the “traditional” perspective—were frequently targeted. Early Christians were not only persecuted for their beliefs, but sometimes accused of witchcraft. For example, a missionary article “Dawn at Kitamaat,” describes the Kitamaat tribal council as having accused, then condemned to death, Methodist Tsimshian Wakuksagumlayou (Charlie Amos).  

Northwest Coast Native peoples also frequently singled out Euro-Canadians as witches or malevolent shamans. One example is found within a series of Native oral narratives recorded by William Beynon which explicitly connects the new powers (halait) of the missionary to an outbreak of measles. The “Epidemic of Excrement of Blood” tells of an outbreak of dysentery or some cholera-like disease following Native attendance at a magic lantern (slide) show given by Rev. Tomlinson at the Gitxsan village of Kispiox, shortly after his arrival in the region. Rumours abounded that Tomlinson’s show was to be a supernatural entertainment, literally the first performance of a white halait, and thus, he attracted a large audience.  

They all came into the great big house which was all darkened and all of the people sat around inside of the big house. They saw at the rear wall of the house a white partition and some were afraid of this, as this will be the first time that they see a strange halait among them. Some of the Gitksan halait had warned the people from going to watch the supernatural performance of the white man, as it may bring disaster to the people of the River (Skeena). So they said, as they had been forewarned by their own supernatural aides. This warning, the people of the many tribes did not heed, but all went to watch at Gispaiyaks. And now all the people gathered into the big house which was all darkened. The Mr. Tomlinson entered and he walked to the middle of the house and lighted a light inside of what seemed like a small box. And from this there came a ray of light from inside of the small box. Then there quickly appeared many people and all strange things unto the big white partition. This was what made the people afraid. They knew that Mr. Tomlinson had possession of a fearful halait. And it happened only next day many became sick and many took flight, all of these many people returning to their own villages. This disease then spread and went away down the river to the villages to the mouth of the Skeena.  

The shamans gathered together to find the cause of the sickness and identified the disease as a canoe fishing for people. There was no other mention of Tomlinson’s white halait, and only the

50 (G. H. Raley), Na-Na-Koa or Dawn on the Northwest Coast no. 2 (April 1898), 1-2.  
51 William Beynon notes that white halait, although in this context a form of supernatural entertainment, was applied to a describe a Christian church ceremony. William Beynon, Notes to “The Narrative of the Epidemic of Excrement of Blood,” Informant: Jno W. Tate, Port Simpson, Native name Said ban, Clan: laxshile (eagle), William Beynon Manuscript, UBCL AW 1 R7173-1, vol. 6, no. 84.  
cooperation of many shamans destroyed the disease. Although the metaphor for a marine-oriented people is probably a common one, in this context it must have seemed rather ironic to the missionaries, who literally believed themselves to be “fishers of men.”

It is safe to say that many “traditional” expressions of Native spiritual power were misunderstood and targeted by the Euro-Canadians for eradication. Although the terms “witch-doctor,” “medicine man/woman,” “conjurer,” and shaman frequently appear in the non-Native missionary discourse as interchangeable labels, the witch (haldaugit) was especially feared and selected for repression. The amendment to the Indian Act of 1884 that banned the practice of potlatching, also prohibited witchcraft in any form:

“Every one is guilty of an indictable offense and liable to one year’s imprisonment who pretends to exercise of use any kind of witchcraft, sorcery, enchantment or conjuration or undertakes to tell fortunes, or pretends from his skill or knowledge to any occult or crafty science, to discover where or in what manner any goods or chattels supposed to have been stolen or lost may be found.” 55-56 VICT. chap 29, sec. 396.53

It might be interesting to speculate whether the fact missionaries themselves were frequently accused of witchcraft motivated them to encourage this particular piece of legislation.

Politics of the Body

Missionaries attempted a reformation of the “Native body,” both of the individual body and that of society at large.54 While a concerted effort to impose or integrate Western cultural values and practices was part and parcel of mission agendas, the body itself, hence, became a symbolic site of struggle over “Native savagery” and “Christian civilization,” at least from the missionary perspective.55 For the Tsimshian, physical appearance (clothing and by extension, bodily adornments) had always expressed social status and inner spiritual/bodily states. Status was marked by tattoos, labrets, ear and nose piercings, and ceremonial body paint. “The power of a shaman,” explains Miller, “resided in his or her hair, which was, therefore, never disturbed.

53Cited in [G. H. Raley], “What is Killing the Indians?” Na-Na-Kwa or Dawn on the Northwest Coast no. 18 (April 1908): 2
54Harkin, “Contested Bodies,” 597.
55See Harkin for an exploration of this very struggle between missionaries and the Heiltsuks over the body, in ibid., 595.
More than any other insignia, long unkempt hair was the badge of a shaman. Apparel during winter ceremonials or secret societies initiation literally transformed the individual and propelled one into contact with supernatural beings. Public display of spiritual states was the "traditional" mode of validating or authenticating power. Bodily appearance was frequently the method of this display.

"Cleanliness is next to Godliness" the Protestant maxim went, and as I have demonstrated in the missionary discourse on converts, Christians were expected to appear as well as act like Christians, as outward proof of their inward state. Hence, as testimony to "true" conversion, Chief Ligeex was illustrated as a model citizen through a portrait featuring him with cropped hair, clean appearance, and wearing a Victorian suit. Missionaries interpreted the persistence of "traditional" Tsimshian clothing, bodily adornment, hair styles, (all deemed "dirty" by European standards), and particularly the use of carvings, masks, and ceremonial regalia, which the missionaries associated solely with pre-Christian spiritualities, as a failure to affect lasting change upon their charges.

Adoption of western style clothing by many Tsimshian could be an indicator of their successful conversion, but after a century of contact with European traders, access to Euro-Canadian clothing was widespread and did not necessarily reflect Christian transformation. More overt proof of commitment to the new religious discipline, was the adoption of uniforms by many Christian groups and organizations. Epworth Leaguers wore black uniforms while members of the Salvation Army and Anglican Church Army dressed in pseudo-military attire (see Figure 11). The sashes and hat-bands worn by the Salvation Army, Church Army members, and the Band of Christian Workers proclaimed slogans of their faith. Red Cross and White Cross associations, as their names suggested, adopted uniforms with coloured Maltese crosses, while a group known as the Good Templars sported distinctive clusters of stars on vests as their insignia.

56Jay Miller, Tsimshian Culture, 106.
57Harkin, "Contested Bodies," 596.
58Daniel Raunet, Without Surrender, Without Consent: A History of the Nishga Land Claims (Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 1984), 71; and Jay Miller, Tsimshian Culture, 134,
The Significance of Names

The historic and contemporary Tsimshian practice of social organization is a complex but flexible system. Adaptability in how kinship structures were defined and maintained, how naming and inheritance practices were sustained, and the composition of marriage arrangements allowed the Tsimshian to continue their traditional social system long after contact with Europeans. Over the long term, however, there occurred shifts in the social body of Tsimshian culture. Numerous pressures provided powerful impetus for these changes; certainly missionary activities were central among them. Personal names, for example, and the practice of naming, seems a promising way of getting at the politics of the social self. Transformation had always been a sign of power both in Tsimshian and evangelical Christian culture. Naming frequently signified transformation. With the new Tsimshian name came power and rank dependent on one's station in society and the power associated with the name being received. Baptism was the Christian rite that recognized the transformation of the individual from their state of natural sin to their new identity as a Christian. The Tsimshian passed names and indeed clan affiliation through the mother's line. Christian names and later, the government's recording of "Indian names" for band roles were patrilineal. There is no evidence to suggest that at any time did Christian names supersede matrilineal family names. Each name had specific occasions when it was used; each name had "power" in its own particular context.

The matrilineal moiety system was fully capable of accommodation to post-contact realities, such as massive population reductions due to epidemics. Miller points to an instance where, after the joining of two tribal groups (Tsimshian and Xaixais) in the village of Klemtu (China Hat), the elite transformed the tribal divisions into exogamous, matrilineal moieties, "suppressing and modifying traditional knowledge and symbols to accord with recent and present needs and conditions." Christian names were not hereditary in the lineage and only Native names remained exclusively in the matrilineal house (waab). This could cause some confusion, because as Garfield explains, "children change their surnames according to the family

---

they are living with," hence, "school records are difficult to keep and a teacher unfamiliar with
the children may find that she has two or three names for the same child."60

Among many evangelical denominations in the nineteenth century, such as Methodists,
according to some historians, the conversion experience was akin to a rite of adolescence "closely
associated with the passage into adulthood."61 Baptism may have marked to beginning of this
progression in youth or recorded the achievement of true conversion in adulthood. The
ceremony was commemorated through the giving of a "Christian" name. Similarly, no Tsimshian
adult of any significant status would have failed to have gone through several formal naming
rites. Names were linked to inheritance, property, titles, and ultimately status and power. To be
without a name (that is one received into the potlatch system or yaawk) was to be "never healed"
or wa'ayin.62 "In the minds of the elders," concluded Marjorie Halpin, "names are of ultimate
social value. 'Names make you heavy'...names are wealth." To be without a name, an "'Unhealed
Person', "was to be a deviant, essentially someone outside the social order. That is, it was less a
social class, as commonly believed, than a moral condition."63

In this respect, the Tsimshian received Christian baptism and the conferring of a Christian
name as the familiar recognition of belonging to a community. Just as evangelical Christians
believed that without a conversion experience a person was unredeemed before God and had not
achieved their potential for salvation, the Tsimshian conception of the power in names, as Cove
explains, was all about realizing one's human potential:

There are various categories of names which refer to differences in humanness, and
consequently, to where individuals are on the continuum of being. Just as Houses
accumulate crests throughout their histories, so may humans acquire names. Each new
one defines a development in an individual's biography representing what has been
actualized at that point. Chiefly names, or real-names, can be seen as starting the ultimate
in human potential; their acquisition marks the transition from ordinary to real."64

60Garfield, Tsimshian Clan and Society, 225.
61Gail Malmgreen, "Domestic Discords: Women and the Family in East Cheshire Methodism, 1750-1830," in
Paul, 1987), 59; quoted in Lynne Marks, "Working Class Femininity and the Salvation Army: Hallelujah Lasses in
English Canada, 1882-1892," in Re-Thinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History, 2d Edition, ed. Veronica Strong-
Margaret Seguin (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1993), 59.
63Ibid.
64Cove, Shattered Images, 125.
Consider the resonance that the missionary’s explanation of the significance of baptism and receipt of a Christian name may have had to Native converts, given prior Tsimshian practices.

This similarity of belief in the power associated with names suggests a point of commonality between Native and Christian spiritual beliefs. However, it also illustrates how the significance of a name was interpreted very differently by Native and non-Native. For the Euro-Canadian missionary, what they thought was the symbolic entry into Christianity, baptism—the beginning of a long education in the new faith—was interpreted by many Tsimshian individuals as a new source of power, an end in itself rather than a beginning. The missionaries themselves may have inadvertently given this impression. For example, Anglican and Methodist missionaries at Port Simpson in earliest days of their missions gave their school children Christian names as Christmas gifts.\(^5\) The ceremony of baptism not only paralleled that of Tsimshian acquisition of new names but was reminiscent of bestowing extremely important names. Baptism “In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost” was an opportunity to receive new names associated with Heaven, which had traditionally been a very potent quality for Tsimshian power or real names.\(^6\)

The context of use is paramount to understanding the changes signified by the taking of a new name. When First Nations still retained control over the social context, “traditional” naming practices prevailed. When Euro-Canadian colonial structures imposed band membership or Christian names, there were some modifications. As Garfield puts it, “the number of appellations by which any one individual is identified is bewildering.”\(^7\) An adult might be familiarly referred to by his or her childhood name, while at formal occasions that same individual would go by their adult name. However, in other venues, they could be known by their Christian names or patrilineal surnames. Parents might be referred to the mother or father of their child’s name and a childless adult might be called “the spouse of...” although the Tsimshian infrequently used the appellation of Mr. or Mrs. when speaking or referring to each other.\(^8\)

\(^7\) Garfield, *Tsimshian Clan and Society*, 225.
\(^8\) Ibid., 226.
Yet there have been some changes to the use of certain names directly because of missionary activity. One of the most obvious, has been the effect on women. Tsimshian women could lose their Christian names when they married, something that was not possible with "traditional" Tsimshian names. Under the pre-Christian system, once names had been assumed and formally sanctioned through a potlatch, they could be discredited, challenged, extinguished or revived by their holders, or even temporarily "held" by another, but not completely lost from the woman's house upon marriage. Of course, under this new system women could assume their husbands' Christian names through marriage, something that their male counterparts could not do. In other words, Christian names introduced a new dynamic into naming practices that, on one level at least, realigned the male-female roles within social memberships. Recall that in Tsimshian society, "traditionally" human descendants circulated through a series of fixed identities within their matrilineages. While the matrilineage gives names to children, they frequently cross-reference the father's clan. Miller gives the example of "a child with a father who was a member of the Orca crest might have 'glistening' as part of the name, as in 'Eagle Glistening in the Sunlight.'" Christian names were passed on in a completely different way, creating a named patrilineage into which females entered and left, but males did not.

Marjorie Halpin notes that another impact of Christianity has been the alteration or elimination certain categories of names. For example, in her ethnographic work in the 1980s, she discovered that Hartley Bay Tsimshian no longer deemed spirit names a discrete class. Many of the Kitka'ata had moved to Metlakatla in the 1870s, where they were prohibited from performing any halai ceremonies. "While some of the names still in circulation in Hartley Bay are of this kind, they are no longer known to the community as such..." Halpin notes that much of this was done when the Tsimshian founded their new village of Hartley Bay in 1887, consciously recreating themselves as a Christian community. Even more influential in taking away the power and authority of family names, were anti-potlatch attitudes (the very mechanism for filling

---

69 Cove, Shattered Images, 73-74, 89; and Jay Miller, Tsimshian Culture, 129.
70 Jay Miller, Tsimshian Culture, 126.
71 Halpin, "Feast Names," 58.
names), unfilled names because of population loss, and the "statusization" of Native people vis à vis the Indian Act and reserve system.\(^\text{72}\)

If the function of names underwent transformation, how was the ceremony of bestowing Christian names (baptism) perceived in the Tsimshian context? Adult baptism was handled very differently by Protestant denominations compared to Roman Catholics. With the exception of "emergency" baptism due to imminent death, Protestants baptized their converts only after considerable scrutiny. In some instances this could mean three or more years of preparation, class meetings, and bible study as a member "on trial" before baptism was given.\(^\text{73}\) Baptism was clearly conceived by the Tsimshian as something other than what missionaries intended it to mean. Baptism became a spiritual power unto itself. Thus, Duncan criticized Crosby for the speed at which he performed baptisms on Natives whom Duncan believed, "were seeking baptism from his hand to act as a charm for their bodily preservation."\(^\text{74}\) Indeed, Duncan himself attempted to substitute formal baptism with an "infant blessing" believing: "that baptism should be deferred till the subjects had come to years to answer for themselves, but that in only one case was the 'blessing' carried out, as it met with so strong opposition from the Indians themselves, that he had to abandon the idea of the change on this important point."\(^\text{75}\) Obviously, Tsimshian preferred and valued the most powerful version of this Christian ceremony. In Marius Barbeau's Northwest Coast files, one oral anecdote collected in the 1920s refers to baptism as a practice that physically divided the village and symbolically accorded the baptized person a status of not only "Christian," but "law-abiding" as well:

They were living in the big houses near the totem poles. They afterwards, those that moved away, referred to that part as the heathen village. Those who moved built themselves cabins and became christians. And they were baptized that is as far as

---

\(^\text{72}\)With the revisions to the Indian Act through Bill C-31 the rules regarding patrilineal transmission of Indian status has been partially redressed, however bands are permitted to create local rules regarding band membership where the potential exists for matrilineal succession to be ignored.

\(^\text{73}\)This point is frequently made in numerous historiographical and historical sources. In the case of William Duncan, he insisted upon three years under his immediate tutelage, before baptism might be considered. Rev. John Sheepshanks, "A Lecture on the Origins, Habits, Modes of Thought, Past and Present and Future of the Red Indians of the West," *Sixth Annual Report of the Columbia Mission for the Year 1864* (London: n.p., 1865), 49.


