

ABSTRACT

Metropolitan Designs and Colonial Realities: A Comparison of the Work of the Church Missionary Society and the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in the West Indies and Sierra Leone, 1785-1835

Kyle L. Welty, Ph.D.

Mentor: William L. Pitts, Ph.D.

This dissertation examines the work of two missionary societies in two fields and explores how these missions differed from the visions formulated in London. The Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society and Church Missionary Society were British Evangelical missionary organizations with origins in the late eighteenth century, and they expanded their work throughout the nineteenth century. The societies' objectives were nearly identical: they hoped to convert "the heathen" and improve the lives of foreign peoples through education. Despite their shared aims and use of similar means, the resulting missions were each unique. Moreover, this was true even of two missions operated by the same society. Particular attention is devoted to the power of West Indian slave societies, which exerted great force on the missionaries operating in the Caribbean. In the context of Sierra Leone abolitionist efforts were prominent, and the campaigns to end the slave trade and slavery shaped the missionary enterprise in West Africa. Through examination of missionary correspondence from the field, this study will document the challenges that diverse colonial contexts presented and examine how missionaries themselves could alter the course of their society's work in a particular setting. Drawing

upon extensive evidence from missionaries' letters, this dissertation argues that these missions were hybrid ventures, retaining distinctives from the metropolitan center while taking on colonial adaptations.

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of the Church Missionary Society and the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society
in the West Indies and Sierra Leone, 1785-1835

by

Kyle L. Welty, B.A., M.C.S.

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W. H. Bellinger, Jr., Ph.D., Chairperson

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Approved by the Dissertation Committee

William L. Pitts, Ph.D., Chairperson

C. Douglas Weaver, Ph.D.

Thomas S. Kidd, Ph.D.

David W. Bebbington, Ph.D.

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J. Larry Lyon, Ph.D., Dean

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|------|---|
| BMS | Baptist Missionary Society |
| CMS | Church Missionary Society |
| LMS | London Missionary Society |
| SPCK | Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge |
| SPG | Society for the Propagation of the Gospel |
| WMMS | Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society |

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To Katie, Lillian, Jack, and Wesley,
who made sacrifices known and unawares

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction and Preliminary Considerations

Introduction

At the close of the eighteenth century British Evangelicals began to act on their growing interest in foreign missions, and they began to form voluntary missionary societies. The aim of these societies was to convert “the heathen,” and the Evangelicals’ theological convictions persuaded them that this was an urgent task. They hoped to bring as many people as possible into relationship with Jesus Christ, saving them from the torments of hell. While their motivation was easily articulated, the execution of this ambitious vision proved to be much more complicated. It must be remembered that the organizers of these missions were Britons who had, with only limited exceptions, never traveled to the places or encountered the people they hoped evangelize. Given the significant challenges intrinsic to an international project of such scope, these missionary societies were able to realize a surprising number of their objectives.

The aim of this dissertation is to reveal the complexities that attended the endeavors of two of these societies in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Examining the work of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS) and the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in the West Indies and Sierra Leone, the ways in which difficulties in the field, both anticipated and unforeseen, modified the vision cast in the metropole will be documented. In some instances, these alterations were minor and had minimal effect on the resulting missionary project. There were also cases with greater ramifications, such as the failure to maintain fundamental moral expectations and the compromise of core theological

principles. The forces exerted upon the missionaries were diverse, and the examination of two distinct contexts will allow these cultural influences to come into sharp relief.

The structure of the dissertation is quite straightforward. Following this introductory chapter, the two missionaries societies' efforts in the two contexts will each be treated in a chapter, yielding four core chapters. The WMMS work in the West Indies, which was the first of the four missions to be established (in the 1780s), will be considered in chapter two. Chapter three will feature the CMS mission in the West Indies, a project that began in 1813. The same order will be employed in the second half of the dissertation, and the Methodist mission in Sierra Leone will be the focus of chapter four. In the last of the four core chapters, the CMS mission in Sierra Leone will be analyzed. Finally, chapter six will advance the concluding arguments.

This initial chapter provides introductory discussions germane to the dissertation. First, the selections of the particular missionary societies, the geographical choices, and chronological boundaries of the study will be explained. Following the explanations of the subject matter, a brief discussion of the broader British foreign missionary enterprise will provide important contextual considerations. In the third and fourth sections, the origins of the WMMS and CMS will be traced. These sections will also look to the two societies' respective theological articulations of their missions, and this will provide a point of reference for comparison with missionaries' activities in the field. The penultimate section will consider the reading of missionary correspondence, which constitutes the majority of the primary source material within this study. The final section will offer a concise historiographical summary of recent trends in the study of British foreign missions and will place this study within that framework of historical writing.

Societies, Fields, and Chronology

The focus of this project is the work of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society and the Church Missionary Society in the West Indies and Sierra Leone between 1785 and 1835, and an explanation of these selections is in order. These two Evangelical societies were chosen for comparison because they offer substantial commonalities and important differences. Of course, Methodism arose as a renewal movement within the Church of England, and it was engaged in the process of establishing its own denominational identity during the decades under examination here. Additionally, both societies held similar Evangelical emphases, which shaped their missions. Both the WMMS and CMS sought to convert persons to Christianity, and they both engaged in education with an emphasis upon literacy to enable Bible reading. As might be expected from two Evangelical missionary societies, the CMS and WMMS shared a number of values and objectives.

Their shared traits do not tell the entire story, however. Significant variances, particularly in the realms of ecclesiology and ecclesiastical politics, separated the two societies. As Methodism cleaved itself from its Anglican origins, differences of ecclesiology were compounded as Methodism forfeited any connections to the established Church and by 1811, when Lord Sidmouth attempted legislation against itinerancy, Methodists found themselves allied with Dissenters as they collectively strove to defeat this potential threat to their religious liberty.¹ Just as the division between Anglicanism and Methodism determined the latter's standing in the metropole, Methodism's position outside the established Church also affected the WMMS in colonial contexts. In Sierra Leone, for example, the WMMS did not face the CMS's expectations of cooperation from the colonial government, but neither

¹ W. R. Ward, *Religion and Society in England, 1790-1850* (New York: Schocken Books, 1973), 54-59; Michael A. Rutz, *The British Zion: Congregationalism, Politics, and Empire, 1790-1850* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2011), 31-41.

did it enjoy the privileges extended to the CMS. Methodism's separation from the Church of England shaped the denomination in the metropole and, in turn, its missionary programs abroad.

Although separated by the vast expanse of the Atlantic Ocean, the slave trade, slavery, and the anti-slavery campaign joined Sierra Leone and the West Indies. The Sierra Leone Company was founded by British Evangelicals with hopes that the settlement would serve as a beachhead in the campaign to eradicate the slave trade at its source on the West African coast. While West Africa and the West Indies were affected diversely by the slave trade and slavery, the shared connection meant that metropolitan developments dealing with slavery were followed closely in both contexts. And, when legislation was passed in 1807 outlawing the slave trade, the effects were felt on both sides of the Atlantic. The cessation of the British slave trade altered many practices in the West Indies as the flow of fresh laborers was suddenly interrupted. The legislation of 1807 had a tremendous impact on Sierra Leone, as the colony began to receive ship after ship of liberated Africans intercepted by the Royal Navy. During the final decades of the slave trade and slavery in British colonies, the West Indies and Sierra Leone were connected by these institutions that were perceived differently in each place.

The British West Indies and Sierra Leone provide two fields in which the two societies faced issues related to the slave trade and slavery, but there are a number of factors that make these two contexts a fruitful pair for comparison of the work of the WMMS and CMS. The most basic criterion, which these two fields met, was that the two societies worked in the fields simultaneously. This allows examination of the two societies' missionaries' engagement with some of the same cultural and colonial forces. As this study is focused on the early British Evangelical foreign missionary enterprises, the West Indies

and Sierra Leone were logical choices because they were the first fields to receive Methodist and CMS missionaries. Methodist missionaries were active among the slaves of the West Indies from the latter half of the 1780s, and in 1790 Thomas Coke, the driving force behind early Methodist missions, was managing the work of thirteen missionaries in seven different islands. Even more impressively, in the same report Coke could claim more than 5,000 persons (predominately slaves of African descent) in Methodist societies across the West Indies.² When the CMS first dispatched missionaries in 1804, the connection between the society's leadership and the founders of the Sierra Leone Company ensured that Sierra Leone would receive the CMS's first missionary. Interest in Sierra Leone dominated the CMS's first decade, and the society did not send an ordained missionary elsewhere until 1814 after India opened (with the renewal of the East India Company Charter in 1813) to British missionaries.³ Not only were the West Indies and Sierra Leone the two societies' first fields, each place was the initial focal point of one of these two societies' missionary efforts.

Substantial differences in these two British colonial contexts meant that the two societies operated in varied circumstances, and, in particular, the missionary societies' relationships to power differed greatly between the West Indies and Sierra Leone. In the British West Indies the plantocracy dominated nearly every aspect of life, and the slave societies they created were designed to perpetuate the way of life the planters enjoyed.⁴

² Thomas Coke, *An Address to the Subscribers for the Support of the Missions Carried on by Voluntary Contributions for the Benefit of the Negroes in the British Islands, in the West-Indies* (London, 1790), 17.

³ *Church Missionary Society Register of Missionaries (Clerical, Lay, and Female), and Native Clergy from 1804 to 1894* (London: Gilbert and Rivington, 1895), 1-4. The CMS did send several artisans as catechists to New South Wales during this time.

⁴ The term 'slave society,' which was made prominent by Elsa Goveia, "refers to the whole community based on slavery, including masters and freedmen as well as slaves." See: Elsa V. Goveia, *Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands at the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Yale University Press, 1965), vii.

Generally, the planters were suspicious of Evangelical missionaries, who were frequently perceived as agents hostile to slavery and capable of fomenting slave rebellions. As Evangelicals in Britain became increasingly involved in the campaigns against the slave trade and then slavery itself, the planters' hostility to Evangelical missionaries increased. In the slave societies of the British West Indies, Methodist and CMS missionaries were viewed askance by those in authority.

Conversely, Evangelicals were prominent in the leadership of Sierra Leone, and there was symbiosis between the colonial leadership and Evangelical missionaries. Both CMS and WMMS missionaries served in schools that were supported by the colonial government in Sierra Leone, and CMS missionaries also served as colonial chaplains in Freetown. In return, the colonial government paid a portion of some CMS missionaries' salaries. Even Methodists, who were not as closely linked to the colonial government as the counterparts in the established Church, enjoyed the support of the governors of Sierra Leone. The Methodist educational program in Sierra Leone was designed and implemented after consultation with the colony's leaders. In circumstances vastly different from the West Indian context, Methodist and to an even greater extent Anglican missionaries in Sierra Leone enjoyed the benefits of a supportive colonial leadership.

Examination of the WMMS and CMS in the West Indies and Sierra Leone also provides illuminating comparisons in the realms of success and failures. In the Methodist case, the West Indies was marked by remarkable growth from its inception, and the Methodist mission in the Caribbean continued to expand its scope throughout the early nineteenth century. In terms of numerical growth, the Methodist mission in the West Indies was an unrivaled story of success within early Methodist foreign missions. The CMS's mission to the Leeward Islands endured a different fate. The CMS never fully committed to

its mission headed by William Dawes in Antigua, and although some gains were made in the number of persons educated in CMS-supported schools the mission was abandoned in less than two decades. Circumstances in Sierra Leone were reversed, as the CMS operated a reasonably successful mission and the Methodist efforts floundered throughout our period of enquiry. The CMS was situated for success in Sierra Leone, as it was the society's only foreign field initially and there were connections between the CMS and colonial leaders. Methodist efforts in Sierra Leone were inhibited by a high mortality rate among its missionaries, and the resulting dearth of personnel and lack of continuity prevented significant gains to 1835. These four contexts offer glimpses of the two societies in successful circumstances and in situations where success, at least in terms of numerical growth, remained elusive.

The chronological bounds of this study (1785-1835), which will only be loosely imposed, were set to encompass the first half-century of the work of the Methodists, who preceded their counterparts in the CMS by several decades. With a starting point in the 1780s, the often-overlooked early Methodist missions in the Caribbean can be considered. The second chronological marker was set with two considerations in mind. First, it offers a round figure of five decades for examination. More importantly, it encompasses the abolition of slavery within the British Empire in 1834 and terminates early in the period of the liberated slaves' transitional apprenticeship.

Finally, another boundary, both conceptual and methodological in nature, of this study must be identified. This is not an attempt to provide definitive histories of these four missions. The focus of the inquiry in the pages that follow will remain steadily on the problems that confronted missionaries and that missionaries brought upon themselves. This accentuation of the obstacles hindering the missions is just that, an underscoring of events

that are germane to the argument presented in this dissertation. Of course, this is only one dimension of the stories in each of these four contexts, and this historical project must be seen for what it is (and what it is not.)

An emphasis upon these missions' problems is not intrinsically denunciatory, and it is not the aim of this dissertation to present the missionary enterprise as an utter failure. On the contrary, the hope here is to consider the wide variety of difficulties that the missions faced and reveal the complex amalgamation of forces that produced these hindrances. Quite simply, the missionary enterprise was much more complicated than either its harshest critics or its partisan chroniclers assert. As the evidence will reveal, colonial sympathies periodically swayed missionaries, but the interference of colonial interests was only one problem among many, and the inadequacies of the assertion that British missionaries were merely an extension of the colonial project will be exposed. At the same time, missionaries' shortcomings are identified and acknowledged. In the diverse correspondence examined here, there are moments of courage, but some of the missionaries' decisions betray selfishness and other baleful motivations. Missionaries, like their Evangelical counterparts in Britain, represented a fairly ordinary cross-section of humanity, comprised of many decent individuals along with those whose words and actions did not realize the missionary societies' ideals. The result will be a realistic portrayal of the missionary enterprise, although the scope of the inquiry necessitates an emphasis upon a narrow (but important) aspect of missionaries' work. Even in these chapters center on missionaries' dilemmas, there are traces of missionaries' charity and compassion. Moreover, it must be remembered that throughout these lengthy accounts focused on problematic aspects of the missionary enterprise, there were many missionaries who represented their societies with honor.

The Origins of the British Foreign Missionary Enterprise

While this is not the place for an extensive treatment of the broader missionary movement in Britain, a concise description of developments outside Methodism and Evangelical Anglicanism is essential to understanding the context in which the CMS and WMMS emerged. Previously, historians have focused on the decade of the 1790s, during which a number of Evangelical missionary societies were created. Recent scholarship has drawn attention to efforts underway earlier in the eighteenth century. Rowan Strong has documented the fact that the metropolitan leaders of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) were interested in evangelization efforts beyond British colonists, who were the recipients of a majority of the society's labors. According to Strong, the SPG's annual sermons offered an important contribution to an Anglican discourse that emphasized evangelistic work in the expanding empire.⁵ Strong's reminder that the history of modern British foreign missions begins with the SPG (and its sister society, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge) is an important consideration.

Another branch of the missionary enterprise that antedated the societies created in the 1790s was that of the Moravians, who were also known as the *Unitas Fratrum* or United Brethren. Several historians have examined the currents of influence that emanated from both the Moravians and German Pietists in Continental Europe and influenced subsequent British foreign missions. W. R. Ward was a seminal voice drawing attention to British Evangelicalism's connections to Continental antecedents, and Andrew Walls has discussed

⁵ Rowan Strong, *Anglicanism and the British Empire, c. 1700-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.) Further discussion of Strong's analysis of the SPG will be offered in the historiographical section below.

the “European context” of the “eighteenth-century Protestant missionary awakening.”⁶

While analysis of these influences lies beyond the bounds of this study, the Moravian presence in Britain merits mention. The Moravian Church in Britain was relatively small, but its members supported the church’s foreign missions. While British Moravians would sponsor work in Labrador in the 1760s, the British Moravian missionary enterprise remained connected to the Moravian center in Saxony, Herrnhut.⁷ Nevertheless, the Moravians within Britain were engaged in foreign missions, and both Methodists and Evangelical Anglicans frequently cited the larger Moravian church’s missionary example. Finally, as will be discussed in chapter five, Moravian leaders, such as Christian Ignatius, Latrobe in London would be instrumental in securing the first missionaries for the CMS.⁸ British missionary efforts, as the examples of the SPG and British Moravians substantiate, began prior to the 1790s.⁹

While the work of the SPG, SPCK, and British Moravians must not be overlooked, there is no denying the unprecedented interest in foreign missions within Britain that emerged in the 1790s. And this interest translated into action, with the founding of numerous voluntary societies, including the following organizations: the Baptist Missionary

⁶ Many of Ward’s numerous publications illuminated the connections between British Evangelicals and their Continental counterparts, and the final installment of his scholarship contributed to this same theme: W. R. Ward, *Early Evangelicalism: A Global Intellectual History, 1670-1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.) Also, see Andrew Walls, “The Eighteenth-Century Protestant Missionary Awakening in Its European Context,” in *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment*, ed. Brian Stanley (Grand Rapids, MI and Richmond, Surrey: Eerdmans and Curzon, 2001), 22-44.

⁷ J. C. S. Mason, *The Moravian Church and the Missionary Awakening in England, 1760-1800* (Woodbridge, Suffolk and Rochester, NY: The Royal Historical Society and Boydell Press, 2001), 28-58; Jeffrey Cox, *The British Missionary Enterprise since 1700* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 55-57.

⁸ Mason, *The Moravian Church*, 115.

⁹ As the following section and second chapter will reveal, Methodists initiated a vibrant missionary campaign in the West Indies in the 1780s.

Society (BMS, 1792), the (London) Missionary Society (LMS, 1795), and CMS (1799).¹⁰ The BMS will be treated in the following paragraph, but prior to that a brief explanation of the LMS's identity is in order.¹¹ The LMS was created in 1796 with pan-denominational Evangelical aspirations, but it would evolve into a Congregationalist mission body. When the Evangelical Anglicans opted to create their own mission society (the CMS) in 1799, it became apparent that the LMS would become distinctively Congregationalist. During the 1790s British Evangelicals surged into the foreign missionary enterprise, and the BMS served as an example for their fellow Evangelicals.

William Carey famously published *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, To Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* in 1792, and the BMS was founded in the same year. Informed by moderate Calvinists such as Andrew Fuller, Carey argued that the dearth of missionary activity was the result of Christians' decisions and inaction. The neglect of ministry among the "heathen" was not the result of circumstances that lay beyond the control of Carey and his contemporaries.¹² Carey argued that the hindrance of practical obstacles, such as "their [the 'heathen'] distance from us," stood in the way of the missions, and he offered solutions to each of these potential objections.¹³ In his final section Carey proposed that "a society and committee should be formed amongst the *particular [B]aptist denomination.*" He articulated his desire that all Christians would participate in the missionary

¹⁰ Methodists, who did not form a mission society in the 1790s, are prominently absent from this list. As the next section will relate, Methodists dispatched and maintained missionaries the 1780s, but they did not form a society for foreign mission initially.

¹¹ Initially the London Missionary Society was founded as the Missionary Society. The name was changed in 1818, and for the sake of clarity LMS will be used here.

¹² Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792-1992* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 11-12.

¹³ William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, To Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (Leicester, 1792), 67-75.

cause, but Carey recognized that “in the present divided state of Christendom” denominational societies would be the only viable approach.¹⁴ Carey promptly acted on his principles, and he and a colleague arrived in India late in 1793. The BMS mobilized quickly in dispatching personnel to India, although its greater expansion was gradual during the society’s first decades. William Carey and his Baptist colleagues did a great deal to inspire interest in foreign missions among their fellow Britons, and they also provided an example of how British Protestants might launch a foreign mission. In particular, the decision to construct a voluntary society for mission would prove influential as a model for later societies.

The Emergence, Evolution, and Aim of Methodist Foreign Missions

As various Evangelical groups became engaged in foreign missions at the close of the eighteenth century, a basic pattern of development emerged. Interest in foreign missions led to the creation of a missionary society, and then missionaries were sent abroad. The initiation of Methodist foreign missions did not fit this mold, as Methodist missionaries were active in the West Indies in the latter part of the 1780s, approximately three decades prior to the founding of the WMMS in 1818. Two explanations can elucidate Methodism’s atypical entrance into foreign missions.

First, there is the question of chronology. Under Thomas Coke’s leadership, Methodists were active in foreign missions in the decade prior to the 1790s, when most of their Evangelical counterparts (BMS, LMS, CMS, etc.) formed missionary societies. As the first British Evangelicals to launch foreign missions, early Methodist efforts were not affected by the precedent established with the founding of the BMS in 1792. Second,

¹⁴ Carey, *An Enquiry*, 84.

Methodism's identity and status as a renewal movement in the process of evolving into a denomination also lent to Methodism's atypical foray into the missionary enterprise. Many Methodists considered their movement to be intrinsically mission oriented, so foreign missions were a natural extension of Methodism. Therefore, there was no need to create a society to oversee their missions—when they engaged in foreign missions Methodists were doing the work that defined their movement at home and abroad.

British Methodism's convoluted entrance into foreign missions is evidenced by the publication various publications issued prior to the founding of the WMMS. In 1804, more than a decade prior to the formation of the WMMS, the organizers of Methodist missions published *A Statement of the Receipts and Disbursements of the Methodist Missions, in the Years 1803 and 1804*.¹⁵ True to its title, this concise document offered little beyond lists of the donations and expenditures for the two-year period.

As interest in Methodist missions began to increase, the annual documents reflected this growth and their cumbersome titles illustrated the missiological tensions within Methodism. The term "Annual Report" was employed in 1806, but the report's title, *The Annual Report of the Spiritual and Financial State of the Missions, Carried on in the West-Indies, Nova-Scotia, New-found-land, Ireland, and Wales, under the Direction of the Methodist Conference*, used geographic descriptors in a manner similar to Coke's earlier publications.¹⁶ The report's title suggested that this was Methodism, under the Conference's guidance, spreading to these regions connected to the British Empire. Just as Methodists executed home missions within Britain, these missions were compatible with Methodism's essence. Moreover, there was no

¹⁵ *A Statement of the Receipts and Disbursements of the Methodist Missions, in the Years 1803 and 1804* (London: R. Lomas, 1804).

¹⁶ *The Annual Report of the Spiritual and Financial State of the Missions, Carried on in the West-Indies, Nova-Scotia, New-found-land, Ireland, and Wales, under the Direction of the Methodist Conference* (London: Conference-Office, 1806).

indication that Methodists had become like other denominations with a separate body responsible for mission, as the task of mission remained within the purview of each Methodist. The document's contents resembled the annual reports of other societies, albeit in a much more concise form. After a brief introduction, excerpts from missionaries' letters in the various fields (primarily the West Indies) were printed. These brief reproductions were followed by the financial figures, and the entire document ran to a mere forty-six pages. An attempt was made in 1808 to emphasize the continuity between domestic and foreign missions; the Report for that year was entitled, *The Annual Report of the State of the Missions, Which Are Carried on Both at Home and Abroad by the Society Late in Connexion with the Rev. John Wesley*.¹⁷ While domestic efforts were featured prominently in the title, readers who proceeded beyond the title page would have found that this document was focused primarily on Methodist efforts abroad. The majority of the text was devoted to the work being executed in the West Indies, although there was discussion of efforts underway in Ireland and Wales. The "Home Missions in England" merited only two paragraphs, which was less coverage than was given to any single island in the West Indies. As Britons' interest in foreign missions grew in the early nineteenth century, Methodist publications sought to cultivate this zeal while retaining Methodism's distinct identity as a movement with mission near its center and not the province of a committee or society.

Eventually, this balancing act between preservation of Methodist identity and the realities of managing an expanding foreign missionary operation proved unnecessary and untenable. The need to avoid the formation of a missionary society was rendered irrelevant as Methodism evolved under the leadership of Jabez Bunting. In a complete reversal of

¹⁷ *The Annual Report of the State of the Missions, Which Are Carried on Both at Home and Abroad by the Society Late in Connexion with the Rev. John Wesley* (1808).

course, Methodists not only established the missionary society they had resisted creating for decades, but the missionary society was essentially one with the denominational leadership. Bunting and his cadre of allies controlled both the WMMS and the Methodist connection, and they controlled both entities.¹⁸ These developments were controversial and not without compromise to Methodism's essence. W. R. Ward, who wrote extensively on Bunting and edited the latter's correspondence, masterfully encapsulated the transformative effects of Bunting's leadership:

That Bunting made his power base in the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society was ostensibly a tribute to the ideal of the missionary church as understood in the early nineteenth century, but it was at best a paradox and at worst a contradiction that his main life's work was to transform Methodist preachers from evangelists into pastors.¹⁹

As Ward observed, Bunting's efforts to organize and elevate Methodist foreign missions can obscure the fact that his regime simultaneously altered the nature of the Methodist ministry, moving Methodist preachers away from itinerant evangelizing to ordinary (and more respectable) pastorates.

Bunting's desire to create a central Methodist missionary society was aided greatly by circumstances beyond his control. While Methodist foreign missions had made substantial gains under Thomas Coke's improvisational leadership, the emergence and rise of the other Evangelical missionary societies, in particular the LMS, provided Methodists with practical incentive to create a society of their own. Things came to a head, as is frequently the case, over the issue of funding. The LMS had begun to solicit funds in both Baptist and

¹⁸ Andrew Porter, *Religion Versus Empire?: British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1790-1840* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), 50.

¹⁹ W. R. Ward, 'Bunting, Jabez (1779–1858)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edition, Oct 2007. [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3947, accessed 11 June 2010]

Methodist chapels, and this, of course, caught the attention of those involved in Methodist missions.²⁰

From the initiation of the Methodist missions in the West Indies in the 1780s until his own departure for India in 1813, Thomas Coke had devoted much of his considerable energies to this cause that he cherished greatly. In addition to four tours of the West Indies and travels throughout the British Isles, Coke spent a considerable amount of time crisscrossing England raising funds (often soliciting from house to house) to support the missions under his direction.²¹ Coke's correspondence with his missionary committee in London reveals a makeshift system fraught with problems. The greatest difficulty besetting this program was the combination of Coke's perpetual absence from London as he sought donations and his insistence that, as superintendent of the missions, he be consulted on all matters pertaining to the work abroad. Coke's colleagues recognized the inefficiency of consulting him on every matter, when they often were unaware of his location.²² At the same time, Coke's extensive touring kept him abreast of developments beyond London.

While in the northern reaches of England (in South Shields) in 1812, Coke learned of the LMS's designs to organize a committee for the purpose of raising "annual Subscriptions among our Societies and Hearers for the support of their Missions." Coke considered this matter "to be of the very first importance to the success of our Missions." He had been aware that "Friends" of the LMS had been soliciting funds among Methodists for some time,

²⁰ Porter, *Religion Versus Empire?*, 55-56.

²¹ In September 1807, Coke wrote to London describing how his efforts from "house to house" had rendered little in the "barren places" of "Preston, Lancaster, Kendal, & Penrith." He was writing from Sunderland and related a story from his time in Carlisle. Thomas Coke to the Committee, 23 September 1807, WMMS Archive, Home Correspondence, Box 1, f. 9.

²² William Myles to Mr. [William?] Jenkins, 16 November 1807, WMMS Archive, Home Correspondence, Box 1, f. 10.

but they had recently approached a “leading Man,” a Mr. Oxley, in the Methodist society of North Shields to organize the LMS fundraising among Methodists. The supporters of the LMS seemingly misjudged Oxley, who had no interest in their proposition. In fact, Coke felt indebted to Oxley for the latter’s “arguments & earnest entreaties for us to take some steps to counteract this [LMS] Plan.” Coke saw this as a grave threat to Methodist missions, with the possibility that “many hundreds, if not thousands, of Pounds will be taken out of the Pockets of our People to support the London Missionary Society.” As Coke observed, “Our People love to promote Missions,” but the Methodist missions, reliant almost entirely upon the fundraising of one man, lacked the means to harness that support adequately.²³ Creating a Methodist missionary society would put the Methodist missions on equal footing with societies such as the LMS, and it would allow for the expansion of the domestic side of Methodist missions.

One year after Coke’s report from South Shields (and just two months before his departure for India) the first local Methodist missionary society was founded at Leeds on 6 October 1813. Methodists from Leeds and the surrounding areas tabled a number of the resolutions that day, but Bunting and other Methodist leaders from London and elsewhere preached and put their stamp upon the proceedings. Thomas Thompson, the Methodist M. P. from Sussex, presided at the meeting. It was Bunting who addressed the question of funding and the LMS. A Congregationalist minister and local LMS secretary, “the Reverend Eccles,” attended the meeting to express his good will toward the nascent Methodist enterprise, but he also sought to impress upon his Methodist colleagues the fact that the “Missionary Cause was but one cause.” Eccles continued, “the various [missionary] Societies,

²³ Thomas Coke to the Missionary Committee, 29 October 1812, WMMS Archive, Home Correspondence, Box 1, f. 20.

though like ships in harbour they might now seem to crowd each other, would have room enough when put out to sea.” According to an account of the meeting, Eccles reiterated his assertion that the “Missionary Cause is but ONE, and that in which all denominations of Christians are united.”²⁴ At this moment, Bunting rose to respond to the Methodists’ guest.

Bunting acknowledged “that the Missionary Cause ought to be regarded as strictly and eminently ONE,” and he affirmed Methodists’ desire to see all branches of the missionary enterprise flourish. He then shifted in tone as he turned to his objective in responding to Eccles. “At the same time I must be allowed to remind the Meeting, that there is no *common Fund* in existence, out of which *all* Missionary Establishments may claim and receive pecuniary assistance. The cause is ONE; but it is promoted by *several* distinct Societies, each of which has its *distinct* and *separate Fund*.” Bunting, perhaps struck by Eccles’s audacity, moved from the realm of the abstract and offered a thinly veiled allusion to the LMS’s solicitations among Methodists. “An impression of a contrary kind has, I know, prevailed in some quarters; and though, I am sure, Mr. Eccles did not design to confirm that impression, I felt it necessary explicitly to state the matter in its true light.” Finally, Bunting picked up Eccles’ nautical metaphor and modified it to fit his own designs.

Now, Sir, all I mean to say is, that the *Methodist* Missionary Ship is one, among others, of the Grand Fleet, by which it is intended to carry to the ends of the earth the blessings of the Gospel; that this ship, like the rest, must be manned, freighted, and provisioned for the voyage; and that our strenuous efforts, and those of our friends, are necessary to fit it for the sea, and to prepare it for the service to which it is destined to proceed. Other denominations are particularly concerned for their own respective ships; and we must particularly care for ours.²⁵

²⁴ James Nichols, *A Report of the Principal Speeches Delivered at the Formation of the Methodist Missionary Society for the Leeds District on the Sixth Day of October, 1813*, 5th ed. (London: Simpkin & Marshall, 1840), 39, accessed in the Frank Baker Collection of Wesleyana and British Methodism, 1749-1979 in the Duke University Libraries Special Collections.

²⁵ Nichols, *A Report of the Principal Speeches*, 39-40.

The question of funding had been raised by a Congregationalist visitor and LMS supporter, but once the subject was broached Bunting was happy to make the case for Methodist support of Methodist missions. And it was an appropriate discussion for the occasion since the LMS's fundraising practices had helped to spur Methodists to action.

Additional district missionary societies were formed (e.g., Halifax in 1814 and Manchester in 1815), and in 1818 the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society was founded.²⁶ The inaugural meeting was held on 4 May 1818 at the City Road Chapel in London, and Thomas Thompson chaired the session as he had done at Leeds five years earlier.²⁷ Thompson's role in both meetings was fitting as the formation of the WMMS in 1818 was the fruition of a process begun at Leeds in 1813.

In the pre-society era reports were published, but they were mere summaries of the work in progress and statements of receipts.²⁸ With the formation of district societies and the WMMS itself came the task of articulating the theological vision that would serve as the foundation for the Methodist missionary enterprise and establishing the rules that would guide the society. After the formation of the society at Leeds, a number of summaries were published, as was Richard Watson's sermon. Watson, who would go on to be a secretary of the WMMS, preached from the thirty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel, in which the prophet was

²⁶ Just as at Leeds, Watson and Bunting were present and prominent at the founding of the Manchester missionary society; see: "An Account of the Formation of a METHODIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY, for the Manchester District," *Methodist Magazine* 38 (May 1815): 391.

²⁷ "General Meeting of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society," *Methodist Magazine* 41 (June 1818): 469.

²⁸ For example, see the report of 1806: *The Annual Report of the Spiritual and Financial State of the Missions Carried on in the West-Indies, Nova-Scotia, and New-Found-Land, Ireland, and Wales, under the Direction of the Methodist Conference* (London: [Methodist] Conference-Office, 1806).

deposited in a valley of dry bones, and his sermon encapsulated the Methodist vision of the foreign missionary enterprise.

Watson connected the wasteland Ezekiel observed to the “heathen world.” As the bones were unburied for Ezekiel to view, so too the “destructive effects of sin, the sad ravages of death, lay exposed and open to the sun” were still discernable in the world. According to Watson, this aspect of the passage “strongly mark[ed] the dreadful maturity of sin among apostate nations.”²⁹ As Watson made clear to those assembled at Leeds, Methodist missions were formed with an unwavering belief in the profound effects of sin that were manifest in “heathen” cultures.