Christianity got. Often an Indian told Hag. [sic?]—it is not me, I did not steal, I am baptized. They had some idea that being baptized was a proof against or a shield they had always held that up, as a kind of safety word. ⁷⁶

Beyond ensuring the creditability of the possessor, baptismal names were documented, and hence took on a material form. "Traditional" Tsimshian crests were a form of public art and displaying them authenticated and perpetuated the existing social order. They announced one's standing within the social body. Baptismal confessions often contained explicit references to written language in a way that suggests a similar validation of one's standing as a Christian through the creation of a written record. For example, during her baptism chieftainess Nis'akx was alleged to have proclaimed, "Jesus is in heaven and is writing our names in God's book," while Clah remarked "I pray to God to clean my heart, and wipe out my sin from God's book." ⁷⁷

Christening certificates were viewed by some, not only as proof of their Christian status, but also as a sort of assurance of their entrance into a Christian afterlife. Thus the written document itself was interpreted almost as if it were a halait, an object manifesting naxnox power. In one anecdote given by a non-Native woman living in Hazelton, the baptismal certificate was viewed by some of her aboriginal neighbours as a "pass to heaven." A non-Christian Gitxsan woman was concerned with ensuring that her step-children had their certificates to guarantee their acceptance into a Christian heaven:

naxstaq.aq.is: mother of pulling hair had a wrong impression, but [sic] christening certificates (catholic baptism). She was a Gitksan heathen from the backbone. She had been heathen all her life and is right now. ....Almost every year, one of these children would die. they all had consumption. Although they did not all die of consumption one of them died of the broken hip. She was the first to die, her name was Christine. And she had all the christening certificates in a bag with string around the bundle. And she came running over to me with a great excitement: --Please show me which one is Christine's heaven paper. She is dying and she must have her heaven paper. So I quickly looked over them and picked out Christine's card and handed it to her. And away she went as fast as she could. And put the paper in Christine's hand. And in a few minutes the little girl was dead clasping her heaven paper. And the old woman thought that she had done her duty, that her little girl would not be shot [sic] out of heaven. And so she now laid on its death bed and had to find the correct paper. I went over to see on the little boy that lies today. And in his hand he clutches as tightly as he could his heaven paper although he

⁷⁶Informant: Mrs. Cox, B-F-89.25, anecdotes re: marriages, ceremonies, Christianity, trips, and eating, M. Barbeau, orig. fn. 1920, typed copy, Marius Barbeau, Northwest Coast Files, BCA Add Mss 2101, # A-1415.
was dead. And the old stepmother stood there and said: --Well I am glad I have never lost one of their papers never one has gone astray. Everyone got his heaven paper.78

Language of Power

With this emphasis on the power of the written word, the issue of literacy and written language became a contested site for missionaries and Native peoples. For evangelical Christians, the Word literally begat creation. The bible was the paramount textual container of God’s word. Indeed, the phrase “God’s Letter” was frequently employed by missionaries to describe what the bible signified to their religion. Because most of the missions to the North Coast were evangelical Protestant missions, the central focus on the bible resulted in a heavy emphasis on the importance of literacy. Crosby claimed the bible was known as the “school-um-text,” suggesting that it was perceived as facilitating reading and writing in addition to helping one “get religion.”79 Indeed, by Victorian standards, the ability to read and write was a marker of civilization. Another missionary confirms this sentiment: “Letter-writing seems to have been an institution of civilised life which greatly recommended itself to the Indians. The schooner commonly carried a “post” of some 200 letters, all written by Indians to their several friends in Victoria.”80 Thus, one category of hegemonic contention was language and whether to fill the bodily container with written or spoken forms as the central repository of knowledge.

There is a lively scholarly debate over the perception of European literacy in early contact situations with non-literate peoples. Peter Wogan cautions against automatically accepting the perception that Native peoples viewed literacy as a special or magical power.81 He reminds us that this perspective (on both Natives and literacy) is as much the product of European ideological projections, particularly given the significance attributed to religious texts in the Judeo-Christian tradition.82 Writing was, in fact, a powerful tool and aboriginal people

79 Thomas Crosby, *Up and Down the North Coast by Canoe and Mission Ship* (Toronto: Methodist Mission Rooms for the Missionary Society of the Methodist Church, the Young People’s Forward Movement, 1914), 15.
80 Wellcome, *Story of Metlakatla*, 82.
81 A useful brief historiographical overview is contained in Peter Wogan, “Perceptions of European Literacy in Early Contact Situations,” *Ethnohistory* 41, no. 3 (Summer 1994): 407-429.
82 Ibid., 410-411.
understood that correctly. Thus, careful examination of the cultural context into which writing technologies are introduced is necessary. For the Tsimshian, even after a century of contact with literate Europeans, I believe a strong case can be made that specific written objects were considered *halait* while others were interpreted at a much more mundane level, as documentary tokens through which to display one’s personal credentials. A few examples should illustrate my point.

Coming from a cultural context that also viewed the bible as a supernatural object that could authenticate one’s veracity (i.e. “swearing on the bible”), Euro-Canadian missionaries encouraged the value placed on written scripture (whether one could actually read what had been written or not). Duncan wrote that his converts: “were anxious to carry in their hands a portion of God’s word, so I wrote out for each, on a piece of paper, —“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”^^ Given that evangelical denominations accepted the bible as both the guide for Christianity and as the direct word of God and therefore, a source of power, it is not surprising that missionaries, such as this one in Alaska, fostered in their converts an understanding of the bible as a powerful object:

The following incident is related of an old Alaskan: The day before he died, a missionary saw a Bible tied to the top of a stick out [sic?] three feet long, set in the ground near his head, and asked why the book was tied there. The old man said, ‘I can’t read, but I know that is the great Word; so when my heart gets weak I just look up at the book, and say, “Father that is your book”; no one to teach me to read; very good you help me; then my heart gets stronger and the bad goes away.’^[1]

Considering Northwest Coast cultural beliefs in a physical manifestation (*halait*) of power, this perception of the bible is perfectly logical, especially as it was presented to them by individuals associated with shamanism or chiefs in their priestly guise.

In the Euro-Canadian accounts of aboriginals in nineteenth century British Columbia, there are numerous references to the value placed on written testimonies or letters of good character. Mission historian John W. Arctander used the term “teapots” to describe them:

---

83[William Duncan], *Metlahkatlah: Ten Years Work Among the Tsimshean Indians* (Salisbury Square, London: Church Missionary House, 1869), 111.
84Excerpt from *Some Curious Things about Alaska* (from “Alaska” by Dr. Sheldon Jackson); quoted in *Missionary Outlook* 9, no. 4 (April 1889): 62.
The Tsimheans were then, as all the coast Indians are now, very anxious to obtain letters or certificates from white men, especially officials, as to their good character. These certificates, which they call ‘teapots,’ they value very much, and are very prone to show them to visiting whites with whom they come into contact. As they generally are unable to read writing, sometimes scurvy tricks are played upon them by persons taking advantage of their ignorance. I saw one such a ‘teapot,’ which read as follows: ‘The Indian is an infernal thief. He will steal a red hot stove. Look out for him.’

Regardless of the “tricks” played on illiterate owners, the notion of material confirmation of social character or status was a common idea in Tsimshian culture. It is very likely, that many of these letters were actually letters of credit, which were powerful items in a very practical sense.

“Traditionally,” Tsimshian ceremonial objects “owned” by chiefs represented the corporate power of their house (waab). When a chief displayed those objects, their privileges and status were validated. The Tsimshian used some written documents in similar fashion. During the showdown at Fort Simpson between Duncan and Chief Ligeex, Ligeex attempted to legitimize his authority by presenting the missionary with written documentation and affidavits to his character which had been given to him by Euro-Canadian officials (and which Duncan refused to read). Therefore, the reaction of Tsimshian converts to written versions of what missionaries presented as supernatural objects (baptismal certificates and biblical scripture) or what prominent Euro-Canadians intended as character references (good or bad), was in keeping with “traditional” forms. Writing was not universally accepted as a magical technology by the Tsimshian, but in specific contexts, they deemed it powerful. It did, afterall, allow Euro-Canadians to communicate with each other without speaking to one another.

The general consensus among First Nations people today holds the churches and their education system are largely responsible for the loss of Native languages. Ironically, when missionaries made the writing of Native languages possible through the creation of syllabic alphabets and translations of scriptures, this set in motion an educational imperative that attempted to replace Native languages entirely, once Natives gained literacy in English. The legacy of Indian residential schools in Canada is a dark and shameful one. While residential schools at Port Simpson (Crosby’s girls’ and boys’ schools), Metlakatla (girls’ boarding house),

---

86 Ibid., 134.
and Kitamaat (orphanage) originated during the missionary period focused on here, the Native role of student in missionization has been more thoroughly and effectively explored by scholars who give this topic the breadth it deserves. As one historian remarked, "[t]he residential school, with its combination of character formation, elementary education, and the inculcation of habits of industry represented the missionary program of christianization and civilization in its most fully developed form."^88

While missionaries envisioned filling their converts' heads with Euro-Canadian values, industrial skills, and Christian beliefs, Native Christians saw a chance to gain a tool that would be useful in their struggle to retain control over their own political and economic autonomy: literacy in English. The Coast Tsimshian verb "to read" is lúdzxk, meaning also "to count," suggesting the significance of the fur trade in establishing a baseline to explain the purpose of writing. In Sm'álgax "to learn" was literally to store up food for the winter (luudisk). Their word for "book" was similar in definition: sa'awûnsk, related to the verb sa'awan, meaning "to put into a box, to put more into a box, or to shake down and make settle in a box" (depending on the dialect).^89

These words draw heavily upon the container motif, explaining texts as something with which one fills the bodily container. Duncan's first pupils were the sons of chiefs and high-ranking heirs, and as such, the Tsimshian expected them "to learn about changing conditions and use this knowledge to benefit their constituents."^90 The advantages of attending school, may have been that it added to the wealth of the house (filling the waab). After decades of sustained contact with European traders in their immediate territory, many Tsimshian, like Natives elsewhere, would have viewed the acquisition of the English language as a practical tool for success in the surrounding wage-labour economy.

---


^88John Webster Grant, Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter since 1534 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 226.

^89Dunn, Dictionary of Coast Tsimshian, s.v. "read," "learn," "book."

^90Jay Miller, Tsimshian Culture, 138.
Jean Usher mentions that religious instruction dominated school curriculum at Metlakatla. Converts sought out and submitted to Euro-Canadian style education in preparation for baptism and learn catechisms, and to gain fluency in English for a better appreciation of religious texts. After receiving a new missionary, day schools were one of the first Tsimshian demands. While many of the schools were run by Euro-Canadian teachers (particularly young women, as was typical in the elementary school system in late nineteenth century Canada), Native teachers were able to take some initiative within the system. This was particularly true in the case of religious instruction, where class meetings, Sunday school, and less formalized bible meetings were largely conducted by Native catechists and exhorters (see Appendices C and D). Chiefs had some say over access to schools. Pierce, for example, reported that he left Duncan's school on orders of his chief.

Nor were schools or indeed Euro-Canadian teachers accepted uncritically by Tsimshian. For example, Clah recounts how the Greenville Nisga'a refused to accept the teacher sent to them by the Methodist Church because he did not have the prestige and authority of an ordained minister. Aboriginal people evaluated the quality of education in direct proportion to the status and influence of the teacher as a recognizably spiritually powerful individual. A constant complaint of Tsimshian Christians was that, because of chronic under-staffing, resident missionaries were frequently absent from their charges while on itinerant circuits. Missionaries may have constantly fretted over inconsistent school attendance by students, but the Tsimshian were equally critical about the level of commitment of their resident missionaries to teaching. Criticisms of inadequate pedagogy were numerous and, many, like Clah, recorded their opinion on the failure of missionaries to fulfill the responsibilities of their job:

about yesterday [referring to a visit by Rev. J. B. McCullagh]. we Speak about lost our Prayer to God and lost to love our Christ Jesus our saviour. we blaming all the priest that

---

91 Usher, William Duncan, 92.
93 Pierce, From Potlatch to Pulpit, 11.
94 Understanding the strategies of survival, resistance, and rejection of Euro-Canadian education by First Nations is central to reclaiming the past and allowing healing to begin.
95 Clah wrote that the Nisga'a "wanted no teacher. they wants high Priest to take charge them. they do not want Small man. to teach them. But good wise Priest to teache them..." AWCJ, Saturday November 7, 1891, NAC MG 40 F11, #A-1713.
works like Comon men lazy. But many Come to them every day. dont make the indian
good. dont teach them right. when indian write letter. writed wrong. that makes my
hearts no good. Because lazy teacher and lazy Priest not teach the indian good. But
wrong that makes our Gods angry. If we telling lies against Him in written letter one to
another some wrong writen and Priests Post themselfs. they make money but indians
dont make any work hard like old israil. we know that we work like slave amongs whit
[white] people.96

The acquisition of literacy skills had a strong impact on oral traditions, although as spoken
language, Native dialects persevered despite missionary attacks. The Tsimshian adawx were (and
are) highly formalized "matrilineally inherited owned family histories which document rights in
material and symbolic property."97 "The advent of writing, the erosion of story-telling as a
widely shared genre, and the tendency to ‘freeze’ traditional materials and to root out
contemporary ‘contaminations,’” commented Margaret Seguin Anderson and Tammy Anderson
Blumhagen, “have all worked together to close the corpus of Tsimshian stories.”98 Although
desires for literacy and the use of English slowly increased as a result of missionary activities, the
oral nature of Tsimshian culture continued to flourish as a public form in the late nineteenth
century. Native languages were not expunged overnight, nor were they immediately challenged
as the language of spiritual things.99 Euro-Canadian missionaries struggled to gain fluency in
Native dialects which were used as the primary language in church services. While this was
common practice for any missionary who stayed a considerable length of time in the region, it
was official policy for some mission societies, such as the C.M.S.100 This mission society widely
employed interpreters to assure that Native converts could follow the missionaries’ sermons
when indigenous languages were not spoken by the newcomers. At Metlakatla, the model
system for many missions in the area, secular and religious education was conducted in both

96AWCJ, Thursday July 9, 1891, NAC MG 40 F11, #A-1713.
97Margaret Seguin Anderson and Tammy Anderson Blumhagen, “Memories and Moments: Conversations and
Chronology,” Ethnohistory 45, no. 4 (Fall 1998): 661-662.
98Ibid., 94.
99Sm'Al'gyax excluded outsiders from certain conversations and therefore could be used as a sort of secret language.
Anderson and Blumhagen point out how this may be even more true for Tsimshian societies today, where sm'Al'gyax
might be translated into English for the speeches at feasts but less frequently for casual conversation and may be used
specifically to prevent understanding (such as when Tsimshian fishers discuss plans or successes over the radio).
Ibid., 99.
100Usher, William Duncan, 93.
English and Coast Tsimshian (*Sm’algyax*).\(^{101}\) In fact, because Metlakatla drew converts from many First Nations in the region, the Coast Tsimshian language gained ascendancy. Once Duncan began using *Sm’algyax* for Christian liturgy, it achieved preeminence, even replacing in some towns, the Southern Tsimshian language (*Skuumxs*).\(^{102}\) English texts were translated into indigenous languages, although there certainly was some pressure to encourage literacy in English so that a fuller understanding of evangelical Christianity could be achieved through reading the Bible where translated texts did not exist.\(^{103}\) However, the mission village never operated in isolation from secular aims, and commercial goals of non-mission economies in the region also highlighted the Native need for English for business affairs.

Conclusion

In summary, manifestations of the social self through the acquisition of names, the reception of written words as both supernatural objects and practical strategies of survival in the new colonial climate, and the subtle shifts to language-preference in public venues such as church, school, or work, all demonstrate how missionaries and Tsimshian negotiated meanings. Defining form, function, and practice for new things (Christian names, baptismal ceremonies, written documents, schools, English language) by placing them into familiar contexts, prevented immediate outright replacement. This was how Euro-Canadians came to be viewed as both shamans and chiefs. At the same time however, missionaries were able to subvert the Tsimshian container through which these new things were conceptualized, thus eroding Native social structures as they transformed them. Above all however, Christianity as container of Euro-Canadian culture was itself “contained” by boundaries and parameters that Native peoples, not missionaries alone, had a part in formulating.

---

\(^{101}\) Ibid., 94.