Just as Ezekiel was commanded to prophesy to the dead bones, Watson asserted that Christians were called to minister to those who were mired in sin. He observed “that the ministry of the word is the grand means appointed by God for the salvation of the world.” Watson met potential objections that might be raised. According to Watson, missionaries need not wait for the “heathen nations” to first be civilized. Quite simply, the task was too urgent—the missionary enterprise could not wait for civilization to permeate the globe. In Watson’s estimation, there were “but few, very few, perhaps none, of the heathen able to comprehend the main doctrines and duties of [Christianity, when once their language is understood by their teachers.”³⁰ As Watson described the work facing Methodists, he underscored the urgency to save their fellow human beings from sin, and he expressed his optimism in the missionary enterprise’s ability to succeed in advance of civilization’s reach. Watson described what would become salient features of the Methodist missions: preaching

²⁹ Richard Watson, *A Sermon Preached at Albion-Street Chapel, Leeds, at the Formation of The Methodist Missionary Society for the Leeds District, October 6th, 1813* (Liverpool: Thos. Kaye, 1813), 8.

³⁰ Watson, *A Sermon*, 11.

to convert individuals from lives of sin and offering education to enable access to the Christian scriptures.

Finally, Watson forecast the success that he anticipated Methodist missions would realize. Watson's confidence was derived from several sources. Initially, Watson looked to his text in Ezekiel and asserted, "The prophecy also expresses the certain success which should follow the application of the appointed means."³¹ He continued by discussing "the power of the gospel." According to Watson, "Wherever the gospel is preached it is accompanied by a dispensation of the spirit. '*A day of visitation*' is vouchsafed, and all to whom it is sent are put into a capacity to understand and obey it." Watson continued, underscoring the Methodists' conception of the experiential nature of the gospel. Watson explained that Methodists did not "consider the gospel as a mere system of doctrines, and duties, and hopes, offered coldly to the reason of mankind." The gospel encompassed these elements but they did not represent its entirety—the gospel also was "the source of a divine influence which exerts itself upon the faculties of those who hear it."³² As Watson articulated this principle, a central objective of the Methodist missionary enterprise was revealed. Methodist missionaries would preach the gospel with the expectation that it would permeate and transform all aspects of those who heard the good news.

It was not only the Methodist understanding of the transformative power of the gospel that bolstered Watson's confidence—in good Wesleyan fashion he asserted: "Our confidence in the certain success of the gospel rests also upon *experience*." Like the founder of Methodism, John Wesley, had done in the preceding century, Watson appealed to his audience's own experiential knowledge, reminding them that if he were to speak of "souls

³¹ Watson, *A Sermon*, 15.

³² Watson, *A Sermon*, 16.

dead to God, defiled with sin” he could also add that “*such once were some of you; but ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*”³³

Methodist missions were launched in the confidence that the liberating power of Christ that had touched Methodists in the metropole would similarly transform the lives of individuals in colonial contexts. While the respective sins may have appeared as different as the sinners themselves in Leeds and Freetown, the plight was universal as was the solution in Christ’s redeeming power.

In sum, Watson’s sermon was a bold assertion of the theological basis and great potential of Methodist missions, and it had been formulated to inspire those present at Leeds as well as those who would later read it in print. Watson strode a fine line between naiveté and theologically informed optimism, but the rhetoric he employed fit the occasion. Clearly, at the launch of a missionary society the speaker was expected to underscore the potential for success. And yet, when Watson exhorted his audience, “Let us haste[n] to banish from the earth those abominations which offend the pure eyes of heaven,” it would seem, at least in retrospect, that he underestimated the scope of the task at hand.³⁴ Nevertheless, Watson’s address conveyed the fundamental principles that would guide Methodist missions. Convinced of sin’s ubiquity and its dire impact upon humanity, Methodists would endeavor to convert individuals from their lives of sin and bring them into relationship with Jesus Christ. This task would be realized through the preaching of the gospel and by providing education, which would allow persons to read the Bible for themselves. Finally, Methodists’ confidence in the power of the gospel, to which they could attest to themselves, endowed them with grand expectations of success.

³³ Watson, *A Sermon*, 18.

³⁴ Watson, *A Sermon*, 20.

While Watson's sermon at Leeds established the theological vision that served as the basis for Methodist missions, the WMMS's rules articulated the society's objectives and the regulations that would guide the enterprise. The first rule set the society's name, and the second stated that "the object" of the WMMS was "to excite and combine on a plan more systematic and efficient than has heretofore been accomplished." Their aim was "the support and enlargement of the Foreign Missions, which were first established by the Rev. John Wesley, A. M. the Rev. Thomas Coke, LL. D. and others."³⁵ The WMMS leaders recognized the continuity between Coke's early efforts and their own work, and it should be noted that very little changed for missionaries in the field with the creation of the WMMS.

Most of the WMMS rules dealt with metropolitan organization, subscriptions, and other fundraising concerns, but there were also stipulations that established the guidelines for selecting candidates for foreign service. Candidates had to secure the recommendation of the Superintendent of their Circuit, gain the approval of the Quarterly Meeting of their Circuit, and pass an examination at the Annual District Meeting, "or at least, by three other Superintendents in the neighbourhood." If these initial stages were negotiated successfully, the candidate would "be sent for to the Conference, and examined by a Special Committee, in reference to their Missionary views and qualifications." After a satisfactory interview with the Special Committee, a candidate would be placed on the "List of Received Missionaries, and be subject to the call of the General Committee for such stations as may need supply or reinforcement."³⁶ A rigorous screening process, which included those familiar with the individual and members of the central organization, was implemented to prevent unsuitable persons from entering the service of the WMMS abroad. Even with such measures in place,

³⁵ *The Report of the Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary Society, 1821* (London: Methodist Society, 1821), vii.

³⁶ *The Report of the Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary Society, 1821*, ix.

the WMMS leaders recognized the inevitability of deviations from the society's standards, and they also defined the process for dealing with missionaries "accused of misconduct, or of having deviated from the Doctrines and Disciplines of the Connexion."³⁷ As the WMMS's "Laws and Regulations" reveal, the leaders of the WMMS realized that they could not expect their designs to be implemented perfectly in foreign fields.

The fifteenth regulation established the protocol for appointing missionaries to particular places. "The Plan for stationing Missionaries" would be "annually drawn up by the Secretaries, laid before the General Committee in London, and, if approved by them, recommended to the Conference."³⁸ This approach aligned with domestic Methodism's appointing of preachers within Britain, and a similar system was employed by most missionary societies. Quite simply, a central committee had to determine the assignments of personnel in various contexts—such decisions could not be left to local entities abroad. While these factors made central control the obvious choice, the result was a system fraught with potential problems. Decisions regarding missionary appointments were made by a panel of men who had (in almost every case) never visited the place in question, and they often possessed minimal familiarity of the missionary they were appointing. Fragmentary knowledge of the foreign contexts and their own personnel limited the central committee's ability to place its personnel in optimal circumstances. Moreover, the period of months that separated an enquiry from the West Indies from a metropolitan response meant that there were frequently extended periods of uncertainty as Methodists abroad awaited word from London following unforeseen developments, such as the death of a missionary. The appointments of Methodist missionaries were determined by an imperfect system that

³⁷ *The Report of the Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary Society*, 1821, ix-x.

³⁸ *The Report of the Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary Society*, 1821, ix.

sometimes created tension between Methodists in the colony and their counterparts in London.

In 1822, a section entitled “Instructions to Missionaries” was added to the annual report, and it featured excerpts from the “Standing Instructions of the Committee to all who are sent out as Missionaries, relative to their conduct on Foreign Stations.” As reproduced in the annual report, the instructions opened with the fifth point, which outlined the posture that Methodist missionaries were to adopt in the political realm. The secretaries stated, “We cannot omit, without neglecting our duty, to warn you against meddling with political parties, or secular disputes. You are teachers of Religion; and that alone should be kept in view.” They also reminded the missionaries “that the venerable WESLEY was always distinguished by his love to his country, by his conscientious loyalty, and by his attachment to that illustrious family which has so long filled the throne of Great Britain.”³⁹ This prominent assertion of Methodists’ fidelity to the temporal authorities and emphasis of Methodist missionaries’ narrow religious identity was not coincidental. English Methodists were only a decade removed from Lord Sidmouth’s attempt to prohibit itinerancy, and Methodists remained vigilant as they sought to avoid any radical associations and proactively declared their loyalty to the Crown.

Looking beyond England, the Methodists’ insistence that their missionaries were solely agents of religion reflected these domestic concerns, but this assertion also addressed colonial controversies. In particular, the renewal of the East India Company’s charter in 1813 had proven contentious, as Evangelicals such as William Wilberforce had pushed for the opening of India to British missionaries. Those who believed that missionaries would

³⁹ *The Report of the Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary Society, 1822* (London: Methodist Society, 1822), xi.

incite controversy and ultimately prove to be a liability to British interests in South Asia resisted this campaign, but Wilberforce and his allies prevailed. Although India had been opened to Britain's missionaries, it remained prudent for Methodists to make clear their intent to avoid political entanglements abroad.

The excerpt of instructions to missionaries featured in the annual report also included directives addressed to those who would serve in the West Indies, where there were "stations of considerable delicacy." Methodists dispatched to the Caribbean would "require, from the state of society there, a peculiar circumspection, and prudence on the one hand, and of zeal, diligence, and patient perseverance, on the other."⁴⁰ The secretaries reminded the West Indian missionaries of their pledge to avoid political meddling and then translated this broad principle to the unique setting of the slave societies in the West Indies. As these missionaries would find themselves in a context in which "a great proportion of the inhabitants are in a state of slavery" the secretaries felt it necessary to reiterate the role that the Methodist missionary was to take in the West Indies: "your only business is to promote the moral and religious improvement of the slaves to whom you may have access, without in the least degree, in public or private, interfering with their civil condition." Particular matters were addressed, and the missionaries were instructed never to "visit the slaves of any plantation without the permission of the owner or manager." Nor were they to schedule "religious services to interfere with their owners' employ." The secretaries also addressed a practice that was already outlawed on many islands as the fear of slave insurrections mounted: "protracted meetings in the evening" were prohibited.⁴¹ Here again, the leadership of the WMMS was sending a message to those who viewed their work in the West Indies

⁴⁰ *The Report of the Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary Society*, 1822, xi.

⁴¹ *The Report of the Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary Society*, 1822, xii.

with suspicion. Methodist missionaries were not agents of abolition, and they would not endeavor to foment rebellion among the vast populations of enslaved Africans in the West Indies.

Methodists' efforts in the West Indies were among the first British Evangelical missions, and they were enhanced domestically in 1813 with the first local society's creation. The central place of foreign missions within Methodism was further solidified in 1818 when the WMMS was founded. Methodist missions were launched with the objective of saving "the heathen" from the clutches of sin. A firm confidence in the power of the gospel led Methodists to expect success as their missionaries encountered foreign peoples. In addition to preaching the gospel, Methodist missionaries would establish and operate schools, with the objective of enabling indigenous peoples to read the Bible themselves. Finally, the architects of the Methodist missionary enterprise were explicit as they commissioned their agents, who were to pursue a narrowly religious calling and avoid political involvement.

The Founding and Aim of the CMS

In 1783 a small group of Evangelical Anglican clergy began a fortnightly meeting where they discussed a predetermined topic of mutual interest. These clergymen named their association the Eclectic Society, and this group would go on to found what would become the CMS in 1799. The charter members included John Newton, Henry Foster, and Richard Cecil, all Church of England clergymen. The Eclectic Society added to its numbers other Anglican clergy, two Dissenting ministers, and select laymen. The society's rules allowed for "country members" outside of London, and the Rev. Charles Simeon of

Cambridge occasionally attended in this capacity.⁴² There was substantial overlap between the membership of the Eclectic Society and the early CMS leadership. The following Anglican clergymen belonged to both: John Newton, Henry Foster, Thomas Scott, William Jarvis Abdy, John Venn, William Goode, John Davies, and Josiah Pratt. Charles Grant, a layman and country member of the Eclectic Society, would serve on the nascent CMS's board of governors.⁴³

The members of the Eclectic Society had entertained questions pertaining to mission, such as the salvation of the heathen, since the 1780s, and their interest in foreign missions only intensified with the creation of the BMS, LMS, and British and Foreign Bible Society in the 1790s.⁴⁴ In the spring of 1799, the members of Eclectic Society began to focus on foreign missions. On 18 March 1799, they considered the question, “What Methods can we use most effectually to Promote the Knowledge of the Gospel among the Heathen?” The following fortnight, on 1 April 1799, they convened to discuss “the Establishment of a Mission.” On 12 April 1799, at the Castle-and-Falcon Inn on Aldersgate Street, members of the Eclectic Society and a group of sympathetic supporters founded a missionary society. The society's initial name, A Society for Missions to Africa and the East was chosen strategically, and the founders' rationale will be explained subsequently. In 1812, the secretaries altered the name, opting for, “The Church Missionary Society for Africa and the

⁴² John H. Pratt, ed., *Eclectic Notes; or, Notes of Discussions on Religious Topics at the Meetings of the Eclectic Society, London, During the Years 1798-1814*, 2nd ed. (London: James Nisbet, 1865), 1-2.

⁴³ *CMS Proceedings, 1801*, 21-22.

⁴⁴ John Newton, “Notebook containing records of the Eclectic Society, 1787-9,” 31 March 1788 and 2 February 1789, Firestone Library, Princeton University. The salvation of “heathens” was discussed in March 1788, and in February 1789 the members considered the question: “The best method of propagating the Gospel in the [*sic*] East-India?” (I am indebted to Professor Bruce Hindmarsh, who shared his transcription of Newton's notes with me.)

East.”⁴⁵ The geographical designators were retained, but the society was most commonly referred to as the Church Missionary Society, and in this study “CMS” will be used consistently for the sake of clarity.

While the anachronistic use of “CMS” from the outset eliminates confusion, it obscures the fact that the name first adopted by the Evangelical Anglicans was a signal that the territories of the existing Anglican missionary body, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG), would be avoided. By adopting the name “A Society for Missions to Africa and the East,” the founders emphasized their geographical designs over and above their Anglican identity. Here was a clear indication that the Evangelicals would not seek to infringe upon the SPG’s territory; they would push south and east rather than west to North America and the Caribbean. Moreover, “A Society for Missions to Africa and the East” was an unassuming choice. Such a society did not seem to hold ambitious designs within the Church of England. The subsequent adoption of the “Church Missionary Society” reflected the young society’s increased stature and a new confidence on the part of its secretaries. While the geographic elements of the name were retained, the decision to begin the title with “The Church Missionary Society” made for a much more bold and aspiring appellation. Such a name denoted an arm of the established Church, if not the Anglican missionary society. In its first vulnerable years the Evangelical Anglican missionary society signaled its compatibility with the SPG through the adoption of a modest name and later embraced a more ambitious designation, which was a more accurate representation of the leaders’ hopes for their nascent society.

⁴⁵ Eugene Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society: Its Environment, Its Men and Its Work Vol. 1* (London: CMS, 1899), 71.

A number of early documents bearing the name “A Society for Missions to African and the East” sought to explain how this new Society would not encroach upon the SPG’s work and demonstrate the need for a missionary society that focused upon work among “the Heathen.” After a brief discussion of the missional nature of Christianity and Britain’s unique position to execute foreign missions, the issue of compatibility with the SPG and SPCK was addressed in the Society’s first annual report. The report acknowledged “In the Church of England, two venerable Societies have long been engaged in the excellent design of propagating Christianity abroad.” A tactful tone was adopted—the authors took pains to underscore their admiration for the SPG and SPCK. At the same time, this deferential statement was worded so as to establish the grounds upon which the need for the CMS could be defended. The two eighteenth-century societies had busied themselves “propagating Christianity abroad,” and the implication of this ambiguous phrase would be made clear after the reproduction of an excerpt from the SPG’s royal charter.⁴⁶ The SPG engaged in important tasks, including education, providing clergy to administer the sacraments, and the teaching of the Gospel. However, this work was being executed “principally in the British Plantations in North America.”⁴⁷

While the SPG did not refuse to work with indigenous peoples when such an opportunity presented itself, “the primary and direct object of this Society, has been rather the religious benefit of the British Colonists, and those Heathens immediately dependent upon them, than the conversion of the Heathen in general.” This meant that “[r]oom, therefore, is still left for the institution of a Society, which shall consider the Heathen as its

⁴⁶ “Account of a Society for Missions,” *CMS Proceedings, 1801*, 5. The CMS annual report did not bear a consistent title during the society’s first decades, although it always contained the term “proceedings.” For the sake of consistency, I will uniformly use *CMS Proceedings*, followed by the year of the report.

⁴⁷ “Account of a Society,” 7.

principal care.” Moreover, there were vast territories (predictably, Africa and Asia were cited as examples) that were untouched by the Church of England, and it was in these regions that “the promoters of the present design turn their chief attention; and from this extensive field they assume their denomination.” The Secretaries, describing their own stance, went on to clearly state that they were “not however considering their name as binding them to exclude their attempts from any other unoccupied place, which may present a prospect of success to their labours.” While they indicated they would only consider “unoccupied place[s],” they made plain the fact that would not be restricted to work in “Africa and the East.”⁴⁸ Guided by Evangelical pragmatism that placed a premium on conversion, the Secretaries of the CMS were willing to extend their efforts into locales where they believed they could successfully propagate Christianity. Keeping with their expectations, the CMS secretaries launched missions beyond the regions in their original name. For example, in the year following the name change to the CMS (1813), the younger society initiated a mission in the British West Indies, which was one of the SPG’s strongholds. In the eyes of the Evangelical Anglicans in the CMS, the SPG was focused upon ministry to British colonists in select locations, and this reality meant that there were good grounds for the formation of an Anglican mission society that would work with the balance of humanity.

The dual identity of the CMS founders as Evangelical Anglicans meant that they faced questions on two fronts. If their first task entailed explanations directed to their fellow Anglicans, the CMS leaders also sought to address the concerns of their fellow Evangelicals outside the Church of England. In particular, the LMS had been created with hopes of uniting Evangelicals in pan-denominational cooperation in the name of foreign missions. In

⁴⁸ “Account of a Society,” 5-7.

light of this expectation, the CMS founders were obligated to explain their rationale for creating a separate Evangelical Anglican missionary society.

A CMS circular letter, written by Josiah Pratt in 1804, touched upon the CMS's place among the other missionary societies. Looking back to the CMS's inception, Pratt reproduced parts of the 1801 annual report as he discussed the CMS and the SPG.⁴⁹ In addition to this borrowing on the subject of relations with the SPG and SPCK, Pratt asserted that "This Society," which had been founded "by members of the Established Church, and is conducted in strict conformity to her Doctrines and Disciplines." In addition to seeking to assuage Anglican doubts, Pratt offered this convoluted declaration describing the limits and potential of inter-denominational collaboration.

It [the CMS] was not instituted with the design of interfering, in the smallest degree, with any other Society whatever embarked in the same cause; but under conviction, that, till a cordial co-operation, in pursuing the conversion of the Heathen, could be effected among all Christians, (which is more to be desired than expected,) it was the duty of such persons as were, by their views of the Doctrines and Disciplines of the Christian Church, enabled to act together, to associate for this purpose; maintaining and cultivating, however, a friendly spirit towards other Societies of a similar nature.⁵⁰

As Pratt explained, the CMS was not created to compete with societies such as the LMS or BMS. On the contrary, British Evangelicals could aspire to support and encourage one another in a congenial environment. After all, they all shared a common objective: the propagation of Christianity throughout the world. At the same time, Pratt offered a civil but firm reminder that the denominational distinctives that existed were very real and could not be glossed over in the name of world evangelization. Here was an answer for rebuffed

⁴⁹ Although the article in the *Proceedings* was unsigned, it is possible (and even probable) that Pratt had authored the initial piece. If so, this would make him merely redundant, not plagiaristic.

⁵⁰ Josiah Pratt, Circular Letter for 1804, CMS Archive, G/AZ/1/1, Circular Book. This circular letter was published, presumably for a readership including supporters of the CMS as well as those not associated with the society.

Evangelical allies who had hoped that the Evangelical Anglicans would make common cause with the LMS. Pratt recognized the impossibility of propagating and growing ‘mere Christianity,’ devoid of denominational particularities. While persons could be converted to a party-less Christianity, the growth and sustenance of the movement would require the adoption of ecclesial principles. The differences between episcopal and congregational principles were substantial, and these distinctive convictions precluded the possibility of a pan-denominational mission society. Pratt signaled his hope that such divisions would be dissolved in the future, but he was realistic in his estimation that this new day of ecumenical harmony could not be hoped for in the immediate future. Until that day, Anglicans, Evangelical or not, would devote their energies to Anglican missionary societies.

Pratt’s circular letter of 1804 revealed an ironic aspect of the early CMS. In the same document in which he underscored the CMS’s Anglican distinctives, he was forced to acknowledge the dearth of ordained Anglican missionary candidates and explain the society’s solution to this pressing problem. From the outset, the founders of the CMS had acknowledged that the Church of England’s constitution dictated that only persons who were episcopally ordained could “officiate, in any respects, as Ministers.”⁵¹ Pratt explained that the CMS had opened communications with the directors of “a Seminary instituted at Berlin for the instruction of young men, preparatory to their engaging in Missions.”⁵² Without a single ordained Anglican clergyman willing to join the CMS as a missionary, the secretaries were going to send German-speaking Lutherans abroad. Pratt explained the potential for symbiosis between the CMS and their Continental counterparts. The young men at the seminary lacked the “funds that could afford them the prospect of entering on

⁵¹ “Account of a Society,” 7-8.

⁵² Pratt, Circular Letter, 1804.

their labours.” These young Lutherans had begun their education “trusting to Divine Providence to open them a door in due season,” and “[b]y the liberality of British Christians this door has been opened.”⁵³ The CMS had the means but lacked the men, and the partnership with the Berlin Seminary solved this problem. There was a measure of irony, however, as the CMS secretaries refused to cooperate with their Evangelical friends in the LMS, while entrusting the entirety of the initial mission in Sierra Leone to German-speaking Lutherans.

The CMS founders’ own convictions along with a variety of external constraints contributed to their insistence upon episcopal ordination for missionaries in their employ. In first place, the CMS secretaries were devoted to the Church of England and were persuaded of the merits of episcopal ordination. But it was not only ecclesiology that informed their position—their sense of propriety also shaped their thinking.

The CMS would not function as a backdoor to ordination that could be abused by aspiring social climbers. The secretaries voiced one possible concern: “He who is once episcopally ordained, though with the sole view of acting as a Missionary to the Heathen, would possess the power of officiating, and holding any benefice to which he might be presented in the English Church.” The potential unfolding of this reality merited “extreme caution,” and the secretaries posed this question: “For, what security can be afforded, that a person of inferior station, offering himself upon this ground for orders, is not influenced by the desire of a more elevated rank in society, or of a life of greater ease, rather than by a pure zeal for the salvation of the Heathen?”⁵⁴ The solution, offered in 1801, was the use of

⁵³ Pratt, Circular Letter, 1804.

⁵⁴ “Account of a Society,” 8-9.

catechists, who would not be ordained. In making this case, the secretaries appealed to the office of catechist in the “Primitive Church.”⁵⁵

Although they would eventually dispatch catechists to several fields, the secretaries of the CMS were never of one mind on this practice. John Newton, a senior figure among the CMS secretaries, had been selected to preach the inaugural annual sermon in 1801, but Newton declined the offer because of his objections to the catechist scheme. He did not wish to fracture the spirit of unity, but Newton could not publicly endorse the plan in a sermon.⁵⁶ Three years later, in 1804, the secretaries’ conflicted opinions were reflected in Pratt’s circular letter. He explained that the deployment of catechists “was a measure to which the Society did not purpose to resort, if it could be avoided,” and he went on to state that there would “not likely be any necessity of adopting” the catechist system.⁵⁷ The CMS would ultimately opt to send non-ordained personnel abroad, with the first laymen leaving for New South Wales in 1809.⁵⁸ Notable within this study, was this case of the Anglican layman, William Dawes, who is the central figure in chapter three. Dawes was commissioned as a catechist in 1813, and he directed the CMS work in the Leeward Islands in this capacity.

Alongside the secretaries’ own opinions of ordination were considerable external considerations that had to be taken into account. For persons with High-Church or other Anglican-party sympathies beyond Evangelicalism, the leaders of the CMS offered assurance that they would not employ their mission society as a tool to inundate the domestic church

⁵⁵ “Account of a Mission,” 9-10.

⁵⁶ Charles Hole, *The Early History of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East to the end of A.D., 1814*. (London: Church Missionary Society, 1896), 65.

⁵⁷ Pratt, *Circular Letter*, 1804.

⁵⁸ *Church Missionary Society Register of Missionaries (Clerical, Lay, and Female), and Native Clergy from 1804 to 1894* (London: Gilbert and Rivington, 1895), 2.

with Evangelical clergy. In a period in which Evangelicals seeking ordination in the Church of England could face considerable challenges, the assurance that the CMS leaders would not use their society as a means of producing Evangelical clergy for domestic service was of considerable importance. With a broader audience encompassing all Anglicans with a sense of propriety, the Secretaries also signaled that they would not allow the CMS to become a conduit through which an ambitious young man of “inferior station” could ascend to the station of ordained clergyman and enjoy the benefits attending such an office.⁵⁹ While these factors were considerable, the simple reality was that during CMS’s first fifteen years there was not an Anglican bishop who would have ordained the society’s candidates. Support from within the episcopacy would eventually be secured for the CMS, but in the society’s early years episcopal ordination was not a viable option.

The founders of the CMS faced various challenges unique to its context within the Church of England, but when they articulated the theological vision that informed their enterprise, similarities with the WMMS and other Evangelical societies emerge. When John Newton declined to preach the first annual sermon for the CMS, his colleague, Thomas Scott, filled the void. Scott, who was the first secretary of the CMS, took Ephesians 2:12 for his text, and it was rendered as follows in the published sermon: “At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.”⁶⁰

Scott opened by signaling the importance of the moment to those assembled and articulating the potential that the nascent society could achieve. In Scott’s description, the recently formed society was “an institution, which, though small in its beginnings, may, if

⁵⁹ “Account of a Society,” 9.

⁶⁰ Thomas Scott, “A Sermon Preached at Saint Anne’s Blackfriars, before The Society,” *CMS Proceedings, 1801*, 25.

properly conducted, and adequately supported, and graciously prospered, extend its beneficial consequences to remote regions and future ages.”⁶¹ The CMS had been founded two years earlier and it was still three years away from sending its first missionaries abroad, and Scott was obligated to acknowledge the society’s humble origins. And yet, his forecast of the CMS’s expansion and duration were ultimately realized.

After his introductory remarks about the society’s initiation, Scott’s focus shifted back to his text. Scott drew a parallel between St. Paul’s reminder to the Ephesians of their pre-conversion status and the heathen that inhabited the globe as the nineteenth century opened. Both the “heathen” of the first and nineteenth centuries “lived as if there had been no God.” Nor was this lifestyle confined to the pagan realms—just as Paul had issued a reminder and warning to his audience in Ephesus, Scott asserted that a similar truth “now may be asserted of vast multitudes who are called Christians.”⁶² The Evangelical discussion of depravity abroad frequently was accompanied with reflection about those living as “Christians” at home. When Scott turned his attention to the current state of the non-Christian world, his assessment was bleak. Scott asserted that as more knowledge was gained about the inhabitants of these far-flung places, “the fuller has been the proof, that they are exceedingly prone to vices of every kind; as well as given up to idolatry, or sunk in total ignorance concerning God and religion.”⁶³ Just as his Methodist counterparts would do in the following decade, Scott described the inhabitants of the “heathen” world as mired in sin.

⁶¹ Scott, “A Sermon,” 25.

⁶² Scott, “A Sermon,” 36.

⁶³ Scott, “A Sermon,” 48.

Scott continued, discussing “the duties” that were “incumbent on us,” and he enquired as to “how far we have criminally neglected them.”⁶⁴ Pressing those in his audience to consider how they might advance the cause, Scott posed a series of questions. He asked them to consider “what advantages” they might “possess, for promoting so good a cause?”⁶⁵ Urging those assembled to consider one of the numerous and diverse roles open within the fledgling society, Scott reminded them of the urgency of their task.

When we think of nearly a thousand millions of our species at once inhabiting this globe; all sinners, all having immortal souls, all to stand before God in judgment, all soon to die, yet to life *for ever* in another world, either in happiness or misery; an few, (alas, how very few in comparison,) having any ground to hope for happiness in that eternal state!⁶⁶

He went on, projecting into the future, to draw his hearers’ attention to the fact that another generation, “all born in sin,” would populate the globe, only “to be soon swept away into eternity; and that this is the case from age to age!”⁶⁷ As Scott explained, the task of rescuing humanity from sin was of the highest priority, with consequences for the contemporaneous generation and those that would follow.

Finally, Scott emphasized the ties that bound all of humanity together, reminding his audience that “we should also be careful not to forget our own principles, concerning the character of fallen man.” He continued, “[t]he human heart, both among the civilized and the savage nations,” according to Scott, was “carnal and enmity to God.”⁶⁸ All of humanity was touched by the lingering effects of the fall, and the dire circumstances facing individuals apart from Christ transcended geographical distinctions. Scott explained that a “soul in

⁶⁴ Scott, “A Sermon,” 50.

⁶⁵ Scott, “A Sermon,” 54.

⁶⁶ Scott, “A Sermon,” 58.

⁶⁷ Scott, “A Sermon,” 58.

⁶⁸ Scott, “A Sermon,” 62.

China, or Africa, is of as much value, as one in our own families or congregations; and its salvation as important.”⁶⁹ Clearly, Scott was attempting to personalize the abstract concept of the “heathen,” and lead his listeners to see that all people, regardless of their national identity, faced the same unsavory prospects if they lived and died without coming to know Jesus Christ as their savior. And this was not merely an attempt at manipulative rhetoric. The belief that conversion was essential to temporal peace and eternal security was a central tenet that the CMS founders held in common with all of their Evangelical contemporaries.⁷⁰

Founded by Evangelicals within the Church of England, the nascent CMS faced a variety of challenges that were unique among the various societies founded in London during the 1790s. With the SPG on the verge of celebrating its centennial, the organizers of the CMS first had to demonstrate the need for an additional Anglican missionary society. They were also obligated to offer assurances that the younger society would not encroach upon the SPG’s work and territory. Adherence to Anglican polity also complicated the question of missionary credentials, and their initial insistence upon episcopal ordination for missionary candidates meant that the CMS secretaries endured a period of five embarrassing years while they maintained a missionary society without missionaries. This painful delay was accentuated by the CMS leaders’ insistence upon the urgency of their task, which was one of the theological foundations of their mission. Convinced of humanity’s certain demise apart from the salvific work of Christ, the progenitors of the CMS launched their missionary

⁶⁹ Scott, “A Sermon,” 60.

⁷⁰ The initial rules established by the CMS were drawn up at least three years before its first missionaries would leave for Sierra Leone, and they are not particularly illuminating as they deal with funding and domestic organization. The rules were expanded, but even as they stood in 1835, the CMS rules are not as revealing as those that guided the WMMS. Therefore, the CMS rules will not be analyzed here.

society so that they could preach the gospel in foreign fields and save their fellow human beings from a terrible fate.

Reading Missionary Correspondence

Early British Evangelical missionaries generated vast amounts of correspondence, and letters from WMMS and CMS missionaries to their superiors in London constitute a majority of the primary sources in this study.⁷¹ Written correspondence was essential to the missionary enterprise as instructions and news passed from London to the field, and reports of progress and problems were dispatched to London. In addition to ordinary letters, missionaries submitted minutes of meetings and their journals. Methodist missionaries were required to keep a journal and submit excerpts to London. The WMMS rules for missionaries offered guidelines for their journaling.

It is *peremptorily required* of every Missionary in our Connexion to keep a Journal, and to send home frequently such copious abstracts of it as may give a full and particular account of his⁷² labours, success, and prospects. He is also required to give such details of a religious kind as may be generally interesting to the friends of Missions at home; particularly, accounts of conversions. Only, we recommend to you, not to allow yourselves, under the influence of religious joy, to give any *high colouring* of facts; but always write such accounts as you would not dislike to see return in print to the place where the facts reported may have occurred.⁷³

Clearly, these instructions shaped the journal excerpts sent to London, but reading Methodist missionaries' journals reveals the fact that the individual missionary's disposition

⁷¹ Letters of other types, including letters from London to the field, will also be utilized. However, as the inquiry focuses on the challenges in the various mission fields, missionaries' letters are of central importance in this project.

⁷² There were no female missionaries during this period, although missionaries' spouses executed a variety of tasks, including class leadership and teaching.

⁷³ "Instructions to Missionaries," in *Report of the Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary Society for the Year 1822* (London: printed for the Society, 1822), xiii.

and circumstances in the particular context were central forces in shaping their journals' contents.

CMS missionaries were also required to keep a journal, but their instructions were not as exacting. "As soon as he quits England, [the missionary] shall keep a regular Journal of his studies and proceedings, a copy of which he shall send, as often as opportunity shall serve, to the Committee of Correspondence."⁷⁴ The missionaries of both the CMS and WMMS were required to keep their respective leaders informed of their activities through the submission of journals, and letters of varying length always accompanied these submissions.

Beyond the journaling instructions given to WMMS and CMS missionaries, there are additional considerations to bear in mind. First, missionaries were writing to their superiors within the missionary organization. In some instances, they had enjoyed friendships with these men while in England, but more commonly they were mere acquaintances. And, in some instances, the missionary would know the letter's recipient by name only. Second, missionaries wrote with the knowledge that their words might be reproduced in a missionary publication or denominational magazine. Missionaries corresponded and journaled with a substantial potential reading public peering over their shoulders—these were not (typically) the record of an individual's intimate thoughts and deeds. Although there were instances, particularly in the immediate aftermath of a spouse's death, in which missionaries made no attempt to censor their own sorrow or other emotions.