\(^{103}\) Duncan argued this when asked by Bishop Ridley why he had failed to translate the Book of Common Prayer or the Bible into Tsimshian. Usher writes, “By the late 1860s, Duncan’s policy appears to have been to teach the Indians to read the Bible in English and let them do their own translating.” Usher, *William Duncan*, 94.
Chapter 10: Christian Houses and Colonial Spaces

I am of Metlakahtla
I wish all to know
Sweet is the sound
Of my village name
Wherever I go
A Home so sweet as mine
I cannot find

Good roads are spread
For the people’s use
The Guest-house stands well
For our new brethren to lodge in
Wherever I go
A Home so sweet as mine
I cannot find.

—Metlakatla Village Song (English version)\(^1\)

One of the most distinctive recurring visual and rhetorical images permeating the missionary literature was the dichotomy of “before and after conversion.” As previously shown, conversion frequently appeared in the Euro-Canadian literature in literal or figurative portraits of outwardly changed Native individuals. The same principle also applied to the village space. Crosby discussed this phenomenon as “Christian street” versus “Heathen Street.”\(^2\) The church, mission buildings, school, neat rows of Euro-Canadian style single family dwellings, perhaps guest house for visitors (as was the case in Metlakatla), streetlights, sidewalks and all other signifiers of “proper” Victorian urban life characterized the “Christian street.” In contrast, “Heathen street” was Native longhouses along the beach, spatially ranked to reflect the “traditional” social order, totem poles, smokehouses, and anything else the missionaries identified with aboriginal material culture. In the minds of non-Native missionaries, like Crosby, “everything of heathenism, is of the devil.”\(^3\) As with the material version of the “before and after

---


\(^2\) John Webster Grant, Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and Indians of Canada in Encounter since 1534 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 136.

\(^3\) Thomas Crosby, Among the An-ko-me-nuns, or Flathead Tribes of Indians of the Pacific Coast (Toronto: William Briggs, 1907), 104.
conversion" portraits of individuals, missionaries took as proof of the community’s acceptance of Christianity and Western modes of civilization, the physical transformation of an entire village. In 1878, Canadian geologist, George Dawson remarked upon the visual impression of mission life as he passed through Port Simpson: “There is quite a large village here, inhabited by Indians under the guidance of a Mr. Crosby.... He has a large white church on the slope above the town, which is quite a landmark from far off the harbour.”

Certainly, before the arrival of missionaries, totem poles or chiefs’ houses would have been the most prominent landmarks. Dawson’s description was noted only a few years after Crosby had arrived there, and Port Simpson was never exclusively Christian during the nineteenth century. Can missionization alone account for the introduction of such apparent colonial space into Native territories? While one can describe these colonial encounters in terms of the Tsimshian’s bold resistance or strategic acceptances, it is clear that some important transitions could and did occur without overt confrontation. This chapter continues my discussion on how missionization created sites of engagement over symbolic practices—from the physical appearances of mission villages, to social organization, and then, returning full circle to the physicality of missions, to Native social structures as represented in material culture. Because missionaries and Natives each drew upon their own cultural frameworks to interpret mission spaces, each party conceptualized the meaning of changes to family dwellings, the village’s social groupings, and the introduction of gravestones, for example, very differently. It is fair to conclude that during the modification of Tsimshian culture as a result of missionization, an “indigenization” of Christianity also occurred, especially at the local level.

Physical Space

One has only to look at any photographic record of the Christian towns of Port Simpson or Metlakatla to see the imposing and dominating character of church structures. Equally as important as a signifier of “Christian” (or as it may have been termed in the ethnocentric

---

terminology of the nineteenth century, "civilization"), was the presence of Euro-Canadian style architecture in all buildings and the absence of all traditional Native ones. Continuing with the example of Port Simpson, the replacement of its renowned painted house facades with Euro-Canadian style houses was already notable by the 1880s. As Europeans, Canadians, and Americans scoured the area grabbing Tsimshian material culture for museums and art collections, they commented on this visual change. Adrian Jacobsen of the Berlin Museum remarked in 1881 that Port Simpson was “the first Indian village in which I bought nothing because there was nothing to obtain,” apparently in reference to how Westernized the settlement had become.

The establishment Christian missions in Tsimshian villages meant the further introduction of colonial spaces among the people, a process underway since first contact with Europeans. For First Nations, the distinction between Christian and non-Christian was sometimes made through the architectural level, but certainly never in ways as clear-cut as the missionaries viewed them. Clah, for instance, refused to go to Metlakatla with Duncan, choosing instead to remain in Fort Simpson, a location which never aspired to become an exclusively Christian place. To prove that not just “heathens” lived in Fort Simpson, Clah helped to organize the building of a bridge from Rose island to the mainland. From the missionary perspective, the bridge project might have signified a symbolic and physical link between the mission space and the supposedly “heathen village” space. Yet, Clah and his fellow villagers likely viewed the bridge as a way to maintain communal unity and coherence in keeping with the expansion and modernization of the town.

In the twenty-five years of our residence amongst the dear people we have seen many changes [at Port Simpson]... But we think the most wonderful improvements have taken place among the natives themselves, in their advance in Christian civilization. Instead of their old heathen practices, they have now a fire company, a rifle company, a temperance society and a Christian band of workers, each with a hall built for themselves. In addition they have their regular Church, together with two Homes, good Schools, and an efficient Hospital. There is also an excellent brass band for the village. The old heathen lodges have given place to neat, comfortable homes. A long time before any agent of the

---


Government was stationed among them, they had their Municipal Council, under which their village was governed and order preserved.  

In the above list, Crosby outlines those characteristics of "civilization" which he attributed to Christian village life (e.g. fire and rifle companies, temperance society, churches and meeting halls, Westernized housing, schools, hospital, brass band, and village council). Beyond industrial and commercial development, the appearance of single-family dwellings was certainly an important marker by which all missionaries sought to measure their successes. These were "Christian houses" to missionaries; but to the Tsimshian, Euro-Canadian style housing was not necessarily a sign of conversion. While the introduction of church buildings was an obvious sign of architectural transformation, a focus on the changes to Native family dwellings provides a solid case example of how physical space became a contested site within a larger process of Christian colonialism.

As described earlier, the central social unit in Tsimshian culture was the House (waab). In fact, the same word for dwelling was also used to describe the group of lineage relations, their territory and their wealth. It was literally the "body of society":

"By explicit analogy, a house was like a person (gyet). As a house had a central hearth, a person had a mind (sigootk), located in the heart (goot), like a flame of intelligence. As a personalized building, the house represented the ancestry of the matriline, clan, and moiety. The four support posts were limbs, the ridge pole was the backbone, the rafters were ribs, the walls were skin. The decorated front was the face, with the door serving as

\[7\] Thomas Crosby, "Letter to Dr. Winthrow, dated Oct. 1st, 1897, Victoria," in Crosby, Up and Down the North Coast by Canoe and Mission Ship, by Thomas Crosby, (Toronto: Methodist Mission Rooms for the Missionary Society of the Methodist Church, the Young People's Forward Movement, 1914), 402.

\[8\] While churches are the most obvious example of "Christian space," the architectural merits of Native churches in this period have been admirably examined by other scholars. See Barry Downs, Sacred Places: British Columbia's Early Churches (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1980); and John Veillette and Gary White, eds., Early Indian Village Churches: Wooden Frontier Architecture in British Columbia (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1977). Tsimshian Christians not only paid for local church construction, they often built them with their own hands. After 1890, the Canadian government provided funds for church construction in Native villages. However, unlike housing, churches were "additions" to Native villages, not reformulations of existing space. There was no comparable "traditional" Tsimshian building designed as a place of worship and metaphorically "God's house," although certainly they had their own sacred spaces and places that temporarily bridged (or recreated them) dimensions between the human world and non-human ones (i.e. during winter ceremonial complexes). Nor did a local tradition of church architecture exist. Euro-Canadian missionary input into church construction was considerable given the prescribed liturgical and architectural traditions of the various denominations. Therefore, I have decided to exclude a general discussion on churches in order to develop the "house" theme (a structure identifiable as both indigenous and Christian) more fully.
the mouth. Known only to the elite, the secret tunnels, used for staging winter spectacles and for escape, represented digestive functions."^9

Longhouses within each waab belonged to the matrilineage, as inalienable possessions controlled by Tsimshian individuals who had inherited the name and position of house chief. The building might be unoccupied or even permanently vacated, but no other lineage could use the structure without the owner's express permission.10 This is significant for a society in which every house had several locations depending on the season and resource territory. The winter village site was spatially organized to reflect the status and wealth of each house and their chiefs. In this respect, the chief's physical house was a communal asset of the lineage group, and reflected their wealth, prestige, and authority. Inheritance of the property and wealth of each house was passed down through the matrilineal group.

In contrast, for the Euro-Canadian missionaries, a house was a building where a nuclear family lived, ideally headed by the husband or father. It was private property whose title resided with an individual and to which widowed spouses and children had some claim upon the principle owner's death. It was not only missionaries who enforced this notion, but Canadian law itself.

There is no denying the impact of Euro-Canadian style architecture and building materials upon the physical space of Tsimshian villages. New ideas regarding house construction in respect to both interior and exterior design were readily encouraged by missionaries who saw them as a means to separate the nuclear family from its larger lineage group within a single family dwelling home. Indeed, for Christian villages like Metlakatla and Port Simpson, "traditional" plankhouse construction had virtually disappeared soon after Christianization. However, it would be a mistake to interpret this transformation as solely attributable to Christian influence. In 1857, Duncan estimated the Native population at Port Simpson to be 2300 persons divided into 140 houses. In 1935, William Beynon listed 106 occupied houses at that location.11 This data would suggest that given the massive population reductions (especially owing to the

---


^11Ibid., 333.
devastating smallpox epidemics of 1836 and 1862), the actual number of dwellings did not change as much as the missionary push toward exclusively nuclear family and single family units would have liked.

One of the first innovations to occur in Tsimshian building practices following European contact was the introduction of hinged doors and more significantly windows in the front walls of houses. Windows frequently were adopted by high-ranking chiefs as new symbols of prestige and wealth which facade painting had formerly assumed. As Jay Miller explains, this was because of their associations with crystals, significant emblems for chiefs in their priestly guise and for shamans generally: "Painted house fronts were among the greatest crests since they were constantly on display. A glass window letting in light was doubly wondrous, as an object and as a symbol. Previously, the equivalent in prestige was the multifaceted quartz crystal. The Tsimshian still apply the same word to both."13

"The second stage of innovation," according to Garfield, "was the building of houses of milled lumber either with or without wooden floors."14 In the late nineteenth century, sawmills were a fixture at major Christian missions and Native peoples frequently found employment at mills up and down the coast. Encouraging industrial self-sufficiency among the Tsimshian was an important agenda for missionaries, who believed it would discourage seasonal migrations and keep the Native converts in one location year round where church and school attendance would remain constant. However, as ownership and access to resources within Tsimshian territory were challenged by outsiders, it makes sense that many of the Tsimshian themselves would also seek to develop and prize these new industries. The creation of local markets for the products of Native owned sawmills (whether consciously or not), through the growing Native preference for milled lumber as a building material, does not necessarily denote that the Tsimshian succumbed to missionary visions of Canadian style homes along neat "Christian streets."

---

13 Jay Miller, Tsimshian Culture, 39.
The particular timing of the change in living space by the Tsimshian coincided with Christianization, but also with the increasing importance of the wage-labour and cash economy in the North Coast region. Discussing the impact of wage-labour upon Native societies and economies and how this aided in the development of a Christian capitalist society, John Lutz remarks that “new Christians also had new imperatives to work. New houses built with milled lumber, nails, and glass windows, as well as new standards for clothing, contributions to build a church or purchase musical instruments, etc., all demanded cash incomes.” Indeed, shingles, doors, and glass windows became emblems of prestige as exotic trade goods.

The next change in fashion introduced homes which externally resemble those of the western pioneers who had brought architectural ideas from England or eastern Canada. The interior floor plan was also modified by some builders to includes one large, high-ceilinged room as a family gathering place and several very small rooms as sleeping and storage spaces. A few houses were built without any interior partitions.

The modifications to lineage residences that resembled Victorian homes elsewhere in Canada did not exclude “traditional” functions. Plankhouses were first modified and then torn down to be replaced by these newer frame dwellings. However, they were frequently built on the original foundations of the older buildings, thus maintaining the social geography of the stratified village. Furthermore, these frame dwellings may have resembled Canadian homes externally, but certainly in the nineteenth century, the interior layouts of these buildings conformed to the needs of the lineage group. Metlakatla may have been characterized by rows of identical plank homes (see Figure 12) symbolic of equality before God and reminiscent of “workers’ cottages,” yet the interior of these homes were not mimics of Victorian space. Most of these houses contained only two major partitions: separate bedrooms at the ends of the building and a large communal room in the middle. Some were designed as conjoined houses with a separate second story but connected first floors. This use of interior space demonstrates continuity in use and design with longhouse interiors, which had contained sleeping platforms or cubicles that were set apart from

16 Ibid., 91, n. 94.
17 Garfield, “Tsimshian and Neighbors,” 11.
18 Garfield, Tsimshian Clan and Society, 280.
19 Ligeex’s house was the exception and was slightly larger than the others in recognition of his status and authority as a chief. Jay Miller, Tsimshian Culture, 140.
20 Ibid.
storage areas and general communal spaces. This may also be a good illustration of collusion rather than a contest over physical social spaces. At Metlakatla Duncan made strategic use of political aspects of Tsimshian culture, and for a while at least, some chiefs were willing to go along with this for their own reasons. They may have agreed upon Duncan's housing designs because initially certain European building materials were deemed emblems of prestige. Their interpretation of the new houses did not necessarily include accepting Duncan's intention to create equality in property. When several hereditary chiefs sided with the bishop in the dispute between Ridley and Duncan, (and which resulted in the establishment of New Metlakatla), they were favouring the more prestigious man in terms of the religious hierarchy, significant given the importance of rank and privilege in "traditional" Tsimshian society.21

Architecturally dynamic, lineage housing arrangements remained typical throughout the period. Garfield described how "many of the older frame buildings still in use [in Port Simpson in the 1930s] are very large, two storey affairs containing from eight to twenty rooms and housing family groups resembling the old lineages."22 A good example of one such house in Port Simpson was Chief Dudoward's Eagle House (see Figure 13) which had been built in the late nineteenth century and modeled on Victorian houses in Eastern Canada.23 In 1890, Dudoward gave a large feast and erected a mortuary pole to commemorate his uncle, so it is unlikely that his preference for a Euro-Canadian style house was an outright acceptance of Western material culture as a replacement of former ways.24 Indeed, taking responsibility for members of one's community, reflecting a village's wealth, and demonstrating diligent industry were indications of a good chief, regardless of indigenous or Euro-Canadian means.25

The force of Canadian law would eventually have a considerable impact on (physical) property ownership and inheritance rights in a way that highlights the clash between the older matrilineal Tsimshian system and Canadian property statutes, favouring patrilineal and

21Ibid., 144.
22Garfield, Tsimshian Clan and Society, 280.
23Clarence Bolt, Thomas Crosby and the Tsimshian: Small Shoes for Feet Too Large (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1992), notes for Figure 10, opposite p. 68.
24Ibid., 88.
25For example, in the 1870s, the Dudowards also owned and operated the schooner Georgina and a store at Port Simpson. Rolf Knight, Indians at Work: An Informal History of Native Labour in British Columbia, 1858-1930 (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1996), 163, 208.
patriarchal rights. Conflict came over succession rights to the homes, whatever architectural design they favoured. Under the older system, a chief’s house passed to the nephew who received the name and position of that chief. Under Canadian law, wives and children were deemed the rightful inheritors. This altered social relationships in subtle ways. Traditionally, a father and his lineage group were responsible for preparing the site for his grown children’s new house as well as carving the house posts. This tradition has not continued, as individual families usually paid for and built their own dwellings. In the past, nephews had assisted in the construction of their uncles’ houses, whereas by the twentieth century, they had been replaced by sons, the ones who now stood to inherit the property under Canadian law.27

Furthermore, increasingly chiefs financed the construction of their own homes and thus insisted they had the right to sell, transfer, or will the property to whomever they wanted.28 “The transfer of the right to use natural resources coming from traditional lineage territory to another lineage by gift or through seizure in payment of a debt was fairly common,” under the old system, Garfield explains, “but such methods of transfer did not extend to dwellings. Since sale of real property was unknown, neither dwellings nor sites were transferred in that manner.” Decline of cooperative building activities among the lineage group (waab) resulted. Miller explains this was mainly because the group no longer had advantages or claims on the household, but the implications were far greater: “During the past two centuries, wealth that had been spent on house building to add to the fame of a lineage was directed toward the ceremonies for installing or burying the chief. Conflict arose over the transmission of not only the building, but also the site where it stood. These places had been owned collectively by the lineage and clan.”30

Garfield cites a prime example of the type of conflict the two competing concepts of property ownership (“traditional” Tsimshian vs. Canadian) could produce with the case of Mark Luther. Luther, a member of the Ginax’angiik tribe, had purchased a house at Port Simpson

---

27Ibid., 280.
28Jay Miller, *Tsimshian Culture*, 49.
30Jay Miller, *Tsimshian Culture*, 49.
belonging to a Gitwilgyoots female chief, who had decided to move to Metlakatla, although when he attempted to take possession of the house, he found the door had been padlocked. After breaking the lock and occupying the house, Luther and his family were confronted by the Gitwilgyoots people who insisted that the house was a chief’s residence and considered tribal not personal property. Elderly women walked through the house weeping and lamenting all the former chiefs who had lived there and other Gitwilgyoots chiefs pleaded for him to give up the house or accept the purchase price they offered for it. Luther appealed to Canadian law and protested that the purchase had been done in good faith and refused to give up the residence. Eventually, a missionary was brought in to mediate and a settlement was arranged between Luther and the Gitwilgyoots, which saw the Luther family compensated several hundred dollars and given title to some land upon which they constructed a new house. In addition to competing legal systems regarding inheritance and property title, the missionaries contributed to the decline of cooperative building between members of the same lineage through their emphasis on single nuclear family dwellings, personal ownership, and prohibitions on the potlatch.

Domestic space was not the only container undergoing transforming. Temporal space through a process already begun with introduction of the wage-labour system was further refined and shaped through the mission environment. Church bells, mandatory attendance at certain classes and services, and residential schools adhered to a strict daily schedule. New habits and disciplines more in keeping with Euro-Canadian work rhythms were encouraged. Ironically, these new work ethics and patterns took First Nations out from under the system of surveillance practiced in the missions, through Native employment in canneries, lumber camps, or mines.

The re-ordering of space was an especially symbolically laden one, if one considers the missionary assault on even eternal space. In the late 1870s, at the head of Douglas Channel, Kitamaat was founded as a Methodist mission and serviced in its formative years by Tsimshian missionaries such as Patrick Russ and notably by Kitamaat resident Wahuksgumalayou/Charlie Amos. An unmarried female missionary Susannah Lawrence, was the first non-Native

31Ibid.; and Garfield, Tsimshian Clan and Society, 288-289.
32Patrick Russ was well utilized by the Methodists throughout the North Coast area. He assisted A. E. Green in the 1870s and throughout the 1880s remained active in missions along the Nass R. and as an interpreter at Port Simpson. Clah identified Russ as one of the four Tsimshian elders who asked Thomas Crosby to leave Port Simpson in 1893.
appointed to the mission in 1883. This was at the request of the Kitamaat people, a Haisla group, but likely also populated at that time by a number of Southern Tsimshian. Lawrence recalls in early November 1883, how the Kitamaat mission house was built literally on the bones of the dead. She describes how while digging post holes for the mission house, a “forgotten” burial site was uncovered. As people openly wept, Lawrence writes unemotionally: “...we told them not to fret and we would bury them in the Christians’ burial ground; so they ceased to build the house. Patrick [Russ] made as many coffins as were needed, then we followed them to the graveyard and I read the burial service. They were then comforted, and went back to work, in about four weeks our house was finished.” While obviously only one perspective of this incident, it is perplexing that such an event should go virtually unremarked in Lawrence’s account, given the symbolic overtones of the incident. The erection of the “official” mission spatially usurps the past, represented in the bodies of previous generation. For Lawrence, the disinterring of graves did not cause the intended site for the mission house to be reassessed, but rather, forced the removal of the whole grave site to another, yet equally, Christian context—the Christian burial ground. This whole event is rather emblematic of the larger process of the Christianization of some Native cultural practices perceived of as obstacles in the Euro-Canadian discourse to the missions’ success or the power politics of missions and how this struggle permeated not only cultural expressions, but everyday life.

Social Space

While the physical appearance of Native villages began to change, it is difficult to write of late nineteenth century Euro-Canadian relations without acknowledging the enormous impact of
de-tribalization and anti-communal policies upon Native social structures. Social space was colonized too. Missionaries were certainly influential agents remaking village politics and forwarding a patriarchal, individualistic vision of the new Christian society they encouraged and outright imposed. Under the watchful eyes of missionary and Indian agent, social space at all levels of Native society was reformed. Missionaries were appointed justices of the peace, with the force of British law and Navy ships at their disposal. Native constables enforced mission laws, which included street patrols on Sundays to ensure full church attendance. Likewise, Jean Usher pointed out that at Metlakatla "[w]ork habits, marital life, and religious beliefs of the people were all the responsibility of the police," who imposed fines and jail sentences for violations. Village chiefs were now supposed to be elected. Secret societies (wutahulait) and halait performances were banned. The potlatch system was under siege, threatening the economic underpinnings of the social order and all legitimization of property, names, and authority. Yet the story was far from a sudden cessation of older social networks or a replacement of Native order with Euro-Canadian structures. Just as the meanings of Christian conversions were as varied as the individuals who utilized the label of Christian, the form and function of Christian society could blend old with new.

As excerpts from the minutes of the annual C.M.S. meeting reveal, many missionaries were concerned over the supply of the Native preachers they so heavily relied upon in the field, and specifically, over the problem of persuading Native peoples to support them. In the following discussion over the supply of Native teachers, by the end of the nineteenth century, the situation was acute enough for meeting attendees to label it "the present emergency":

The Archdeacon thought we had not done our duty in the past in training men. Mr. Keen thought there was no difficulty in securing men, the difficulty was rather in getting the people to support them. This was because remnants of several tribes were gathered in one villages, and the petty chiefs were divided. We should teach suitable men to give addresses and recognise lay Evangelists-men who work during the week & preach on Sundays: a native minister, if a failure would be a white elephant. Mr. McCullagh reminded Mr. Keen that what he had stated as the reason why the people wd [sic] not

36Usher, William Duncan, 78.
37Hereditary chiefs remained the legitimate voice, guaranteed by the revised Indian Act of 1880, despite the introduction of democratic forms of political leadership like Metlakatla's elected council. Jay Miller, Tsimshian Culture, 145.
support a native, was the outcome of the potlatch. Miss West thought that if young men were sent away to be educated for 5 or 7 years, as Edward Marsden, then the people wd [sic] receive & support them.\textsuperscript{38}

While missionaries suggested a European-style education was a way to increase the authority of Native evangelists, missionaries were also aware that an older social order was still intact and functioning. The "traditional" chiefs remained highly influential despite Christian village organization and the imposition of Canadian style systems of local government through the Indian Act. Well into the early twentieth century, village councilors may have been elected, but hereditary chiefs still retained considerable authority over local affairs. It was customary in many villages, such as Port Simpson, for the head of the council to be a chief.\textsuperscript{39} In some Native communities today a socially stratified system still endures, whereby church leaders are also hereditary nobles.\textsuperscript{40}

As new Christian social organizations emerged, the Tsimshian utilized them to continue their most important "traditional" practices, just as European technologies had altered property and material culture. Euro-Canadian missionaries were frequently drawn into the existing Native social structures in complex ways, even as they sought to alter them. This process was not always readily apparent to Euro-Canadians. One good example can be found in Robert Tomlinson Jr.'s, a second generation missionary in the North Coast region, account of how his father (Rev. Robert Tomlinson) was received into Nisga'a society. The story suggests that Christian missionization did not mean the replacement of Native ways with "white ways"; quite the opposite in fact. When Rev. Robert Tomlinson first arrived on the Nass River to work in the Anglican mission of Kincolith, he had marked all his linen with a small dove in black ink to prevent any loss during his travels or when he sent his clothes out to be laundered. Upon seeing this symbol of a black bird, two Nisga'a boys living in the mission house informed their fellow clan members that the missionary was their relative. Immediately, representatives of the Ravens approached Tomlinson to ask him if the black bird was his crest. He replied that it was. "So they had a feast and it was

\textsuperscript{38}Anglican Diocese of Caledonia, Minutes of the Diocesan and C.M.S. Conference, Metlakatla, May 29-June 1, 1903, ACCABC reel # 118/9, p. 29.

\textsuperscript{39}Garfield, Tsimshian Clan and Society, 323.

announced that the Shemarget [as they called the missionary] belonged to the Raven clan, and so the Raven clan had to always look after him. That stood him in good stead many a time later on.” When he married, the Eagle clan adopted his wife, so that Robert Jr. and the other Tomlinson children were all reared as members of the Eagle clan. The daughter-in-law of Rev. Tomlinson, Mrs. Robert Tomlinson Jr., confirms that a clan, the Finback Whale, also adopted her, so her marriage to an Eagle could be permitted under Nisga’a law. Accompanying each adoption of these Euro-Canadian missionaries was a potlatch.

The Tomlinsons’ experience is a perfect example of Native people contextualizing symbols and outsiders into a familiar environment. On the one hand, this could be an instance of the Euro-Canadian missionary being incorporated into the Nisga’a social structure, in the case of the first Tomlinson, possibly without fully realizing it. The adoption proceedings were formalized through a potlatch at a time when, ironically, missionaries were campaigning for its eradication. On the other hand, this may be another instance of collusion. I find it difficult to believe that Tomlinson would have been unable to explain the significance of the dove given the magnitude of its Christian symbolism. He may have realized this as an opportunity to advance his cause by emphasizing the dove’s association with aboriginal traditions, which in the long term, were clearly advantageous for him and his family.

Just as outsiders (missionaries) living among Tsimshianic peoples were socially made into insiders, Native Christians utilized the new forms of organizations to maintain the social solidarity of their cultures. While missionaries made much of the distinction between Christian and non-Christian, First Nations were more concerned with the cohesion of the group. Considering the historical scope of intercultural relations on the coast with other First Nations, it is very unlikely that the Tsimshian ever placed Christians in a category by themselves. Although undoubtedly causing some internal tensions, especially if Christian teaching was perceived as

"privileged" knowledge from a chief-missionary, "Christian" and "heathen" were not mutually exclusive categories for aboriginals.\(^3\) Despite how the Euro-Canadian missionaries rationalized Tsimshian society into Christian and non-Christian parts, it does not appear these were insurmountable divisions. True, there was a certain degree of exclusiveness in the creation of "Christian villages," but none were truly isolated from "traditionalist" influences. Even Metlakatla provided a guest residence for visiting Natives who may or may not have been Christian. Evangelical doctrine demanded that the faithful move among the unconverted for the important purpose of evangelism. The "persecution" of Christian converts was a favourite theme in missionary propaganda. By some accounts, medicine men "did in" or killed several early Christian Natives, making them martyrs to the Christian cause.

However, as commonplace as tensions between non-converted and converts were, conflicts between groups of Christians were an even more striking division which arose out of the mission context.\(^4\) It is well known that one of the two factions which ripped William Duncan's Metlakatla apart after 1882, opposed Duncan and sided with the Bishop. Several hereditary chiefs making up this anti-Duncan group had seized the opportunity to gain some of the power they had lost under the missionary's egalitarian Christianity. The Metlakatla case was not an isolated one. More often than not, the most significant "traditional" Native social and cultural practices continued under Christianity, including some indigenous spiritual expressions, in altered or adapted forms. Consequently, it is also fair to speak of a process of indigenization of Christianity at the local level.

Ironically, Euro-Canadian missionaries facilitated the continuance of older social groupings through by introducing certain mission organizations. As early as 1864, Duncan divided Metlakatla into ten companies of men, each with two village councilors and two

\(^3\)Patterson discusses how the Nass River missionary, R. A. A. Doolan, was perceived by the Nisga'a as a chiefly figure who introduced a new "privilege" among them: "They were willing to hear Doolan on the subject of Christianity, he was told, but not in the presence of the common people. What Doolan taught, especially in his own house to those resident with him, may have been perceived as privileged knowledge, congruent with the training of the Nishga youths for leadership." Palmer Patterson, "Nishga Perceptions of Their First Resident Missionary, the Rev. R. A. A. Doolan (1864-1867)," *Anthropologica* 30 (1988): 134.

\(^4\)For example of such persecution see G. H. Raley, "Dawn at Kitamaat continued," *Na Na Kwa* no. 2 (April 1898): 1-2.
constables. Women were also grouped into ten companies. Eventually the structure of these companies were revised to include a chief, two Native teachers, two constables, three councilors, two musicians, and ten volunteer firemen with their captain. Usher concludes that Duncan implemented these ten companies as a system of surveillance to facilitate conformity and adherence to the new Christian and European-styled environment. In practice, however, his "mission companies" replicated some of the functions of the pre-Christian tribal and crest organization. These groups provided the same kinds of social networks of mutual aid and communal identities which the house lineages and tribal affiliations had formerly, and in this new context, might continue to provide.

Christian organizations elsewhere provided similar opportunities for older social structures to creatively adapt to the mission environment. In describing early twentieth century religious factions among the Tsimshian, the result of several generations of missionization among Port Simpson Tsimshian, Viola Garfield identified a distinctly Christian faction which emerged in the 1890s following the death of Paul Ligeex. Bowing to Methodist pressure to abandon hereditary chieftainships, clan membership, and all aspects of potlatching, several of the most influential house heads at Port Simpson signed an agreement with the resident missionary to this effect. Garfield writes that the council appointed to represent the Gispaxlo'ots at feasts, funerals, and gift-giving ceremonies (functions which were formerly in the hands of Chief Ligeex), "uses the agreement with the missionary as a reason for renouncing most of their financial and social obligations to other tribes, which has put them in bad repute, especially among the Gitxala who have entertained them many times without return." This Christian faction prompted a group of Gunhu. t Eagles, led by two high-ranking women, to break off and attempt to set up a new chieftainship by reviving and claiming names, rights, and privileges of their house. This political shifting and house factionalism was not necessarily a direct result of missionary presence and

45 Ten distinct groups of Coast Tsimshian had once maintained winter villages on the lower Skeena river, although one group had disappeared by the time the nine groups moved to the area surrounding Fort/Port Simpson after 1834. Marjorie Halpin and Margaret Seguin, "Tsimshian Peoples: Southern Tsimshian, Coast Tsimshian, Nishga, and Gitksan," in Handbook of North American Indians: Vol. 7, Northwest Coast, ed. Wayne Suttles (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1990), 267.
46 Usher, William Duncan, 78.
47 Ibid.
48 Garfield, Tsimshian Clan and Society, 186.
Christianization, although undoubtedly exacerbated by them. Garfield found this situation illustrative of "one of the ways in which secondary chieftainships, and probably main chieftainships as well, may have become established under ancient conditions." 49

Palmer Patterson reached a similar conclusion regarding how some Nisga’a Christian villages were founded, also in "traditional" fashion however influenced by missionary activity in the area. 50 For at least the first few decades of Christianization, he argued, the impact of missionaries on Nisga’a village life, economic self-sufficiency, and political organization was slight. Patterson argues that "from its inception, Kincolithic was a Nisga’a village, essentially in continuity with Nisga’a culture, practice, and historical sequence," despite the C.M.S. missionaries, Robert Tomlinson’s and Rev. Robert Doolan’s intentions that the new Christian settlement introduce profound changes in ideology and lifestyle among its converts through a total separation from indigenous culture. 51

Indeed, Euro-Canadian missionaries presented Christianity as if it offered to all converts, a single unifying identity and, at least in theory, universal access to spiritual transformation. Yet, "traditionally" members of Tsimshian communities rarely adhered to a single group. At the village level, pre-Christian Tsimshian society was typified by a moiety system, whereby villages were divided into two social halves, and all matrilineal crests aligned themselves within the two divisions. 52 There were no other social organizations that were merely groupings of individuals unrelated through clan or kin. However, there was one notable exception, and this also divided each village into two social groupings: participation in the secret dancing societies of Nulim (Dog Eaters) and Mila (Dancers) did not adhere to kinship or tribal affiliations. 53 All Tsimshian who were not slaves or wa’ayin (nameless) belonged to at least one of these two groups. With the introduction of Christianity this began to change, encouraging groups of Christians to gather together regardless of clan or house membership. However, in the first generation of converts it

49Ibid., 188.
52Halpin and Seguin, “Tsimshian Peoples,” 267-284; and Jay Miller, Tsimshian Culture, 55.
53Garfield, Tsimshian Clan and Society, 318.
is readily apparent that the older system was not simply discarded for a new one. Denominational affiliation, membership in various church organizations such as Ladies’ auxiliaries, class meeting groups, Epworth Leagues, and temperance societies could be and were used to continue pre-existing social structures. In this way Christianity offered new ways to express “traditional” social ideals and practices at the village level, even in the new formed Christian settlements.