Given that missionaries were writing to their employers and knew that their correspondence might appear in print, it might seem that the temptation for "high colouring of facts" might be impossible to resist. While it is certainly true that missionaries tended to

⁷⁴ *CMS Proceedings*, 1806, no pagination.

present their work in a flattering light, the fact that their colleagues in the same locale were also reporting to London provided ample incentive to maintain accurate reporting.

Moreover, in many contexts, such as Sierra Leone, there were other parties in correspondence with London, and any glaring misrepresentations would quickly come to light.

This study's focus on the problems that missionaries reported to London necessitates a brief discussion of this dimension of missionary correspondence. The letters from the West Indies and Sierra Leone describe a host of diverse problems that missionaries encountered and brought upon themselves. Several critical considerations are relevant to these reports. First, there were instances in which missionaries emphasized difficulties such as extremes in the climate seemingly to gain the sympathy of their superiors in London. A second aspect that must be weighed is the fact that a missionary who had failed to realize his objectives needed to offer explanations as to why things had not transpired according to plan. In this scenario, it could be in the missionary's interest to accentuate the difficulties he faced, as this could explain whatever failings had occurred.

Missionary correspondence is a peculiar genre of literature, and it yields a great deal of illuminating material when analyzed appropriately. Just as with any type of correspondence, historians must consider issues of authorial intent and readership. Missionaries' letters were diverse in their aim. A great deal of correspondence must be seen as mere organizational communication, devoid of traces of friendship and warmth. In many cases, however, indicators of friendship are present. Missionaries would allude to personal connections with the letter's recipient. For example, missionaries would send their wives' greetings to the spouse of missionary secretary, who was receiving the letter. Sensitivity to these dynamics of friendship allows for a better-informed reading of missionary

correspondence. A context of friendship between author and recipient could embolden the missionary as he explained circumstances in the field or requested assistance from London. In instances where the implicit trust of friendship was absent, missionaries were compelled to offer thorough explanations and document their claims.

Recognition of the great diversity within missionary correspondence is essential to an informed reading of these valuable sources. Any extant contextual clues must be brought to bear on the reading of a letter. In some cases, the author was well known, and there are even secondary sources available to create a profile of the missionary. More frequently, minimal information is available, and a fragmentary knowledge of the author must suffice. The most effective remedy to this deficiency is usually the missionary's colleagues, who offer glimpses of their peer's character and serve as means of accountability when necessary. The fact that missionaries operated in a community of coworkers in most of the situations examined here is of crucial importance. If a missionary did not report a problem, he could expect that his colleagues would do so. This might inspire the missionary to report his own misdeeds, seizing the opportunity to explain the circumstances from his perspective. The checks and accountability of missionary communities do not mean that we are seeing the missionary enterprise in its totality, but the measure of accountability they provide improves the historical record available in the societies' archives.

Historiographical Considerations

In recent decades historical studies of the nineteenth-century British foreign missionary enterprise have documented the complexities that were intrinsic to this vast, diverse campaign, and in this section a concise discussion will situate this study amongst the existing literature. Previous generations' analysis of missionaries tended to deal in extremes. Sympathetic authors emphasized the heroic nature of male missionaries, and the resulting

hagiographical portraits did not yield an accurate representation of missionary work. At the other end of the spectrum, anti-imperialist authors have written about missionaries' roles as the agents of empire, while dismissing any notions that there might have been a plurality of motivations guiding missionaries' engagement with indigenous peoples. As Jeffrey Cox, an historian with decades of missionary research behind him, has explained, the lingering effects of both positions persist. Cox's description of his own experience illuminates the legacies of both camps:

In years of giving talks about missionaries, I have often found that an audience expected to hear stories of missionary heroism only to be disappointed when told that missionaries were rarely as heroic as their image. Other audiences expect to hear missionaries unmasked as racists and imperialists of the worst kind, only to become baffled or annoyed when I put forward a complicated picture of irony and unintended consequences in the missionary story, along with a history of genuine affection and spiritual cooperation across racial and gender boundaries.⁷⁵

Cox rightly suggests that nuanced accounts of the missionary enterprise, which still evokes strong and diverse reactions among many, do not fit with popular expectations. By the 1980s these two extreme positions were beginning to disappear from the literature, but that is not to say they have been abandoned entirely.⁷⁶ Notably, the anthropologists, Jean and John Comaroff, have sought to re-cast understanding of missionaries in their two influential volumes, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Vol. 1: *Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa* (1999) and Vol. 2: *The Dialects of Modernity on a South African Frontier* (1997).⁷⁷ As the Comaroffs' titles suggest, theoretical considerations figure prominently in their work. In the

⁷⁵ Cox, *The British Missionary Enterprise*, 5.

⁷⁶ Norman Etherington, "Introduction," in *Missions and Empire*, ed. Norman Etherington, unnumbered volume in the *Oxford History of the British Empire*, Companion Series, ed. Wm. Roger Louis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 4.

⁷⁷ Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution, Vol. 1: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999) and Vol. 2: *The Dialects of Modernity on a South African Frontier* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.)

preface to the first volume, they explain that their work “traces the processes by which Nonconformist [i.e., LMS] Christian missionaries, among the earliest footsoldiers of British colonialism, sought to change the hearts and minds, the signs and practices, of the Southern Tswana.”⁷⁸ They continue, explaining that they were attempting “a historical anthropology of cultural confrontation—of domination and reaction, struggle and innovation,” and also signaled that their project was undertaken with “an eye forward to the present, toward both everyday resistance and historical consciousness in apartheid South Africa.”⁷⁹ Near the crux of their argument was the role that missionaries played among the Tswana. According to the Comaroffs, LMS missionaries were agents of colonialism who sought to transform the Tswana so that the latter group could be integrated into the colonial system and would ultimately become participants in capitalism. Reactions to the Comaroffs’ work have varied considerably, with historians tending to be less enthusiastic in their responses.⁸⁰

While the importance of the Comaroffs is undeniable, Elizabeth Elbourne, an historian who has also studied the LMS in South Africa extensively, has offered a number of insightful critiques of the Comaroffs’ approach and conclusions. First, it must be emphasized that Elbourne is no apologist for the missionary cause. Her own massive volume on LMS missions among the Khoekhoe in the Eastern Cape, *Blood Ground: Colonialism, Missions, and the Contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799-1853*,

⁷⁸ The Southern Tswana were a people in southern Africa.

⁷⁹ Jean and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Vol. 1, xi.

⁸⁰ Etherington, “Introduction,” 4; Elizabeth Elbourne, “Word Made Flesh: Christianity, Modernity, and Cultural Colonialism in the Work of Jean and John Comaroff,” *American Historical Review* 108, no. 2 (April 2003): 438.

reveals how missionaries often failed to realize the ideals that informed their enterprise.⁸¹ In her analysis of the Comaroffs' scholarship, Elbourne notes that their conclusions rest upon narrow and rigid understandings of LMS missionaries, the Tswana, and Christianity itself. As Elbourne points out, many LMS missionaries were poorly cast in the role of colonial agent since they frequently inhabited the margins of respectable colonial society.⁸² As an alternative to the Comaroffs' argument in which missionaries utilized conversion to Christianity to control the Tswana, Elbourne posits that "Christianity was never fully in the control of the white missionaries who had brought it and only became popular once it was spread mostly by Africans and then transformed in the process."⁸³ The Comaroffs' emphasis upon the control and influence of LMS missionaries comes at the expense of fully recognizing the active role of the Tswana in adopting and adapting Christianity. Where the Comaroffs have underscored the fact that missionaries' actions resulted in the victimization of indigenous peoples in Africa, Elbourne points to a growing body of literature that "emphasizes instead the agency of Africans in using and reshaping Christianity to their own ends."⁸⁴ While the Comaroffs' findings are intriguing and illuminating, there are significant limitations that are intrinsic to their approach.

Part of what distinguishes the Comaroffs' approach from that of most historians is the former's mistrust, informed in part by postmodern understandings of the limits of language, of missionaries' written accounts of their own work. The Comaroffs are more interested in ritual and practice and assign missionary texts to a lesser position. At the other

⁸¹ Elizabeth Elbourne, *Blood Ground: Colonialism, Missions, and the Contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799-1853* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002.)

⁸² Elbourne, "Word Made Flesh," 448.

⁸³ Elbourne, "Word Made Flesh," 451.

⁸⁴ Elbourne, "Word Made Flesh," 454.

end of the methodological spectrum is the work of Rowan Strong, whose work on the SPG has already merited mention. In making his case for a reconception of the SPG, Strong relies entirely upon published sources, with the annual sermons of the SPG and other metropolitan publications figuring prominently in his work.

This project does not seek to overturn Strong's thesis regarding missionary interest in eighteenth-century England, but a comparison between his approach and the methodology employed here offers an illuminating historiographical consideration. Outside of Strong's scholarship, historians are in general agreement that throughout the eighteenth century the SPG's resources and personnel were devoted to ministry among British colonists and work among non-European peoples was a secondary concern. Strong contends that historians have ignored an interest in evangelism within Anglicanism during the eighteenth century, and he employs SPG publications, assigning particular significance to the society's published annual sermons, to make his case.⁸⁵ Insisting that his work is not "a history of missions" or of the SPG, Strong describes his work as "a history of public views of both metropolitan leaders of the Church of England in England, and of Anglicans in these British colonies, regarding the church and the empire, and about the colonizing and colonized populations found there."⁸⁶ While Strong goes on to claim that by examining published texts by colonial figures he has represented both the "centre and the peripheries of empire," an examination of the sources drawn upon reveals that, with very few exceptions, these texts were all published in London.⁸⁷ Strong's approach allows for analysis of metropolitan

⁸⁵ Strong, *Anglicanism and the British Empire*, 7-8, 17-18.

⁸⁶ Strong, *Anglicanism and the British Empire*, 7.

⁸⁷ Strong, *Anglicanism and the British Empire*, 7. The list of primary published sources (no archival sources are cited by Strong) is found on pages 295-297.

discourse about empire and evangelism, but his claim to represent various colonial positions deserves careful scrutiny.

A fundamentally different approach and objective guide this study and this requires examination of different types of sources. This dissertation will document how the complexities unique to various foreign contexts, in addition to practical and personnel difficulties, shaped each mission in ways that could not have been anticipated in London. And these unforeseen challenges were only one dimension of the difficulties facing British mission agencies—there were also the problems, such as debilitating and fatal fever in West Africa, of which the organizers were aware. If it is successful, this dissertation will demonstrate how the missionary enterprise was always a hybridity, with both contextual realities and metropolitan visions contributing attributes.

To access this view of the missions, missionary correspondence must be examined. It was in their letters to superiors in London related at least some, if not all, of the problems they encountered.⁸⁸ Both the WMMS and CMS published missionary correspondence in periodicals and in their respective annual reports, but these letters were, of course, edited. Problems that underscored missionaries' heroic sacrifices, such as the loss of a spouse or a missionary's own good death, were often reproduced in print.⁸⁹ Predictably, many of the missionaries' dilemmas, such as missionary misconduct, did not pass through the editors' filter and were redacted prior to publication. When unpublished missionary correspondence is studied in tandem with metropolitan sources, a more fully-formed image of the missionary

⁸⁸ As was indicated in the section dealing with missionary correspondence, there can be no doubt that missionaries censored themselves. As with any historical subject, our understanding of the missionaries' work is fragmentary.

⁸⁹ An account of a "good death" recounted an Evangelical's continued faith in Christ even as death approached, and these narratives had been a fixture of Evangelical literature since the eighteenth century.

enterprise emerges. Metropolitan sources reveal British theological convictions, evangelistic designs, and perhaps imperial aspirations, but they do little beyond illustrating ideas in the metropole. In some regards, metropolitan sources, such as a society's annual sermon, can be regarded as the proverbial tip of the iceberg—they are easily visible and most prominent but represent only a narrow aspect of the missionary cause. To appreciate and analyze the totality of the enterprise, the surface must be broken and the archival depths must be plumbed.

While the utilization of archival resources (in order to obtain a different objective) distinguishes this project from Rowan Strong's *Anglicanism in the British Empire*, this examination of the WMMS and CMS stands in continuity with much of the existing literature. For example, Michael Rutz's examination of the relationship between Congregationalism in the metropole and LMS missionary efforts in South Africa and the West Indies provides a useful model of tracing the reciprocal movement of influence between colonial contexts and the metropole.⁹⁰ In limited ways, this approach has been emulated here. Jeffrey Cox's recent survey of the British foreign missionary enterprise also provides a helpful summary of developments, and the breadth of his survey did not prevent Cox from offering an impressive level of nuance.⁹¹ In a valuable contribution to the literature, Cox traces important strands of the story of British foreign missions.

Andrew Porter's *Religion Versus Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914* is a massive work of staggering scope, and this dissertation represents a

⁹⁰ Michael A. Rutz, *The British Zion: Congregationalism, Politics, and Empire, 1790-1850* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2011.)

⁹¹ Jeffrey Cox, *The British Missionary Enterprise since 1700* (New York: Routledge, 2008.)

minor contribution to the case made by Porter.⁹² In his thorough analysis of numerous facets of the British foreign missionary enterprise, Porter reveals the complexity of this massive undertaking. According to Porter, “Missions and missionaries, even when they conformed to these stereotypes [imperial agents and destroyers of indigenous culture] so entrenched in Western historiography, were without doubt the supporters and embodiment of much else.”⁹³ Porter’s approach to the subject is worthy of duplication, as he openly recognizes missionaries’ failings while also drawing attention to their achievements, which were often recognized by the indigenous persons the missionaries worked amongst.⁹⁴ With the shared objective of revealing the complexities of the missionary project, this examination of the WMMS and CMS aims to add a small amount of evidence to the massive corpus already assembled by Andrew Porter.

Richard Price’s *Making Empire: Colonial Encounters and the Creation of Imperial Rule in Nineteenth-Century Africa*, which examines missionaries’ and other British colonists’ interactions with the Xhosa people of the Cape Colony, bears a number of affinities with this project.⁹⁵ While Price confines his examination to a single region, his analysis considers a diverse cast of characters, including missionaries belonging to several societies, colonial officials, and indigenous peoples. Important contextual distinctions unique to the British encounter with the Xhosa distance Price’s monograph from this study, but there are also

⁹² Andrew Porter, *Religion Versus Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004).

⁹³ Porter, *Religion Versus Empire?*, 316.

⁹⁴ Porter, *Religion Versus Empire?*, 317.

⁹⁵ Richard Price, *Making Empire: Colonial Encounters and the Creation of Imperial Rule in Nineteenth-Century Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

theoretical and concrete connections between the two works.⁹⁶ Price argues that “empire was and is a utopian project,” dependent upon “a series of assumptions that involve enormous leaps of faith, hope and sheer invention.” According to Price, the “utopian dream” of empire “was to be found at its most ecstatic among the missionaries, until they encountered Xhosa reality.” Missionaries, along with other British colonists, arrived in Africa with “coherent and complete discourses and programs about how they could influence and interact with the Xhosa.” These “knowledge systems” formulated in the metropole proved inadequate in the eastern Cape and “were quickly undermined and even displaced by the experience.” Price asserts that this systemic crumbling occurred among individuals and “also at the level of empire as a system.”⁹⁷ Missionaries were not exempt from this process, and Price documents various cases of the “closing of the missionary mind.”⁹⁸ Price’s assertion that there was radical discontinuity between the metropolitan vision of a liberal empire and the reality in Xhosaland aligns with the argument in this dissertation, which examines similar phenomena in missionaries’ experiences in the West Indies and Sierra Leone.

A final historiographical note is merited. The term “Evangelical” has been employed extensively in this chapter, as it will be throughout the dissertation. The British historian, David Bebbington, advanced the standard definition in the early 1980s. Bebbington posited four characteristics that identified Evangelicals, who he argued emerged within Britain in the

⁹⁶ Price utilizes William Shrewsbury, who was initially a Methodist missionary in the West Indies and is featured in chapter two of this dissertation, as an example of a missionary who arrived in southern Africa with impeccable humanitarian credentials and underwent a transformation, ultimately succumbing to “racism.” Price discusses Shrewsbury in several chapters, but the latter’s transformation is traced on pages 77-85.

⁹⁷ Price, *Making Empire*, 6.

⁹⁸ Price’s sixth chapter is entitled “The closing of the missionary mind.”

1730s. According to Bebbington, Evangelicals are marked by their emphases on the Bible, conversion, and Christ's atoning work on the cross ("crucicentrism" is the term Bebbington employs.) Finally, Evangelicals are distinguished by their activism.⁹⁹ Bebbington's definition has been debated and discussed, and even adapted, but it remains a definition with as great a consensus as might be hoped for in this realm.¹⁰⁰ While there are lingering debates regarding the continuity between Evangelicals of the eighteenth century and Puritans of earlier generations, employing the term, as Bebbington conceives it, to describe the Methodists behind the WMMS and the founders of the CMS as Evangelicals is not controversial. These British Christians exhibited the characteristics identified by Bebbington, and their missionary endeavors are evidence of Bebbington's fourfold definition. Their concern for the "heathens'" sinful state prompted them to launch missions with the intent of converting these lost souls. Their belief in the efficacy of Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross instilled in them the confidence to launch missions to the far reaches of the globe. After the initial work of conversion was realized, and sometimes before this work was completed, missionaries established schools so that they could enable indigenous persons to read the Scriptures themselves. Finally, the willingness to act on their principles, launching and maintaining numerous missions, attests to their activism.

⁹⁹ D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 2-17.

¹⁰⁰ Timothy Larsen, "Defining and Locating Evangelicalism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology* eds. Timothy Larsen and Daniel J. Treier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1-2. With a nod to Bebbington, Larsen "jokingly" refers to his adaptation of Bebbington's "quadrilateral" (a term never employed by Bebbington himself) as "the Larsen Pentagon." Larsen adds Protestantism as a marker essential to Evangelical identity.

CHAPTER TWO

Methodism in the British West Indies

Introduction

With the conversion of a prominent Antiguan planter, Nathaniel Gilbert, Methodism migrated into the West Indies in the 1760s, and by the 1790s, when British Evangelicals were becoming more widely interested in foreign missions, Methodists had already gained thousands of members in societies across the British West Indies. In 1789, Thomas Coke, the instigator of early Methodist missions, reported 3,949 persons (almost entirely African slaves) in Methodist societies in the islands of Antigua, St. Christopher's, St. Eustatius, St. Vincent's, Dominica, and Barbados.¹ The early numerical success enjoyed in the West Indies, belies the difficulties that the West Indian context held for Evangelical missionaries. Various problems were endemic to the West Indies and the Caribbean context exposed flaws intrinsic within British Methodism. In order to substantiate the argument that the foreign contexts could alter a mission, the transformative effects of West Indian contextual difficulties will be surveyed. To this end, the following categories will be examined: illness and death, missionary fatigue, administrative difficulties, rivalry with other missionaries, missionary misconduct, and Methodist missionaries' push for respectability. Impediments that arose from the West Indian context, including legal restrictions, anti-Methodist violence, missionaries' cultural assumptions and the transformation of their perceptions of black Africans, and, Methodist accommodations to the slave system, will also be considered. As Methodist

¹ Thomas Coke, *A Farther Account of the Late Missionaries to the West Indies: In a Letter from the Rev. Dr. Coke, to the Rev. J. Wesley* (London, 1789), 12.

attitudes toward slavery are of central importance to this chapter (and the dissertation as a whole), the second section will consider John Wesley's writings on slavery along with other Methodists' opinions on the subject. First, a very brief introduction to the West Indian context must be offered.

The West Indian Context

The societies that developed in the West Indian islands were centered on slavery, and by the 1780s (when this study picks up) this had been the case for more than a century in most islands. Plantation slavery generated substantial wealth, and during the eighteenth century most of the islands produced sugar as the chief crop. In the British islands (Jamaica, Barbados, and the Leeward Islands, which included Antigua) a general system of government was firmly in place by the late eighteenth century. Each island had a colonial legislature and a governor. The legislatures, which could pass laws and impose taxes, were populated by planters representing local interests.² The colonial governors represented the crown in an island. While the colonial governors held extensive powers, the local legislatures were generally able to see their aims realized.³ Through their control of the legislature and in possession of the ability to levy taxes, the planters were able create systems that protected their interests and perpetuated slavery.

Another important consideration is the composition of these islands' populations. Each of the islands where missionaries labored had a substantial black majority, which was comprised overwhelmingly of enslaved Africans but also included a small number of

² Gad Heuman, "The British West Indies," in *The Nineteenth Century* ed. Andrew Porter, vol. 3 of *The Oxford History of the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 470.

³ D. J. Murray, *The West Indies and the Development of Colonial Government, 1801-1834* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 14-19.

freedmen. In 1810, for example, Antiguan slaves accounted for 89.6% of the island's population and whites only 5.2%. And Antigua was by no means exceptional in this regard. Barbados had the largest white population at 16.7% in 1810, with a slave population of 80.6%.⁴ These demographics must be remembered as the planters' hostility to missionaries is discussed below. The vastly superior number of slaves meant that the fear of revolt was constant and ubiquitous throughout the region, and any behavior that might incite the slaves to revolt was simply not tolerated.

John Wesley, English Methodism, and Slavery

Methodism's relationship with the slave system in the British West Indies was complex and problematic. On the one hand, chattel slavery as practiced by British colonists offered several advantages for missionaries seeking access to "the heathen." Most importantly, missionaries could, with a planter's blessing, work among a literal captive audience. Unlike missionaries laboring in other contexts who were obligated to attract hearers, Methodists in the West Indies could access sizable audiences after securing the proprietor's permission. Although slaves' captivity facilitated pragmatic aspects of Methodist missionaries' efforts, these benefits came at a high cost. Attempting to propagate Christianity among West Indian slaves proved to be a campaign wrought with difficulties as Methodist missionaries were obligated to make dubious concessions to a system to which they were theoretically opposed as Methodists.⁵

⁴ B. W. Higman, *Slave Populations of the British Caribbean, 1807-1834* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 77.

⁵ The focus of this chapter (and the larger dissertation) is the Methodists in connection with John Wesley, and it is these Methodists who were opposed to slavery. In the broader Methodist movement of the eighteenth century there were Methodists, such as George Whitefield, who affirmed the compatibility of slavery and Christianity. Whitefield's importance in the Evangelical Revival is indisputable, but the divide

Beginning with John Wesley's own stand against slavery, Methodists gradually joined those calling for an end to the slave trade and, subsequently, slavery. In the 1770s Wesley published several tracts which touched on the slave question. David Hempton has posited that Wesley was "the first religious figure of real significance to denounce slavery," and his "principled opposition" offered an important precedent for subsequent abolitionists and provided an important precedent for Methodists.⁶ Wesley argued against both the slave trade and slavery itself. John Wesley's best known and most important pamphlet in this realm took aim at the latter institution.

Thoughts upon Slavery was first published early in 1774, and it enjoyed robust sales and ran through a number of editions. Wesley had been influenced by the French-born Quaker, Anthony Benezet, whose abolitionist writings fused passages from Enlightenment thinkers with the narratives of slaves and travellers.⁷ And, as he was wont to do, Wesley paid Benezet the high literary compliment of incorporating sections of the Quaker's *Historical Account of Guinea* into his own *Thoughts upon Slavery*.⁸ Wesley

between Wesley and Whitefield over the question of predestination separated the two men and their respective followers. In particular, an acrimonious public exchange in the 1770s curtailed the influence of Whitefield (and other Calvinists) among Wesleyan Methodists. Therefore, while Whitefield offers an alternative position on the question of slavery, the followers of John Wesley looked to him rather than Whitefield as they considered issues such as the slave trade and slavery.

⁶ David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 41-42. Elsewhere in the same book Hempton described Wesley's early stand against slavery as "prophetic." See: Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, 129. Hempton's claim for Wesley's seminal role could be countered by an advocate for George Fox, who was a significant religious figure who called for emancipation in the preceding century.

⁷ Maurice Jackson, "The Social and Intellectual Origins of Anthony Benezet's Antislavery Radicalism," *Pennsylvania History* 66 (1999), 93.

⁸ Warren Thomas Smith, *John Wesley and Slavery* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), 92. It should be noted that Benezet was aware of and pleased with Wesley's "borrowing."

relied on Benezet as he sketched details of the slave trade in Africa, but he went on to relate his own principles near the pamphlet's conclusion. Wesley asserted, "Much less is it possible, that any child of man, should ever be *born a slave*. Liberty is the right of every human creature, as soon as he breathes the vital air. And no human law can deprive him of that right, which he derives from the law of nature." Further in the tract, Wesley urged his fellow Britons to end their enslavement of human beings: "Let none serve you but by his own act and deed, by his own voluntary choice. Away with all whips, all chains, all compulsion! Be gentle toward all men." Wesley's final paragraph was styled as a prayer, which was uttered to "the Father of the Spirits of all flesh," who "hast mingled of one blood, all the nations upon the earth."⁹ In *Thoughts upon Slavery*, Wesley expressed his opposition to both the slave trade and slavery, as they were irreconcilable with both reason and revelation.

Within the next four years, Wesley produced two more tracts that included passages condemning the slave trade. Events in the American colonies prompted Wesley to pen, *A Seasonable Address to the More Serious Part of the Inhabitants of Great-Britain, Respecting the Unhappy Contest between Us and Our American Brethren: With an Occasional Word interspersed to those of a Different Complexion* in 1776.¹⁰ According to Wesley, the loss of the American colonies was not an event of singular importance in the history of the world. On the contrary, the British Empire, like other empires throughout history, was entering a period of decline. The nation's goodness had enabled its rise, and, in a corresponding fashion, grievous sins were bringing about its downfall. Wesley asserted that empires

⁹ John Wesley, *Thoughts upon Slavery* (London: R. Hawes, 1774), 51 and 52.

¹⁰ The tract was published anonymously; the title page bore the name "a Lover of Peace."

“rose by virtue; but they fell by vice.”¹¹ He identified Britain’s participation in the slave trade “as one principal sin of our nation,” and went on to describe it as “iniquitous from first to last.” Wesley proceeded to claim that this “trade of blood . . . has stain’d our land with blood.”¹² As John Wesley sought to explain Britain’s trials, he identified participation in the slave trade as a significant factor.

Two years later, in 1778, Wesley again addressed his English compatriots. Wesley echoed his earlier censures of the slave trade and slavery. He asserted his hope that “we may never steal and sell our brethren like beasts—never murder them by the thousands and tens of thousands.” In Wesley’s estimation, “Never was any thing such a reproach to *England* since it was a nation, as the [*sic*] having any hand in this execrable traffic.”¹³ Wesley returned to the slavery question in his postscript. In his closing paragraph, Wesley asserted that “every Lover of Mankind” would rejoice at the cessation of the slave trade “tho’ all our Sugar-Islands (so the inhabitants escaped) were swallowed in the depth of the sea.” Countering arguments that projected economic decline upon England’s withdrawal from the slave trade, Wesley predicted that England “may increase in Population, Agriculture, Manufactures . . . tho’ we no more suck the blood and devour the flesh of the less barbarous *Africans*.”¹⁴ Without equivocation, Wesley boldly condemned the slave trade and went as far as to link England’s misfortunes with its facilitation of slavery.

¹¹ John Wesley, *A Seasonable Address to the More Serious Part of the Inhabitants of Great-Britain, Respecting the Unhappy Contest between Us and Our American Brethren: With an Occasional Word interspersed to those of a Different Complexion* (Bristol: W. Pine, 1776), 12.

¹² Wesley, *A Seasonable Address*, 13.

¹³ John Wesley, *A Serious Address to the People of England, with Regard to the State of the Nation* (London: R. Hawes, 1778), 15.

¹⁴ Wesley, *A Serious Address*, 28.

Wesley's early and sustained stand against slavery set the tone for Methodism during the decades leading up to the Emancipation Act.¹⁵ According to Lamin Sanneh, by the time of Wesley's death, Methodism had become a powerful antislavery force within England and beyond.¹⁶ Our examination of Methodism's interface with slavery in the West Indies will complicate the "and beyond" aspect of Sanneh's pronouncement, but for the moment, Methodism's anti-slavery position within England must be affirmed.¹⁷

Even during Wesley's lifetime, anti-slavery sentiments were expressed within Methodism. For example, the *Arminian Magazine* published extracts of Hannah More's poem on slavery in consecutive issues in the autumn of 1788. More, whose poem frequently raised themes surrounding freedom, exhibited little restraint as she defended Africans and criticized her fellow Britons. She instructed her fellow Britons: "Perish the illiberal thought which would debase / The native genius of the sable race!" More probed the arguments of African inferiority as she questioned the correlation between "the casual colour of skin" and the powers of the mind. Africans, like Britons, "have

¹⁵ One of Wesley's last extant letters was written to William Wilberforce, encouraging the latter to sustain his fight against "that execrable villainy, which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature." John Wesley to William Wilberforce, 24 February 1791, *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, ed. John Telford (London: The Epworth Press, 1960), 265.

¹⁶ Lamin Sanneh, "'The World is My Parish': Methodism and the Roots of the World Christian Awakening," in *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies*, ed. William J. Abraham and James E. Kirby (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 190. Sanneh described Methodism in 1791 as "an intercontinental antislavery powerhouse."

¹⁷ Although it falls largely beyond the purview of this study, American Methodism's shift toward accommodation of slavery had begun by 1791. As Methodism was not present in substantial ways in many locales beyond England, the US, and the West Indies at the time of Wesley's death, Sanneh's claim must hang upon Methodists in places like British North America, Ireland, Scotland, and France.

heads to think, and hearts to feel.”¹⁸ More’s boldness would have stung pro-slavery readers when she addressed “thou WHITE SAVAGE,” whose “lust of gold, / Or lust of conquest rule thee uncontrolled [sic]!”¹⁹ In addition to More’s stinging criticisms, situated within her condemnation was an editorial attempt to assert Methodism’s place within the emerging abolitionist movement. Near the conclusion of the excerpt, More lauded William Penn and those within the Society of Friends for their anti-slavery position and commendable colonial practices. According to More, “Thy followers only* have effaced the shame, / Inscribed by SLAVERY on the Christian name.” The editors²⁰ took exception to More’s description of the Quakers as the lone force opposed to slavery. An asterisk was inserted following the word “only,” and the note at the bottom of the page read: “Not so. Vast multitudes in Great Britain and Ireland are, at present, as great enemies to Slavery as ever the Quakers were.”²¹ The editors’ prickly correction suggests that they felt More was unaware of the expansion of the abolitionist campaign, and, most importantly, she had missed Methodists’ contribution on this front.

Following Wesley’s death, Methodists retained a voice against the slave trade and slavery. In 1792 Samuel Bradburn, a Methodist preacher who would go on to become conference president in 1799, authored a fiery tract addressed to his fellow Methodists.²²

¹⁸ Hannah More, “An Extract from a Poem on Slavery,” *Arminian Magazine* 11 (October 1788), 558-559.

¹⁹ Hannah More, “An Extract from a Poem on Slavery,” *Arminian Magazine* 11 (November 1788), 614.

²⁰ Although he received assistance, John Wesley was the editor in 1788. See: Frank Cumbers, *The Book Room: The Story of the Methodist Publishing House and Epworth Printing Press* (London: Epworth Press, 1956), 140.

²¹ More, “An Extract,” 615.

²² Samuel Bradburn, *An Address to the People Called Methodists; Concerning the Evil of Encouraging the Slave Trade* (Manchester: Harper, 1792).

Although Bradburn's title identified the slave trade and his first pages were devoted to it, he went on to attack West Indian planters, "*the most bloody and abandoned villains,*" who were responsible for "savage barbarity."²³ As the abolitionist cause replaced the elimination of the slave trade following 1807, Methodists intensified their efforts. The *Methodist Magazine*, in 1809, featured excerpts from a report of the African Institution.²⁴ Four years later the magazine reproduced an account that described the dehumanizing nature of slave sales.²⁵ In 1817, Richard Watson, a secretary of the WMMS, published his *Defence of the Wesleyan Methodist Missions in the West Indies*, which included a refutation of the pro-slavery apologist, Joseph Marryat.²⁶ The 1824 WMMS annual meeting featured discussion of the slave revolt in Demerara and included an exoneration of the alleged missionary-instigator, John Smith.²⁷ In 1826 the *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine* printed a list of anti-slavery publications, which contained "a full View of the Nature and Effects of Negro Slavery."²⁸ As England inched toward abolition, Methodists remained devoted to the cause. At the annual conference of 1832, the following question was posed: "Shall any farther means be adopted by the Conference to promote the EARLY AND ENTIRE

²³ Bradburn, 3. Bradburn, whose tract went on to at least four reprint editions, detailed the atrocities committed by the planters. He seemingly aimed to shock his readers through description of the methods used to maintain slave society in the West Indies.

²⁴ "Sierra Leone," *Methodist Magazine* 32 (June 1809), 265.

²⁵ "An Account of a Negro Sale," *Methodist Magazine* 36 (May 1813), 390-393.

²⁶ Richard Watson, *A Defence of the Wesleyan Methodist Missions in the West Indies* (London: Thomas Cordeux, 1817).

²⁷ "Annual Meeting of the Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary Society," *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine* 3 (June 1824), 414. Smith was a LMS missionary who was subjected to rough handling and died while in prison.

²⁸ "The Following Publications of the Anti-Slavery Society contain a Full View of the Nature and Effects of Negro Slavery," *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine* 5 (February 1826), 125.

ABOLITION OF SLAVERY IN THE BRITISH DOMINIONS?” In response, the conference articulated the importance of disseminating accurate accounts of slavery and repeated “its solemn conviction of the great moral guilt which the maintenance of that system entails upon our country.” Until slavery was abolished, Methodists were to employ prayer and wield their influence to combat slavery, and effective anti-slavery organizations were to be supported.²⁹ When the abolitionists finally achieved victory in Parliament, the editors of the *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine* hastily inserted a note even though their press deadline antedated the bill’s royal sanction.³⁰ In the decades between John Wesley’s death and abolition of slavery Methodists maintained the campaign against the slave trade and slavery.