The continuance of traditions, social ideals, and practices operated, for example, at Port Simpson, where in the late nineteenth century, two fraternal societies emerged—the Firemen and the Soldiers (see Figure 14). In addition to performing specific duties on behalf of their community as their names readily suggest, these organizations also developed an outlet for social rivalries between houses and lineages. Each society vied to attract a greater number of chiefs into their membership and to elect the most prestigious chief to act as head of each society. Likewise, athletic clubs or educational associations that emerged out of the local church organizations, assumed, at least in part, many of the social duties and functions formerly performed by the matrilineage group, particularly in regard to arrangements after the death of a member or relative.

William Beynon’s ethnographic notes are even more specific regarding the continuance of traditional social categories through Christian organizations. The secret societies had been an important source of wealth for the chiefs, providing them with a continual economic income through initiation tributes. When the secret societies were outlawed by missionaries their “spirit” remained, as did the power and prestige they brought chiefs. Beynon refers to the Port Simpson example, where the village was equally divided into membership of two vying organizations, the Firemen and the Volunteers (Soldiers). In contrast to New Metlakatlans living in Alaska, Beynon concluded that Tsimshian language, customs, and social structure were much slower to change among Canadian Tsimshian.

---

54 Ibid., 319.
55 Ibid., 320.
58 Ibid., 88.
Beynon identified yet another form of this continuity with past Native social structures in church denominational friction and rivalries. When Duncan and his followers first founded Metlakatla in 1862, Duncan continued to send someone to Port Simpson to conduct Sunday services. Beynon wrote that “one of the rising chiefs who wanted to become a Cannibal Halait was expelled from the Church and in order to retain his prestige and in retaliation, this chief encouraged the Methodist Church to send a missionary to Port Simpson.”59 Presumably this chief was Alfred Dudoward. His initiative suggests that the Dudoward family had a very different and decidedly “traditional” transformation in mind when they founded the Methodist mission on the North Coast. When Port Simpson became predominantly Methodist throughout the 1870s and 1880s, yet another split occurred—the separation of the Band of Christian Workers from the parent body of the Methodist Church—which again corresponded, Beynon claimed, “not in membership but in spirit to the old society rivalry.”60 With the formal establishment of the Band of Workers as an independent group, the rivalry over leadership precipitated yet another schism, and led one faction to establish the local corps of the Salvation Army in the 1890s. The competition between the two completely Native-led organizations resulted in incidents of violent confrontations over rights to public services at Port Simpson. It also provides us with a new perspective on the significance of interdenominational antagonism as a manifestation of the continuance of older familial and kinship systems.61

Politics of Material Culture: Totem Poles to Gravestones

I was invited back, and was received by about 500 men with much distinction. Again the old men stated their case. Their spokesman held aloft the mask and other symbols of the past, and said, “These were my forefathers. These are my Bibles. Would you give up your Bible? Why then should you require me to give up mine?”62

59He does not name the individual chief, mostly likely Alfred Dudoward. Ibid., 86.
60Ibid.
61Clah described years of friction between the Methodists and the Salvation Army in Port Simpson, including incidents of violence and a “lock-out” of the Army from the Methodist church building they had been using. AWCJ, especially noticeable in entries Dec 1892-Dec 1894, NAC MG 40 F11 A#1707, 1706.
After his conversion he became very anxious to burn all his idols which he said he had been serving for thirty years. Accordingly, one Saturday he informed me privately that it was his intention to destroy them all that night after everybody had gone to bed, and he requested that I remain up with him to be a witness to the deed. At midnight two boxes were brought in, both filled with heathen treasures of all kinds, such as the secret whistle which belonged to the man-eater dances, dog whistles, wild dance whistles, aprons, head dresses, leggings, etc. These boxes he told me had been handed down for several generations and had travelled from place to place during the heathen dances. ...One of the secret whistles belonging to the man-eater dances which he showed to me was in the form of five fingers at one end while at the opposite end was just one piece where the blower was. He told me that the Kitamaat man-eaters had offered his grandfather one slave for this special piece. So when Tom decided to part with these treasures, it was to him a great sacrifice. It meant the traditions of his family would be wiped out. At two o'clock in the morning everything had perished in the flames. We then knelt down to pray...

In relation to missionary attempts to reform individual, social, and spatial bodies within the mission environment (and beyond), certain aspects of Tsimshian material culture were especially targeted. As the above quotations reveal, missionaries related the destruction of property symbolic of spiritual or social power to the belief that conversion necessitated a sharp and absolute break with the pre-Christian past. Missionaries interpreted the presence of Euro-Canadian consumer goods and store-bought clothing, milled lumber for building construction, or "school-um-texts" to be signifiers that the "authentic Indian" was being replaced by a reformed, "civilized," and Christianized one.

As I have discussed in previous chapters, this was not the perspective of all Tsimshian who embraced Euro-Canadian material culture or even Christianity. Social relationships in Tsimshian societies had long been materially represented through village geography, housing designs, and crests. Recall that the Tsimshian word for family (waab) also referred to the longhouse itself, the repository of names and the territory of the matrilineage. Tsimshian material culture reflected the social order and, once again, the Native-missionary discussion over meaning and expression of older forms in the newer mission context demonstrates the

---


complexities of Christianization. Native practices around one of the most identifiably
"traditional" cultural objects, the totem pole, provide an important example of how Tsimshian
peoples transformed practices and meanings associated with this public "art" form, once again, in
ways unexpected by mission officials. Indeed, the anti-potlatching stance taken by many Euro-
Canadian missionaries was frequently directly related to the missionaries' insistence that crest
poles should not be erected by "converted" communities.

Tsimshianic peoples raised totem poles for any number of reasons—to shame a rival, to
celebrate a lineage's trading prowess, or to honour the memory of the deceased. Totem poles
were containers of clan history, "real" people, and wealth. As Miller explains, they were
absolutely central to Tsimshian culture, society, and economy: "It is the adawx that specify places,
resources, crests, and spirits who benefit ancestors and the house, explicitly linked together by a
totem pole carved with crests, dedicated and set in the ground to face the river or beach."65 While
acting as historical records, the poles were not without spiritual significance. First contact with
superhuman/non-human powers took place during childhood, through a series of throwing
dance or ceremonies of throwing power into children by lineage chiefs, at which children
received their first "power name." These powers were similar to crests in that they remained
within the matrilineage and were inherited. They were represented through the power names
held by lineage members and also physically appeared on garments, houses, and totem poles.66
During the last quarter of the nineteenth century many of these wooden poles were destroyed or
were replaced by stone gravestones, particularly apparent in villages that had undergone
significant transformation as a result of mission work.

Was the pattern of totem pole destruction a result of conversions to Christianity in this
period? As mentioned in the preceding chapter, evangelical revivals sometimes stimulated such
religious enthusiasm that the newly converted destroyed objects associated with their previous
"un-redeemed" state. There was a definite connection between the destruction of "traditional"
property and communal Christian fervour. Missionaries attributed the disappearance of poles in
villages to their own success among the people. When Thomas Crosby arrived at Fort Simpson at

the invitation of the Dudowards, "there was only 'one shingled 'European' house outside the fort... By 1878, 'most of the original carved posts' had been 'cut down as missionary influence spread among the people.'" For good measure, Crosby organized the public burning of several totem poles and arranged for an "Indian Council" headed by a Christianized chief to remove shamanic paraphernalia from Port Simpson homes. At the non-denominational Christian village of Minskinisht (Cedarvale) on the Upper Skeena, the practice of raising totem poles was abandoned because of associations with "traditional" customs. It is also not surprising that this type of destructive or omitting activity towards totem poles may have increased during periods of intense Christian revivalism. At these times, the pressures to publicly demonstrate one's religious convictions were intensive and immediate. This trend continued for second and third generation of Christian converts in the region. For example, Marius Barbeau noted that a number of totem poles were destroyed or taken down by their owners during religious revivals in the early twentieth century.

Individual Native explanations as to why conversion was marked with the removal of their totem poles reflect both missionary values and their need for a public demonstration to announce their new found Christian identity. Grace Stevens, the daughter of renown Haida missionaries, Agnes and Amos Russ (active evangelists on the Queen Charlotte Islands since the late 1870s), remarked on the tremendous pressure employed by missionaries to get Native converts to make a material testimony to their new faith:

There's a lot of old lodges still there and a lot of totem poles, and my father, being the chief's son, had lots to say about a lot of the totem poles. The missionaries, of course, at the time said that they had to do away with all those old things, and they were heathenish and everything, and I remember my father cutting down beautiful totem poles and cutting

---

68 Douglas Cole cited in Douglas Todd, "Coastal Missionary Cashed in on Indian Culture," Vancouver Sun, October 23, 1995, A2; and Crosby, Up and Down the North Coast, 66.
70 Marius Barbeau, Totem Poles according to Crests and Topics Vol. 1, Anthropological Series no. 30, Bulletin no. 119 (Ottawa: Museum of Man, n.d.), 1. As Barbeau dates these totem pole destructions to the years 1917 and 1918, it might be interesting to speculate whether the impact of the Spanish Influenza played any role in these events.
them up for kindling wood and firewood. He wanted to do away with all those old things if they were going to become Christians.\textsuperscript{71}

In 1895, Pierce reported one of his Christian converts, a seventy year old shaman from Kispiox, demonstrated his newly found convictions by pulling down his house and totem poles and by formalizing his marriage through a Christian ceremony.\textsuperscript{72} Likewise, Arthur Wellington Clah removed one his family's poles in testament to his new found Christian identity.\textsuperscript{73} Yet, late in life, Clah was ambivalent about this decision to cut down his family crest pole. He recorded in his journal how he asked four of his nephews to chop down his totem pole (depicting the Blackfish/Orca crest) as a symbol of his commitment to Christianity.\textsuperscript{74} However, when others followed his example, he later expressed remorse over this decision and the replacement of such poles, generally, with stone monuments.\textsuperscript{75}

The significance of such an overt break with the past was not lost on Euro-Canadian missionaries, and this sentiment was frequently expressed in the mission propaganda. A Salvation Army publication, for example, reported that early converts, "[a]s testimony to their desire to break with the old traditions and customs the new Army soldiers gladly gave their historic totem poles to be used in the foundation of the Army Hall."\textsuperscript{76} Twentieth century Nisga’a oral history substantiates this very symbolically-laden action. When asked by an interviewer about the totem poles used in the construction of the Salvation Army Hall at Gitwinksikshlkw (Canyon City) on the Nass River, Chief Roy Azak’s reply focused on explaining how totem poles were more akin to crest histories for each tribe:

When the first Anglicans, when they come into Nisga’a Nation, they say those are idols. It's not good. Cut them down. Burn them, yet they didn’t. You see old people if they had broken english like me, and they hasn’t got education to really explain, but they only

\textsuperscript{71}Mrs. Grace Stevens (daughter of Haida missionaries Agnes and Amos Russ), excerpt from Interview by Imbert Orchard, "The Queen Charlotte Islands—The Agnes Russ Story," People in Landscape, Educational Series—Transcript, Accession no. 2424, Tape no. 1, Track no. 1 (Victoria: Aural History Programme, Provincial Archives of British Columbia, n.d.), 12.

\textsuperscript{72}Pierce, From Potlatch to Pulpit, 68.

\textsuperscript{73}The event in question occurred decades prior to Clah recording it in his journals. AWCl, Oct. 3, 1901, NAC MG40 F11 #A-1707; and Arthur Wellington Clah, "Diary and Notes relating to Clah," in George Henry Raley Collection, BCA H/D/R13/C52.

\textsuperscript{74}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{75}AWCl, Wednesday December 14, 1887, NAC MG40 F11 # A-1714.

\textsuperscript{76}Brian Lea, "Gitwinkikshilk: How Canyon City Came by Its Picturesque Name," The War Cry, April 16, 1949, 10.
understand that it was a sin... [akin to the biblical tales of Moses' outrage against the golden calf]...But our people don't do that. It's just a history, that's right.  

Some Native publications assert that missionaries believed totem poles were worshipped, and that is why missionaries adamantly targeted them. Euro-Canadian missionary sources for the nineteenth century do not seem to corroborate this as the primary reason they were opposed to this particular aspect of Native material culture, at least in the case of those operating in the North Pacific Coast region for any significant length of time. While, missionaries recognized some spiritual significance attached to poles, it was their connection to "traditional" cultures that made them problematic. Crosby for example, emphasized social rather than religious associations, when he described totemism among Northwest Coast nations as "not merely a system of rough crests and monstrous heraldry, but is symbolical of a vaguely religious and very definite social institution." However, regardless of the religious or social associations, the sentiments expressed in the descriptions of Native owners destroying their poles as a public break with pre-Christian values suggests that missionaries commonly employed coercion and shaming to encourage the removals. In times of intense religious excitement, such as during evangelical revivals, public pressures on Native Christians must have been very strong. Moreover, the above examples of actions of the Russes or Clah, were those of extraordinary Native Christians (evangelists themselves), who may not necessarily represent the "ordinary" Native perspective on this matter, and therefore, acted with more pronounced conviction. Another explanation may be that simply some Tsimshian demonstrated a deeper commitment to Christianity than was previously assumed.

On the other hand, an argument can be made that destroying, particularly burning, material items was a way for the Tsimshian to transfer those objects to the spirit world. By throwing personal objects or regalia into a fire, shamans could send them to the recently deceased. Individuals may have chosen not to give their objects to missionaries or Indian

---

77 Roy Azak (Chief, Caynon City), Oral Interview (tape) by Mrs. Major M. Evenden, May 4, 1981, SAA.
79 Crosby, Up and Down the North Coast, 307.
81 Garfield, Tsimshian Clan and Society, 240; and Cove, Shattered Images, 87, 114.
agents but rather to release the power of halait things through fire and smoke. Hence the burning of masks and shamanic objects may not have invalidated their purpose as physical manifestations of power; quite the contrary, it was a method of further empowering them or a way of returning that power to the world from whence it came. There may also have been a "traditional" social dimension to these activities. Persons seeking to acquire additional status through becoming Christian may have used the opportunity to destroy property as a way of validating that change accomplishment.

Clearly, the issue of the destruction or removal of totem poles is a very sensitive one for aboriginal peoples, and the decision to do so must have been a difficult one for even the most devout of Christians. Coercion undoubtedly played a strong role. Euro-Canadian missionaries openly encouraged an end to the practice of raising poles because it was accompanied by potlatching and represented the past they aimed to eradicate. Yet missionary opposition to the presence of totem poles, was not without glaring contradictions. William Duncan, for example, was not overtly opposed to the use of indigenous designs in other contexts. The first chapel constructed in the 1870s at Metlakatla was adorned with two carved poles representing the four clans: Blackfish/Orca and Wolf on the right, and Raven and Beaver on the left (see Figure 15). Beaver was substituted for Eagle, "according to a still-current joke," because "Duncan and the Tsimshian, as good businessmen, were well aware that beavers provided the money during the fur trade era." "I never interfered with the crest business," Duncan wrote of the early years at Metlakatla. "It was very helpful to me. Members of the same crest would not fight each other," and thus served his agenda of preserving the peaceful coexistence between nations quite well.

Concurrent with the physical destruction of totem poles in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Natives and non-Natives alike removed poles, often to European and North

---

82 On a related matter, John Cove discusses the extent to which Tsimshian cremation of human remains was necessary for reincarnation by feeding the dead and making possible the re-unification of a body and a soul. Cove, Shattered Images, 73, 88-89, 114, 144.
83 Jay Miller, Tsimshian Culture, 142, note to illustration no. 19.
The American curator, James G. Swan, who was under contract to the Smithsonian Institution in the 1870s, tried to utilize existing cultural practices with regard to significant ceremonial objects as a strategy to collect totem poles. Among several Northwest Coast groups, individual items "owned" by one chief might be sent to the house of another chief. According to Swan, his Haida contact told his people, "I send these things to the great Chief of the Boston people, who have them taken care of and preserved in a big house." Although Swan's statement is suspect given his motives as a museum collector, this explanation may indicate that in "giving" their totem poles to a Euro-American chief, their Haida owners believed they were increasing their significance and value. Margaret Seguin explains that in the "traditional" Tsimshian feast system, central to the keeping and building of relations of power, the host distributed gifts of food and property to high ranking guests, who temporarily represent "Real Beings from other worlds." By returning property to the realm of the "Real Beings," the chiefly host could expect to receive gifts of food, wealth, and crests in return, for his or her hospitality and generosity. Were Euro-Americans received as high-ranking chiefs whose acceptance of totem poles and other material goods thereby validated the wealth of their Tsimshian owners? Indeed, some Northwest Coast groups set the "purchase" prices for poles to reflect the amount of wealth that had been distributed when the pole had been first raised.