In the decades between Wesley’s death (and Bradburn’s tract) and the abolition of slavery in Britain, many Methodists in Britain remained opposed to the slave trade and slavery, but political and ecclesiological realities complicated matters considerably. Wesley’s firm and unequivocal stand was of great importance as Methodists weighed the issue. This was the way things worked in Wesleyan Methodism. According to David Hempton, a leading historian of Methodism, Wesley’s articulation of the argument against the slave trade and slavery made opposition to slavery “the official default position of the Methodist movement.”³¹

²⁹ “Minutes, 1832” in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, vol. 4 of *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, ed. Rupert Davies, A. Raymond George, and Gordon Rupp (London: Epworth Press, 1988), 413.

³⁰ “Abolition of Colonial Slavery,” *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine* 12 (September 1833), 658.

³¹ David Hempton, “Popular Evangelicalism and the Shaping of British Moral Sensibilities,” in *British Abolitionism and the Question of Moral Progress in History*, ed. Donald A. Yerxa (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2012), 62.

Hempton acknowledges that a growing concern to avoid radicalism and Methodism's own internal fracturing abated the progress of Methodist abolitionism. Nevertheless, ordinary Methodists, including Methodist women who supported boycotts of West Indian sugar, joined with Methodist leaders such as Jabez Bunting in opposition to slavery. Bunting, who assumed a place of singular importance within British Methodism in the early nineteenth century, combined the concerns that Methodists in Britain were obliged to balance. Bunting was resolute in his antislavery stance, but he was equally committed to conservative politics. Additionally, he was keen to see Methodism's place in Britain secured. These various interests were not fully compatible, and compromise was necessary. Because of his concern to protect domestic Methodism and Methodist missions in the West Indies, Bunting was cautious as he considered antislavery involvement. It was not until the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828 ensured their religious freedom that Methodists swelled the ranks of abolitionists.³² Once Methodists were at liberty to act on their convictions, the scope of their involvement was considerable. More than nine out of ten Methodists supported the emancipation petition of 1833.³³ While Methodists may have been linked to antislavery by default, several competing considerations inhibited active participation for many Methodists in the first decades of the nineteenth century. With the removal of political concerns, British Methodists made the default position provided by Wesley their own.

Thomas Coke shared Wesley's sentiments with regard to slavery, and Coke's approach to the institution shaped Methodist policy in the West Indies for decades. In his person, Coke brought together the various manifestations of Methodism in the

³² Hempton, "Popular Evangelicalism," 62-72.

³³ Seymour Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 128.

North Atlantic World. His extensive travels allowed Coke to observe slavery in the American South and the West Indies, even as he remained abreast of metropolitan Methodists' opinions on slavery. During his first tour of North America, Coke initially took a firm public stance against slavery. In his journal, Coke recorded his encounters with slavery in several southern states. His first observation related the tension that charged his handling of the issue; while in Virginia in 1785 he "dared for the first time to bear a public testimony against slavery."³⁴ This first public criticism proved to be an anomaly in that it offended only one person—Coke's subsequent remarks prompted a greater response.

Coke's tenure as a tolerated abolitionist in the American South was short-lived. A mere three days after his first declaration against slavery, a group of "unawakened" Virginians conspired to flog him and a reward of fifty pounds was offered to the person who "would give that little doctor one hundred lashes." In the next week, a mob armed "with staves and clubs" were to set upon Coke the moment he "touched on the subject of slavery." Although Coke was unaware at the time, he did not see it as his "duty to touch on the subject there," and violence was averted.³⁵ Upon arrival in North Carolina, Coke was obliged to change his *modus operandi*. Since state law forbade the emancipation of any "negroes," Coke endeavored to effect legislative change. He drew up a petition for the state's General Assembly, "intreating [*sic*] them to pass an act to authorize those who are so disposed, to emancipate their slaves."³⁶ Returning to Virginia, Coke again revised his tactics. Having come to realize that direct assaults upon slavery would not be

³⁴ Thomas Coke, *The Journals of Thomas Coke*, ed. John A. Vickers (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2005), 53.

³⁵ Coke, *Journals*, 55.

³⁶ Coke, *Journals*, 57.

countenanced by White Southerners, Coke developed a “method of delivering it [testimony against slavery] without much offence, or at least without causing tumult.” Coke would begin by “addressing the negroes in a vary pathetic manner on the duty of servants and masters; and then the whites will receive quietly what I have to say to them.”³⁷ Although he would make another bold legislative appeal,³⁸ this step towards accommodation of slavery was indicative of Coke’s policy in the West Indies and Methodism in the Southern United States.³⁹

Coke’s central concern in the West Indies was not the European colonists, but the enslaved Africans. Moreover, he invested his own and Methodism’s resources in the slaves’ spiritual improvement and physical well-being.⁴⁰ While his interest was holistic in scope, realities within the slave societies of the West Indies forced Coke and his Methodist missionaries to focus upon the spiritual realm and avoid public contradictions of West Indian norms. With knowledge gained in the American South, Coke realized that direct denunciations of slavery would be counterproductive in the West Indies. Coke and the Methodists were obliged to employ oblique criticisms, if any, of West Indian slavery.⁴¹ The West Indian context, as opposed to the Southern United States,

³⁷ Coke, *Journals*, 57.

³⁸ He helped to circulate a petition in Virginia that called for the “immediate or gradual emancipation of all the slaves.” See: Coke, *Journals*, 58.

³⁹ With regard to the American context, Francis Asbury’s reluctant accommodation to slavery is discussed in John Wigger, *American Saint: Francis Asbury and the Methodists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 333-334 and 384-385. Also, Donald Mathews has traced early American Methodists’ opposition to slavery along with their subsequent compromise. See Donald G. Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism: A Chapter in American Morality, 1780-1845*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 3-61.

⁴⁰ John Vickers, *Thomas Coke: Apostle of Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969), 150.

⁴¹ Vickers, *Thomas Coke*, 170-171.

required greater delicacy because on the islands blacks outnumbered whites by a margin of seven to one, and the planters would not tolerate any stirrings that might ignite this volatile and imbalanced mix of peoples.⁴² Although Thomas Coke opposed slavery like his Methodist counterparts in England, the West Indian context obliged the Welshman to make accommodations within slave societies in order that the mission might be perpetuated. And thus the Methodist missions in the Caribbean were, from the outset, predicated upon a certain ambivalence toward the slave system, which was essential given the planters' control of slave society. It is, at last, time to examine the Methodist work in the West Indies.

Illness and Death: Grave Problems with Practical Consequences

Debilitating illness and death were inevitable aspects of British foreign missions in equatorial and subtropical regions in the early nineteenth century. While the West Indian islands were not as inhospitable for Europeans as Sierra Leone, illness represented a significant obstacle in Methodism's first foreign mission field. In 1804, Thomas Coke estimated that the "unwholesome climate" in the West Indies reduced missionaries' lives by twenty years.⁴³ Numerous missionaries described how illness and death touched their lives, and these descriptions were frequently followed by requests to return to England. A series of letters from a Methodist missionary is illustrative of this pattern. In December 1806, John Taylor wrote to Coke and explained his desire to leave for England. Since he was "ready to think [I] have had my share of sufferings both in

⁴² Vickers, *Thomas Coke*, 170.

⁴³ Thomas Coke to the Committee, undated (Autumn 1804, based on position in the archive), WMMS Archive, Home Correspondence, Box 1, f. 4. Hereafter, "Home Correspondence" will be abbreviated as "H.C.".

body and mind,” Taylor felt his request was reasonable.⁴⁴ Shortly after penning his request in December, Taylor evidently received news that he was to stay on in the West Indies. This prompted Taylor to renew his case in a letter composed late in January 1807. Taylor, who opted for a formal tone over a more typical friendly style of writing, pointed out that Coke had promised him a term of four years.⁴⁵ He even went as far as to reproduce Coke’s entire letter.⁴⁶ London prevailed, and Taylor remained in the West Indies. The committee’s decision to refuse Taylor’s request ultimately proved costly for the missionary. In August of 1807, he wrote again to report his wife’s illness and death. He renewed his request to return home in the same letter.⁴⁷ As demonstrated in John Taylor’s case, illness in the field created tension between overseers in London and missionaries in the field.

Reports of illness issued from Methodist missionaries in the Caribbean islands throughout the early nineteenth century. In 1814, James Dunbar wrote to describe his colleague’s poor health. Dunbar told how William Wilson was plagued by “fainting fits, cold sweats, want of appetite,” among other symptoms. Wilson’s doctors urged him to curtail his activities.⁴⁸ William Turton, a long-time missionary in the West Indies,

⁴⁴ John Taylor to Thomas Coke, 12 December 1806, WMMS Archive, West Indies Correspondence, Box 111, f. 8. From this point forward, “West Indies Correspondence” will be abbreviated as “W.I.C.”.

⁴⁵ Taylor was serving in the pre-WMMS era, when arrangements were made by Coke himself and not guided by a standard policy.

⁴⁶ John Taylor to “The Reverend Doctor Coke, & the Preachers who compose the committee for transacting the Affairs of the West India Mission,” 27 January 1807, W.I.C., Box 111, f. 8.

⁴⁷ John Taylor to Thomas Coke, 10 August 1809, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 111, f. 11.

⁴⁸ James Dunbar to the Committee, 25 August 1814, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 111, f. 33.

described how bouts of fever inhibited his work in 1815.⁴⁹ The news submitted from the West Indies could be quite doleful—late in 1820, William Ratcliffe conveyed a heart-wrenching account from Jamaica. Ratcliffe opened with a somber reminder and added more sorrowful news: “In my last [letter] I acquainted you with the painful bereavement I had experienced in the death of my two children, and little thought then that I should have so soon to resign up their beloved mother to the same spot of earth.” He went on to describe how a severe fever seized his wife, and how the fever prompted her to give birth prematurely. Mrs. Ratcliffe died within days of her son’s birth.⁵⁰ Between September and December of 1820, William Ratcliffe endured the loss of two sons and his wife. Poignant accounts such as Ratcliffe’s were frequently reproduced in the *Methodist Magazine*; it seems that the Methodist leaders recognized how their evocative powers could engender sympathy and build support.⁵¹

While missionaries’ accounts of illness and death were woeful, and even used to help promote Methodist missions, the central committee allowed efficiency and economy to guide its policies when a degree of compassion seemingly should have prevailed. As in Taylor’s case, requests to return to England were denied frequently. In 1814, Thomas Talboys wrote from Antigua, begging to return to England because of his deteriorating health. In a move that would seem unnecessary in the context of a missionary society, Talboys even included a copy of a physician’s note so as to validate

⁴⁹ William Turton to the Committee, 5 January 1815, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 112, f. 36.

⁵⁰ William Ratcliffe to the Joseph Taylor, 10 December 1820, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 116, f. 126.

⁵¹ Ratcliffe’s letter was published in the *Methodist Magazine* 44 (March 1821), 235-236.

his claims of illness.⁵² The secretaries' callous coolness is revealed in the annotation added in London to Talboys's letter; the correspondence was labeled: "Talboys's wish to return."⁵³ The committee's unsentimental approach was evident in a bluntly worded resolution passed in 1815: "Resolved, that every Missionary going out to the West Indies in future shall be informed that the Books given to him, in case of death, shall be returned or left in the Island to be disposed of as the Committee may direct."⁵⁴ The committee members attempted to walk a fine line, balancing their desire to disseminate the gospel as rapidly and broadly as possible with the limitations of their perpetually underfunded mission. While their motives were understandable, the committee's tendency to elevate the mission's progress above the needs of its missionaries was unfortunate as tensions emerged between the central leadership and missionaries in the field.

Just as missionaries' physical wellbeing was threatened by the West Indian climate, the strain of cross-cultural living, persecution, and other factors combined to dissolve missionaries' zeal and cause fatigue in their ranks. Missionaries found discouragement in a variety of sources, and a perceived lack of attention in London contributed to the missionaries' discontent. John Taylor, in the letter in which he requested permission to return to England, expressed his dissatisfaction with the dearth of communication from London: "It is poor encouragement for a man to be labouring in this burning clime and he cannot get so much as a letter." Taylor also described his

⁵² Thomas Talboys to Robert Smith, 27 April 1814, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 112, f. 30.

⁵³ Missionaries' letters were annotated with a short phrase that summarized the letter's contents.

⁵⁴ First Minute Book, page 216, WMMS Archive, General Minutes, Box 545, f. 4.

disappointment as he had visited the post office with the arrival of every vessel for a period of two months without reward for his efforts.⁵⁵ Francis Hallett, a Methodist missionary who claimed to be a personal friend of Thomas Coke, opened his correspondence with an expression of his frustration: “I have written you several Letters since my arrival in the West Indies, but they seem not to have merited your attention, as I have not been favor’d with one from you.” He even went as far as to observe, “it appears that both the Letters & myself have been treated with silent contempt, no notice having been taken of either.”⁵⁶ A final example of the tension between the secretaries in London and missionaries in the field can be found in John Shipman’s letter from Jamaica in 1818. Shipman had learned that his request for a chapel had been denied. This news, coupled with a shortage of funds, left Shipman “greatly discouraged.” He went on to offer this stinging criticism of Methodist preachers in the metropole: “Those who have Chapels built, Societies formed, Houses built & furnished ready to their hand, know but little of the difficulty of the poor missionary has to encounter, who has none of these things, and far from any of his brethren.”⁵⁷ Shipman detected a double standard guiding Methodist policy. Methodism in England, which was already situated in a more advantageous context than missionaries in hostile environments such as Jamaica, often also benefited from generous allowances for facilities and accommodations. Because of delays in communication and disagreeable financial decisions, relations between missionaries and administrators were periodically strained.

⁵⁵ John Taylor to Thomas Coke, 12 December 1806, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 111, f. 8.

⁵⁶ Francis Hallett to the Committee, undated (probably spring of 1807, based upon the letter’s location in the archive), WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 111, f. 9.

⁵⁷ John Shipman to the Committee, 22 December 1818, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 113, f. 75. The double underlining is in the original letter.

The Difficulties of Trans-Atlantic Administration

From its inception, the Methodist Connexion had been governed by strict and far-reaching central leadership, and the secretaries of the Methodist foreign mission sought to maintain a similar degree of control over Methodism in far-flung places such as Antigua and Jamaica. While John Wesley's ambitious travel itinerary allowed him to visit Methodist societies across Britain, Methodist missionary secretaries were forced to govern remotely. This meant that a group of secretaries in London, comprised almost entirely of men who had never visited the Caribbean, made personnel decisions which were to be honored by missionaries and ordinary Methodists throughout the West Indies.⁵⁸ As might be expected, this arrangement was fraught with logistical challenges.

As with any institutional enterprise, pecuniary questions were frequently raised. In 1813, news reached the secretaries that a Methodist missionary in the West Indies, Calverly Riley, had remitted £200 to his family in England "in the short space of two years on his missionary station." Thomas Jackson, who wrote after consulting with Methodist leaders such as Jabez Bunting, hoped to gain the committee members' assurance that they were not implicated in the affair, so that a clarifying statement could enable lay support of missions in Yorkshire to continue.⁵⁹ Jackson's report prompted an enquiry, which was answered by Thomas Morgan (who wrote on behalf of the district gathering of missionaries) and Riley himself.

Morgan asserted that Riley had been examined and found to be without fault. First, the amount sent to England had been £170, not £200. Part of the sum had been

⁵⁸ Thomas Coke was the exception, having spent time in the West Indies, but he departed for India in 1813 and died in 1814.

⁵⁹ Thomas Jackson to Robert Smith, 22 November 1813, WMMS Archive, H.C., Box 1, f. 23.

gained through thrift while in the West Indies, but Riley had gained a majority of the funds through the sale of property before his departure as a missionary.⁶⁰ Riley, who did not divulge a great deal of detail in his own letter of explanation, assured the secretaries that the report had been based on an ignorance of his financial affairs.⁶¹ This episode reveals how the committee found itself positioned between English Methodists' concerns regarding missionary conduct and missionaries' activities in the field. If ordinary working class Methodists were to learn of their missionaries' substantial financial gains, this could potentially curb their giving to Methodist missions.

As Methodist missionaries succumbed to illness in the West Indies, the practical problem of their widows' support faced the committee in London. In 1819, Sarah Turton wrote to London to solicit the Society's support in the wake of her husband's death. Turton's request was polite, as she gently reminded the committee of her late husband's "faithful labours."⁶² Not all dealings with missionaries' widows were as straightforward, nor were they conducted as civilly. In a dispute regarding contested property in the island of Dominica, the widow of a Methodist missionary went on the attack against her late husband's colleague. Thomas Dumbleton's widow attempted to evict Thomas Pattison, a Methodist missionary. When this failed, she took up residence in the Methodist chapel.⁶³ Once ensconced in the chapel, she "solemnly pray[ed] that God would fall upon" the Methodist missionaries. Pattison, whom she hoped to

⁶⁰ Thomas Morgan to the Committee, 28 April 1814, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 111, f. 30.

⁶¹ Calverly Riley to the Committee, May 1814, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 111, f. 30.

⁶² Sarah Turton to the Committee, 18 March 1819, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 114, f. 86.

⁶³ Edward Turner to Thomas Coke, 29 April 1808, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 111, f. 13.

dislodge from the disputed house, received the worst of her verbal brutality. He reported that she called him “Turk, Brute, Rogue, Cloven Foot,” and other names.⁶⁴ Throughout this complex and bizarre property dispute, mission officials in London were observers as Methodist missionaries in the field were forced to resolve the conflict between the mission and the disaffected widow. Although mission secretaries in London insisted upon their control of the entire enterprise, in instances such as the Dumbleton case, the missionaries in the field were forced to respond to situations as they arose and the London leaders could only observe from afar because of the substantial delay in correspondence between the Caribbean and London.

Just as the Conference appointed preachers to a particular circuit, the mission committee assigned missionaries to circuits (as soon as they were established) each year. This practice prompted West Indian Methodists and missionaries to write and offer their input in advance of such decisions or their analysis of appointments already determined. After the defection of a particularly insolent colleague, the Methodist missionaries, Abraham Whitehouse and Calverly Riley, wrote to express their incredulity as they pondered how the committee could have deemed such a person worthy to be sent as a Methodist missionary.⁶⁵ Members of Methodist societies would write to implore the committee to refrain from transferring their missionary to different islands.⁶⁶ As suitable

⁶⁴ Thomas Pattison to the Committee, 27 November 1807, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 111, f. 12.

⁶⁵ Abraham Whitehouse and Calverly Riley, 23 November 1814, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 112, f. 35.

⁶⁶ One such example was sent from Barbados in 1821; see: Petition from Methodist Society of Barbados, 26 July 1821, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 117, f. 146. They had learned that their missionary, William Shrewsbury, was to be transferred from Barbados to Tobago, and they hoped that his work with their society would continue. A similar request was submitted from Demerara in 1825; see: Society in Georgetown, Demerara to George Morley, 12 October 1825, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 129, F. 408.

candidates were in short supply throughout the early nineteenth century, ordinary Methodists wrote to London to request missionaries for their communities. Ann Gill, a Methodist laywoman, wrote a series of letters in 1825 as she sought to secure additional missionaries to guide Barbadian Methodists.⁶⁷ By 1827, the number of missionaries assigned to Barbados had increased from one to three.⁶⁸ As Methodism advanced in the West Indies, the committee in London's work was shaped by input from the field as some personnel decisions reflected the desires of Caribbean Methodists.

Rivals in the Field

Although the planters' contempt for Evangelical missionaries fostered camaraderie among missionaries of various societies, there were instances of rivalry between Methodist missionaries and personnel attached to other agencies. In London, the various Evangelical missionary societies projected a united front to the reading public, as the societies' and denominations' publications frequently kept their readers informed of the progress of other societies. While there may have been motivational objectives behind the reports of other societies' advances, inter-societal relations in the metropole tended to be civil and even cooperative. Most missionaries in the West Indies, regardless of their denominational affiliation, occupied the same precarious position in the region's slave societies and would seemingly have been happy to cooperate with any like-minded individuals. Nevertheless, there were moments at which rivalry surfaced.

⁶⁷ Ann Gill to George Morley, 16 May, 2 July, and 5 August 1825 WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 121, f. 228-230. At the time of Gill's request, there was a single missionary, Moses Rayner, responsible for the entire island of Barbados.

⁶⁸ The Report of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, for the year ending, December 1827 (London: WMMS, 1828), xvii.

Throughout this period there were isolated instances of contention. In 1814, Jeremiah Boothby, a Methodist missionary, expressed his firm belief that an Independent minister, Mr. Elliott, was an enemy not to be trusted. Even after the assurances of his Methodist colleague, James Whitworth, Boothby remained dubious. In response to Whitworth's description of Elliott's obliging attitude, Boothby asserted, "Yes he talks of love & love now, but he will act in a very different manner by and bye."⁶⁹ Dealings with Independent ministers were unusual, but contact with individuals attached to the Church of England was commonplace in islands that were British colonies.

Methodist missionaries in the British West Indies operated in the shadow of the Church of England, and although Methodism remained a renewal movement designed to supplement the Anglican Church (at least in theory), there were moments at which Methodist missionaries' misgivings about the established Church surfaced. As he described the defense he had issued to the Earl of Bathurst in 1818, Abraham Whitehouse offered this blunt criticism of the Anglican establishment's failure to minister to slaves in the West Indies.

It is a notorious fact that the Clergy of the Church of England have not a single congregation of Slaves throughout the whole Island [Trinidad], and I doubt whether any single Slave of his own will attends their ministry, or whether it is a matter of any moment at all to those Clergymen whether those slaves are instructed in the Doctrines of Christianity, or continue in a state of ignorance of Divine things."⁷⁰

Whitehouse's argument was premised upon the claim that Methodist missionaries, unlike ministers in the Church of England, were ministering to slaves.

⁶⁹ James Whitworth to Samuel Woolley (forwarded to London), 26 April 1814, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 111, f. 30.

⁷⁰ Typeset copy of Abraham Whitehouse's letter, 2 May 1818, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 113, f. 64.

News of conflict with Moravian missionaries in the West Indies reached Methodist leaders in London in 1821. Before examining this conflict in the 1820s, several aspects of the Moravians' work in the West Indies must be considered. Moravian missionaries had first arrived in the Danish West Indies in the 1730s, and the Moravian experience in the region was complicated. Throughout most of the eighteenth century Moravians openly accommodated the slave system, and Moravian missionaries often owned slaves, allowing the missionaries to operate without financial support from London. The Moravian attitude toward slavery had been shaped initially by their leader, Nicholas von Zinzendorf, who had espoused the curse of Ham as justification for the enslavement of Africans.⁷¹ Additionally, it must be remembered that the Moravians operated in the West Indies for at least five decades before British Evangelicals began to show interest in the abolition of the slave trade. As they adapted to the slave societies of the West Indies, Moravian missionaries made a variety of accommodations beyond the slave system itself. For example, they did not insist upon monogamous legal marriage for those attached to their congregations, and this allowance seems to be reflected in the Methodist missionaries' allegation that the Moravians tolerated "concubinage."⁷²

Methodist missionaries' criticisms also arrived at the Moravian missionary headquarters in London, from where a defense was issued to the WMMS secretaries. Christian Ignatius Latrobe, the leading figure in English Moravian missions, dismissed the Methodist missionaries' claims, pointing to the fact that his personnel were long-term veterans of the West Indian context. The Moravians' Methodist critics were mere

⁷¹ J. C. S. Mason, *The Moravian Church and the Missionary Awakening in England, 1760-1800* (Woodbridge, Suffolk and Rochester, NY: The Royal Historical Society and Boydell Press, 2001), 101.

⁷² Jeffrey Cox, *The British Missionary Enterprise since 1700* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 56-57.

novices (in Whitehouse's case, he had spent less than a year in Antigua), who were misrepresenting their Moravian counterparts.⁷³ Latrobe, who had a copy of a letter by Whitehouse in his possession, reproduced the Methodist missionary's accusation that the Moravians were notorious in Antigua for "their awful conformity to the ungodly maxims and practices, which are so deplorably prevalent in these Islands." Latrobe's closing sentence conveyed his estimation of the gravity of Whitehouse's accusations: "This is a charge, which those who make it have to answer for, not before the Tribunal, but before the Judgment seat of that Lord, whom we serve." Latrobe asserted that such allegations could do great harm in both Antigua and Britain.⁷⁴

Methodist missionaries accused the Moravians of moral laxity and improper behavior. Sarah Whitworth, the wife of a Methodist missionary (James Whitworth), spoke of "the existence of those gross evils, Sabbath-breaking, and illicit connexions" among the Moravians.⁷⁵ In his own letter on the matter, James Whitworth shared an anecdote that depicted the Moravians' want of discipline. Whitworth described how members of his society, upon being expelled for immorality, would retort that they were not troubled since they could merely go over to the Moravians. Implicit in his account was the fact that the Moravians would tolerate the debauchery that had prompted

⁷³ Latrobe based his argument, in part, on the movement of Methodist missionaries from island to island, and he drew this information from WMMS publications. As this episode reveals, the various missionary organizations took keen interest in the work of their colleagues in other societies.

⁷⁴ Christian Ignatius Latrobe to Joseph Taylor and Richard Watson, 13 April 1822, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 117, f. 159.

⁷⁵ Sarah Whitworth to Joseph Taylor, 7 June 1822, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 117, f. 160.

Whitworth's disciplinary action.⁷⁶ In a subsequent letter, James Whitworth implied that the Moravians had brought the conflict to the attention of Josiah Pratt, the long-time CMS secretary and a leading figure within British Evangelical missionary circles. Whitworth observed, "it seems [Pratt] must have heard a whisper respecting the moravian [*sic*] business, and [Pratt] wrote for particulars to Mr. Daws [*sic*], who I am told has given them in detail."⁷⁷ Writing six years later, in 1828, Matthew Banks, a Methodist missionary, reported that the Moravians in Antigua tolerated "Sabbath breaking and concubinage."⁷⁸ While Methodists and Moravians held a great deal in common, especially when compared with Anglicanism in the West Indies, there were points of difference that separated them. In particular, the Moravians' greater openness with regard to sexual conduct drew Methodists' ire, especially when converts were lost to the Moravians for that very reason. The conflict with Moravians in Antigua happened in direct contradiction of metropolitan missionary rhetoric, which sought to emphasize the various societies' distinctives along with the mutual interest and support among the societies.

Missionary Misconduct

While most Methodist missionaries fulfilled their obligations with dignity, there were missionaries who engaged in shameful conduct. Of course, missionaries' misdeeds

⁷⁶ James Whitworth to the Committee, 7 June 1822, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 117, f. 160.

⁷⁷ James Whitworth to Joseph Taylor, 22 June 1822, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 117, f. 160. Whitworth was referring to William Dawes, the chief CMS representative in the Leeward Islands and a central figure in chapter three.

⁷⁸ Matthew Banks, Journal, 1828, WMMS Archive, Special Series, West Indies Biographical, Box 589, f. 54.

were not recorded in society publications,⁷⁹ and even in the relative confidentiality of private correspondence genteel discretion often prevailed over detailed reporting. However, there were cases in which missionaries were obligated to provide information to their superiors in London. As these unfortunate events were described, the reporting missionaries frequently describe the great harm done to the mission by one missionary's irresponsibility. The misconduct of missionaries, particularly acts that touched the slave populations directly, is a poignant example of incongruity between the Methodist missiological vision and the reality in the field.

Among the various problems that missions endured, missionaries' illicit sexual encounters were among the most damaging to their work. Given the dynamics of race, gender, power, and privilege, it is not surprising that Methodist missionaries (who were, of course, white men throughout our period of enquiry) engaged in sexual affairs with black and mixed-race women. Typically, these women were either slaves or servants. Edward Turner's case is representative of this phenomenon. William Coultas, a colleague to whom Turner confessed his errors, reported the unfortunate news to London. Turner, one of the first Methodist missionaries in the West Indies, had engaged in sexual misconduct occasionally over a period of seventeen years. Coultas described several encounters, and in each case the women were members of the Methodist society. One slave woman was married, and Coultas speculated that the husband of the woman would kill his wife and brutally murder Turner if he were to learn

⁷⁹ Anna Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 7.

of their relationship.⁸⁰ Writing two years later, Abraham Whitehouse mentioned that the mission had only recently recovered from the harm inflicted by Turner.⁸¹

In the same year, 1814, the district meeting found the Methodist missionary, William Jowett, guilty of “improper behaviour and breach of Discipline.”⁸² Thomas Morgan, a Methodist missionary writing in 1815, reported a colleague’s incautious behavior toward a young woman, which the district meeting deemed “truly reprehensible.”⁸³ Instances of sexual impropriety continued throughout our period of enquiry. In 1825, as he explained that the “deplorable condition” of his circuit could be attributed to deeds done prior to his arrival, Roger Moore, a Methodist missionary recently arrived in the Bahamas, described how his colleague’s actions had sullied the Methodist name in the Bahamas. According to Moore, John Thompson had spoken of his romantic designs from the pulpit and associated with a woman who was “like a Billingsgate-whore.”⁸⁴ Samuel Woolley, who had served as a Methodist missionary in the West Indies since 1806, allegedly spent several evenings with a young woman after the death of his wife.⁸⁵ Throughout the period in question, Methodist missions in the West Indies were plagued by missionaries’ sexual indiscretions.

⁸⁰ William Coultas to the Committee, 1812, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 111, f. 19.

⁸¹ Abraham Whitehouse to Thomas Blanchard, 23 November 1814, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 112, f. 35.

⁸² “Minutes of the Second General District Meeting in Antigua,” 21 April 1814, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 112, f. 29.

⁸³ Thomas Morgan to the Committee, 3 July 1815, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 112, f. 39.

⁸⁴ Roger Moore to Richard Watson, 13 May 1825, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 121, f. 224.

⁸⁵ Thomas Stauison, “A Statement of facts respecting Mr. Woolley’s Case,” 15 February 1832, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 131, f. 441. Woolley left the West Indies in

Methodist missionaries were envoys of a movement that advocated the centrality of holiness in the Christian experience, the process of sanctification, and, more controversially, preached Christian perfection.⁸⁶ These emphases, particularly the bold claim of the possibility of Christian perfection, made missionaries' sexual sins all the more conspicuous and harmful to the Methodist cause in the West Indies. Of course, any sexual sin committed by a missionary harmed the Methodist enterprise, but when these liaisons involved women in societies, the damage was particularly acute. Even more problematic were the missionaries' dalliances with black servants and slaves. As they engaged in these encounters, missionaries crossed the great divide, moving from among the friends and advocates of slaves to join the ranks of those who would exploit the most vulnerable within slave societies. Missionaries' sexual misconduct, while infrequent (there were fewer than ten instances mentioned in the correspondence through 1835), was a force antithetical to the ideals of Methodism.⁸⁷

The Allure of Respectability

Methodism's place in the West Indies was precarious throughout the period in question. Even as the numbers in societies climbed to impressive heights, Methodism's status on the planter-dominated islands remained tenuous. Among the various forces

1832, but he was appointed as a Supernumerary to the Birmingham Circuit. See: William Moister, *Heralds of Salvation: Being Brief Memorial Sketches of Wesleyan Missionaries* (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1878), 119.

⁸⁶ John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, 5th ed. (London: J. Paramore, 1777), 25. Although the entire tract deals with the subject of Christian perfection, on this page Wesley offers a fairly direct description of the state of perfection.

⁸⁷ Of course, it is possible that I missed some reports, and there were, most likely, instances of misconduct that were not reported to London. Even with these caveats in place, it can be asserted that sexual misconduct was not commonplace within Methodist missionary circles.

that checked Methodism's growth, cultural obstacles represented a substantial impediment. On his first accidental visit to the West Indies in 1786,⁸⁸ Thomas Coke observed the potential difficulty that would attend Methodist efforts in the world the planters had created. In a passing mention of a visit with members of the planter class, Coke subtly signaled an issue that would complicate Methodist missionary efforts in the West Indies well into the nineteenth century. He noted that "Our friends who invite us to their houses, entertain us rather like princes than subjects: herein, perhaps, lies part of our danger in this country."⁸⁹ Coke's experiences in Antigua endowed him with the awareness that Methodists living and laboring in the West Indies would be exposed to the continual pull of the opulence that epitomized planter culture.

Methodist missionaries travelled to the Caribbean islands in order to minister among the enslaved population. Moreover, their allegiance to Methodism dictated, at least in theory, their opposition to slavery. Because Methodist missionaries were guided by motivations entirely foreign to the planters and bound to oppose slavery, their position at the margins of West Indian planter culture was inevitable.⁹⁰ Unfortunately for Methodist missionaries in the West Indies, Coke's initial suspicion was not unfounded: Methodism endured decades fraught with cultural tension as it sought to find a place in the West Indian islands.

⁸⁸ Coke had sailed for Halifax, Nova Scotia, but the vessel was battered by a series of storms. The ship's captain determined that the West Indies represented the only feasible destination. Coke and companions arrived in Antigua on Christmas morning of 1786. See: John Vickers, *Thomas Coke: Apostle of Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969), 150-152.

⁸⁹ Thomas Coke, *An Extract of the Rev. Dr. Coke's Journal, From Gravesend to Antigua, in a Letter to the Rev. J. Wesley* (London: J. Paramore, 1787), 11. Elsa Goveia employed this quotation in a similar fashion; see: Elsa V. Goveia, *Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands at the End of the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 300.

⁹⁰ Goveia, *Slave Society*, 300-301.

The glimpses offered in missionaries' letters suggest that they perceived the shame that many planters associated with Methodism. In 1803, John Taylor wrote to Thomas Coke to report on the work accomplished in Nevis. After mentioning that several hundred persons recently had been added to their numbers for a total of 1,200 in society, Taylor offered this telling observation: "there is not only an increase of Black and coloured [*sic*] people. But Glory be to God we have about a dozen Whites and I believe most of these are truly converted and not ashamed to be called Methodists and what is more extraordinary still four of these are Men."⁹¹ Taylor's enthusiasm revealed much. The resistance experienced among the white residents of Nevis occasioned his excitement for the dozen white adherents. Taylor was rather nonchalant as he mentioned the 1,200 slaves devoted to Methodism. Although Taylor perhaps took the slaves' adherence for granted, Methodism's success on Nevis was remarkable. In 1810, the entire population of Nevis was approximately 11,550 persons.⁹² Nearly one in ten persons on the small island was associated with Methodism. Within the ranks of the whites recalcitrant toward Methodism, men tended to be particularly averse to Methodism's overtures. This reality, of course, helps to explain Taylor's description of the "extraordinary" development of four white men associating with Methodism. By 1803, Methodism missionaries assumed that slaves would be attracted to their societies, and they were surprised and overjoyed when whites, especially white men, were willing to be identified as Methodists.

⁹¹ John Taylor to Thomas Coke, 8 March 1803, WMMS Archive, Box 111, f. 1, W.I.C..

⁹² B. W. Higman, *Slave Populations of the British Caribbean, 1807-1834* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 77. It should also be noted that slaves accounted for approximately ninety percent of Nevis's population in 1810.

Given that white Methodists risked the scorn of their peers because of their attachment to a Methodist society, it comes as no surprise that Methodist missionaries perceived planters' prejudice toward their movement. It must be remembered that anti-Methodist bias was not unique to the West Indies. Methodists in Britain were viewed askance by polite and respectable society, and Methodists were popularly depicted as "enthusiasts" capable of such extremes as political revolution.⁹³ Writing from Bermuda in 1808, Joshua Marsden expressed his belief that anti-Methodist prejudice was beginning to wane on the island. Nevertheless, Bermuda remained a hostile environment for Methodism. Marsden speculated, "Perhaps there is not an island in the Western Ocean where the people have been more prejudiced against the Methodists, than they have in this island." Marsden continued to explain that prejudice among ordinary Bermudians was to be expected when the Attorney General, in the course of a trial, claimed "Methodists were the cause of the rebellion in America, the revolution in France, and the disturbances in Ireland."⁹⁴ Just as Methodists faced suspicion and prejudice in England, Methodists in colonial contexts endured similar hostility.

Mindful of the prevalent suspicions in the broader culture, Methodists in the West Indies sought to gain respectability through the erection of chapels. As Methodism expanded in the West Indies, Methodist missionaries and their sending committee faced logistical decisions regarding the building of chapels. Throughout the period in question, tension between missionaries and officials in London is evident as they differed on the practice of chapel erection. Missionaries tended to see the lack of a chapel to be a

⁹³ David Hempton, *Methodism and Politics in British Society, 1750-1850* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984), 31-32.

⁹⁴ Joshua Marsden to Thomas Coke, 26 November 1808, WMMS Archive, Box 111, f. 14, W.I.C..

significant obstacle to their work, while members of the committee objected to the initial and ongoing expenses attached to the building and maintaining of a chapel. As will be demonstrated, both practical and cultural consideration contributed to the missionaries' building impulse.

Foregoing a chapel or subsisting with an inadequate facility meant that Methodists could be left without a cemetery for those attached to their movement. As Isaac Bradnock, a Methodist missionary in Barbados, argued in 1808, the lack of a "Burying Ground" inhibited his work with people of African descent, who devoted "very great attention ... to the dead." Bradnock proceeded to detail how great an obstacle this matter represented.

It has been said, not only in Barbadoes, but also in other Islands, 'If you go to the Methodist Chapel, you shall not be interred in the Church-yard:' And the fear of this prevents many from hearing the Word. This, undoubtedly, would be removed, had we a burying-place of our own. The want of this prevents from having any to baptize, or even many to hear.⁹⁵

Of course, critical readers might wonder if the lack of a cemetery could have been used by an ineffective missionary as an excuse for stagnation in a locale. In Bradnock's case, his own testimony in the same letter suggests he had exaggerated the severity of his plight. He went on to mention that he had preached to a "very large congregation last Sabbath." But lest his readers' carefully engendered sympathy dissipate, Bradnock styled the meeting place "our inconvenient Chapel."⁹⁶ Writing in 1815, John Shipman, a Methodist missionary who was recalled in 1825 for issuing a statement that was deemed

⁹⁵ Isaac Bradnock to Joseph Butterworth, 30 April 1804, WMMS Archive, Box 111, f. 2, W.I.C..

⁹⁶ Bradnock to Butterworth, 1804.

too favorable to slavery, expressed a similar sentiment.⁹⁷ Shipman observed, “I am inclined to think, that if the mission were placed on a more respectable footing, by having a better chapel, &c. and a burying ground, it would probably soon flourish, and the mission soon support itself.”⁹⁸ In Shipman’s estimation, a respectable chapel was essential if Methodism was to attract respectable persons.

This sentiment was not confined to Methodist missionaries. In 1818, Methodists in Bridgetown, Barbados, submitted to London a copy of their flier soliciting contributions for a new chapel in their town. According to the tract, a committee had been formed to consider erecting a new chapel, and at their first meeting, with unanimity, decided to build a new chapel. As the advertisement explained, they determined “that this old *wooden* building should be taken down; and a new one of *brick* erected, upon a plan and scale better adapted to the sacred purpose for which it is designed, and, as a *public Edifice*, more worthy of the respectable Metropolis, in which it is destined to stand.” The notion of respectability appeared again, and the Methodists appealed to the burgeoning civic pride of their fellow Barbadians. Their aspirations to occupy a prominent place within Bridgetown were not veiled in the least.

In the letter to the committee in London, which was appended to the flier, the Methodists explained their rationale for building a new chapel. In the minds of these Caribbean Methodists, the matter was simple. The Methodist mission in Bridgetown

⁹⁷ Mary Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries: The Disintegration of Jamaican Slave Society, 1787-1834*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 112-116. It should be noted that the WMMS secretaries’ decision to recall Shipman and to transfer a colleague (James Horne) for their statements that were sympathetic to the planters’ plight in an era of slave revolts reflects Methodists’ changing attitudes on slavery, and the prominence of the anti-slavery lobby in general in 1825.

⁹⁸ John Shipman to the Committee, 15 January 1815, WMMS Archive, Box 112, f. 36, W.I.C..

was being held back by the deteriorating condition of the chapel, and there was “no prospect of its succeeding unless we can rebuild [the chapel].”⁹⁹ Methodists’ desire for respectability was not confined to British colonial contexts. A Methodist missionary, John Raby, wrote from the Dutch-controlled island of St. Eustatius and described similar phenomena. Writing in 1815, Raby reported that “a number of respectable inhabitants are our constant hearers.” Raby went on to assert that if the chapel “were either larger or more convenient, [for] more of that description [respectable] would attend.”¹⁰⁰ In order for Methodism to gain ground, adequate facilities must first be erected. Methodism had developed a formulaic approach founded upon pragmatic reasoning. While Methodism had long employed means to reach people, this inflexible reasoning allowed little space for the work of the Holy Spirit or providential spontaneity. It seems that the inexorable pull toward respectability, felt acutely by Methodists in the West Indies, molded Methodism on these tropical islands.

Legal Impediments

Legal restrictions thwarted Methodism’s progress in the West Indies and represented a significant obstacle to the WMMS’s work in the region. Various tactics employed by missionaries aroused planters’ suspicions. Planters directly controlled nearly every aspect of their slaves’ existence, and the missionaries were attempting to create an organizational structure to which the planters’ reach could not fully extend. Missionaries sought to cultivate personal relationships with individual slaves, gather

⁹⁹ Moses Rayner, Francis Brown, et. al. to the Committee, 26 October 1818, WMMS Archive, Box 113, f. 73, W.I.C.. Rayner was a Methodist Missionary and president of the Society, but the other signees were laypersons.

¹⁰⁰ John Raby to the Committee, 26 January 1815, WMMS Archive, Box 112, f. 37-1, W.I.C..

enslaved Africans into corporate meetings, educate and promote literacy among slaves, and inform slaves that God's love extended to all of humanity. As these activities could be construed, at the very least, to provide the opportunity for missionaries to sow the seeds of unrest, planters sought to control the licensing of ministers and establish guidelines for ministers able to secure licenses. Moreover, planters preferred to explain away slave rebellions by blaming external forces such as missionaries' meddling rather than acknowledging the fact that slaves were driven to action by the brutal system designed by the plantation owners themselves.¹⁰¹ The planters' domination of power in the West Indies meant that they were able to see that their wishes found their way into legislation.

Methodist missionaries' letters frequently conveyed accounts of legal struggle, including attempts to secure licenses to preach and the repercussions endured when statutes were broken (or were merely rumored to have been broken). Legal means were employed by the planters to prohibit or restrict Evangelical missionaries, and licensing was one of the chief tools wielded by the colonial legislatures. In 1804, Joseph Butterworth, a Methodist laymen and leader in London, re-published a resolution of the Jamaican legislature that expressed its resolve to prohibit unlicensed ministers in the colony, regardless of directives received from London.¹⁰²

Although antagonism toward Methodism was manifest on various islands, no island outstripped Jamaica when it came to the attempted suppression of Evangelical missionaries. Jamaica was the largest and most important British possession in the

¹⁰¹ Michael Craton, *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 241.

¹⁰² "From the Royal Gazette, Kingston, Jamaica," London: J. Butterworth, 1805, in the WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 111, f. 2.

Caribbean. By 1763 Jamaica produced more sugar than all the other British West Indian islands combined. Jamaica also boasted an extensive Anglican presence within a parish system that had been implemented in the seventeenth century. The Anglican clergy in Jamaica, who were commonly slave owners, did not regard the island's slaves to be within their realm of ministerial responsibility, although they would perform mass baptisms when planters made the request.¹⁰³ In 1800 and 1807, the Jamaican Assembly (the island's legislature) passed bills that sought to prevent Nonconformists' preaching to slaves.¹⁰⁴ As was typically the case in West Indian islands, Jamaican planters controlled the island's legislature and courts, and these Jamaican institutions were used to advance the planters' agenda. Although Evangelical missionaries sought to distance themselves from the political aspect of the slavery question, Jamaican planters remained hostile to the missionary program because of their belief that the missionaries were either connected to, or at least sympathetic with, the antislavery party in Britain. Quite simply, Jamaican planters represented a minute minority on their island, which was overwhelmingly populated by African slaves. Any threat to the status quo could not be tolerated and neither were any threats to the island's stability.¹⁰⁵

In 1812, John Wiggins, a Methodist Missionary in Jamaica, recounted his imprisonment for "preaching the gospel of the Son of God." Wiggins had run afoul of the local authorities in Kingston for preaching without a license. Despite a constable's warning, Wiggins preached, as was his custom. He was summoned to the courthouse,

¹⁰³ Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, 1-11.

¹⁰⁴ Because of their incompatibility with English law, the Crown struck down both of these bills. Keith Hunte, "Protestantism and Slavery in the British Caribbean," in *Christianity and Caribbean: Essays on Church History*, ed. Armando Lampe (Kingston: The University of the West Indies Press, 2001), 104-105; Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, 8-19.

¹⁰⁵ Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, 1-30.

tried, and sentenced to a month's imprisonment.¹⁰⁶ Wiggins's argument, that he was licensed as a preacher in England, was dismissed curtly. According to the magistrate, the laws of England had no bearing upon affairs in Kingston.¹⁰⁷ Several years later, in 1815, Wiggins wrote to inquire if the Conference could demonstrate that the Toleration Act was applicable in Jamaica.¹⁰⁸

Writing in the same year, John Shipman relayed the opinion of Methodist sympathizers, who advised that Methodist missionaries should secure letters of recommendation from "His Majesty's Secretary of State, or from some person in high authority." Without these letters, Methodist missionaries "might as well never come to this colony, at least under present circumstances."¹⁰⁹ Shipman's registration for a Jamaican preaching license is extant in the WMMS archive, and the clerk's condescension remains palpable. The clerk recorded: "John Shipman styling himself to be a clergyman of the Westleyian [*sic*] sect of Dissenters."¹¹⁰ As the nineteenth century dawned, Jamaican authorities sought to arrest Methodism's growth through legal means.

Throughout our period of enquiry, opposition to Methodism persisted in Jamaica. In 1830, Thomas Pennock drafted a treatise entitled, "Charges Alleged against

¹⁰⁶ John Wiggins to the Committee, 15 December 1812, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 111, f. 20.

¹⁰⁷ G. G. Findlay and W. W. Holdsworth, *The History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society*, Vol. 2 (London: Epworth Press, 1921), 77.

¹⁰⁸ John Wiggins to the Committee, 23 April 1815, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 112, f. 38.

¹⁰⁹ John Shipman to John Edmondson, 16 September 1815, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 112, f. 41.

¹¹⁰ Undated Jamaican Legal Document, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 112, f. 41. The document's situation in the archive suggests it should be dated to 1815. It is possible, but unlikely, that this Jamaican clerk knew that John Wesley's grandfather had dropped the 't' from his name.

the Sectarians by Certain Senators in the Jamaica House of Assembly Examined and Refuted.” Pennock likened the missionaries in Jamaica to the Apostle Paul in the Roman Empire. Regardless of however faithful and pure a missionary he, like Paul, might “be the butt of the rage of the ungodly, who will hate and persecute him, and lay many grievous complaints to his charge.” After his opening volley, Pennock took a defensive posture. He countered claims that the missionaries were “sowing sedition,” “robbing the slaves,” and driving the slaves to madness.¹¹¹ In the decades prior to Emancipation, Methodist missionaries remained a harried cohort in the island of Jamaica.

Jamaican laws also affected ordinary Methodists. Methodism’s growth was dependent upon the missionaries’ ability to commission local preachers, who would, in turn, disseminate Methodist teaching throughout the island. As John Wiggins explained in 1817, it was impossible for a person of “brown or black” complexion to be licensed. This restriction precluded the possibility of a black or mixed-race person executing ministerial tasks, and Wiggins lamented that the law “silence[d] all our Local Preachers, Exhorters, and even Class Leaders.”¹¹² Planters sought to eliminate any potential for the organization of revolt, and a gathering of slaves led by a person of color would not be countenanced. If Methodism’s demise was the collateral damage of such legislation, the planters were not troubled. The consequences for Methodism on Jamaica were dire on both practical and missiological grounds. Quite simply, the five or six (depending on the year) Methodist missionaries could not minister effectively to Jamaica’s more than

¹¹¹ Thomas Pennock, “Charges Alleged against the Sectarians by Certain Senators in the Jamaica House of Assembly Examined and Refuted,” 1830, WMMS Archive, Special Series – West Indies Biographical, Box 588, f. 27. I have seen no evidence that Pennock’s tract was published. The manuscript in the archive is handwritten.

¹¹² John Wiggins to the Secretaries, 1 January 1817, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 113, f. 50.

300,000 slaves without the assistance of lay leaders and local preachers. From a missiological perspective, the legal necessity of white leadership inhibited Methodism's evolution from a religion of the missionaries to the faith of the people. Jamaican laws, designed to promote stability within a "slave society," imposed injurious restrictions upon Methodist missionaries and the slaves attracted to the movement.¹¹³

While the Jamaican context was perhaps the most hostile, legal barriers were erected in other parts of the region. In 1814, Thomas Talboys was appointed to Demerara as the Methodists made a second attempt at establishing a mission in British Guiana. Upon his application for a preaching license, the governor told Talboys that "he was not wanted," and he further informed the missionary that "the people were much prejudiced against Dissenters—especially the Methodists!"¹¹⁴ Talboys was granted a license, thanks in part to the Governor of St. Bartholomew's letter of recommendation, which he was able to produce. Talboys's work was thwarted by a variety of slanderous rumors, but the suggestion that he was preaching sedition to the slaves was the most damning charge. Talboys's defense took several forms. To counter the false reports in circulation, Talboys wrote to the editor of the *Guiana Chronicle* to counter the public claims made by one of his critics, J. H. Faber, Esq.. According to Faber, Talboys disliked seeing white persons in his congregation and insulted any such persons from the pulpit. He also accused Talboys of holding secret late-night meetings with slaves.

¹¹³ The term "slave society" refers to the culture created by planters, who constructed societies that reinforced slavery at every point. This concept was established in Elsa Goveia's seminal study, *Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands at the End of the Eighteenth Century*, which has been cited above. Goveia's definition must be kept in mind as the Methodist missionaries' position in the West Indies is considered. The societies in which they labored had been designed to promote and protect slavery, and this reality complicated Methodist designs in the region.

¹¹⁴ Quoted in Findlay & Holdsworth, *The History* Vol. 2, 276.

Talboys, who reproduced an excerpt of Faber's writing, flatly denied the accusations as "notoriously false."¹¹⁵ Faber's accusations reveal the manner in which the breach of a cultural taboo (anti-white bias) was coupled with a legal violation (night meetings) in attempt to damage a missionary's reputation. Talboys also gathered signed statements from those whose testimony could vindicate his character and ministry, and they provide evidence against Faber's falsehoods. Running to nineteen pages of text, these statements from persons who identified themselves as white or colored inhabitants of Demerara explained that Talboys was polite and never held secret meetings for slaves.¹¹⁶ Even before the slave revolt of 1823, the Demeraran context proved hostile to Methodism.

Legal difficulties persisted elsewhere in the Caribbean. In 1818, George Poole of Leeds relayed news he had received from Trinidad. In the wake of the slave revolt on Barbados, regulations were imposed upon ministers in Trinidad who did not belong to the Anglican or Roman Catholic churches.¹¹⁷ Abraham Whitehouse, a Methodist missionary in the island, was called before the council and was forced to post a £500 bond, which would be forfeited if he violated the statutes by administering the sacraments or preaching more than three times in a week.¹¹⁸ In the island of Grenada in

¹¹⁵ Thomas Talboys, Letter to the Editor, *The Guiana Chronicle, and Demerara Gazette*, 16 April 1817, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 113, f. 79.

¹¹⁶ Thomas Talboys, et. al., 12 April 1817, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 113, f. 78-79.

¹¹⁷ Spain formally ceded Trinidad to Britain in 1802, and there was a sizable French population on the island. While Trinidad was a British possession, a strong Roman Catholic interest remained in 1818. Because of the "unreliable" (i.e., Spanish and French) nature of the population, London broke with its normal West Indian policy and did not allow a local legislature on Trinidad. See: A. Meredith John, *The Plantation Slaves of Trinidad, 1783-1816: A Mathematical and Demographic Enquiry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 19.

¹¹⁸ George Poole to George Marsden, 28 July 1818, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 113, f. 70.

1826, John Mortier petitioned the House of Assembly regarding a recent piece of legislation, the “Consolidated Slave Act.” The act prohibited any person to baptize a slave other than the clergyman of the parish, and Mortier appealed to his three decades of ministry in the West Indies as he sought, in vain, to persuade the legislators.¹¹⁹ Throughout the Caribbean, legal authorities sought to restrict and, in some cases, eliminate the work of Methodist and other Evangelical missionaries.

Anti-Methodist Violence in the West Indies

Methodism’s early history in the West Indies was marred by occasional violent outbursts of varying degrees of severity. During the first decades of the nineteenth century, the fear of slave insurrections strengthened its grip upon West Indian societies, and this concern prompted white colonists to lash out at those who were believed to be sympathetic with the abolitionists. Although anti-Methodist and anti-missionary violence escalated following the major slave revolts of 1816, 1823, and 1831, Methodist missionaries reported violent persecution early in the century. Writing in 1805, Archibald Murdock mentioned that “an attempt was made on [his] life by a rude mob” while he was conducting a worship service. Murdock did not expand his account of the hostility in St. Kitts; he merely stated that he had been “wonderouslyd [*sic*] preserved by the good hand of God.”¹²⁰ Given Murdock’s nonchalant attitude (he devoted greater space to Methodism’s mounting debts in St. Kitts) regarding this brush with death, it seems as if he was not shocked by the mob’s behavior.

¹¹⁹ John Mortier “To The Honorable the Speaker and Members of the House of the Assembly of the Island of Grenada,” 28 August 1826, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 123, f. 285.

¹²⁰ Archibald Murdock to “Rev. & Dear Sir” (possibly Thomas Coke), 6 January 1805, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 111, f. 5.

As fears of slave rebellions were realized, Methodist missionaries' predicament worsened. In the spring of 1816 slaves in Barbados revolted in what came to be known as Bussa's Rebellion. A decline in the sugar market and the cessation of fresh supplies of slaves after 1807 translated into increased hardships for slaves, prompting the violent reaction.¹²¹ Of course, planters had no interest in explanations that implicated their own harsh treatment of slaves, and Methodists (and other missionaries) were subjected to greater scrutiny as a result of Bussa's Rebellion. Writing four months after the Barbadian revolt, Thomas Dakin, a Methodist missionary, wrote to report the demise of his colleague, Jeremiah Boothby. Although Boothby died of natural causes, Dakin described how anti-Methodist agitation caused the fatal illness. During the evening service on 4 July 1816, a local man by the name of Knighton entered the chapel and sought to disrupt Boothby's preaching. At the conclusion of the service, Boothby invited the agitator to discuss the interruption in private. Knighton's coarse rebuke, which was uttered in the presence of the congregation, scandalized all who were present. In the confused moments that followed, Boothby was locked out of doors in a profuse sweat, which was thought to have incited the pleurisy that claimed his life.¹²² Finally, it should be noted that Boothby was stationed on the island of Dominica, several islands removed from Barbados, the scene of the revolt. The dread of slave insurrection permeated the British West Indies and touched Methodist missionaries throughout the region.

Events in England were monitored closely in the British West Indies, and the fortunes of Methodist missionaries in the archipelago were shaped by events in the

¹²¹ Michael Craton, "Proto-Peasant Revolts? The Late Slave Rebellions in the British West Indies, 1816-1832," *Past and Present* 85 (November 1979), 101; Craton, *Testing the Chains*, 258-259.

¹²² Thomas Dakin to Thomas Wood, 17 July 1816, WMMS Archive, Box 113, f. 47, W.I.C..

metropole. They were accused of being agents of the African Institution or other agents of abolition. Along with these misleading accusations, actual events in London complicated missionary work in the West Indies.¹²³ Seeking to counter the anti-Methodist backlash that followed Bussa's Rebellion, Richard Watson, a leading figure in the domestic organization of Methodist missions, published an apologetic monograph in 1817.¹²⁴ Watson argued that Britons had failed to address the spiritual and temporal needs of these inhabitants in part of their empire, and he produced a number of quotations from Methodist missionaries illustrating the miserable condition of slaves in the British West Indies.¹²⁵ After establishing the need for missionaries' intervention, Watson attempted to dispel the slanderous accusations leveled at Methodist missionaries and offered a true description of the Methodist missionary work in the West Indies.

In the following year, John Shipman wrote to Watson, and his letter offers a glimpse of the missionary's predicament. Shipman, a missionary writing from Jamaica, complimented Watson on the book as a whole, but he proceeded to identify several problematic elements of the work. First, a reading of the introduction would lead many proprietors to believe that Watson was a "Wilberforce man." Shipman pointed out that Watson's commentary on the "civil condition" of the slaves was harmful to WMMS personnel in the West Indies. Their access to slaves was dependent upon the WMMS policy of attending to the slaves' spiritual needs exclusively, while avoiding any meddling with civil, legal, or political affairs. Shipman maintained a deferential tone, but he

¹²³ The assertion that Methodist missionaries were actually agents of the African Institution was inaccurate, but there were of course many Methodists who were supporting the work of abolition.

¹²⁴ Watson, *A Defence of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionaries in the West Indies* (cited above.)

¹²⁵ Watson, *A Defence*, 2-19.

observed that his conversations with gentlemen of various ranks and “having been examined in several of the [Jamaican] Courts” endowed him with the ability to determine what would benefit and harm the mission.¹²⁶

Shipman also reported complicating factors in the field. He described how “a number of vagrants” roamed from estate to estate committing crimes “under the cloak of religion.” The damage done by these malcontents to the “cause of religion” exceeded Shipman’s “power to describe.” Unfortunately, external threats were not all that troubled Shipman. He asserted that the letters of his colleagues, in particular William Gilgrass, contained material “of such an inflammatory nature that were they to be published” in Jamaica, “inconceivable harm” would be done. In Shipman’s estimation, candid descriptions of the slave system were too great a risk as they could potentially fall into the wrong hands. Throughout the decades preceding emancipation, WMMS missionaries were obliged to exercise caution in the planter-dominated world of the British West Indies.

In 1823 a slave insurrection again jolted colonial societies across the Caribbean. Like the revolt on Barbados in 1816, the attempted rebellion in Demerara was incited by an intensification of the demands placed on slaves in the colony.¹²⁷ Prior to the violence of 1823, anti-Methodist sentiments were palpable in Demerara. *The Essequibo and Demerary Royal Gazette* published an article entitled “West Indies Methodists,” which offered the following commentary on the arrival of Methodist missionaries in the colony: “Our colonies are now inundated with canting hypocritical tailors, carpenters, tinkers, cobblers, etc. who, too lazy to work for an honest livelihood in the Mother Country, and

¹²⁶ John Shipman to Richard Watson, 18 June 1818, WMMS Archive, Box 113, f. 64, W.I.C..

¹²⁷ Craton, *Testing the Chains*, 267.

charmed with the idea of living in ease and luxury abroad, found it very convenient to become converts to the new light and volunteer to teach the Gospel without the ability to spell one of its verses.”¹²⁸ The colonists’ condescension and suspicion were not reserved for Methodists alone—the newspapers in Demerara used “Methodist” as a pejorative bit of shorthand for all Evangelical missionaries, whom they mistrusted equally.¹²⁹ This indiscriminate habit would prove costly to Methodists, as the one missionary implicated in the Demerara revolt was an agent of the LMS.¹³⁰

Planters in Demerara believed their anti-Evangelical prejudices to be reinforced by similar actions in other West Indian colonies, and currents of influence flowed in both directions. Waves of anti-missionary sentiment emanated northward from Demerara. This reaction touched Methodism most directly on Barbados. In the aftermath of the revolt in Demerara, the Methodist chapel in Bridgetown was destroyed and the missionary, William Shrewsbury, fled the island in order to save his life. From the relative safety of St. Vincent, Shrewsbury reported the disastrous news to London and wrote pastoral letters to the Methodists remaining on Barbados. Shrewsbury adopted an apostolic tone as he encouraged the members of the Barbadian Methodist Society to “love another” and “[b]e patient toward all Men.”¹³¹ Shrewsbury’s tone and exhortations suggest that he anticipated rigorous trials were awaiting his former charges. Writing to his superiors in London, Shrewsbury began by acknowledging, “Methodism

¹²⁸ Quoted in Emilia Viotti da Costa, *Crown of Glory, Tears of Blood: The Demerara Slave Rebellion of 1823* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 13.

¹²⁹ Viotti da Costa, *Crown of Glory*, 11.

¹³⁰ John Smith, the LMS missionary, has been described as only an “unwitting accomplice” to the revolt even though his chapel was frequented by key figures in the insurrection. See: Craton, *Testing the Chains*, 281.

¹³¹ William Shrewsbury to “Dear and Respected Brethren” [Methodists in Barbados], 24 October 1823, WMMS Archive, Box 119, f. 198-199, W.I.C..

has never been popular in Barbados.” He went on to relate the particulars of the violence that claimed the chapel, and he mentioned that the mob had more than the tacit approval of “several influential characters” on the island.¹³²

On the following day, Shrewsbury wrote and included the reproduction of a tract that had been forwarded to him from Barbados. The tract, signed by “a despiser of your [Shrewsbury’s] doctrines,” warned that neither Shrewsbury nor any other WMMS missionary should return to the island. Should Shrewsbury make an appearance, the author speculated that “not your effigy, but yourself would suffer.” The warning continued: “therefore keep away; advise others likewise to keep away: there is no Chapel, nor ever will there be another, unless built for Preachers of the Established Church.”¹³³ Shrewsbury also reproduced the text of a handbill that celebrated the mob’s work. The handbill, which was subsequently sent to the WMMS headquarters in London, bore the zealous title, “Great and Signal Triumph over Methodism, and Total Destruction of the Chapel!!!” The tract’s author explained how the “unmerited and unprovoked attacks . . . repeatedly made upon the Community by the Methodist Missionaries, (otherwise known as Agents to the villainous African Society)” forced “a party of respectable Gentlemen” to close “the Methodist Concern altogether.” Not only were the missionaries agitators, they were connected directly with the abolitionist cause. In the final paragraph, an exhortation was issued to other residents of the West Indies. The handbill closed with this chilling call to arms: “It is hoped that this information will be circulated throughout the different Islands and Colonies, and all Persons who consider themselves true lovers

¹³² William Shrewsbury to the Secretaries, 29 October 1823, WMMS Archive, Box 119, f. 199, W.I.C..

¹³³ William Shrewsbury to the Secretaries, 30 October 1823, WMMS Archive, Box 119, f. 199, W.I.C..

of Religion will follow the laudable example of the BARBADIANS in putting an end to Methodism and Methodist Chapels throughout the West Indies.”¹³⁴ Just as the violence had spread to Barbados from Demerara, these Barbadians hoped that anti-Methodist and anti-Evangelical missionary sentiments would be acted upon across the Caribbean.

Missionaries' Cultural Assumptions and Transformations

Not only did a variety of context-specific problems plague Methodist missions in the West Indies, but aspects of the missionaries' own domestic cultural identity proved to be problematic as did their changing estimations of Africans' character. In any cross-cultural contact, the visitor to the culture brings preconceived notions about the persons he or she will encounter. British missionaries at the turn of the nineteenth century certainly embodied this principle. While they left their home culture behind, missionaries retained, at least initially, the cultural assumptions in which they had been immersed since infancy. Of course, British expectations about African slaves were most relevant for missionaries to the West Indies. Methodist missionaries, who were simultaneously Evangelicals and ordinary Englishmen, maintained a dual identity, and this reality explains their convoluted estimations of Africans. While Methodists were privy to Wesley's arguments about the universality of human nature, they were also members of a broader European community in which notions of race that reinforced the enslavement of black Africans were ascendant. Racial categories had been flexible in earlier eras, but by the late eighteenth century notions of race, including black Africans'

¹³⁴ “Great and Signal Triumph over Methodism, and Total Destruction of the Chapel!!!,” Bridgetown, Barbados, 21 October 1823, WMMS Archive, Box 120, f. 204, W.I.C.. The handbill's location within the archive suggests that it was sent to London in November 1823.

inferiority, were becoming normative in Europe.¹³⁵ At the same time, Methodist missionaries' endeavors were founded upon the principle that the black African slaves in the West Indies were human beings created in God's image and were in need of salvation. While Methodist missionaries were motivated by a belief predicated upon equality in the eyes of God, culturally informed opinions of race and civilization persisted as well.

Moreover, as will be demonstrated, Methodist missionaries' thinking reflected important departures from their organization's ideals on questions of Africans' moral deficiencies. Methodist missionary leaders in London, such as Richard Watson, argued that any estimation of the status of enslaved Africans must take into account the extreme hardships that they endured within the slave system. Methodist missionaries began to lose sight of this important caveat, and made condescending statements about the people among whom they ministered. As will be demonstrated from missionaries' correspondence, it seems plausible that living in slave societies, which were predicated upon the myth of blacks' intrinsic inferiority, influenced Methodist missionaries to an extent.

As they wrote to their superiors in London, Methodist missionaries exhibited low estimations of black Africans' moral condition. From the outset, it should be noted that missionaries' descriptions of the slaves' depravity, were likely, in some instances, shaped by a self-serving interest. It was to the missionary's advantage to emphasize the dearth of moral propriety prior to his ministry as this made for a more poignant contrast with conditions during his tenure among the slaves. John Taylor's letter of 1803 provides an

¹³⁵ Timothy Lockley, "Race and Slavery," in *The Oxford Handbook of Slavery in the Americas*, ed. Robert L. Paquette and Mark M. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 342.

example of this phenomenon. Reporting from the island of Nevis, Taylor told how “The Negroes, who used to spend that sacred day [the Sabbath] in dancing and drinking, which generally ended in fighting, now attend God’s house and learn to sing his praise.”¹³⁶ John Brownell, a Methodist missionary writing in the following year, was equally direct in his description of the improvement on Tortola: “I find Religion has made a great alteration for the better among the Blacks in this island.”¹³⁷ Methodist missionaries detailed the moral advances realized under their ministries, and these dramatic improvements were dependent upon the nadir of morality maintained by the slaves when left to their own devices.

Missionaries could be explicit as they described slaves, and tensions on this front emerged between the missionaries in the field and Methodists in the metropole. A Methodist missionary in the Bahamas, John Rutledge, writing in 1806, offered this observation: “Hear as you may of the Black People they are very selfwilled and of course not easy [*sic*] taught, yet we have many precious souls among who [*sic*] in the depth of humility fear God and work righteousness.”¹³⁸ Rutledge’s incongruous comments merit several observations. First, he seemingly challenged his readers’ second-hand knowledge of Africans, and Rutledge implied that his audience in England was naively ignorant of

¹³⁶ John Taylor to Thomas Coke, 7 May 1803, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 111, f. 1.

¹³⁷ John Brownell to Joseph Butterworth, 16 July 1804, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 111, f. 1.