Even more problematic is how to interpret missionaries in their role as "collectors." Apparently, Europeans, Americans, or Canadians did not collect full-sized totem poles from Northwest Coast groups prior to the mission era. While many missionaries campaigned against the erection of any new poles in the period under study, several prominent missionaries were actively collecting or facilitating the collecting of Native material culture, including totem poles.

---

85 Douglas Cole's study indicates this was a virtual pillage of material culture. Douglas Cole, Captured Heritage: The Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts (Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 1985), passim.
87 Seguin, "Lest There Be No Salmon," 118.
88 Joanne MacDonald, "Ceremonial Object to Curio," 205.
90 For a discussion on the continuing controversy over the role of missionary as collector, see the following cited article which examines the actions of Thomas Crosby's heirs who now possess the missionary's Native artifact collection. The irony of missionaries preserving and profiting from the very objects they publicly encouraged their converts to denounce and destroy is not lost on contemporary museum representatives attempting to develop
Joanne MacDonald explored the nature of missionary involvement in obtaining ceremonial objects, poles, and sacred artifacts at Port Simpson and Metlakatla. By the twentieth century, she concludes, missionaries had facilitated the collection of over 30 per cent of the total objects removed from the two villages. This process was well underway in the nineteenth century, and missionaries such as William Duncan, Thomas Crosby, William H. Collison, Dr. R. W. Large, J. B. McCullagh, George Raley, and Bishop Ridley all became contributors of Northwest Coast “art” for museums and galleries. In addition to acting as “middlemen” and even providing a mail-order service for private collectors, several of these missionaries maintained their own personal collections. Given the “traditional” function of the Tsimshian yaawk (potlatch) to “empty the house” and maintaining the reciprocal relationship with “Real Beings,” Joanne MacDonald postulates “[p]erhaps Duncan and Crosby were able to tap into this concept when they were perceived as the sources of new “White” power. I have already expressed the ways in which Euro-Canadian missionaries were received as shamans and chiefs, and the advantages these perspectives allowed them in their mission work. There a several photographs from the late nineteenth century of missionaries dressed in chiefly or shamanic regalia. Rev. J. B. McCullagh posed as a shaman for the cover of his biography and Thomas Crosby posed alongside Nishlkumik/Sudalth (Victoria Young) sometime in the 1870s (see Figure 16), dressed as a Tsimshian chief. The regalia subsequently became part of Crosby’s personal collection.

During missionization, sacred and ceremonial objects were thus inverted and transformed into “curios” by the dominant culture. If Native objects like totem poles were being removed, destroyed, or no longer created, did alternative forms assume the previous traditions or cultural functions these poles had served? Examples of “traditional” uses for new material art forms

---

92 Ibid., 211, n. 2.
93 Ibid., 201.
95 Joanne MacDonald, “Ceremonial Object to Curio,” 211.
include button blankets, which like totem poles before them, recorded and displayed lineage crests. Likewise, flagpoles and especially gravestones, each in their own way, took on some of the conventions and functions that totem poles once had. Just as H.B.C. traders used to give flags to local “chiefs” with whom they conducted regular business, missionaries also utilized flags to confirm a relationship with their converts. Missionaries raised flags on the Sabbath to mark it as the day for worship. Following this practice, Native Christians adopted flags to publicly display their status as converts. In his memoirs, Rev. William Henry Pierce recalls his work at the Methodist mission of Kispiox on the Upper Skeena River (1895-1909) and cites one such example. Pierce writes about a Kispiox convert, who told the Tsimshian missionary:

“...I want to give my heart to God. I have been thinking about it for a long time and now I want to make a start tonight. Will it be right for me to hoist by flag today as a token of my intention, so that the whole village may know?” “Certainly,” I replied, “and I will hoist the mission flag in response.” As soon as the people saw the flags inquiries were made, and when the explanations were given there was great excitement and rejoicing. Everybody who had a flag hoisted it.

In this respect, the flagpoles from which the flags flew, functioned as a alternative totem poles, and indeed, many flagstaffs were raised with an accompaniment of similar ceremonies. A photograph taken at Port Simpson in the 1880s, depicts a flag being flown atop a “traditional” totem pole (see Figure 17), suggesting further syncretism at work.

Gravestones proved to be an even more adaptable material object to continue the form and function of mortuary poles. Art historian Ronald William Hawker examined the role of gravestones as examples of Tsimshian culture change and continuity extensively in his thesis work and publications. “Art among the Tsimshian functioned as a social statement. Both plastic and two-dimensional art acted as crests and were used to establish and advertise the owner’s

96 For both historical and contemporary traditions of button blankets on the Northwest Coast, see Doreen Jensen and Polly Sargent, *Robes of Power: Totem Poles on Cloth*, Museum Note No. 17 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press in association with the UBC Museum of Anthropology, 1993). Haida Florence Edenshaw Davidson recalls how the crests were continued in the format of button blankets, a practice that proliferated in the post-contact period because of easy access to European manufactured buttons. Like totem poles, button blankets recorded lineage crests and could be publicly displayed at a time when missionaries opposed the raising of totem poles. Margaret Blackman, *During My Time: Florence Edenshaw Davidson, A Haida Woman* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1995), 124.
97 Pierce, *From Potlatch to Pulpit*, 80.
98 Ibid., 84.
position."\textsuperscript{100} The Christian-style gravestones and stone monuments introduced by missionaries could replicate these needs.\textsuperscript{101} In addition, the accompanying practices of feasting, communal participation, and distribution of goods that marked the raising of a mortuary pole were continued despite the change in form of the final object on display. Clah mentioned the contributions given for Chief Ligeex's gravestone and a new stone village marker in 1891 were nearly identical to what would have occurred if poles had been raised. Moreover, the function for these stone markers was similar to "traditional" commemorative poles.\textsuperscript{102} Clah also refers to the meeting of group of chiefs in 1887 to discuss whether new stones could stand alongside old mortuary poles, indicating the introduction of gravestones may have had an additive, not just syncretic, quality among the Tsimshian.\textsuperscript{103}

Gravestones could incorporate inscriptions and epitaphs, emblematic of how the written language was embraced as a source of status as well as an effective recording device. However, gravestones also incorporated non-written methods of display and personal memorialization. The Tsimshian readily incorporated crest designs, even very "traditional" styles, into Victorian Canadian mortuary art—in essence, creating stone totem poles. The meaning of these "stone poles" was congruent with pre-Christian rules of who was eligible to "own" and display such symbols. Hawker's 1991 survey of grave-markers throughout Tsimshian territories clearly reveals that the gravestones of children (who would not yet have received a significant number of power names or acquired a prominent rank in their community) and those adults of low social status were more likely to bear simple inscriptions and non-Native carvings, such as angels. "While a person of low rank could afford an elaborate memorial stone, he still could not use traditional crests to which he did not have access through traditional rights. The combination of Western-style gravestones and Indian crests designs thus displayed both economic and ceremonial wealth and was a way for the chiefly class to reaffirm its position in a changing

\textsuperscript{101} In fact, missionaries functioned as "middlemen" and agents for some of the commercial monument companies. Ibid., 93-97.
\textsuperscript{102} AWCJ, Tuesday June 2, 1891, NAC MG40 F11, #A-1713.
\textsuperscript{103} AWCJ, Wednesday Nov 30, 1887, NAC MG40 F11, #A-1714.
A headstone interpreted by missionaries to represent a Christian death and burial, meant something very different to Northwest Coast Native peoples. It signified property had been distributed at a potlatch for the deceased; it was a public symbol of power, wealth, and status. Hence stone monuments were ultimately syncretic in form, as Hawker explains: "The Tsimshian took a European tradition, that of the gravestone, and adapted it to their own social needs, creating in the process a new and vibrant form of folk art." Moreover, the Tsimshian were not alone in this cultural adaptation. Their neighbours on the North Coast, such as the Kitamaat Haisla and the Haida of the Queen Charlotte Islands saw a similar transformation of their mortuary practices and expressions.

One of the advantages for the Tsimshian in utilizing a "missionary-approved" form to commemorate their dead was that they could openly conduct mortuary feasts at a time when the law prohibited the potlatch. Thus, ironic results came of missionary attempts to "replace" Native feasts with Christian ones for funeral rites, and their introduction of Euro-Canadian winter holidays like Christmas and New Year's. At Metlakatla, for instance, Christmas and New Year's were emphasized as communal celebrations. There was even distribution of wealth at these apparently "Christianized" festivities. At Metlakatla's New Year's celebrations, Duncan himself frequently hosted a feast and held the annual business meeting for the mission, which involved introducing newcomers, assigning them to their companies who were present in their uniforms and badges of office, collecting taxes, followed by the singing of songs and the giving of speeches by the chiefs and council members. Later, games were played and Duncan often gave a magic lantern (slide) show. Metlacatians gave personal feasts to commemorate births, deaths, and the completion of new houses, all of which would have been full-blown "potlatches" in the past. Usher speculates it was unlikely that Duncan was consciously adapting mission practices to

---

104 Hawker, "Faith of Stone," 90.
105 Ibid., 87-90, 97; and Margaret B. Blackman, "Totems to Tombstones: Culture Change as Viewed Through the Haida Mortuary Complex, 1877-1971," Ethnology 12, no. 1 (Jan 1973): 55.
106 Hawker, "Faith of Stone," 82.
108 Unintentionally, the Anglican Church at Masset came to be included among the recipient guests at mortuary potlatches. "This came about, however, only after the potlatch had undergone a considerable amount of external and superficial change while remaining structurally and functionally unaltered." Blackman, "Totems to Tombstones," 51.
109 Usher, William Duncan, 85-86.
Tsimshian customs. However, for the Tsimshian, Christmas and New Year’s celebrations allowed them an opportunity to publicly affirm rank and acknowledge wealth, two former functions of the Tsimshian potlatch.\textsuperscript{110}

Conclusion

The spatial assertion of missionization challenged, redefined, and realigned boundaries for many Tsimshian cultural containers: houses, social relations, and material life. “Christian street” and “Heathen street” never really existed in Tsimshian villages. The adoption of European architectural styles, especially for family dwellings, did not mean that the Tsimshian accepted missionary definitions of family as a patriarchal, patrilineal nuclear group. Yet social relations were altered over time, and in subtle ways, through changes to housing designs, building customs, and inheritance laws. The incorporation of Euro-Canadian building materials, whether for homes or in the creation of monuments to the dead, had different significance for Natives and missionaries. Clan affiliations and “traditional” social divisions continued in Christianized communities through new organizations introduced by missionaries, manifested in everything from denominational membership to choice of class meeting to attend.

While many aspects of Tsimshian society were transformed in ways that preserved their essential functioning in the community, it is very clear that the introduction of a competing legal system, the Indian Act, and the ban on the potlatch (the very mechanism by which social, economic, and political systems were maintained), attacked Tsimshian society in more a comprehensive way than missions alone had done. The division in some communities over the potlatch highlighted Christian and “traditionalist” factions in ways not apparent in the symbolic battlegrounds of other issues, such as dress, names, or house designs. By the close of the nineteenth century, secular battles came to forefront; “Two systems were at war on the north coast.”\textsuperscript{111}

\textsuperscript{110}Ibid., 86.
\textsuperscript{111}Anti-potlatch petitions: AGP, Box 3, f.4, Chiefs of the Nass River to Attorney General, 20 July 1896; box 4, f.2, David McKay, George Eli and Frederick Allen to Attorney General, 30 Mar. 1898; Box 5, f. 2, Osterhout to Attorney General, 6 Sept. 1899; cited in Douglas Cole and Ira Chaikin, \textit{An Iron Hand Upon the People: The Law Against the Potlatch on the Northwest Coast} (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1990), 48.
Figure 12: Metlakatla [188?] (BCA C-8105). Eastern portion of the village showing milled lumber houses, church, and salmon cannery buildings.
Figure 13: Chief Dudoward's "Eagle House" at Port Simpson [n.d.] (BCA B-03750)
Figure 14: Port Simpson Volunteers (Soldiers) [n.d.] (BCA B-003552)
Not all missionaries objected to the public display of crest designs in other contexts. These totem poles are carved in an "untraditional" style and portray the images of the four Tsimshian crests: Orca/Blackfish and Wolf on the right; Raven and Beaver on the left. Beaver is an affiliate of the Eagle clan and was substituted a reminder of the wealth wrought through the fur trade.
Figure 16: Nishlkumik/Sudalth or Victoria Young with Rev. Thomas Crosby [n.d.] (BCA G-07293). Crosby is wearing chiefly regalia which eventually became part of his personal collection.
Figure 17: Port Simpson Longhouse [188?] (BCA E-08350). This cedarplank house was known as Sgagweet Eagle House and displayed the giibilk crest of the name-title Nis'wiibaas. The house was still standing in 1915 and illustrates the persistence of indigenous architecture alongside the new Euro-Canadian designs. However, also note the syncretic use of a flag flying from atop the totem pole.
Chapter 11: Conclusion

In the vignette I began this study with, William Duncan tells an unexpectedly unconventional conversion narrative. His tale recounted his first meeting with a “traditional” Tsimshian tribe. He opened his story with the typical Eurocentrism of assumed cultural superiority, with patronizing quips about the misuse of umbrellas, his fears of being murdered for his clothing, and his reluctance to attend an “Indian” dance. But somehow his meeting with that “very heathen tribe” was nothing like that which he had been prepared to experience. Instead the Native community opened up a dialogue with the missionary, to discuss the changing heavens. The dance of “barbarism” expected by Duncan was instead a prayer and a hymn. The identities and meanings exchanged in this communication between “Native” and “Missionary” may not have been mutually understood, but it was an emotionally charged encounter nonetheless.

In the decades that followed, this dialogue continued. Over the course of missionization, Native Christians spoke with a significant voice about the meanings of Christianity. It should come as no surprise the Tsimshian were attracted to new sources of power like Christianity, given their long-standing tradition of cultural borrowing from neighbouring First Nations. Transformative experiences which allowed participants to achieve their more than human potential were especially valued. Christian power, thus, was added to the existing methods of acquiring status and spiritual strength. When Euro-Canadian missionaries presented Protestant evangelicalism to the Tsimshian in terms of a transformative experience, they were probably unaware just how familiar certain aspects of their message were to the Tsimshian. Older forms did not simply disappear with the introduction of missions, although they certainly were altered by the process. As Tsimshian themselves took on an active role in the dissemination of Christian teachings, some looked to circumvent “traditional” methods of acquiring spiritual power and authority, while others viewed Christianity as a new source of status, names, and power to further bolster their already elevated position in society.

1See chapter 1: Introduction, 1.
With the establishment of formal missions, opportunities for individual self-expression abounded. The policy followed by all of the Protestant mission societies operating in the region was one of proselytization from within. Missionaries routinely set up weekly class meetings and there were no barriers to becoming a class leader or local preacher, beyond a personal calling. Men and women like Arthur Wellington Clah, Katherine and Alfred Dudoward, Philip McKay, and countless other self-motivated Christian Tsimshian shaped the new religion as they actively evangelized. However, the mission societies attempted to channel these evangelistic impulses through study and more formalized training. Euro-Canadian missionaries established training classes for their Native protégés and set up schools for local preachers. Many Tsimshian evangelists earned the designation of “official” missionaries, whether as ordained ministers, such as the Reverends William Henry Pierce and George Edgar, or as salaried employees known as “Native Assistants” and “Native Teachers.”

Native missionaries served diverse roles. Tsimshian mission workers were often the first Christian teachers in an area. Native Assistants were frequently responsible for setting up new mission sites, organizing the community, teaching, preaching, fundraising for the building of a church and mission house, promoting the building of roads, single-family dwellings, or sometimes industrial enterprises, such as sawmills or canneries. Euro-Canadian missionaries and ordained ministers almost always came with the second wave in this region. Hence understanding the role played by these Native missionaries is paramount to fully comprehending not only the religious encounter between Christian and Native beliefs, but also the process of the Christianization of Tsimshian peoples.