¹³⁸ John Rutledge to Thomas Coke, 5 June 1806, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 111, f. 8. This letter has been edited, and it was edited in a fashion similar to the methods of the editors of the *Methodist Magazine*. However, I cannot find it in the *Magazine*. It should be noted that whoever edited this letter eliminated the entire paragraph from which this sentence was extracted.

Africans' true disposition.¹³⁹ Perhaps, by underlining "hear," Rutledge was underscoring the fact that their knowledge of Africans was acquired through intermediaries, while he lived and worked among the black inhabitants of the West Indies. At the same time, Rutledge appealed to his readers' shared prejudice when he wrote that "of course" Africans were not easily educated. In this instance, a Methodist missionary in the field sought to educate officials in London as to the authentic nature of Africans.

Another example of incongruity between London and the field can be found in Charles Hodgson's letter of 1808, which was edited for the *Methodist Magazine*. As Hodgson described an African dance, in which "every lust was indulged to excess," he went on to describe how the ultimate result often involved recourse to violence. Hodgson speculated that the dance "served as a pretence to gratify that Cruel Revenge which is the Natural disposition of all the Blacks."¹⁴⁰ The editors of the *Methodist Magazine*, who were happy to expunge liberally, went as far as to alter Hodgson's language at this point. They changed Hodgson's phrase to read: "...served as a pretence to gratify that Cruel Revenge which all the Negroes are by nature strongly inclined to."¹⁴¹ While they allowed the essence of Hodgson's observation to stand, the editors did eliminate Hodgson's inference that African people were intrinsically given to "Cruel Revenge." Methodists in England acknowledged that there were cultural and circumstantial differences that distinguished Africans from Europeans, but they could

¹³⁹ The letter was addressed to Coke, who had visited the West Indies but never resided in the region. Moreover, the letter would have been circulated among Coke's associates in London.

¹⁴⁰ Charles Hodgson to William Myles, 8 February 1808, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 111, f. 12.

¹⁴¹ "Extract of a Letter from Mr. Charles Hodgson to Mr. William Myles," *Methodist Magazine* 31 (July 1808), 332.

not countenance the notion that were essential differences within humanity's various manifestations. The correspondence of missionaries reveal strands of discontinuity that emerged between the missionaries' appraisals of black Africans and the opinion of Methodists in the metropole.

Methodist missionaries also described Africans in harsh terms when they were not seeking to contradict or explicitly shape opinion in London.¹⁴² Writing in 1808, Joshua Marsden wove a reminder of the Africans' corruption into his description of their attraction to the good news he offered: "The Blacks, though very wicked, are not only willing, but wish to hear the gospel."¹⁴³ As John Raby reported on his labor on the island of St. Kitts, he described how he was "pained at seeing so many children of different colour living in almost all kinds of vice." Raby went on to explain how he had, through instruction in the Christian religion, remedied this problematic situation.¹⁴⁴ While Raby could have emphasized the children's ignorance of Christianity, he chose to relate how these children partook in vice of nearly every form. Marsden and Raby's language was harsh and condemnatory, and it raises cultural and theological questions.

Methodists, along with all Evangelicals, held a grim view of humanity's condition apart from God. Conversion, which was the missionaries' primary objective, entailed a clear break with one's sinful pre-conversion existence—it was not understood as a mere decision to improve one's way of life. Moreover, Evangelicals believed that all persons,

¹⁴² Of course, the missionaries' reports helped to shape British Methodists' understanding of Africans and other peoples.

¹⁴³ Joshua Marsden to Thomas Coke, 26 November 1808, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 111, f. 14. Marsden's letter was reproduced in the *Methodist Magazine* 32 (June 1809), 263-266.

¹⁴⁴ John Raby to Joseph Benson, 16 October 1816, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 113, f. 148. Raby's letter too was reproduced in the *Methodist Magazine* 40 (March 1817), 237-238.

including English persons baptized as Anglicans and not practicing “real Christianity,” were in need of conversion to vital Christianity. As Allison Twells has argued, the foreign missionary impulse in England emerged alongside a growing concern for the heathen within England. While Evangelicals understood sin to be present uniformly in humanity, Twells acknowledged that, through the influence of Scottish Enlightenment’s notion of the histories of civilizations, not all cultures were considered to be on an equal footing.¹⁴⁵ Moreover, as has been demonstrated, discontinuities existed between missionaries’ opinions and actions in the field and the Evangelical ideals established in the metropole.

When considering the missionaries’ position, it must be remembered that they were immersed in slave societies that had been designed to promote and reinforce belief in the inferiority of the African. Furthermore, this mentality emanated from the most respectable quarters of West Indian society, from proprietors who were the missionaries’ social superiors. From a theological perspective, Methodist missionaries should have recognized that it was only the grace of God—not their identity as civilized Englishmen—that distinguished them from the unconverted African slaves they encountered. In reality, a variety of cultural assumptions shaped the missionaries’ thinking, which, ultimately, was an amalgamation of Evangelicalism, English culture, and planter ideology. Methodist missionaries’ severe appraisals of Africans were seemingly informed by the influence of the plantocracy. These missionaries were British Methodists who had volunteered for missionary service, at least in part, because they believed in humanity’s shared attributes, which included a common need of salvation in

¹⁴⁵ Alison Twells, *The Civilising Mission and the English Middle Class, 1792-1850: The “Heathen” at Home and Overseas* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 14.

Jesus Christ. As they lived in slave society, it seems that they began to ascribe to African distinctions based upon their racial identity, and every aspect of the slave society had been engineered to reinforce such racial divisions. To the extent that missionaries possessed unfavorable opinions that tinted their perception of Africans, those attitudes represented an obstacle to their work in the West Indies and a divergence from many metropolitan Methodists' opinions.

Methodist Missionaries in Slave Societies

While Methodists in the metropole sought to terminate the colonial institution of slavery, Methodist missionaries in those colonies adopted a variety of postures as they attempted to execute their work in a society designed to advance the planters' interests. In this section, the ways in which slavery complicated the Methodist missionary cause in the West Indies will be examined.

The WMMS secretaries in London stood as an intermediary party between English Methodism and missionaries in the field, and their instructions to missionaries in slave contexts provide the logical starting point as Methodism's complex relationship with slavery in the West Indies is considered. Throughout the early decades of Methodist missions, rules and advice for missionaries were approached through a piecemeal and ad hoc system. At a Missionary Committee meeting in 1817, those present chose to codify the various instructions and rules previously given to missionaries.¹⁴⁶ The first five rules dealt with the missionary's personal piety and identity as Methodist preachers.¹⁴⁷ The fifth rule reminded missionaries that they were "teachers

¹⁴⁶ "Instructions to Wesleyan Missionaries," in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, vol. 4, 381.

¹⁴⁷ "Instructions to Wesleyan Missionaries," 381.

of Religion; and that alone should be kept in view.” Missionaries were warned “against meddling with political parties, or secular disputes.”¹⁴⁸ These directives were issued to all agents of the WMMS working abroad, and they were followed by particular instructions for missionaries destined for the West Indies, “in stations of considerable delicacy.” Missionaries in the West Indies required “peculiar circumspection and prudence,” and they were to “enforce upon them [slaves] the experience and practice of [Christian] doctrines and duties, without intermingling doubtful controversies in your administrations.” The instructions became more pointed as they went on: “the Committee most strongly call to your recollection . . . that your only business is to promote the moral and religious improvement of the slaves to whom you have access, without in the least degree, in public or private, interfering with their civil condition.” Moving into a realm not dissimilar from accommodation, missionaries were given the following order. “On all persons in the state of slaves [*sic*], you are diligently and explicitly to enforce the same exhortations which the Apostles of our Lord administered to the slaves of ancient nations, when by their ministry embraced Christianity.”¹⁴⁹ Texts from Ephesians and Colossians, in which servants were exhorted to obedience to their masters, were then cited. While these instructions would have put planters’ minds at ease, it seems that in issuing these instructions the Methodist leaders were edging perilously close to contradicting their own stand against slavery.

Missionaries were unusual figures in the West Indies as they were among the only Europeans in the region who were not (at least in theory) connected to the slave

¹⁴⁸ “Instructions to Wesleyan Missionaries,” 381. For example, see: *Report of the Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary Society for the Year Ending December 1830* (London: WMMS, 1830), xi.

¹⁴⁹ *Report of the WMMS, 1830*, xi-xii.

system, and their novel position rendered them socially isolated in many instances. The vast majority of Europeans on the islands were either planters or persons dependent (or at least interdependent) upon the planters for their livelihood. Evangelical missionaries were distinct from the British islands' regular clergy in that the latter group received financial support for officiating at baptisms, marriages, and funerals and from the colonial legislatures.¹⁵⁰ The degree to which slavery permeated West Indian culture shaped Methodism profoundly, and the narrow issue of slave ownership touched Methodist missions in two scenarios. First, many prospective Anglo converts to Methodism owned slaves. Thus, Methodism's anti-slavery stance functioned as a deterrent for would-be European converts and as an impediment requiring resolution for those slave-owners who became Methodists. Second, almost all of the early Methodist missionaries dispatched to the Caribbean were bachelors, and many of them became romantically involved with female colonists. As these courtships evolved into marriages, several Methodist missionaries became owners of slaves jointly with their wives.¹⁵¹ These realities meant that the practice of manumission became part of Methodism in the West Indies, and records of manumissions found their way to London as proof that a Methodist's slaves had been liberated.

Manumission was infrequently practiced in the West Indies, and the rare instances typically involved the liberation of a planter's mistress or the offspring of such a union.¹⁵² Liberating slaves was not as simple as the slave owner opting to manumit his

¹⁵⁰ Goveia, *Slave Society*, 266.

¹⁵¹ In 1807 Thomas Coke prompted the Conference to pass a rule that prohibited Methodist missionaries from marrying women who owned slaves. See: Vickers, 171.

¹⁵² Frank Wesley Pitman, "The Treatment of the British West Indian Slaves in Law and Custom," *The Journal of Negro History* 11, no. 4 (October 1, 1926): 615.

or her slaves. On several islands the colonial legislatures sought to deter manumissions. The legislatures of Barbados and Grenada each assigned stiff fines for owners who chose to liberate slaves,¹⁵³ and the Antiguan legislature passed regulations that were intended to deter the practice.¹⁵⁴ On the whole, planters opposed manumission of slaves because it allowed slaves' aspirations to ascend toward freedom, and it created freedmen, who were a class of people who did not easily fit into slave societies.

The notes of manumission extant in the WMMS archive illuminate Methodists' tenuous position as they sought to join principled opposition to slavery with the perpetuation of the movement in slave societies. In 1812, Elizabeth Murray, a Methodist in St. Christopher's, opted to emancipate her slave Bess and the latter's two children, Katie and Robert. Murray cited Bess's "faithful service" and "divers [*sic*] other causes and considerations" as she explained the rationale behind her decision to manumit the three slaves.¹⁵⁵ Murray and the Methodist missionaries who witnessed the deed employed this veiled reference to the principles that obliged Murray to take this step.¹⁵⁶ An explanation beyond Bess's fidelity in her labors was necessary, but Murray and the missionaries did not have the option of blatantly stating that it was her attachment to Methodism that prompted her to emancipate the slaves. The next year, Sarah Walrond utilized identical phrasing as she explained her decision to manumit her slaves, Molly and Theodore. Walrond's note also named Thomas Blackburn and Samuel Woolley, both

¹⁵³ Pitman, "The Treatment," 615.

¹⁵⁴ David Barry Gaspar, *Bondmen & Rebels: A Study of Master-Slave Relations in Antigua, with Implications for Colonial British America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 160.

¹⁵⁵ Elizabeth Murray, Note of Manumission, 7 June 1812, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 111, f. 18-19.

¹⁵⁶ The Methodist missionaries Thomas Blackburn, Charles Hodgson, and William Driver signed the document as witnesses.

Methodist missionaries, as wielding her powers of attorney.¹⁵⁷ With the support of Methodist missionaries, several Methodist women took practical steps aligned with their Methodist convictions.

Methodist missionaries frequently found themselves in awkward positions as they navigated a course that accounted for the planters' demands and the slaves' needs, but the issue of missionaries holding slaves (usually through a spouse) was perhaps the most treacherous territory encountered. When news of the Conference's prohibition of slave ownership by Methodist missionaries reached the West Indies, several missionaries wrote in response to the ruling. Although several protests were submitted to London, Thomas Blackburn wrote to express his readiness to comply with the Conference's decision. He described his resolution "not to marry [his fiancé] until every slave she has is visited to that liberty which I have was [*sic*] thought is as much the Birth right of the oppressed African, as of the haughty Briton."¹⁵⁸ Sadly, Blackburn's eagerness to comply was uncommon, and several missionaries wrote to protest the ruling and rationalize their holding of slaves.

Francis Hallett was a native of the West Indies, but, like his English colleagues, came to own slaves through marriage. Writing from Antigua in 1808, Hallett opened with the assertion "that the Conference decided upon a case upon which they wanted

¹⁵⁷ Sarah Walrond, Note of Manumission, 10 May 1813, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 111, f. 23. Methodist missionaries William Gilgrass and Thomas Talboys witnessed the manumission.

¹⁵⁸ Thomas Blackburn to Thomas Coke, 19 November 1812, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 111, f. 20. It seems that despite Blackburn's noble intentions, his wife did not manumit her slaves prior to their marriage. The WMMS archive contains a note of manumission describing the liberation of Thomas and Sarah Blackburn's two slaves. It is unclear if these were the only slaves the couple owned, but it would have been quite conspicuous for them to liberate some of their slaves while retaining others. See: James Whitworth (witness), Note of Manumission, 21 May 1814, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 112, f. 30.

information.” Hallett was surprised at the outcome since “several Preachers were present who had been in the West Indies, & were familiar with the circumstances attending slavery.” Hallett’s attempt to put the secretaries’ minds at ease revealed his estimation of black Africans; he had “long thought that if the Negroes were all emancipated we should have better servants.” In keeping with the West Indian Methodist dichotomy between civil and religious affairs, he proceeded, “however acting on the capacity of a Minister of the Gospel, Prudence has always dictated silence upon the subject.” Hallett acknowledged that he and his wife owned six slaves, all of whom she had brought to the marriage. For a variety of reasons, including humanitarian concern for an older woman “incapable of laboring either for herself or me,” Hallett explained why manumission was neither wise nor feasible. Three of the young men were already set to be manumitted upon reaching the age of twenty seven, but one young family of three were “doom’d to perpetual servitude; unless the Conference will ransom them.” Hallett and his wife could not free them because of the claim of a former proprietor and because of colonial law. According to Hallett, freeing these slaves was not a viable option.¹⁵⁹

Edward Turner, a Methodist missionary in Antigua, wrote later in the spring of 1808, and he was of like mind with Hallett. Turner pointed out that a number of missionaries owned slaves when he arrived, and that the condition of his wife’s slaves was not altered upon his taking up joint ownership. For a decade, he had labored as a slave-owning missionary, but now the rules had been changed across the Atlantic and “nothing would do but emancipation.” As Hallett had done, Turner suggested that the

¹⁵⁹ Francis Hallett to William Jenkins, 19 February 1808, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 111, f. 12. Hallett also trotted out the argument that he would have to hire someone else’s slaves to work for him, which would perpetuate slavery too.

Conference was not attuned to the West Indian context. He expressed his concern as follows: “I fear, the Conference are rather too apt to decide hastily upon matters relative to the W. Indies, of which they can know but little; and that some of the persons who give them information are not men of the most profound judgment, and who have scarcely five ideas more now, than they had fifteen years ago.” Moreover, London’s insistence upon emancipation by missionaries would validate the planters’ belief that the Methodists were abolitionists: “We have all along been suspected of holding a compact with Mr. Wilberforce, for the purpose of putting an end to slavery, and now those suspicions will be confirmed, and I shall not be surprised, if all our Preachers are soon silenced, or banished from the West Indies.”¹⁶⁰ It is difficult to separate Turner’s various desires. It is clear he hoped to retain his slaves, but he may have genuinely harbored concern for the perpetuation of the mission in the West Indies. While it is impossible to discern Turner’s motives with precision, his protest helps to elucidate aspects of Methodism’s troubled relationship with slavery in the West Indies. Near the crux of the matter was the identity of that mission—was it an endeavor that would countenance or resist slavery as practiced in the West Indies?¹⁶¹

Beyond the narrow issue of their own slave ownership, Methodist missionaries faced a much greater obstacle: executing their work in slave societies. Of course, the

¹⁶⁰ Edward Turner to Thomas Coke, 21 May 1808, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 111, f. 13. There were also missionaries who wished to manumit their wives’ slaves but found doing so to be difficult. William Turton reported that his colleague John Rutledge and his wife wanted to free the slaves she had brought to the marriage, but her brother, who shared a claim upon the slaves, opposed the move. See: William Turton to the Committee, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 112, f. 30.

¹⁶¹ The issue of slave-owning missionaries remained alive in 1811. The WMMS committee recommended that Hallett, Turner, and Toland, who owned slaves, should be recalled. The Conference affirmed the Committee’s motion. See: First Minute Book, page 116, WMMS Archive, General Minutes, Box 545, f. 2.

slave system presented various practical impediments to Methodist growth and maintenance. The greatest practical difficulty attached to work in slave society was the issue of access. Methodist missionaries' ability to minister among slaves was dependent largely upon the planters' allowance. Access to plantations was granted infrequently, and this made the missionaries' work among the slaves all the more challenging.¹⁶² Writing from Demerara in 1818, John Mortier described the Methodist slaves' inability to participate in the Society's activities. Many of the enslaved members could not be seen even once a quarter; Mortier estimated that two hundred of them had not been to a class meeting in the last quarter. In spite of their isolation on their respective plantations, Mortier related that these would-be Methodists could not be expelled for their absence, as they "hear nothing against their conduct." Moreover, some of these pitiable Methodists sought to remain "in connexion" by sending for tickets.¹⁶³ Methodist slave leaders, who performed tasks such as these deliveries, could be victims of the planters' wrath. In an extreme case, a Jamaican Methodist slave leader who guided his charges to a Methodist service rather than to the Anglican church was shackled in irons and flogged severely.¹⁶⁴ The restrictions that planters imposed upon their slaves complicated Methodism's existence in the West Indies, and they placed English missionaries and Methodist slaves in vulnerable positions.

¹⁶² Robert Worthington Smith, "Slavery and Christianity in the British West Indies," *Church History* 19, no. 3 (1950): 174. According to Smith, the WMMS missionaries utilized Methodist slave leaders, who had a greater degree of mobility, to act as liaisons between the missionaries and the slaves confined to plantations.

¹⁶³ John Mortier to George Marsden, 31 March 1818, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 113, f. 64.

¹⁶⁴ Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, 80.

While practical problems frustrated missionaries and slaves alike, missionaries' willingness to accommodate West Indian slavery jeopardized the very mission they sought to perpetuate. First, it must be acknowledged that the missionaries found themselves ensnared in a context fraught with ethical pitfalls with regard to the slave system. At the crux of their predicament was the simple reality that the planters dominated West Indian societies, and if a missionary was perceived to be at cross-purposes with the planters, the consequences, such as the destruction of the Methodist chapel in Barbados, could be far-reaching. Words or actions deemed threatening to slave society could bring about the cessation of a missionary's endeavors and imperil the work of the entire missionary society. Thus, missionaries were required to strike a delicate balance. They were obliged to conform to the rules and norms of slave societies even as they ministered among slaves and represented English Methodism.¹⁶⁵ In their persons, Methodist missionaries were forced to reconcile the irreconcilable, and many were not equal to this tall order.

Throughout the period in question Methodists in the West Indies attempted to portray Methodism as compatible with slavery. Although Thomas Coke was opposed to slavery, in a published tract he underscored Methodism's ability to make slaves more diligent laborers. According to Coke, planters were "constrained to acknowledge, that the negroes who are united to *us* and to the *Moravians*, are the most laborious and faithful servants they have." Far from being problematic, Methodism's compatibility with slavery meant that God had "laid open the whole country to our labours among the blacks; and we seem to want nothing but preachers, under the divine influence, to gather

¹⁶⁵ Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, 26. Turner points out that all missionaries, not Methodists alone, felt the pull of slave society.

in many thousands of them.” Coke went on to reiterate how the spiritual benefit it provided allowed Methodism to be reconciled with the institution of slavery: “Our country is enriched by the labours of the poor slaves who cultivate the soil, and surely the least compensation we can make them, is to endeavor to enrich them in return with the riches of grace.”¹⁶⁶ Thomas Coke, the father of Methodist missions, established a precedent allowing Methodist missionaries to justify Methodism’s accommodation of slavery with the spiritual benefit imparted to the slaves.

Following Coke’s seminal example, Methodist missionaries affirmed Methodism’s ability to co-exist with slavery. Instances of Methodist missionaries seeking to assert Methodism’s compatibility with slavery are difficult to come by between 1785 and 1815.¹⁶⁷ The prominent slave rebellions in and following 1816 prompted Methodist missionaries to emphasize the innocuous nature of their work. Two decades after Coke’s tract of 1786, John Raby reported from the Dutch island of St. Eustatius. He averred that “every proprietor will allow, that those slaves who attend our ministry, and into whose minds religious principles have been infused, are more punctual in the discharge of their duty, and more worthy of confidence, than those who are strangers to the things which make for their peace.”¹⁶⁸ Raby’s declaration was unique in that it was proactive rather than reactive—he offered it in a time of relative calm in the West Indies.

¹⁶⁶ Thomas Coke, *An address to the pious and benevolent, proposing an annual subscription for the support of missionaries in the Highlands and adjacent islands of Scotland, the isles of Jersey, Guernsey, and . . .* (London, 1786), 8.

¹⁶⁷ In part, this can be explained by the fact that the WMMS archive’s first correspondence is from the early nineteenth century.

¹⁶⁸ John Raby to the Committee, 26 January 1815, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 112, f. 37-1. Interestingly, Raby’s letter was published in the *Methodist Magazine* (issue 38, May 1815, p. 398), and this passage was not struck out by the editors. Careful English readers with anti-slavery sentiments might have twigged the tension within West Indian Methodism.

Writing in the wake of Bussa's Rebellion (1816),¹⁶⁹ Samuel Woolley explained how Methodism in Antigua could function as a safeguard against revolts such as the recent rebellion on Barbados. He challenged those who thought "religion seditious, and the implantation of religious principles in the negro mind, dangerous, and calculated to bring about revolt." Woolley then shared an anecdote about a planter who embodied this unenlightened position. The planter assembled his slaves to inform (and presumably warn) his slaves about events on Barbados. Because he assumed religion to be averse to slavery, the proprietor was surprised when his slaves mentioned religion as they explained why they would not duplicate the Barbadian slaves' actions. Woolley then boasted, "These people are members of our society."¹⁷⁰ Upon inquiring among Methodist slaves, he was "proud in being able to state" that he "found in them no disposition even to murmur at their situation, much less to rebel."¹⁷¹ Woolley's credulity at this point is striking—it seems unlikely that any slaves with ideas of revolt would have shared them with Woolley, who clearly affirmed the existing order.

In another anecdote similar to his first, Woolley told how "One man of whom I inquired, (a well-informed man, a leader) took up a book and said, 'Sir, with this book in

¹⁶⁹ This was a slave revolt in Barbados in April 1816.

¹⁷⁰ Samuel Woolley to William Buckley, 3 May 1816, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 113, f. 45. The editors of the *Methodist Magazine*, who reproduced ninety-percent of this letter in the magazine, expunged the two sentences in which Woolley reproduced this anecdote. See: "From Mr. Woolley, to Mr. Buckley," *Methodist Magazine* 39 (October 1816), 792-793. The editors' method of editing initially involved striking through portions of the text that would not be published in the magazine. Unfortunately, their heavy line obscured some of Woolley's text, but his purpose in demonstrating Methodist slaves' docility is discernible.

¹⁷¹ Woolley to Buckley, May 1816.

your hand, you will do more to prevent rebellion, than all the king's men."¹⁷²

Immediately, Woolley broke into a doxological exaltation: "Hail! thou Divine Religion, thou art the bulwark of our colony, the guardian of our peace, the author of our tranquility, and the grand cause of our safety. May thy bright beams increasingly enlighten the African's mind! and under thy cheering influence, may he be happy in time, and in eternity!"¹⁷³ Woolley plainly sought to declare that Methodism undergirded Antigua's slave society. When he asserted that religion was the "bulwark of our colony," Woolley was, of course, referring to a colony that was centered upon and sustained by slavery. Religion's "bright beams" would continue to enlighten Africans' minds, but, presumably, those same Africans would remain enslaved in Woolley's vision. And religion would play a central role ensuring Antigua's ongoing peace and stability as a slave society. While Woolley employed some of the most straightforward descriptions, his position was not aberrational.

Not only was Woolley's attitude not anomalous, but the number of missionaries expressing similar sentiments rose in the decades prior to emancipation, during which there were three significant slave revolts. Reporting from Bermuda in 1816, William Wilson claimed that he had "ever found that those negroes who have attended to religious instruction have been better slaves."¹⁷⁴ Wilson's candid observation conveyed

¹⁷² This anecdote was reproduced in the magazine, perhaps as a signal to the representatives of the West India interest. While we cannot determine with accuracy why the editors might have included this part of Woolley's letter, we can be certain it was not accidental. Rarely were entire letters reproduced in the magazine, and generally the letters were substantially reduced by the editors' alterations. This particular letter was edited before publication in the magazine.

¹⁷³ Woolley to Buckley, May 1816.

¹⁷⁴ William Wilson to George Marsden, 26 December 1816, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 113, f., 50.

what his colleagues insinuated and suggested: Methodism made slaves more efficient slaves.

In the wake of the 1823 slave revolt in Demerara, John Davies, a LMS missionary, wrote to his WMMS colleague, John Mortier. Davies thanked Mortier for his assistance during the travails of the insurrections, and he noted that not a single person attached to his own or Mortier's chapel had been "found among the infatuated insurgents on the late melancholy occasion." In language similar to that of his WMMS peers, Davies described how those in the anti-missionary faction were utterly mistaken: "Our enemies themselves, if they knew what instructions we give the negroes, would, in place of threatening our lives & property with destruction, cordially cooperate with us, & build us chapels in every district, & would with our excellent Governor & Government here, assist us to extend our labors as widely as possible."¹⁷⁵ Of course Davies's remarks are not representative of Methodism or Methodist missionaries in the West Indies, but they are telling in at least two respects. Davies's letter, although it lumped the work of the LMS and WMMS together, does reveal a non-Methodist Evangelical's perception of Methodism's interaction with slavery. From Davies's perspective, Methodism was compatible with and even beneficial to the planters' designs. Secondly, while Mortier was the recipient of the letter, his decision to forward the letter to London suggests that its contents met with his approval. Davies' affirmation of religion's enhancement of the slave system received Mortier's tacit approval when the latter chose to send it on to his superiors in London.

¹⁷⁵ John Davies to John Mortier (forwarded to the WMMS in London), 11 November 1823, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 119, f. 199.

In 1823, William Catts sent a letter to London that was appended to a copy of a bill recently passed in the legislature of Dominica. The piece of legislation, “An Act for Promoting Religious Instruction among the Slaves of Dominica,” was, ostensibly, a boon for Methodism on the island and the WMMS more generally. As the Act’s preamble explained, the legislature, in 1818, had allowed for salaries to be paid to Anglican curates and Moravian missionaries. Since “no such Person” could be found, “And Whereas experience has shewn the advantage derived from the Instruction granted to the lower classes of the Community and more particularly to the Slave Population by the Wesleyan Missionaries,” the legislature moved to pay £120 per annum to Methodist missionaries engaged in such work.¹⁷⁶ As the Act eased the pecuniary strain on the perpetually cash-strapped WMMS and to the extent it signaled Methodism’s increasing respectability, the news, upon arrival in London, was almost certainly welcomed. And, Methodism was ascending to the same plane as the established Church and the Moravians, who were the first missionaries to arrive on the island. If practical benefits and the climb toward respectability are ignored, the legislation is more sobering. The planters had come to recognize that Methodist missionaries advanced the formers’ own agenda by reinforcing the slave system, and Dominica’s colonial government was willing to pay WMMS men to do so.¹⁷⁷ Even as missionaries were under suspicion for inciting slave revolts in Demerara, Methodist missionaries were being welcomed into the colonial fold.

¹⁷⁶ “An Act for Promoting Religious Instruction among the Slaves of Dominica,” July 1823, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 119, f. 194.

¹⁷⁷ While it was unusual for Methodist missionaries to receive a salary from one of the colonial governments, missionaries did receive stipends from individual estates. For example, John Taylor’s balance sheet submitted from Nevis in 1802 reported a “Salary from Nisbets Estate” of £9. See: “Monies rec’d and expended by John Taylor of Nevis, 1802-1803,” WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 111, f. 1.

Methodist missionaries were to join the colonial system and, either unwittingly or knowingly, could be wielded as tools in the planters' hands.

Catts's letter, to which the Act was appended, helps to complete our understanding of Methodism's relationship with the colonial government in Dominica. Oddly, Catts did not mention the Act, which he was sending to the secretaries in London. He did, however, have other important news to relate. The Earl of Huntingdon (Hans Francis Hastings), who was Governor of Dominica, had paid Catts a visit and expressed his intent to rent a pew in the Methodist chapel. The governor also indicated that his family would begin to attend Catts's chapel. Catts reassured his superiors in London: "We will therefore fix up one [pew] in a proper manner for the reception of his Lordship."¹⁷⁸ The governor of a British colony had chosen to attend a Methodist chapel, which was, perhaps, pleasing for Catts and the WMMS leaders in London, even as it was an affirmation of Methodism's compatibility with the colonial government on the island of Dominica. Quite simply, a governor of a slave colony could not associate with a religious body that was opposed to slavery. The Earl of Huntingdon's relationship with Methodism can help to explain the legislation that was passed, and, more narrowly, it also sheds light upon the first action taken under the newly minted Act. The final clause of the handbill stated: "His Excellency the Governor has pleased to nominate and appoint the Reverend James Catts, Wesleyan Missionary, under and by virtue of an Act of this Island, to propagate the Christian Religion and Instruction among the Slave Population." The Governor had assented to the Act on 14

¹⁷⁸ James Catts to the Secretaries, 7 August 1823, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 119, f. 94.

July 1823, and he appointed Catts two days later.¹⁷⁹ It seems that Catts had begun to enjoy the patronage of the most prominent attendee of his chapel. James Catts and Methodism on Dominica reveal how Methodism in the West Indies, when perceived to be compatible with slavery, could be incorporated into the edifices supporting a slave society.

If English Methodists serving as missionaries succumbed to the pull of slave society, it is not surprising that ordinary white Methodists in the West Indies made similar compromises. Of course, there were numerous Methodists, especially in the decades prior to the 1820s, who held slaves. As Edward Turner had pointed out in 1808, if missionaries were forced to free their slaves, then other Methodists would have to follow suit. In Turner's estimation, such a development would be a conspicuous disaster for Methodism in the West Indies.¹⁸⁰ Beyond the rudimentary issue of slave ownership, an advertisement published in Bridgetown, Barbados revealed the troubled relationship that existed between white Methodism and slavery in the West Indies. In an attempt to solicit contributions to the erection of a new chapel, a Methodist committee published a handbill for circulation. The advertisement detailed the need for a new chapel and appealed to the "Barbadian liberality and readiness to patronise Religion in every shape." The Methodists welcomed "Contributions in Cash, Building Materials of any description, or Negro Labour."¹⁸¹ Just as they desired donations of timber, the Methodist Society in

¹⁷⁹ "An Act for Promoting Religious Instruction among the Slaves of Dominica," July 1823. The act was included in Catts's letter of 7 August.

¹⁸⁰ Edward Turner to Thomas Coke, 21 May 1808.

¹⁸¹ "A New Wesleyan Chapel in *Bridge-Town*," October 1818, WMMS Archive, W.I.C., Box 113, f. 73. In an intriguing twist of fate, the Methodist chapel in Bridgetown, which probably had been built, at least in part, with slave labor, was destroyed by a pro-slavery, anti-Methodist mob five years later. This event was discussed above in the anti-Methodist violence section.

Bridgetown hoped that slave-owners would commit their slaves' physical efforts to the cause. Of course, cash donations received from planters would have been tainted by slavery, but the direct appeal for slave labour demonstrates how Methodism in the West Indies had reconciled itself with slave society.

In 1818, the WMMS secretaries conducted a survey that serves as a final example of the bonds that had begun to couple Methodism with British West Indian slavery. As the planters intensified the pressure upon Methodist and other Evangelical mission societies, the WMMS sought to gather evidence from the West Indies that would vindicate its missionaries on a variety of charges, including sedition. To realize this objective, the secretaries circulated a questionnaire to gentlemen throughout the Leeward and Windward Islands and beyond, including residents of Anguilla, Antigua, the Bahamas, St. Christopher's, Grenada, Jamaica, Nevis, Tortola, and St. Vincent's.

The questions posed reveal the secretaries' aims and betray their assumptions about the work underway under their auspices in the West Indies. In the cover letter that preceded the series of question, the secretaries explained that they hoped to put to rest falsehoods circulating about Methodist missionaries in the West Indies. Accusations, such as the charge of sedition, were founded upon ignorance or willful distortions of the truth. The secretaries hoped that the testimony of respectable persons from the West Indies would prove useful in the wars of legislation and propaganda in which the WMMS found itself engaged.

Six questions were posed, and each was designed to lead the respondent to affirm the compatibility of the Methodist missionary enterprise with West Indian slave society. Question one was direct: "Have any of the Wesleyan Missionaries to your knowledge preached seditious or immoral doctrine?" The five subsequent questions

dealt with the consequences of Methodist missionaries' labors among slaves. Offering a leading question, the secretaries inquired, "Have the Slaves become more diligent and faithful in consequence of [Methodist] instruction?" The final question solicited any anecdotes that could be offered that were "illustrative of the loyalty and good conduct of religious slaves."¹⁸² It is clear that the secretaries considered their mission's work to be compatible with West Indian chattel slavery, and they sought proofs of this conviction from the region.

The secretaries issued the questions to sympathetic parties, and they received more than forty responses. The secretaries secured the evidence for which they hoped—prominent figures from the West Indies validated the claim that there was symbiosis between Methodism and slavery. In response to a question about the involvement of religious slaves in revolts, David Grieve, an Antiguan medical doctor, asserted, "No! this is perhaps one of the strongest proofs of the blessed effects of religion on the negro mind."¹⁸³ Richard Ottley, the Chief Justice of Grenada, responded and described how "slaves have become more faithful to their masters, in consequence of [Methodist] instruction."¹⁸⁴ Josias Jackson, a proprietor on St. Vincent's, relayed his belief that his slaves' increased loyalty and good conduct were "the result of the frequent visits the missionaries do me the favour of paying to my estates." Jackson went on to describe the accommodations he had created to facilitate the missionaries' visits to his

¹⁸² Joseph Butterworth and Thomas Thompson, *Copy of a Circular Letter sent to the West Indies, December 1817 – January 1818*, WMMS Archive, Special Series, West Indies Biographical, Box 588, f. 44.

¹⁸³ David Grieve to Joseph Butterworth, 31 March 1818, WMMS Archive, Special Series, West Indies Biographical, Box 588, f. 45.

¹⁸⁴ Richard Ottley to Joseph Butterworth and Thomas Thompson, WMMS Archive, Special Series, West Indies Biographical, Box 588, f. 46.

plantations.¹⁸⁵ The testimonies gathered successfully vindicated Methodism in the short term, but these words linger as a perpetual witness to the degree to which Methodism accommodated itself to slave societies in the British West Indies.

Conclusion

While the focus of this chapter has remained upon the obstacles facing Methodist missionaries, before recapitulating the evidence already presented a mention of what these missionaries did accomplish is in order. The WMMS annual report for 1835 documented the expansive growth of Methodism throughout the Caribbean. By the 1830s, Methodism in the West Indies was large enough to feature four districts: the Antigua District (basically, the Leeward Islands), the St. Vincent's District (basically, the Windward Islands), the Jamaica District, and the Bahama[s] District. The numbers reported belonging to Methodist societies in the West Indies attested to Methodism's growth in the preceding decades. The Antigua and Jamaican districts were the largest, with 10,885 and 12,835 respectively attached to societies in the two districts. The total number of persons in Methodist societies in the West Indies was 31,676.¹⁸⁶ These staggering figures, which were by far the strongest within the WMMS's various missions, most likely were a point of pride for Methodists in Britain and seemingly vindicated the bold claims made at Leeds in 1813.¹⁸⁷ However, any notion of "success" in the West

¹⁸⁵ Josias Jackson to Joseph Butterworth, 12 March 1818, WMMS Archive, Special Series, West Indies Biographical, Box 588, f. 47.

¹⁸⁶ *WMMS Annual Report, 1835*, xx-xxii. The West Indies' central place within Methodist foreign missions can be appreciated when the numbers for the region are compared to the whole of the WMMS's program.

¹⁸⁷ *WMMS Annual Report, 1835*, xxii. There were 48,301 persons in all of the WMMS missions, and thus the West Indies accounted for approximately sixty-five percent of Methodists attached to missions world-wide.

Indies must take into account the accommodations to slave society that were made by Methodist missionaries, and these elements must be now considered.

Methodism's expansion into the West Indies was initiated by a planter who was converted after reading John Wesley's writings, and throughout the early nineteenth century Methodists in the West Indies strove to strike an uneasy balance with the institution of slavery.¹⁸⁸ Living in slave societies represented Methodism's greatest challenge, but other factors shaped the work of Methodist missionaries in the West Indies.

A variety of practical problems inhibited Methodism's growth and altered the Methodist missiological vision. Missionaries' illnesses and deaths created tension between missionaries and London, and the aftermath of missionaries' deaths often entailed the resolution of various practical problems, including property disputes. Missionaries also felt alienated from their sending society, and the distance and limitations of travel and communication limited the secretaries' administrative reach. Although relations between missionaries were generally good in the West Indies, there were instances of conflict between Methodist missionaries and their peers belonging to other denominations. These cases represent a point of incongruity with the cooperation exhibited in the metropole, or at least clashed with the friendly tone employed in missionary publications as the work of other societies was described.

There were a variety of problems that missionaries introduced and could have been avoided had Methodists missionaries lived by the code of conduct they purported to maintain. The social dynamics in the West Indies placed Methodist missionaries in

¹⁸⁸ This was Nathaniel Gilbert of Antigua, who began preaching to his slaves in the 1760s. See: Robert Glen, "A Tangled Web: the Gilberts of Cornwall and the Gilberts of Antigua," *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 53 (October 2002): 216-25.

situations in which their status as white men gave them opportunity to exploit women of color who were particularly vulnerable in slave societies. Missionaries' sexual misconduct, though infrequent, resulted in great harm to the Methodist cause. Each instance of sexual impropriety tarnished Methodist missionaries' message of holiness and emphasis upon virtuous Christian living. While the consequences are not quantifiable, there can be no doubt that as slaves and free blacks (not to mention white Methodists) of both genders learned of these encounters, the Methodist mission lost potential society members.

Intrinsic aspects of the West Indian slave societies hindered and altered Methodist missions in the West Indies. This was true of all colonial contexts, but the West Indies was unique in the degree to which British and other European colonists opposed the missionary enterprise. The resistance to Methodist and other Evangelical missionaries was manifest in official channels such as legislative restrictions, but it also took the form of mob violence. Legal impediments and the unlawful violence represented significant restrictions to Methodist missionaries' ability to minister to the members of their societies, but the practical results, such as not being able to preach for want of a license, were only one aspect of the impact upon Methodist missionaries. Methodist personnel residing in slave societies faced a more insidious danger: the formidable resistance mounted by the planters seemingly contributed to the decline in Methodist missionaries' resistance to slavery and their modified perceptions of Africans' attributes.

Methodist missionaries' coexistence with and accommodations to West Indian slave societies represent the greatest transformative factors in this episode of Methodist missionary history. Although Methodists in England boasted a record of abolitionist

activity, Methodist missionaries living in slave societies often succumbed to the powers of these cultures designed by the planters. Methodist missionaries were thrust into impossibly difficult circumstances, and there were many instances in which unpopular principles were maintained in the face of strong compulsion. However, many Methodist missionaries, motivated by a variety of impulses, sought to demonstrate how their activities were compatible with slavery and could even bolster slave societies. This line of argument, employed by Methodist missionaries over a period of decades, reveals how the West Indian context altered the Methodist mission to the point that it could be, in certain respects, antithetical to the position of prominent Methodists in England.

CHAPTER THREE

The Church Missionary Society in the Leeward Islands

Introduction

The CMS mission in the Leeward Islands was unusual in nature, short in duration, and limited in scope, but it provides a fascinating window into the dynamics of the relationship between religion and colonialism in the early nineteenth century. As this aspect of the CMS's history has received little attention, the chapter will open with a description of the CMS mission in Antigua and its abortive efforts in other parts of the Leeward Islands. The singular force behind the mission, William Dawes, features prominently in this account. Through the personal connections of William and (his wife) Grace Dawes, the CMS developed partnerships with Antiguan Methodists, who were employed as teachers and even superintendents of CMS schools in Antigua. Following an examination of the relationship between the CMS and Antiguan Methodists, the broader Anglican presence in the West Indies will be analyzed. Particular attention will be given to the SPG's activities in Barbados, which included the operation of a slave plantation, and this will provide important aspects of the context in which the CMS found itself. In the chapter's penultimate section, a brief survey of the CMS's own dealings with the institution of slavery will be offered. Finally, the arrival of Bishop Coleridge and his impact on the CMS program in Antigua will be treated.

An Overview of the CMS Mission in the Leeward Islands

In 1813, with the launch of an unconventional mission to the West Indies, the secretaries of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East allowed their gaze

to shift to the west.¹ The “mission” to the Leeward Islands was unique in a variety of ways; perhaps most notable was the fact that it was a “mission” that was operated without the appointment of missionaries from Britain.² From its inception until its gradual demise in the late 1820s, lay leadership, rather than that of ordained missionaries, was the norm for the CMS mission in the Leeward Islands. Even more unusual was the fact that a single person guided the mission for its entire lifespan. William Dawes, who initiated and led the CMS work in the Leeward Islands, was at the center of the first CMS activity in the British West Indies, and it is with him that an account of this mission must begin.

William Dawes (1762-1836), who was a former Royal Marine, astronomer for the first fleet to Australia, and three times the governor of Sierra Leone, was an English Evangelical who had been in contact with prominent Evangelicals for several years prior to his departure for Antigua in 1813.³ Dawes’s Evangelical identity and his relationships with prominent Evangelicals such as William Wilberforce and Zachary Macaulay helped

¹ The members of the Eclectic Society, who formed what would eventually become the Church Missionary Society, initially styled it the Society for Missions to Africa and the East. As was discussed in the first chapter, the Evangelical Anglicans chose this name to signal their intent to avoid SPG territories.

² The CMS began work in Antigua in 1813, and expanded this work slowly to other islands, including Barbados, Dominica, and St. Vincent’s. Work in Jamaica began only in the middle of the 1820s, a decade before the close of this period of inquiry. Moreover, the CMS’s entrance into Jamaica coincided with the arrival of the first bishop of Jamaica, and the approach there varied dramatically from the methods employed by Dawes and his associates in the Leeward Islands. The work in the Leeward Islands, which was encapsulated within our period of inquiry, is the focus of this chapter. The CMS program in Jamaica will be referenced occasionally when it yields evidence not available in the Leeward Islands.

³ According to Dawes’s *ODNB* entry, he was a “strong Evangelical” and a “member of the Clapham Sect.” Derek Howse, “Dawes, William (1762–1836),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, Oxford: Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/50961> (accessed 24 January 2011.)

to secure his three appointments as governor in Sierra Leone.⁴ While back in England, Dawes's Evangelical identity and experiences abroad made him a natural fit within the CMS and a valuable aid to the secretaries of the CMS, for whom he worked between 1804 and 1808. In 1806, during the CMS's early improvisational years, Dawes briefly took charge of the German Lutheran candidates' practical (i.e., not divinity) education.⁵ Dawes's connections to central figures in the CMS were sustained throughout his time in England, and it was a change in his personal circumstances that prompted his departure for Antigua and initiated the CMS work in the Leeward Islands.

William and Grace Dawes, along with Grace's sister, Martha Gilbert, moved to Antigua in 1813. The Dawes family moved to Antigua so that William could work for the Gilbert family on their estate, Gilberts.⁶ The CMS annual report recorded Dawes's "wish to be accredited as a Catechist and Correspondent of the Society," since "he would have the superintendence of a considerable number of Negroes." Dawes, who was a member of the CMS committee, offered "to render all the assistance in his power

⁴ Howse, "Dawes, William." Dawes was governor for three different periods between 1792 and 1803.

⁵ Stuart Piggin, *Making Evangelical Missionaries, 1789-1858: The Social Background, Motives and Training of the British Protestant Missionaries to India* (Abingdon: Sutton Courtenay Press, 1984), 189–190, and Charles Hole, *The Early History of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East* (London: Church Missionary Society, 1896), 117. This brief stint as an educator for the CMS took place between Dawes's second and third terms as governor of Sierra Leone.

⁶ It was Dawes's professional ambitions that took him to Antigua, and the CMS make clear the fact that he initiated discussions of working for the CMS while he was in Antigua. The minutes read: "Mr Dawes proposes to act as a Catechist of the Society in Antigua," (Minutes, CMS Archive, III/7/G/C/1, Vol. 1, p. 573.) In her biography of her great-grandfather (Dawes), A Curren-Jones asserted: "In 1813, at the special wish of William Wilberforce, Dawes went to Antigua," (A. Curren-Jones, *William Dawes, R.M., 1762 to 1836* (London: Smith and Son, 1930), 71.) Howse's *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry follows Curren-Jones and mentions Wilberforce's role. The CMS minutes make no mention of Wilberforce's involvement, and they give the impression that Dawes was moving to Antigua regardless of any ongoing relationship with the CMS.

to promote, in the West Indies, the objects of the Society.”⁷ Dawes’s offer was particularly enticing to the Society because he offered his services gratuitously.⁸ According to an early historian of the CMS, Dawes’s appointment was unprecedented as no layperson had been appointed in any capacity greater than a catechist.⁹ Thus began the CMS’s initial and irregular foray into the Americas.

Before summarizing the CMS campaign in the Leeward Islands, an initial observation, which underscores the complexities of missionary work in slave societies, is in order.¹⁰ Curious readers of the CMS annual report might have wondered how Dawes had come to be in a position in which he “would have the superintendence of a considerable number of Negroes.”¹¹ As was mentioned above, he was to be employed on his new in-laws’ slave estate.¹² While Gilberts was owned and operated by an Evangelical family who sought to treat their slaves as humanely as possible, the reality remained that the CMS’s representative was in the employ of slave owners and worked on a slave plantation. To an extent, working among slaves in the British West Indies

⁷ *Proceedings of the CMS, 1814*, 314. During our period of inquiry, there were permutations in the title of this publication, which featured the society’s annual report and reproduced the annual sermon. For the sake of clarity, I will employ the format featured in this entry when citing the annual report.

⁸ Minutes, CMS Archive, III/7/G/C/1, Vol. 2, p. 5.

⁹ Hole, *The Early History*, 297. According to Hole, Dawes was cast in the position that subsequently became known as “honorary missionary.”

¹⁰ The term ‘slave society,’ which was made prominent by Elsa Goveia, “refers to the whole community based on slavery, including masters and freedmen as well as slaves.” See: Elsa V. Goveia, *Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands at the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Yale University Press, 1965), vii.

¹¹ *Proceedings of the CMS, 1814*, 314.

¹² Sue Thomas, “William Dawes in Antigua,” *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 12, no. 1 (2011), no pagination, http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_colonialism_and_colonial_history/v012/12.1.tomas.html (accessed 13 November 2011).

entailed cooperation with the planters who controlled the slaves' existence. While the CMS committee members may not have been enthusiastic about appointing a catechist working on a slave plantation, the fact that a degree of entanglement with the slave system was inevitable may have put the committee members' minds at ease.

(Cooperation with the planters was unavoidable since missionaries were obligated to comply with planters' terms in order to gain access to their slaves.) Dawes's tenure at Gilberts was short-lived, but the fact that the CMS relied upon a person employed by a West Indian proprietor is telling.¹³ Even as Evangelical Anglicans associated with the CMS were turning their sights from the abolition of the slave trade (prohibited in 1807) to slavery itself, in this instance the CMS committee members found themselves temporarily aligned with the slave system.

Departing from its standard practice in most venues, the CMS did not send ordained missionaries to the Leeward Islands. In this field, the CMS relied upon William Dawes to serve as a conduit between the society and its objectives in the islands. Rather than dispatching its own personnel, the CMS committee empowered Dawes to recruit teachers and other staff. Left largely to his own devices, Dawes assembled a diverse team of teachers and superintendents whose only common bond was their shared Evangelicalism. Notably, Dawes relied heavily on Antiguan Methodists, with Charles and Elizabeth Thwaites serving as superintendent of schools in Antigua for the CMS while remaining active Methodists.¹⁴ Dawes's partnerships extended beyond the ranks of

¹³ Even though Dawes left the employ of Gilberts after a tenure of approximately three years (in 1815), Grace and William Dawes continued to draw an annuity and legacy annually from the plantation until they relinquished both in 1822. See: Thomas, "William Dawes in Antigua."

¹⁴ Elizabeth and Charles Thwaites will be discussed subsequently as the connection between William and Grace Dawes and Antiguan Methodism is detailed.

the Methodists—he also aligned the CMS with Antigua’s Moravians. For example, the Old Hill school used the Moravian church at Grace Bay (Antigua), and it was superintended by a Moravian, the Reverend Jens Olufsen.¹⁵ This approach allowed the CMS to gain a foothold in the West Indies without the difficulties attached to the recruitment and ongoing maintenance of ordained missionaries. While efficient on several fronts and effective for a decade, the CMS’s reliance on non-Anglicans would not survive episcopal scrutiny when the diocese of Barbados was established in 1824. In fact, the bishop’s insistence on Anglican teachers in schools supported by the Church of England would be one of the chief devices employed by the bishop and archdeacon as they began to wrest control of the Antiguan schools away from Dawes and the CMS.¹⁶

Just as with its personnel policy, the CMS adopted a cooperative approach with respect to institutions in Antigua. The CMS program in the Leeward Islands centered on education of slaves and the support of vulnerable young women. While he played a part in the founding of some schools, Dawes, and by extension the CMS, also lent support to schools and societies that had been created and were maintained by other Evangelical Christians. In some instances, Dawes joined with other Evangelicals to help create institutions. For example, in 1815 the Antiguan Methodist sisters Anne Hart Gilbert and Elizabeth Hart Thwaites founded the Female Refuge Society, and the CMS supported the project with a donation of £100.¹⁷ In both its approach to personnel and institutions, the CMS opted for secondary participation in Antigua and the other Leeward Islands.

¹⁵ *CMS Proceedings, 1820*, 216; *CMS Proceedings, 1822*, 209.

¹⁶ The acrimony between Dawes and Bishop Coleridge will be examined in a subsequent section of this chapter.

¹⁷ Minutes, CMS Archive, III/7/G/C/1, Vol. 2, p. 460; also, see: Sue Thomas, "Anne Hart Gilbert, Creole Benevolence and Anti-Slavery, 1815–1834," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 33, no. 3 (July 2011): 228-229. The £100 CMS donation also benefited

During the first years of his life in Antigua, William Dawes looked after CMS affairs after attending to his other pursuits, including work on the Gilberts' plantation and then a stint as a druggist. Dawes also began a newspaper, the *Antigua Journal*, and operated a rum improvement operation. In 1820, Dawes was made the Superintendent of the CMS Sunday Schools in the West Indies, and he was obligated to withdraw from the work involving rum. The CMS began to pay Dawes an annual salary of £300, and he was able to devote the majority of his time to CMS projects.¹⁸ It was from this point forward that the number of students educated in schools supported by the CMS began to increase dramatically. In 1819, the CMS claimed 841 Antiguan scholars, who were educated in four schools.¹⁹ Six years later, in 1825, the growth reported was remarkable—by this time the CMS was connected to fifteen schools and 2002 scholars were attending CMS-supported schools.²⁰ The aim of the schools was to promote literacy and provide religious instruction, among “Coloured” (mixed-race) and “Black” children and, to a lesser extent, adults.²¹ The schools convened consistently on Sundays, the lone day that slaves typically had away from their labor, and on other days where

two of the English Harbour Sunday School Society's schools, which the Hart sisters were involved with as well.

¹⁸ *CMS Proceedings, 1821*, 211; Minutes, CMS Archive. III/7/G/C/1, Vol. 5, p. 729-730.

¹⁹ *CMS Proceedings, 1818*, 207.

²⁰ *CMS Proceedings, 1825*, 190.

²¹ *CMS Proceedings, 1825*, 190-191. Of the 2002 scholars mentioned above, 145 were adults.

possible.²² The CMS supported education in Antigua so that children of African descent would be equipped to read the Bible and learn about Christianity.

In addition to its support of education, the CMS also aided programs that endeavored to protect the vulnerable young women of Antigua. The CMS lent its support to two such Antiguan enterprises: the Female Refuge Society and the Distressed Females' Friend Society.²³ The Female Refuge Society, which had been founded by the Hart Sisters, was small in scale and vulnerable to the threat of bankruptcy during its first years. The Society's third annual report (for 1818) is extant in the CMS archive, and it depicts the Society's humble status. In 1818, there were only four subscribers, and the year's receipts totaled just over £69.²⁴ Clearly, the CMS's financial support, which began the following year, was a boon to the fledgling Antiguan organization.

As women of color who were natives of Antigua, the Hart sisters were attuned to the precarious position that impoverished black and mixed-race Antiguan women occupied within slave societies, and they helped to educate Dawes and (by extension) the British Evangelical reading public as to the pressures that pushed these women toward moral corruption.²⁵ A CMS report published in the *Christian Observer* in 1817 described

²² The CMS sponsored schools educated free black and mixed-race students, but the majority were slaves. Thus, the many restrictions that bound the slaves shaped the schools' schedules.

²³ *CMS Proceedings, 1819*, 207.

²⁴ "Third Report of the Female Refuge Society, 1818," CMS Archive V/C/W/O6. The author of the report (perhaps Anne Gilbert?) recognized that "it might appear ostentatious and absurd to publish a Report" for a society with only four subscribers and acknowledged that the report was an attempt to cultivate interest in the Society's work. It is also interesting to note that the CMS received the report at least a year after its publication on 25 July 1820.

²⁵ John Saillant has argued that those who characterize the Hart sisters as opponents of slavery are mistaken, as it was their opposition to the "vice it [slavery] spread into the lives of blacks" that motivated the sisters to action. See John Saillant,

the forces within slave society that pushed these women away from moral purity. “If these girls determine on leading a virtuous life, they have therefore no other prospect than great poverty and contempt: while a life of unchastity, to which they have constant solicitations after the age of fourteen or fifteen years, holds out to them the advantages of a liberal supply of all their wants.” Regardless of their temporal circumstances, a similar pull affected all black and mixed-race young women and even girls. Those who were slaves might hope for emancipation and, in some cases, freedom for their mothers as well. Free women could potentially attain ownership of a “small property” and a “handsome wardrobe, together with a flattering degree of respect from their associates.” While these temptations were alluring, they were also fleeting, since the benefits “almost universally terminate with decay of personal appearance, or the incumbrance [*sic*] of children.”²⁶ The aim of societies such as the Female Refuge Society was to provide young women with the possibility of joining chaste living with financial viability. Rather than merely preaching against sexual immorality and offering only condemnation, the CMS, in its support of relief societies, sought to endow young Antiguan women with skills that would allow them an array of alternatives to prostitution or concubinage.

For the entirety of its existence, the CMS program in the Leeward Islands was centered in Antigua, where William and Grace Dawes settled, but there were several attempts to expand the work beyond Antigua. The centrality of Antigua was the natural

“Antiguan Methodism and Antislavery Activity: Anne and Elizabeth Hart in the Eighteenth-Century Black Atlantic,” *Church History* 69, no. 1 (March 1, 2000): 86-100. Certainly, a desire to prevent sin prompted the sisters to act, but it does not seem that this must have come at the exclusion of a general anti-slavery impulse.

²⁶ “Religious Intelligence,” *Christian Observer* 16 (January 1817): 60. This section of the article dealt with girls attached to the English Harbour Sunday School, so it is likely that Anne Hart Gilbert, who was chiefly responsible for the organization, helped to articulate this assessment of the temptations facing her fellow Antiguans.

consequence of the Dawes's connection to the island (via Grace's family, the Gilberts) and residency there. The secretaries urged Dawes to expand the work beyond Antigua as early as 1820, and Dawes did travel to the island of St. Bartholomew, where he was unable to initiate an educational program in the Swedish possession.²⁷ Finally, in 1823 Dawes set out on a tour to extend the CMS's reach to other islands. He hoped to make it "as far as Demerara; and then, if circumstances permit, strike over to Santa Cruz [Saint Croix], and call at St. Thomas, Tortola, St. Kitts, Nevis, and Montserrat."²⁸ Dawes's itinerary proved to be overly ambitious; he only made it to the islands of Dominica and St. Vincent while absent from Antigua for six months. While he was able to found an auxiliary society in Dominica, no enduring institutions arose from Dawes's tour.²⁹ Lieutenant Robert Lugger staged another attempt beyond Antigua in 1818 in Barbados.³⁰ While the school in Barbados could claim as many as 160 scholars at its peak in 1820, it, like all of the CMS schools in the Leeward Islands, was wrested from CMS control by the Bishop and Archdeacon in 1825. The CMS annual report bluntly related, "the Lord Bishop took the Colonial Charity School [in Barbados] under his own charge."³¹ While efforts were made to extend the work beyond Antigua, little progress was realized in other Leeward and Windward Islands.

²⁷ *CMS Proceedings, 1821*, 211.

²⁸ William Dawes to the Secretaries, 11 January 1823, CMS Archive C/W/O/31. Evidently, the committee members had been pushing for this expansion for sometime; they mentioned (that Dawes "had been prevented from engaging in it [the tour] so early as was designed." See: *CMS Proceedings, 1823*, 189. The secretaries did not mention the particulars that delayed Dawes, but in his letter of 11 January, he cited his "indifferent health & the series of very bleak, boisterous & rainy weather for many weeks past."

²⁹ *CMS Proceedings, 1824*, 194.

³⁰ *CMS Proceedings, 1819*, 210-211.

³¹ *CMS Proceedings, 1821*, 214; *CMS Proceedings, 1826*, 136. The bishop's action was one episode in a larger contest for power, which is detailed in a subsequent section.

In sum, the CMS mission to the Leeward Islands was irregular, limited in scope and aim, and, of a duration less than three decades, short-lived. This mission, which began at the instigation of an individual who happened to be moving to Antigua, did not seem to figure prominently in the committee's global agenda.³² Oddly, as slave rebellions and the rise of the anti-slavery movement drew Britons' attention to the West Indies in the 1820s and 1830s, the CMS secretaries witnessed the numerical zenith of their activity in the Leeward Islands and would withdraw from the islands within this same period.³³ The secretaries exhibited a degree of ambivalence toward the work in the Leeward Islands throughout this period. Their limited investment of funds in and failure to appoint missionaries to the islands point to their lack of resolution on this front, but the most damning piece of evidence involved Dawes himself. In 1817, the annual report contained news that would have been disconcerting for supporters of the CMS's work in the Leeward Islands. "Feeling the great importance of placing the African Mission under the superintendence of a competent head, the Committee proposed to Mr. Dawes to remove for that purpose to Sierra Leone." Dawes declined the proposition, citing "the circumstances of his family, and the usefulness of the situation" in Antigua.³⁴ Had Dawes been removed to Sierra Leone, the CMS's efforts in the Leeward Islands would likely have been aborted. While the contributions of Dawes's Methodist allies, especially

³² The CMS's foray into the Leeward Islands had the misfortune of being initiated at the same time as the revision of the East India Company's Charter in 1813, which opened the vast population of South Asia to British missionaries. Having achieved this allowance that had been sought after for some time, it was no surprise when the CMS leadership, along with their counterparts in other Evangelical missionary societies began, to focus their attention on India.

³³ Numerically, the CMS program in Antigua peaked in 1824-1825, which coincided with the Bishop's appointment and arrival.

³⁴ *CMS Proceedings, 1817*, 474.

Elizabeth and Charles Thwaites, were crucial to the work, Dawes was the only direct link between the CMS and the programs in Antigua. A decade later, when Bishop Coleridge sought to direct the work executed by the CMS, the secretaries offered resistance, seeking the intervention of the Archbishop of Canterbury. However, when Bishop Coleridge prevailed, the secretaries chose to withdraw from the Leeward Islands rather than surrender a degree of control. The CMS secretaries' decisions suggest that the work in the Leeward Islands was a mission on the periphery of their concern as work in West Africa, the Pacific, and India dominated their interest.

The Connection to Antiguan Methodism

After the death of his first wife, William Dawes married Grace Gilbert (c. 1776-1844) in 1811. Their union, which connected Dawes to the Gilbert family of Antigua, would profoundly shape the CMS's early endeavors in the Caribbean.³⁵ Grace Gilbert was a white native of Antigua, and she was the niece of Nathaniel Gilbert (c. 1721-1774), who had introduced Methodism in Antigua in the late 1750s.³⁶ In addition to connecting Dawes to Antiguan Methodism, the Gilbert family's various relationships reveal the complexities of Atlantic history, familial connections between colony and metropole, and the avenues of contact within the world of Evangelicalism. Dawes had served in Sierra

³⁵ The Gilbert family's importance has been recognized by a number of historians. See: Frank Baker, "The Origins of Methodism in the West Indies: The Story of the Gilbert Family," *The London Quarterly and Holborn Review* 185 (January 1960): 9-17. Robert Glen has helped to eliminate several points of confusion: Robert Glen, "A Tangled Web: The Gilberts of Cornwall and Antigua," *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 53 no. 6 (October 2002): 216-225.

³⁶ With little regard for historians in future generations, the Gilbert family produced five men who shared the name, Nathaniel Gilbert. The Nathaniel Gilbert mentioned here, who brought Methodism to Antigua, was the third to bear this name. Historians refer to him as Nathaniel Gilbert III, although neither Gilbert nor his peers employed this designation.

Leone with two of Grace's cousins, the Reverend Nathaniel Gilbert (an Anglican) and Melvill Horne (a Methodist during his stint in Sierra Leone.) Dawes's activity in Evangelical spheres of influence, such as Sierra Leone, helped to unite him with Grace, but these were only the first manifestations of the Gilbert family's connections.

Upon arrival in Antigua, William Dawes worked as an attorney for Grace's second cousin on the plantation known as Gilberts. After leaving that post, William and Grace began a close association that would shape the former and, in turn, the CMS in the Leeward Islands. Having left Gilberts, where William had been employed, the couple was in need of housing. John Gilbert, Grace's brother, and his wife Anne opened their home, and the William and Grace resided there for a time.³⁷ In the person of Anne Gilbert, the connections between Dawes, the Gilberts and Methodism were redoubled. Anne (Hart) Gilbert and her sister, Elizabeth (Hart) Thwaites were mixed-race Antiguans.³⁸ The sisters' lineage connected them to both Antiguan Methodism and the Gilbert family. Their maternal grandmother, Frances Clearkley, had converted to Methodism as a result of the ministry of Francis Gilbert, a forbear of Grace Dawes. Frances Clearkley's daughter, Anne, who was known as a pious and serious woman, married Barry Conyers Hart, a black slave owner.³⁹

Anne and Elizabeth, the two sisters who would work with Dawes, were two of Anne and Barry Hart's children. The Hart family's circumstances reveal the complexities

³⁷ Sue Thomas, "William Dawes in Antigua." John (white) and Anne (mixed-race) Gilbert were one of few interracial married couples, although less formal unions between white men and women of color were common in Antigua.

³⁸ Sue Thomas, "Anne Hart Gilbert, Creole Benevolence and Anti-Slavery, 1815–1834," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 33, no. 3 (July 2011): 227-230.

³⁹ Moira Ferguson, introduction to *The Hart Sisters: Early African Caribbean Writers, Evangelicals, and Radicals* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 5.

of life in a slave society. During the sisters' childhood, their father, Barry Conyers Hart, operated a slave plantation near St. John's, Antigua. Although Hart endeavored to treat his slaves humanely and with compassion, he was, nevertheless, a slave-holding proprietor. Thus, the Hart sisters, who would go on to oppose slavery, were themselves the product of a proprietor's household.⁴⁰ In fact, their first attempts at ministry to slaves were carried out among human beings who were considered to be their black father's property.

Elizabeth and Anne Hart converted to Methodism after hearing Thomas Coke preach during his visit to Antigua in 1786.⁴¹ Elizabeth, in her *History of Methodism*, described how Coke spent a day at their father's home and issued tickets to both sisters. Although she had resolved to break with Methodism after Coke's departure, Elizabeth, "Contrary to [her] intention, became a constant hearer." Her sister, Anne, joined the Methodists at the same time.⁴² Following their conversions to Methodism, the sisters began to act on their convictions. After years of informal service, Anne and Elizabeth, in good Evangelical fashion, began to channel their action into organized structures. They founded the multi-racial and non-denominational English Harbour Sunday School in 1809, the first Sunday school in the West Indies. Six years later, the sisters helped to create the Female Refuge Society, which sought to minister to the many vulnerable

⁴⁰ Ferguson, who is a seminal figure in the scholarship on the Hart sisters, portrays the sisters as ardent abolitionists. As was mentioned previously, John Saillant has argued that sisters were primarily opposed to the sinful consequences of the slave system (Saillant, "Antiguan Methodism and Antislavery Activity," 86-100.

⁴¹ Coke's visit to Antigua is described in John Vickers, *Thomas Coke: Apostle of Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1969), 149-153.

⁴² Elizabeth Hart Thwaites, *History of Methodism in The Hart Sisters: Early African Caribbean Writers, Evangelicals, and Radicals*, ed. Moira Ferguson (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 91-92.

young women of color in a slave society.⁴³ Through education and assistance, the Hart sisters sought to improve the lives of those in need within Antiguan society.

The Hart sisters' unprecedented work was important in several respects, and it is of crucial relevance for any consideration of the CMS work in the Leeward Islands. Joined by familial connections and Evangelical convictions, the Hart sisters and William Dawes (and the CMS, by extension) cooperated as they sought to offer education and opportunity for improvement to Antiguan persons of color. For example, Dawes lent his support to the English Harbour Sunday School Society, serving as the president while Anne Gilbert was the superintendent for female students and the book steward.⁴⁴ The Thwaites, Elizabeth and Charles, were connected directly to the CMS until the arrival of Bishop Coleridge in 1825. Both Charles and Elizabeth were central figures within the network of schools that the CMS supported, and from 1817 they were "wholly devoted to the work of visiting and superintending the [CMS-supported] schools."⁴⁵ Keen supporters of the CMS in England would have been familiar with the Thwaites, as the couple's names frequented the pages of the annual report and appeared in other publications. In 1818, Charles Thwaites was listed as the superintendent of the CMS's Antiguan schools, and "Mrs. Thwaites" was added to the report in the same capacity in the following year.⁴⁶ Beyond mere mentions, the CMS annual report featured excerpts from Charles Thwaites's journal and correspondence.⁴⁷ As the CMS program in the

⁴³ Sue Thomas, "Anne Gilbert," 228.