Much of the record of Native contributions to this Christianization was penned by Euro-Canadian missionaries. Missionary writing was a literary genre unto itself. Frequently published in (and undoubtedly edited for public consumption by) international journals to support missionary endeavours, missionary letters from the field were popular and numerous in the nineteenth century. Descriptions of Native Christian forms were shaped by the preconceptions


\[\text{3} \text{For a example of the variety of paid positions for Methodist Native mission workers, see Appendix D.}\]
Euro-Canadian missionaries brought with their ample cultural baggage. The Euro-Canadian discourse idealized Tsimshian Christians, like Philip McKay or the Dudoward family, as archetypal Native evangelists. According to this perspective, Christian conversion was conceptualized as a rejection of a “dark” past and was gauged by the inward and outward changes of individual converts, their heroic deeds in service of the Christian Lord, and by their perseverance through countless trials, showdowns, and challenges, which they endured alongside the equally heroic Euro-Canadian missionaries. Yet, in celebrating this “proselytizing from within,” Euro-Canadians also affirmed the unequal relationship between missionary and Tsimshian. The male and female portraits of Tsimshian Christians were embedded in the social agendas of Christian missions (especially with respect to public behaviour and social values), and in a process of hegemony that worked through an explicitly patriarchal discourse on gender and the nuclear family. While male catechists were assessed in terms of their loyalty to the missionary and their evangelistic work, Tsimshian women were conceptualized in the Euro-Canadian discourse, according to Victorian notions of femininity, maternal and domestic duty, and passive vulnerability. Yet, for Tsimshian women like Katherine Dudoward, Nis’akx (Martha McNeill), or Nishlkumik (Sudalth or Victoria Young), this narrow Euro-Canadian perspective did not even come close to describing their true role in Christian Tsimshian society. These high-ranking women adopted a proactive form of Christian leadership that demonstrated their continued significance in a society still arranged by matrilineal collectives.

Several of these Tsimshian Christians contributed regularly to the published mission discourse, although their writings could be, and sometimes were, indistinguishable from any other missionary’s. They too had access to the “white” discourse on “Indians” and were quite capable of adapting “white” literary and polemical conventions in their own work.4 After all, it was clear to them who their audience would be and what they expected to read about “Indian” missions. Penny Petrone’s survey of Native literature in Canada found the writing of nineteenth century aboriginal Christians to be so “derivative and imitative” in style chiefly because of the influence of the Bible. She found that Natives effectively “produced passionate sermons and

---

lectures, as well as prose narratives that advocated assimilation into the blessings and benefits of Christianity and progress. Indeed, this was the rhetorical style common to most evangelical writers of that era, indigenous or not. Native texts therefore were characteristic, not imitative, of evangelical discourse; their authors, "genuine" evangelical Christians.

Native participation in the dominant missionary discussion should not be viewed as subservience to Euro-Canadian power, any more than silences on the matter should be viewed as disinterest or neutrality. As the Native missionary discourse has revealed, despite the "im/moral frontier," for the first generation of converts at least, there was some choice in negotiating their own conversions and interpretations of Christianity. The message of Christian salvation fell on attentive ears because of pre-existing Tsimshian conventions about transformation, the acquisition of powers, and the responsibility to one's social group to encourage everyone to attain their more than human potential. Yet Native Christians could be, and were, critical of the process when these objectives were constrained and contained by Euro-Canadian authorities and the mission environment.

Furthermore, there was one profound difference in the Tsimshian discourse compared to that of non-Natives. For non-Natives conversion meant altering one's behaviour, "turning from sin," not necessarily forsaking one's cultural traditions. The "moral" and cultural baggage attached to "Indianness" insisted that conversion for aboriginals be accomplished by a rejection of "traditional" culture. Because of this cultural element, First Nations Christians were forced to create a discourse that was capable of holding contradictions which Euro-Canadian models of Native Spirituality/Christianity dichotomy would not allow. Clah's journals, for example, document his engagement within a process of missionization and how expressions of both Tsimshian and Christian perspectives about the world shaped his life. Taken as a historical source, Clah's texts represent an ambiguous position resulting from the negotiated process of

---

5 Penny Petrone, Native Literature in Canada: From Oral Tradition to the Present (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 69.
7 For some non-Native evangelicals, Christian conversion meant reconnecting with the essence of Anglo-Saxon values and traditions.
conversion that rejected the notion there was a firm dichotomy of Native versus Christian.\(^8\)

Many Native Christians, such as Clah, Louis Gray, William Henry Pierce, George Edgar, David Leask, and the Dudowards, assumed identities of “inbetweeness.”

...promise to have Council this evening about Victoria government and canadian government about our land. methodist mission Society promising to help the indian Christianity they give the land in the hand of lawyer. I had told the head Chiefs in Victoria that we waiten them promis. If we lost our land. also we lost our Christian.\(^9\)

As Arthur Wellington Clah expresses his frustration over the Native lands issue, broken promises, and the role played by the Methodists against the government on the Tsimshian’s behalf, he also summarizes an important point. Being Christian did not mean forsaking the connection to one’s heritage, land, or indigenous cultural expressions. The most significant aspect of religious conversion, Robert Hefner writes, “is not a deeply systematic reorganization of personal meanings but an adjustment in self-identification through the at least nominal acceptance of religious actions or beliefs deemed more fitting, useful or true.”\(^10\) This self-identification is a shifting one; one which does not have to be the only reference point for an individual. Christianity was not directly imposed upon First Nations. Religious encounters between Natives and missionaries were dialogic meetings in which both parties changed through the process of translation and communicating their opinions and positions. It is true that the relationship was not equal in power, and Christian identities were not always easy ones to define or maintain. Yet, the Christian identity was no less genuine than other Native identities. When Margaret Blackman asked Haida Florence Edenshaw Davidson “what she most wanted to be remembered for, she answered without hesitation, ‘for my work in the Church.’”\(^11\) I am certain that David Leask’s or William Henry Pierce’s responses would have been similar. Clah wrote in his journal in 1890, “I open my mouth to all sleepe Christian. some were laught at me. othere
shame. I awake every Body is heart to walk straight don't look back this same Lot's wife.”

Clah’s belief in a positive future for the Tsimshian peoples was as steadfast as Lot’s adherence to God’s instructions. While Native Christians were mocked and ridiculed at their decision to convert by “traditionalist” factions within their own communities, or by Euro-Canadians who did not regard their conversions as genuine, many Natives incorporated a deep commitment to Christianity as part of their own identities.

Indigenous discourse and textual voices were not the only Tsimshian methods of expressing the meaning of conversion and their Christian identities. Native Christians also acted in ways that departed from Euro-Canadian ideals and adhered closer to ancient notions of spirituality. The Tsimshian goals of transformation and empowerment had long characterized indigenous discourse on shamans and prophets. These concerns were paralleled by the search by Native Christians for experiential forms of religion through revivals and active participation in evangelism. Expression of Christian faith at the community level frequently transcended the narrow confines of missionary authority or mission conventions. Group evangelism was conducted through church-sanctioned social organizations, but sometimes developed a level of independence unforeseen and unwelcome by Euro-Canadian officials. Indeed, Euro-Canadian missionary reaction to such external missionizing through evangelical revivalism and group evangelism was mixed. Some celebrated the dissemination of Christian teachings as important adjuncts to their own work and vital to the potential success of the mission itself. Others condemned revivals, unsupervised evangelists, and prophets as dangerous appropriations, distortions, and rebellions against the “authorized” version of Christianity.

The pattern was already established in the pre-mission period, as prophets like Bini disseminated Christian knowledge. Before the establishment of formal missions, prophet movements appropriated Christian ideas, incorporated and adapted teachings into a Native spiritual context. Some scholars viewed these types of prophet movements as “readjustments” to Native spirituality caused by the encounter with Christianity, an erosion of the former Native relationship with the “supernatural,” and a blending of two belief systems. But difference is not

---

12AWCJ, Tuesday February 18, 1890, NAC MG40 F11 #A-1706.
evidence of decline. We can also interpret this phenomenon, particularly in the local context, as a religious encounter which saw Christianity conforming to Native concepts. At times, it was Christianity that became indigenized through the so-called “adjustment” and “erosion.” Native prophets and evangelists demonstrated how the Tsimshian wielded Christian power in both old and new ways. Although very diverse in form, pre-mission prophets, and mission revivals and Native evangelists shared the common functions of dissemination of power and revitalizing Native communities through religious enthusiasm.

Indigenization not only occurred at the level of understanding and disseminating Christianity, but in the practical forms Christianity would take in the local context of the everyday life in mission villages. There were many challenges confronting North Coast First Nations by mid-nineteenth century. Cultural boundaries were being redrawn, from within and from without. For many indigenous peoples of the North Coast area Christianity was inseparable from the material associations of Empire and the history attached to it. After all, the role of the missionary transcended being merely a religious instructor. The politics of everyday practices and daily life was another aspect of the dialogic nature of missionization. Transformation of the body as well as the soul, resulted in significant negotiations over meaning in the arenas of dress, conceptualization of disease and healing, and naming practices. The social body was also influenced. The Tsimshian were able to utilize religious rivalries to their own advantage, and by changing denominational allegiance, they were able to express their discontent over challenges to their power and authority in the region, to express older village or tribal rivalries, or to find Christian organizations more compatible with those “traditional” spiritual forms which the Tsimshian deemed essential. Likewise, Tsimshian physical, social, and symbolic space underwent transformation as a result of Christianization, but not exclusively into the forms or arrangements favoured by missionaries. Older cognitive understandings informed Christianity at the local level, even indigenizing it, while over time, Christian influences altered indigenous traditions.
Power, as Michel Foucault would argue, is a creative as well as repressive force in societies, particularly regarding the production of "truths." My study on Tsimshian Christianization has demonstrated this concept for "truths" about the spiritual nature of the universe and humankind. However, by the end of the century, it was apparent that other fundamental "truths" in Tsimshian territory were being challenged by colonial intrusion.

The year 1901 was marked by another calamity—a serious fire at Metlakatla. It started in one wing of the large Mission house & as a strong wind was blowing, soon spread to the adjoining buildings which, being all of wood, were quickly destroyed. The huge church & Mission house, Schools, Houses, Church Army Hall, boat house, & some Indian cottages were all reduced to ashes. The only mission building saved was [Rev. John Henry] Keen's house which happened to be windward of the fire. It took place on July 22nd when all the able-bodied Indians were away fishing on the River Skeena & Keen with them. The mission ladies made a valiant attempt at salvage, but naturally couldn't do much, & they lost most of their belongings. Happily no lives were lost. The Bishop's losses, however, were quite serious. In his house were valuable MSS. including translations, folk-lore, a Tsimshian grammar & an extensive collection of Indian curios.

After this fire destroyed much of the mission site at Metlakatla, Bishop Ridley and his supporters rebuilt the village and consecrated a new church in the autumn of 1903. But the once idealized North Pacific Coast mission, a model of Victorian industry and Christian enlightenment, was barely a shadow of its former self. Of course, Metlakatla had changed long before the fire heralded its decline. Duncan and over six hundred Tsimshian Christians had left for Alaska to establish New Metlakatla in 1887, convinced of the benefit of American land and educational policies and driven by the desire to distance themselves from their past ties to the C.M.S. and the Anglican Church. Their departure illuminated secular matters of Native self-determination and land that concerned Christian and non-Christian alike, an anxiety that had been intensified by the 1880s and 1890s, affecting every corner of the North Pacific slope. Indeed, the heavens were changing.

---

13 Historian Patricia O’Brien’s summary of Foucault’s discussion of power, drawing particularly from his The Order of Things and Archaeology of Knowledge is very useful in narrowing down how his theory might be applied in this study without agreeing with all of his tenets entirely. Patricia O’Brien, "Michel Foucault’s History of Culture" in The New Cultural History, ed. Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 34-35.

Epilogue: Christian Identities and Secular Battles

Margaret Seguin Anderson stated that if she had to choose only a few terms to represent the Tsimshian, they would be story (adawx), crest (p'teeq), name, territory, and feast (yaawk). ¹ Jay Miller would add to this list the spiritual concepts of halaat, naxnox, and light (goypax).² In this study, I have explored the Christian confrontation with most of these cultural bases in some detail, with the exception of Tsimshian territory and potlatch. In a way, the latter two are the most significant secular issues in the Native-Missionary encounter on the North Coast and were certainly the most complex and documented sites of Native/non-Native contention. The late nineteenth and twentieth century battles against the potlatch and the appropriation of Native territories would represent the greatest threat to the “containers” of Tsimshian spirit and people. The Tsimshian yaawk was the mechanism to empty and fill that symbolic box of names, wealth, and property that had been situated in a specific place for centuries. Its removal would represent the loss of Tsimshian culture and autonomy.³ However intimately connected to missionization, the potlatch and Native land claims were preeminent secular issues of colonial British Columbia, and thus make an appropriate epilogue to my inquiry into nineteenth century Tsimshian spiritual transformations and Christianization.

While Christian churches had modified and transformed many aspects of Native communities, they had simultaneously given the Tsimshian tools with which to retain what they held most dear. In certain respects, as my research has shown, Christianity offered a means of expressing some Tsimshian traditions in new ways under a colonial regime that outwardly shunned them. But the changes that would increasingly make this dialogic aspect of missionization more difficult were well underway by the 1880s. Indian reserves were established without any formal surrender of land title, while the Indian Act created legal restrictions on the

¹Margaret Seguin Anderson, personal communication to Jay Miller; cited in Jay Miller, Tsimshian Culture: A Light Through the Ages (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 169, n. 6.
²Ibid., 7.
personhood of First Nations. However, the forces of colonialism were not a unified enemy against which the Tsimshian could rally. On the one hand, many missionaries and Indian agents campaigned against the potlatch, which they saw as the ultimate bulwark against their attempts at cultural, social, and economic reformation. On the other hand, some missionaries, unlike the Indian agents, campaigned for Native land claims and rights of citizenship. This heterogeneity of Euro-Canadian leaders and officials divided any Tsimshian response. Christian Tsimshian aligned with Christians on some issues, and stood unified with their aboriginal relations against the church on others. The absence of a clear-cut dichotomy between Native and Christian was never more apparent than in the battles against assertions by colonial powers over Tsimshian land and sovereignty.

The Tsimshian eloquently defended their position on rights to their own territories and freedom from the confines of Indian agents and the Indian Act.\(^4\) For example, in 1883 Clah argued with the Indian agent that the Tsimshians were protected under God's law: "Did you ever see a Christian take land from another Christian, and sell it, not letting him know anything about it?"\(^5\) After consulting with Chief Ligeex over the history of European arrival in Tsimshian territory, Alfred Dudoward added to Clah's testimony, declaring that the land situation was unresolved and that Tsimshian would zealously pursue the matter until a satisfactory resolution was determined.\(^6\) Yet, in 1887, commissioners refused to hear Alfred Dudoward speak, although he was the chief appointed by the Port Simpson village council to address the Indian Reserve Commission, because he was only a "half-breed."\(^7\) Clearly, the experiences of Tsimshian Christians like Clah and Dudoward demonstrate how the Euro-Canadian dichotomy of "Native" or "Christian" did not conform to the reality where Natives claimed Christian rights and hereditary chiefs were considered too "white" to speak for their people.

\(^6\)Ibid.
\(^7\)Ibid., 82.
For Tsimshianic peoples on the North Pacific Coast themselves, the divide between Christian and non-Christian was inconsequential when it came to presenting a unified case for self-determination and autonomy in their own territories. In 1887, Clah was on the Nass River and attended a meeting in which a group of Nisga’a chiefs discussed strategies to use in their land struggles with Victoria. Clah recounts the difficulty in deciding how to reconcile Coast Tsimshian and Nisga’a claims to areas of the Nass River in order to stand united against the provincial government, or whether it would be best to pursue their interests as independent villages and tribes. One chief addressed the meeting, and while the content of his speech was not noted by Clah, the method by which he chose to validate his opinion offers a powerful image. As the chief spoke, he held a bible in his left hand, and an eagle feather, a Native symbol of peace, in his right hand. He told the chiefs and elders in attendance that one was not stronger than the other. This image summarizes the predicament confronting Tsimshianic peoples in the late nineteenth century. They were both Native and Christian, at a time when secular battles over cultural practices and land issues saw only dichotomies. Christian identities were not subordinate or superior to Native ones, but they had become an important part of who Tsimshianic peoples had become after a few decades of missionization. Yet, colonial authorities, at least those advocating the elimination of the potlatch and the appropriation of Native land, did not recognize this when it served them better to distance the aboriginal “Other” from themselves. Native Christians saw this injustice all too well. Clah lamented in 1888:

Because our great God give the land to everybody in the world to use it and to live with. God made the man an women to not slave one another. so God give the land. to we use it. He not promise to give the land to only whit people and not to indians. for what God made the indian for?[8]

---

8AWCJ, Saturday April 23, 1887, NAC MG 40 F11, #A-1714.
9Clah wrote in the margins of his journal that he personally regarded the bible as the stronger of the two. Ibid.
10AWCJ, Monday January 30, 1888, NAC MG 40 F11, #A-1714.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

Archival Sources

Anglican Church of Canada Archives, Diocese of New Westminster, Vancouver, BC (ACCABC)


British Columbia Archives, British Columbia’s Information, Science, and Technology Agency, Victoria, BC (BCA)

Barbeau, Marius. With William Beynon. “Northwest Coast Files.” Add. MSS 2101


Crosby, Thomas. Correspondence. In Ebenezer Robson Collection. H/D/R57/C88


Dudoward, Mrs. M.C. Correspondence. In Ebenezer Robson Collection. H/D/R57/D86


Hyde, Edward Hicks Tavner. Transcript. Add. MSS 1873

Pierce, William Henry. Correspondence. In Ebenezer Robson Collection. H/D/R57/P61


Schutt, Margaret Elizabeth. Autobiographical Notes, 1866-1966. Add. MSS 1213

Scott, Robert Clyde. Thomas Crosby and Glad Tidings Logbooks, 1884. Add. MSS 1299

Tate, C. M. Correspondence, Transcripts, and Misc. In Tate Family Collection. Add. MSS 303

Tomlinson, Alice May. Journals, May-July 1879. Add. MSS 2725

National Archives of Canada, Ottawa, ON (NAC)


Salvation Army Archives, George Scott Railton Heritage Centre, Toronto, ON, (SAA)

Azak, Roy (Nisga'a Chief, Caynon City). Oral Interview (tape) by Mrs. Major M. Evenden, May 4, 1981.

Booth, Herbert. "Brief Relating to Canadian Affairs dictated and written by the Commandant on the occasion of Relinquishing his command [1892-1896] to Field Commissioner Eva Booth for her guidance in the Government of the Salvation Army throughout the Dominion of Canada, Nwfd, and North-Western America." Typescript. [1896].

Moore, Chester (Nisga'a). Oral Interview (tape) by Mrs. Major M. Evenden, May 3 1981.


The Salvation Army. Clippings Files: Canynon City, Glen Vowell, and British Columbia.

The Salvation Army. The Salvation Army Corp. Listings and Corps Officers, Canada & Bermuda Territory: Canada West-British Columbia-South Pacific. Manuscript.


United Church of Canada (National) Archives, Toronto, ON (UCA)


Methodist Church of Canada. Fonds 14/4: Methodist Church Missionary Society. Home Department Records, 1906-1927. Acc. # 78. 099C. Box 8 of 26, File 11A.


United Church of Canada, BC Conference Archives, Vancouver, BC (UCABC)

Methodist Church of Canada. BC Methodist Conference. Minutes of Annual Fort/Port Simpson District Meetings, 1883-1900.


University of British Columbia Library, Special Collections Division (UBSC and Library (UBCL)


Church Missionary Society, Correspondence, Journals, and Misc. (microfilm).


Forbes, George (Rev.) Private Papers. UBCSC, Boxes 2-3.


Published Primary Sources


anonymous. The Church and the Indians. The Trouble at Metlakahtla. Pamphlet article from the Daily Colonist, Victoria, BC. July 26th, 1882.


Halcombe, J. J. Stranger Than Fiction. n.p.: [Church Missionary Society], n.d.; reprints of published material from Mission Life May 1-Dec 1, 1871.


Russ, Agnes, Grace Stevens, and Peter Kelly. Excerpt from Interview by Imbert Orchard, “The Queen Charlotte Islands—The Agnes Russ Story.” *People in Landscapes, Educational

Tate, C. M. (Rev). *Our Indian Missions in British Columbia.* Toronto: published by the Methodist Young People's Forward Movement for Missions, Methodist Mission Rooms, [1900?].


**Missionary Notices, Annual Reports and Newspapers**

*All the World* (Salvation Army). SAA, Toronto


———. *Missionary Notices of the Methodist Church of Canada.*

Raley, G. H. Na-Na-Kwa or Dawn on the Northwest Coast, Nos. 1-18, UCA, Toronto.


The War Cry (Salvation Army). SAA, Toronto

The Western Recorder (Methodist Church of Canada). 1899-1928.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Books


Barbeau, Marius. Indian Days in the Canadian Rockies. Toronto: Macmillan Co. of Canada Ltd., 1923.


Harkin, Michael E. The Heiltsuks: Dialogues of Culture and History on the Northwest Coast. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press in cooperation with the American Indian Studies Research Institute, Indian University, Bloomington, 1997.


Stephenson, Mrs. Frederick C. *One Hundred Years of Canadian Methodist Missions, 1824-1924.* Vol. 1. Toronto: Missionary Society of the Methodist Church of Canada for the Young People's Forward Movement, 1925.


______.  *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society.* London: Fontana Press, 1983.


**Articles**


Harris, Cole. "Voices of Disaster: Smallpox around the Strait of Georgia in 1782." Ethnohistory 41, no. 4 (Fall 1994): 591-626.


______. “They Act as Though They Have No Relations: A Reply to Geertz.” *Religion* 24, no. 1 (Jan 1994): 11-12.


Ronda, James P. “‘We Are Well As We Are’: An Indian Critique of Seventeenth Century Christian Missions.” *William and Mary Quarterly* 3d ser., vol. 34 (Jan 1977): 66-82.


Websites

Unpublished Theses and Conference Papers


Morrice, L. "History of George and Mary Ann Edgar." Paper, vertical file: Edgar, George. UCABC.


APPENDIX A

A Plan for Conducting Christianizing and Civilizing Missions on the North Pacific Coast,
By Mr. William Duncan, based on his own experience

1. Preach the Gospel in the Native tongue:
2. Itinerate among all the tribes of the same tongue:
3. Aim at breaking up the tribal system:
4. Commence a Christian settlement
5. Secure a Reserve of land round the Settlement:
6. Allow all the settlers allotment of land:
7. Encourage handcraft trades in the Settlement:
8. Settlers should not be allowed to alienate the land:
9. Land on Reserve not utilized to be public domain:
10. Treaties made only with Indians in the Settlement:
11. Government aid restricted to Native towns and employed only on Public works:
12. Intoxicating liquors forbidden in Native Settlement:
13. The Missionary to be a Justice of the Peace:
14. A Corps of Native Police organized in the Settlement
15. A native council elected by ballot to institute and enforce by-laws—Control public moneys, and lands, and carry out public works:
16. The Native Church to be unsectarian
17. Officers of the Church to be elected by the Congregation
18. Industries to be introduced and fostered in the Settlement:
19. Every member of the Settlement entitled to serve the public weal some way:
20. Amusements such as athletic games, brass-band, and other forms of music to be introduced and encouraged:

William Duncan's Rules at Metlakatla

1. To give up their Ahlied or Indian devilry
2. To cease calling in conjurers when sick
3. To cease gambling
4. To cease giving away their property for display
5. To cease painting their faces
6. To cease drinking intoxicating liquor
7. To rest on the Sabbath
8. To attend religious instruction
9. To send their children to school
10. To be cleanly
11. To be industrious
12. To be peaceful
13. To be liberal and honest in trade
14. To build neat houses
15. To pay the village tax

2[William Duncan], Metlakatlah: Ten Years Works Among the Tsimshian Indians (Salisbury Square, London: Church Missionary House, 1869), 82-83. William Duncan's 1862 journal as include prohibitions of "the Demoniacal Rites called Ahlied or Medicine Work; Conjuring and all the heathen practices over the sick; Use of intoxicating liquor; Gambling; Painting Faces; Giving away property for display; [and] tearing up property in anger or to wipe out disgrace." William Duncan, Notebook, "Laws of Metlakatla," 15 Oct 1862, WD/C2158; quoted in Jean Usher, William Duncan of Metlakatla: A Victorian Missionary in British Columbia, Publications in History No. 5 (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1974), 64; see also Robin Fisher, Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1977), 132-133.
APPENDIX B

Arthur Wellington Clah as the “Transformed” Christian

Like Chief Ligeex, missionaries observed that Arthur Wellington Clah had undergone a significant physical transformation upon conversion. Anglican Bishop Hills described his first encounter with Clah in 1860 (although he gets the name wrong), noting especially the material improvement Christian Natives represented and the apparent desire to learn about Christianity. From the Euro-Canadian perspective, the physical environment reflected the spiritual choice made by the individual when one became a Christian.

Today an Indian came to see me. It was the young man of the clean tent I saw yesterday. He instructed Mr. Duncan in Tsimshian and had learned English, or rather improved himself in English at the same time. He can speak & write English. His name is John Clark [Clah] and his wife’s Jarx [Dadks]. He has come to trade. He complained much of the Haida Indians. ‘Fight, Fight’ is the word. ‘Fight all day, all night. Drink bad, I get no sleep, my wife afraid my little boy cry.’ He told me he prayed. He knew the leading points of the Christian faith & in all respects is a promising specimen of what may be done. He asked me for a Prayer Book which I promised.

I went with Mr. Dundas to the Tsimshian ranch. We found the hut, or tent, of Clah, to whom I had promised a Prayer Book. He was in. There was also his wife Jarx & another, with his little boy. The tent had comforts not seen in others. There was a stove with cooking apparatus, a bedstand. He had also a desk. There were beautiful white loaves [of bread] which he had brought home, being Saturday & the whole menage was that of a respectable cotter in England on Saturday. He placed seats. We sat. I gave him the [Prayer] Book. He was pleased. He brought out a box with his writing books & account books. He writes a good hand & spells well in English. He repeated the Lord’s Prayer in a most reverent & touching way. He could tell of the dying of Christ for us & said he loved Christ. We had interesting conversation in which he evidently took pleasure. We all knelt down. He put his hands together & I prayed our Heavenly Father’s blessing upon our plans, upon these poor Indians & that he would cause his blessed truth to be known by them that all might be partakers of the same hope & be meet for heaven through his dear Son.3

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Native Christians</th>
<th>Native Baptisms</th>
<th>Missionary stations</th>
<th>European lay teachers</th>
<th>Europe workers</th>
<th>Native Lay Teachers</th>
<th>School boys</th>
<th>School girls</th>
<th>Seminarians</th>
<th>Native contributions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1857</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1858</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1862</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1864</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1865</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1866</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1868</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1869</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1873</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1874</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1876</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Incomplete for some years; N/A=stats unavailable; some years listed May-May: first year indicated above (e.g. May 1863-May 1864 labeled above as 1863); 1896 Native contributions in £.

### Appendix D: Methodist Mission Statistics (1883-1900)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Present Members</th>
<th>Baptisms</th>
<th>Churches</th>
<th>seat</th>
<th>attend</th>
<th>other preach</th>
<th>total preach</th>
<th>ministers</th>
<th>missionary</th>
<th>Local Preachers</th>
<th>Local Exhorters</th>
<th>Leaders &amp; Assistants</th>
<th>Stewards</th>
<th>Epworth League members</th>
<th>Active School Members</th>
<th>Sunday Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>Ft. Simpson</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>778</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>3400</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>816</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2600</td>
<td>3400</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>862</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>964</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>1135</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>783</td>
<td>1259</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>739</td>
<td>1378</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>703</td>
<td>1207</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>1146</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>1056</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>878</td>
<td>1268</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>766</td>
<td>1284</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4735</td>
<td>4500</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>927</td>
<td>1409</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>909</td>
<td>1461</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>934</td>
<td>1503</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>933</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3750</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>617</td>
<td>986</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>108</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>622</td>
<td>963</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: BC Methodist Conference, Minutes, Annual Port Simpson District Meeting, 1883-1900. UCABC (Vancouver).

District included Methodist missions of Port Simpson, Nass, Bella Bella, Port Essington, Queen Charlotte Islands, Upper Skeena, Kitsegucia, Kitmaat, and mission ship "Glad Tidings."
APPENDIX E

Similarities and Characteristics of Selected Bini Narratives
(Numbers correspond to individual narratives in (1-15) Marius Barbeau,
Northwest Coast Files, and other misc. sources; see key below)

BINI THE PROPHET AND HIS BEHAVIOUR

Bini falls ill or goes mad during trance (2, 8, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19)
Bini’s disappearance (4, 8, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19)
Bini’s (first) death (2, 8, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17)
Journeys to Otherworld; meets with the Sky or “White” People (1, 2, 3, 6, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19)
Bini is discovered in tree, frequently blossoming out of season (6, 13, 14, 15, 16)

Bini’s Practices

- Baptism and giving of new names (14, 16)
- Sign of the Cross (13, 15, 16, 17, 19)
- Prayer sticks or Wooden boards used as calendars (13, 14, 16, 18)
- Dance of the Dead or Special Dance (1, 2, 3, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19)
- Keeping the Sabbath (13, 14, 15, 16)
- Miracles attributed to Bini (6, 8, 13, 16)
- Healing powers (15, 16)
- Use of translator or speaks strange language (8, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18)
- Bini’s travels proselytizing (4, 13, 14, 17)

Bini’s songs or knowledge about him reach other First Nations (7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19)
Bini’s (final) death because of use of a shaman’s rattle (13, 14, 16)
Fear of Bini’s 2nd resurrection or failure to perform proper ritual to assure his return (2, 3, 15, 16)
Reference to Bini’s totem pole or grave site (8, 10, 12, 14, 18)
Reference to disease concurrent with prophet movement (7, 14, 15)
Mention of other prophets imitative of Bini (8, 10, 12, 13, 17, 18)

BINI’S PROPHECIES

Inversion of the Normal

- Poor become rich (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 14, 15)
- Different vessels for food and water (13, 14)
- Dancing to become “white” (5, 6)
- Dancing to raise the dead (1)
- Eclipse of the Sun (16)

Appearance of New Animals, Technologies, Material Culture

- Dogs of Heaven or Large Dogs (Horses) (2, 4, 6, 13, 15, 16, 18)
- Other domesticated animals (14, 16)
- Airplanes or Angels (4, 13)
- Railroad (4, 6, 13, 18)
- Telegraph (6, 8, 15)
- Steamboat (4, 13)
- Other Euro-Canadian material objects (13, 16)
- New Foods (13, 16)

Coming of “Whites” (6, 8, 15, 16)
Jesus or Christianity (8, 12, 16)
Key to Bini Narratives

(File Nos. 1-15 correspond to Marius Barbeau, Northwest Coast Files, BCA Add. MSS 2101)

5. B-F-322.7: Bini's dancing and preaching, (1923). Informant: Paul Dzius; Interpreter: Mrs. Cox
7. B-F-197.6: Letter dated March 27, 1923, Port Simpson, BC, from William Beynon to M. Barbeau
11. B-F-198.9: Letter dated Feb. 6 1933, from Leslie Spier to M. Barbeau re: Bini research
12. B-F-198.10: Letter dated March 27, 1933, from M. Barbeau to L. Spier re: B-F-198.9
13. B-F-322.5: Bini. Informant: Johnny Patsy, Hazelton
15. B-F-322.1: Bini. Informant: Charles Martin; Interpreter: Mrs. Cox
16. Marius Barbeau, Indian Days in the Canadian Rockies (Toronto: Macmillan Co. of Canada Ltd., 1923), [compilation of 5 narratives collected from Carrier and Gitxsan], 17-58.
17. Vol. 3, no. 55, UBCL AW 1 R7173-1, William Beynon Manuscripts, "When the Bini Teaching Reached all Tribes," Informant: Joseph Bradley
18. Ibid. William Beynon, Notes on Bini

Note on Mrs. Cox: Mrs. Cox, reportedly the first "white" child born in the Hazelton, was the daughter of Mrs. R. E. Loring (wife of the Hazelton Indian agent). Her mother's father, Thomas Hankin, founded the fur trading post at Hazelton in 1867, and her mother's mother was a Tlingit woman from Alaska.4