⁴⁴ "English-Harbor [*sic?*] Sunday-School Society Report (1824)," in the CMS Archive V/1/C/W/O6.

⁴⁵ "Church Missionary Society," in *Christian Observer* 18 (1819): 870.

⁴⁶ *CMS Proceedings, 1818*, xiii, and *CMS Proceedings, 1819*, xi.

⁴⁷ For example, the 1819 report reproduced Charles's correspondence and offered a summary of the couples' work. *CMS Proceedings, 1819*, 208-210.

Leeward Islands ascended to its apogee in the middle of the 1820s, the partnership between Dawes and Antigua Methodists was both secure and fruitful.

Slavery and the Church of England in the West Indies

The CMS was not the only Anglican entity in the Caribbean, and the other manifestations of the Church of England were firmly established when Dawes arrived in Antigua in 1811. Both the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) and colonial Anglican clergy provided models of what Anglicanism could look like in slave society.

The SPG enjoyed the benefit of an early arrival (by English standards) in the West Indies, and, unlike the CMS, associations with abolitionists in England did not taint the SPG in the planters' eyes. The SPG owned and operated a pair of slave plantations in Barbados from the early eighteenth century until British emancipation. Christopher Codrington, a prominent figure in the West Indies, had bequeathed his estates, which were among the most coveted properties on Barbados, to the nascent SPG in 1710. He envisioned the establishment of a seminary that would train clergy for missionary work among non-Europeans in the West Indies, and this venture would be funded in perpetuity by the sugar plantations ceded to the Society. After resolving disputes regarding Codrington's will, the SPG set about bringing Codrington's vision to fruition.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Frank J. Klingberg, "British Humanitarianism at Codrington," *The Journal of Negro History* 23 (October 1938): 451-486; Noel Titus, "Concurrence without Compliance: SPG and the Barbadian plantations, 1710-1834," in *Three Centuries of Mission: The United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, 1701-2000*, ed. Daniel O'Connor (London: Continuum, 2000), 249-252. As the decades wore on, it became apparent that the SPG was not interested in transforming the entirety of Codrington's vision into reality.

Thus began what has been described aptly as an experiment in “the curious combination of missionary zeal and human exploitation.”⁴⁹

Although amelioration would become a central SPG emphasis intended for implementation on Codrington Plantation, at many points in the sugar plantations’ history they were operated very much like other West Indian slave plantations.⁵⁰ Just as on other plantations, the SPG’s plantations were plagued by an alarming mortality rate.⁵¹ To rectify this problem and maintain a steady population of three hundred slaves, the Society (through its managers and Barbadian attorneys) purchased slaves periodically, including the wholesale purchase of another plantation in 1766.⁵² Natural deaths contributed to this ongoing shortage, as did the practice of shedding “refuse Negroes,” who were no longer capable of rigorous labor and were burdensome to the plantation.⁵³ In the 1730s a disturbing report from Barbados informed the SPG that newly arrived slaves had the letters “S O C I E T Y” branded on their chests.⁵⁴ As focus upon the generation of income through sugar production tintured all decision regarding

⁴⁹ John Hope Franklin, review of *Codrington Chronicle: An Experiment in Anglican Altruism on a Barbados Plantation, 1710-1834*, ed. Frank J. Klingberg, William and Mary Quarterly 7 (January 1950): 147.

⁵⁰ “Codrington Plantation” was the term used to refer to the combined plantations that were bequeathed to the SPG.

⁵¹ Travis Glasson, “Missionaries, Slavery, and Race: The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts in the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2005), 245.

⁵² General Codrington’s will stipulated that a population of 300 slaves was to be maintained on the plantations. This was one aspect of the bequest that the SPG strove to honor.

⁵³ Titus, “Concurrence without Compliance,” 254.

⁵⁴ Klingberg, “British Humanitarianism at Codrington,” 463. To its credit, the SPG did order that this gruesome practice end.

Codrington, efficiency and maximization of profits competed with the society's aim of merciful, Christian slaveholding.

The vast oceanic space that separated the SPG committees and bishops in London from their slave plantations on Barbados allowed plantation managers to embrace directives issued in London selectively. The Society's designs for slave education were made subservient to labor schemes, and Codrington slaves did not benefit significantly from the SPG's educational mandate until modifications of management schemes were made in 1819.⁵⁵ The fact that although not a single slave had been baptized, the plantation went without a catechist between 1717 and 1726, serves as an example of the plantation's failure to realize its objective of Christian slaveholding.⁵⁶ Although the SPG's objectives and methods different from those of the Evangelical missions, all of these agencies felt the affects of operating in the slave societies of the West Indies.

Along with the SPG, other branches of the Church of England existed within the slave societies of the British West Indies. Anglican parochial clergy devoted the majority of their energies to ministry among the white minorities, and, for a variety of reasons, these ministers shared the assumptions and interests of their white parishioners. Governors appointed Anglican clergy in the British West Indies, and these benefices were granted without the Bishop of London's consultation. In some cases, parishes were assigned to men in return for civil service within the colonial government. Many of the clergy were (white) natives of the islands, and, as the products of slave societies, they

⁵⁵ J. Harry Bennett, Jr., *Bondsmen and Bishops: Slavery and Apprenticeship on the Codrington Plantations of Barbados, 1710-1838* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1958), 110.

⁵⁶ Bennett, *Bondsmen and Bishops*, 78.

sought to maintain social connections with their families and peers.⁵⁷ Of course, this meant affirming the slave system, and, in many instances, this affirmation likely came instinctively since these individuals had been immersed in slave societies since infancy. Practical considerations also bound the West Indian clergy to their parishioners. The clergy received financial support from fees they received when officiating at ecclesiastical ceremonies, in addition to the grants offered from the colonial governments.⁵⁸ Beyond sympathetic loyalties tying them to the plantocracy, Anglican clergy in the West Indies frequently were responsible for vast parishes that precluded the possibility of ministry among slaves after the ministerial needs of white parishioners had been met.⁵⁹ Regular Anglican clergy in the West Indies were inclined to support the slave system, and practical constraints made ministry among slaves an unlikely prospect for most Church of England ministers.

In 1825 the Church of England expanded its reach in the West Indies with the arrival of its first two colonial bishops in the region. Christopher Lipscomb was appointed the first bishop of Jamaica, and William Hart Coleridge became the initial bishop of Barbados.⁶⁰ Although they enjoyed greater autonomy than the West Indian clergy beneath them, the Anglican bishops, like their priests and deacons, were influenced by the planters. The bishops, who had been dispatched to the West Indies as

⁵⁷ Goveia, *Slave Society*, 256-266. Goveia cites the example of the appointment of Samuel Wickham Harman, who was nominated to an Antiguan curacy after serving as the private secretary of the Governor of Antigua.

⁵⁸ Goveia, *Slave Society*, 266.

⁵⁹ Goveia, *Slave Society*, 267.

⁶⁰ Until the 1840s, the Bishop of Barbados's see included Trinidad, British Guiana, the Leeward Islands, and the Windward Islands. Coleridge's primary residence was in Antigua.

part of the effort to reform the slave system, were in positions rife with tension.⁶¹ Even as they sought to advance amelioration and ultimately emancipation, the bishops were obliged to maintain cordial relationships with their parishioners and peers in the plantocracy. Forced to balance metropolitan loyalties to the Church and Crown along with the colonial interest in the preservation of the slave system, the Bishops of Jamaica and Barbados answered to two masters.

Bishop Coleridge's experience in his vast diocese revealed the difficulties confronting the West Indian Anglican Church during the tumultuous decades preceding emancipation. Coleridge, who cooperated closely with the SPG, helped implement the elusive ideal of amelioration on Codrington Plantation, and he offered leadership through the process of emancipation. The Bishop also attempted to improve conditions at Codrington so that slave marriages would increase.⁶² Even as he sought to improve the slaves' position, Coleridge's deference to the planters limited his effectiveness as an advocate on the slaves' behalf. In the eyes of an Evangelical critic, the Bishop had become attached to the planters to a degree that his ministry had been compromised.⁶³ In 1827, Coleridge issued a model prayer to be recited by slaves before the day's labor. The prayer's first five paragraphs dealt with predictable theological categories applicable to any of the Bishop's charges, but the final paragraph narrowed to the slaves' unique status. The slaves were instructed to pray to be enabled to "serve Thee, our God, in all holiness and righteousness; and our earthly Master in all honesty, faithfulness, and

⁶¹ Mary Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, 14.

⁶² Schon Goodridge, *Facing the Challenge of Emancipation: A study of the ministry of William Hart Coleridge, first bishop of Barbados, 1824-1842* (Bridgetown, Barbados: Cedar Press, 1981), 77.

⁶³ William Dawes to the Secretaries, 15 November 1825, CMS Archive, V/1/C/W/O/31.

diligence, with good will doing service as to the Lord, and not to men.”⁶⁴ The Bishop’s prayer fused theological instruction to a call to obedience, and in so doing Coleridge sought to sacralize the slaves’ compliance with their masters’ instruction. Coleridge’s concern for planter opinion also contributed to his support of gradual emancipation at Codrington. According to the Bishop, the SPG should continue to “still patiently bear” abolitionists’ criticisms, and he urged caution, lest “we shall excite apprehension in our fellow-proprietors; or be misunderstood or imposed upon by our people.”⁶⁵ Although Bishop Coleridge was able to advance the slaves’ cause in some instances, his close ties to the plantocracy limited his effectiveness on this front.⁶⁶

The Anglican entities in the West Indies beyond the CMS formed symbiotic relationships with the plantocracy and lent support to the slave societies the latter had created, and these connections between the plantocracy and the Church of England had a bearing upon the CMS’s program in the West Indies. In sum, the CMS faced expectations of support and cooperation from the planters.

While the CMS was associated with prominent abolitionists in the metropole and benefited from the swelling support for the anti-slavery position in England, upon arrival in the West Indies the society found itself in an environment in which challenges to slave holding were met with hostility. Moreover, the precedents established by the SPG and Anglican clergy meant that the CMS was expected to avoid conflict with the

⁶⁴ “Form of Prayer Recommended by the Bishop: To Be Used Every Morning on a Plantation,” 12 July 1827 (received in London), CMS Archive, V/1/C/W/O/11.

⁶⁵ W. H. Coleridge to SPG Secretary, 30 June 1830, SPG Fulham Documents, West Indies; quoted in Bennett, *Bondsmen and Bishops*, 123.

⁶⁶ An example of Coleridge’s taking the side of slaves is offered by his biographer, who describes the Bishop’s support of a priest (William Harte) who dared to preach a sermon that touched on equality between the races. See: Goodridge, *Facing the Challenge*, 34-35.

slave system. For a century prior to the CMS's arrival in Antigua, the Church of England had functioned as a supporting piece of the slave societies of the Leeward Islands. As the CMS's relationship with West Indian slavery is considered, the broader Anglican context in the region, which included the SPG's operation of a slave-worked sugar plantation, must be remembered.

The CMS and Slavery in the British West Indies

Slavery touched all facets of the CMS program in the British Caribbean, and it seems that the relationship between the CMS and the slave system was somewhat paradoxical. On the one hand, many of the Evangelical supporters of the CMS were opposed to slavery, and this conviction intensified during the period under examination. At the same time, colonial power and the slave system afforded British missionary societies the opportunity to pursue their agendas in the British West Indies. The CMS, like all British foreign missionary societies, sent its personnel to locales controlled by Britain itself or, at the very least, where there were some measures for protection and cooperation.

In one instance, legislation meant to preserve the slave system fostered Dawes's optimism for the CMS's prospects in Antigua. In 1825, as news of slave revolts elsewhere in the Caribbean engendered fear among Antiguan planters, the local legislature mandated that each plantation must have one white male resident per forty slaves. Failure to comply resulted in a fine of £53 for each white man that a plantation lacked. As he described the legislation, Dawes intimated that this could allow for self-sustaining white missionaries on Antiguan estates, since proprietors might be looking for

“Free-Tenant[s].”⁶⁷ While the British colonial presence offered stability in the West Indies, the slave system provided high numbers of accessible non-Christians. Quite simply, the political status quo, including plantation slavery, made the British West Indies a viable field for missionary work.

The reality of plantation slavery imposed practical restrictions upon the CMS agenda. For example, CMS schools were forced to operate in the evening and on Sundays in order to educate children who spent their days laboring for their masters.⁶⁸ A report from Antigua revealed the substantial difference in attendance that existed between instruction offered on Sundays and on weekdays. In 1823, the five Antiguan Sunday schools averaged an attendance of 973, while the six day schools averaged 270.⁶⁹ Beyond the limited time available for schooling, classes were on offer at the end of the day’s labor or on the one free day that most slaves enjoyed. Of course, this limited the number of participants and, in the case of evening classes, the efficacy of instruction. In the British West Indies, the planters controlled most facets of the slaves’ temporal existence, and providing education in these slave societies was always secondary to the planters’ designs.

The limitations intrinsic to the slaves’ captive existence fostered various ancillary difficulties for Evangelical missionary societies, including issues indigenous to plantation life and aspects of broader slave society. As he surveyed the state of religion in Antigua, Dawes identified “the absolute power possessed by men in authority upon the Estates

⁶⁷ William Dawes to the Secretaries, 2 July 1825, CMS Archive, V/1/C/W/O/31. In this same letter Dawes described the Bishop’s arrival and the first traces of tension between the two.

⁶⁸ *CMS Proceedings, 1821*, 213.

⁶⁹ CMS Archive, Minutes, III/7/G/C/1, Vol. 6, p. 576.

whether white or black; which is abused in numerous instances, to the purpose of seducing young females, and it is a fruitful source of misery and immorality” as a “formidable obstacle” to religion in Antigua. Even as he employed “seducing” as a euphemism to describe the nature of these sexual encounters, Dawes was conveying a harsh truth about the vulnerable position young women occupied on slave estates. Moreover, Dawes’s bipartite identification of the effects of “misery and immorality” demonstrated his recognition that there were multiple layers of consequence that followed in the wake of these sexual encounters—beyond questions of morality, Dawes recognized the emotional and physical harm that these liaisons caused. Dawes also proceeded to note that the predatory sexual habits and whims of men on the plantations represented a significant impediment to the Sunday schools, and thus this moral problem impinged upon the CMS’s education program.⁷⁰ The vulnerability of black and mixed-race women on Antiguan plantations was a pressing moral concern, and Dawes joined with the Hart sisters to attempt to offer relief for these women who were caught in impossible circumstances.

A central hindrance to the advance of Christianity within slave societies, at least in the missionaries’ reckoning, was the slaves’ Sunday markets. While the slaves typically were not required to labor for their masters on Sundays, this was not necessarily a day of leisure. This was the one whole day that slaves could devote to the maintenance of their accommodations, clothing, and, in some cases, vegetable plots. Other tasks, including the care of ill friends and family, were seen to on Sundays. Having emerged shortly after

⁷⁰ William Dawes to Benjamin D’Urban, October 1823, CMS Archive, C/W/M/1. Dawes did not specify how the Sunday schools were harmed, but it seems likely that pregnancies would have been one factor. Additionally, women who were the victims of non-consensual sexual encounters may have withdrawn from public activities, such as attending classes at CMS schools.

plantation slavery was established in the Leeward Islands, the markets were an entrenched part of the slaves' culture. Beyond their longstanding place in the slaves' experience, the markets met practical and social needs. As many slaves were responsible for their own provisions, the market offered a venue of exchange that was essential to daily life. Socially, the markets allowed separated family members, former co-workers, and friends from different estates to maintain their relationships.⁷¹ The Sunday markets, which were condemned by nearly all Evangelical missionaries in the West Indies, presented a complex problem for Dawes and his associates.

When considering the Sunday markets, the CMS agents saw an array of practical and moral problems, but they failed to grasp the beneficial, and even essential, nature of the markets for the slave population of Antigua. On a practical level, the Sunday markets and CMS classes competed for the slaves' one entire day away from their labor. Charles Thwaites described his handling of the issue as follows. Having learned that some of his students at Bethesda had visited the English Harbour before arriving at the school, he "gave notice that in the future the School would begin at 10 o'clock instead of 12, in order to put a stop to this pernicious custom." As if to justify his decision, Thwaites went on to assert that "the Sabbath Market is one of the greatest hindrances in the West Indies to the success of the Gospel, and to Religious Institutions."⁷² Thwaites made no mention of the students' tardiness, so it would seem that he was acting because of his principled objections rather than the practical consideration of scheduling.

⁷¹ David Barry Gaspar, "Slavery, Amelioration, and Sunday Markets in Antigua, 1823 – 1831," *Slavery and Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies* 9 no. 1 (1988): 4-14.

⁷² This excerpt from Thwaites's journal was reproduced in William Dawes's letter, (William Dawes to Josiah Pratt, 10 March 1820, CMS Archive, C/W/O/31.)

In the Evangelicals' estimation, the Sunday markets were morally problematic in several respects. In addition to the fundamental issue of Sabbath-keeping, Evangelical missionaries believed that the markets offered an array of temptations for Christian slaves, including drinking, gambling, and dancing.⁷³ While many of the Evangelicals' concerns and criticisms were based on an accurate estimation of the markets, there was a distinct failure on their part to appreciate the utilitarian aspects of the Sunday markets. Antiguan slaves appreciated the various functions of their markets, and legislation prohibiting Sunday markets sparked insubordination and protests in 1831.⁷⁴ The Sunday market, recognized as problematic by CMS employees such as Charles Thwaites, posed challenges for the CMS and its agenda. Easily recognizable problems such as Sabbath-breaking obscured recognition of the necessity of the markets, and the CMS, along with other Evangelical missionaries, missed an opportunity to empathize with and assist the slaves they sought to reach.

The CMS and the Colonial Episcopacy

Relations between William Dawes, the chief initial representative of the CMS in the West Indies, and the Bishop of Barbados (and the Leeward Islands) were strained from the outset, and the two parties' failure to reconcile contributed to the demise of the CMS mission in the West Indies. For more than a decade, Dawes implemented CMS designs without a local bishop's oversight, but the Bishop's arrival in 1825 marked the beginning of a new epoch for Dawes and the CMS. Initially, Dawes's efforts in advance of Bishop Coleridge's arrival will be examined, and the second half of this section will analyze the relationship between Dawes, the Bishop, and the Archdeacon.

⁷³ Gaspar, "Slavery, Amelioration, and Sunday Markets," 8-9.

⁷⁴ Gaspar, "Slavery, Amelioration, and Sunday Markets," 1-21.

Evangelical Liberties: Dawes in the Pre-diocesan Era

As Josiah Pratt reiterated in a letter to William Dawes, the CMS's primary objective in the West Indies was the education of slaves.⁷⁵ To achieve this end, Dawes directed an educational program that was cobbled together, employing any Evangelical personnel that could be recruited. During his first decade of work in the West Indies, William Dawes executed the CMS's educational program by cooperating with like-minded Evangelicals, regardless of their denominational identity. In some cases, Dawes, in his capacity as an agent of the CMS, was supporting schools operated by Methodists. In a letter written to a Methodist colleague,⁷⁶ Dawes emphasized the fact that although the CMS supported schools on Antigua, they were "strictly speaking, not 'Church Schools.'"⁷⁷ When a hurricane claimed an Antiguan Methodist school, Dawes and his Methodist counterparts used the reconstruction of the school to advance their partnership. Mindful that he was the steward of Anglican support, Dawes assured Pratt that the new school would not be distinctly Methodist—with both Methodist and CMS support, it would advance "common Christianity."⁷⁸ Dawes, who functioned as an Evangelical conduit on Antigua, offered reports to London that conveyed what each of his audiences needed to hear.

What Dawes referred to as "common Christianity" was a broad Evangelicalism, which allowed his cooperation with Methodists. Beyond his familial connection to

⁷⁵ Josiah Pratt to William Dawes, 21 October 1823, CMS Archive, V/C/W/L/1, p. 30.

⁷⁶ The address of this letter has been cut out, but it is in the WMMS Archive and has been written to a Methodist; William Dawes to WMMS Secretaries (?), 15 November 1821, WMMS Archive, West Indies Correspondence, Box 117, f. 154.

⁷⁷ Dawes to WMMS Secretaries, November 1821.

⁷⁸ William Dawes to Josiah Pratt, 1 April 1820, CMS Archive, V/1/C/W/O/31.

Antiguan Methodism, Dawes actively sought ought Methodists to employ in the CMS's educational program. Dawes's efforts to join with and enlist Antiguan Methodists as teachers were not the unsanctioned actions of a man who happened to have personal connections with local Methodism. On the contrary, Dawes sought and received the secretaries' directions on these matters. In October of 1820, Dawes wrote with two pressing questions regarding the unfolding CMS educational program in the Leeward Islands beyond Antigua.⁷⁹ First, Dawes inquired as to "how far [he was] at liberty to assist the Schools of other Orthodox Christians,* or to co-operate with them." Dawes, in a note at the foot of the page, clarified that he did not anticipate encountering anyone apart from "United Brethren & Methodists." Dawes's terminology and clarification on this point are intriguing in light of his later criticisms of Anglican clergy, who he seemingly believed to be of dubious orthodoxy. Second, Dawes wanted to determine if the committee wanted schools elsewhere in the British West Indies "to be open to persons of all denominations," as was already the practice in the Antiguan schools.⁸⁰ When writing in 1820, Dawes held the Antiguan policies as precedents for openness in CMS schools, and this expectation likely shaped his correspondence with London.

As Dawes may have anticipated, the CMS committee members chose to follow the methods already in place in Antigua. They resolved that all CMS schools in the West Indies would "be open to persons of all Religious Denominations; provided that the Scholars agree to conform to the course of Religious Instruction, which shall be therein established." Their second point addressed Dawes's question regarding personnel and

⁷⁹ It should be noted that this expansion of Antigua never really materialized, as was documented above. Dawes's tour was delayed until 1823, and the Bishop's arrival two years later put an end to any thought of expansion beyond Antigua.

⁸⁰ Dawes to Pratt, 1 April 1820.

schools of other denominations. They declared that Dawes was “at liberty to employ, as Teachers, such persons as he can obtain, who are duly qualified.” It seems that the CMS leadership in London recognized the dearth of qualified and theologically compatible candidates. The committee members continued and addressed the subject of denominational identity, but this clause was subsequently struck through. The minutes read as follows: “~~without respect to the denomination which they may belong.~~”⁸¹ Clearly, the committee members had again chosen to follow their Antiguan policy of openness at this meeting on 8 January 1821, and it seems that someone returned to the minutes to strike (quite literally) this decision from the records.⁸² In 1820, both William Dawes and his superiors in London were content with the ecumenical cooperation underway in Antigua, and they planned to proceed in a similar manner as they expanded the scope of their work.

Dawes was thoroughly Evangelical, and he could be quite forthright. He exhibited this combination in a survey of Antiguan religion and education that he offered to the newly arrived governor, Sir Benjamin D’Urban. D’Urban had requested a summary statement on Antiguan schools and “any observations . . . as to the existing state and deficiency of religious instruction and education throughout the Island.”⁸³ Dawes complied with the governor’s wish, and, much to the CMS secretaries’ chagrin, he zealously responded to the second aspect of the governor’s inquiry. After discussing the

⁸¹ CMS Archive, Minutes, III/7/G/C/1, Vol. 5, p. 729.

⁸² That being said, this was not an attempt to expunge every trace of the resolution, as the original text remained discernible beneath the second layer of ink. Moreover, in the section preceding these resolutions (and on the same page), there was the record of discussions with Moravians in London regarding the possibility of CMS support for Moravian teachers in Antigua.

⁸³ Benjamin D’Urban to William Dawes, 4 September 1823, CMS Archive, V/1/C/W/M/1, p. 267.

schools on the island, including their attendance figures and religious affiliation, Dawes turned his sights to the island's Anglican clergy. His disparagement was pointed and thorough; Dawes reported:

I have attended the preaching of every beneficed Clergyman now in the Island, and with [one] exception, have not heard more than 5 or 6 sermons which by a person modestly acquainted with the peculiar and distinguishing doctrines of Christianity, would be characterized as being in any tolerable measure founded on those doctrines or on that excellent and faithful summary of them which is contained in the Doctrinal Articles of the Church.⁸⁴

Having exhibited little restraint as he evaluated the Antiguan priests, it seems that Dawes was either unafraid of the colonial governor's response or, perhaps, confident that D'Urban was sympathetic to this unflattering presentation of the island's priests.⁸⁵

Juxtaposed to Dawes's criticisms of the Anglican clergy were his affirmations of the Antiguan Methodists and Moravians. Dawes even went as far as to mention how he was "in the habit of attending the Sunday evening service in the Methodist Chapel" in St. John's and had attended the Methodist "Chapel at English Harbour many times."

Dawes's endorsement of Antiguan Methodism did not stop there, however. With words that earned the "disapprobation" of the committee,⁸⁶ Dawes praised the Methodists' "wholesome discipline" and explained that proportionally there were "considerably more [Methodists] who walk consistently with and worthy of the vocation with which they are

⁸⁴ William Dawes to Benjamin D'Urban, October 1823, CMS Archive, V/1/C/W/M/1, p. 270.

⁸⁵ This was not Dawes's first criticism of the parochial clergy in the Leeward Islands. In October 1820, Dawes wrote to the committee members and, arguing against creating narrowly Anglican schools, made a thinly veiled swipe at the clergy and a disparaging mention of "the state of religion in the West Indies." William Dawes to the Secretaries, 16 October 1820, CMS Archive, V/1/C/W/O/31.

⁸⁶ CMS Archive, Minutes, III/7/G/C/1, Vol. 6, page 577.

called then among any other denomination of Christians in this Island.”⁸⁷ These remarks submitted to the governor of Antigua revealed Dawes’s Evangelical ecumenism and his hostility toward the Anglican establishment on the island.

This unguarded commentary on the state of Antiguan Anglicanism documents Dawes’s presuppositions, but the reaction from London coupled with Dawes’s subsequent response offer an illuminating glimpse of the CMS’s delicate position vis-à-vis the church hierarchy. In their summation of Dawes’s letter to D’Urban, the committee members sterilized Dawes’s language in their minutes, paraphrasing his criticism of the clergy thus: “notice of the want of sound preaching in the Parochial Churches.” They also touched on the other facets of Dawes’s report to D’Urban. After recounting additional correspondence from Antigua, the secretaries articulated a resolution that captured their displeasure with Dawes’s lack of discretion. They pointed out that this was “an official communication to His Excellency Sir Benj. D’Urban.” Dawes was writing as a representative of the Society—this was not merely a note exchanged between friends in confidence. Citing Dawes’s harsh condemnation of the parochial clergy and the mention of his own attendance of Methodist chapels, the committee members observed that “such statements being irrelevant and of a nature, if made public, to injure the Society; that the Committee, therefore, feel it incumbent on them to record their disapprobation of the statements, and altogether withhold from them their sanction.” They went on to declare that Dawes was to be directed to avoid “such measures and statements” in the future, and they identified remarks such as these as “a deviation from the objects specifically proposed by the Society, in carrying on its

⁸⁷ Dawes to D’Urban, October 1823. Of course, most of the Christians in Antigua were Anglicans, so Dawes’s compliment to Methodists came primarily at the expense of his fellow Anglicans.

operations in the West India Islands.”⁸⁸ Clearly, Dawes had struck a nerve when he directly criticized the members of his own denomination while, simultaneously, mentioning his connection to Antiguan Methodism. In this moment of incautious honesty, Dawes was dangerously close to embodying the suspicions of the CMS’s critics, who detected traces of reckless enthusiasm and contempt for the non-Evangelical manifestations of the Church of England. The members of the committee recognized the potential harm in Dawes’s letter to D’Urban, and it was this recognition that generated their concern.

Dawes was stung by the committee’s criticism, and, while he was apologetic to an extent, he chose to explain his motivations rather than recanting. He began with an expression of his incredulity at having earned the committee’s censure. Launching into his defense, Dawes argued that he had fulfilled the Governor’s request as specified and with integrity. He also expressed his belief “that the friends of Religion in England should be acquainted with the real state of it here.” Beyond this, Dawes expressed his belief that it was not a coincidence that had prompted the Governor to inquire of him as to the state of religion in Antigua. “I considered myself as called upon, therefore, in the course of God’s Providence, to give such evidence, as, had it transpired here.” And having “long mourned over the exceedingly corrupt state of the Clergy generally in this part of the world,” Dawes believed that the failure to answer candidly would have come at great cost: “I should have incurred the guilt of disobedience to the Governor, and of a dereliction of duty to God, to the cause of Religion generally, and to that Church especially of which I esteem it a happiness and privilege to be a member.”⁸⁹ In his own

⁸⁸ CMS Archive, Minutes, III/7/G/C/1, Vol. 6, p. 576-577.

⁸⁹ William Dawes to Josiah Pratt, 12 May 1824, CMS Archive, V/1/C/W/M/1.

defense, Dawes asserted that he had acted honorably by providing forthright answers, and he expressed his belief that his remarks had not compromised his fidelity to the Church of England. Moreover, Dawes's remarks convey his disappointment with the committee's reaction and subtly suggest that they were compromising, perhaps out of naivety as to the realities of Anglicanism in the slave society of Antigua, Evangelical principles for the sake of decorum or respectability.

This episode sheds light upon the tension between pragmatic concern in the metropole and Evangelical conviction in the field. The distanced observer can see both parties' perspectives. The committee recognized the incendiary potential that Dawes's comments carried, and the committee members' fears were realized in a manner they could not have envisioned at the time. Two years later, in 1825, Dawes wrote from Antigua to report that the newly arrived Bishop had the letter in his hands.⁹⁰ There can be little doubt that Dawes's letter to D'Urban tintured Bishop Coleridge's opinion of Dawes and precluded the possibility of cooperation between the two members of the Church of England. And, as will be documented below, this failure would prove to be a central factor in the demise of the CMS mission in the Leeward Islands. Clearly, the committee members' concern had been well founded.

At the same time, Dawes's defense is compelling given its Evangelical context. Neither Anglican vestments nor an Oxbridge education were guarantors that the gospel

⁹⁰ William Dawes to the Committee, 29 July 1825, CMS Archive V/1/C/W/O/31. Dawes did not speculate how the Bishop came into possession of the letter. It seems plausible that either Governor D'Urban (who was transferred to Demerara and Essequibo in 1824), the letter's recipient, may have been involved in the transmission or that the letter had been accessible in a compendium of official correspondence. In the latter scenario, the Bishop must have been guided to the letter, as it seems highly unlikely that among his first tasks upon arrival was a thorough reading of gubernatorial correspondence.

was being preached in a given parish. Dawes's dismissive remarks must be seen in light of the Evangelical notion of "real Christianity," which was attached to theological veracity, not ecclesiastical office. Moreover, Dawes had taken action with the hope of effecting change. Had he had balked at this unique opportunity to appraise Governor D'Urban of the true nature of religious practice in Antigua, Dawes would have been responsible for perpetuating an unpalatable status quo in the Church he loved dearly. Ultimately, in Dawes's estimation, turning a blind eye to the shortcomings of the parochial clergy would have entailed a costly silence, as the eternal fate of Antiguan parishioners potentially hung in the balance.

In the decade of labor before the Bishop's arrival, William Dawes directed a program that was operated in a fashion unlike the approach utilized by the CMS in most contexts. With the approval of the CMS committee, Dawes directed an Evangelical educational program that employed Methodists and Moravians and supported the schools operated by those two denominations. Clearly, Dawes's dual identity as an Evangelical and Anglican guided his decision making in Antigua, and it was not always apparent which facet of his identity was to the fore. When responding to Governor D'Urban's request for a summation of Antiguan religion and education, it seemed that Dawes's Evangelical presuppositions tinted his Anglican affiliation. With Dawes's criticism of the Anglican clergy and acknowledgement of attending Methodist chapels, a reader with a critical eye might have concluded that this agent of the CMS was an Evangelical first and an Anglican second.

Moreover, such a conclusion regarding the CMS mission in Antigua could reasonably be defended. The CMS program in Antigua (which had been intended to be extended to other islands) was an effort dependent upon ecumenical cooperation. Just

as the execution of the program was not confined to the Church of England, the aims of the CMS were not narrowly Anglican either. In a sense, the CMS leaders' designs were altruistic in that they hoped to provide the slaves with education and introduce them to the gospel, all without the expectation that the beneficiaries would join the Church of England. Of course, incorporating enslaved Africans into Antiguan Anglican parish life was not a viable option, but the CMS must be recognized for undertaking work that extended beyond adding numbers to denominational registries. While these considerations counter notions of Evangelicals' singular focus on proselytization, there was no doubt that the project was an Evangelical undertaking in that it was supported by Evangelicals in England, executed by Evangelicals (from three denominations), and it held broad Evangelical goals rather than strictly Anglican objectives. These aspects of the CMS's program were not lost on Bishop Coleridge upon his arrival, and the changes that the Bishop's arrival brought must be examined now.

'Making Bible Christians' in the Bishop's Islands

The consecration in 1824 and arrival in 1825 of William Hart Coleridge as the first Bishop of Barbados had significant ramifications for Dawes and the CMS. At first blush, it would seem that the long-awaited appointment of a colonial bishop would have been a welcomed development by the churchmen within the CMS. Such sentiments were articulated in the CMS annual report for 1825; the bishops' and archdeacons' appointments to Jamaica and the Leeward Islands were predicted to awaken "lively hopes on behalf of the population of the West-India Colonies."⁹¹ In reality, Coleridge's

⁹¹ *Proceedings of the CMS, 1825*, 190.

arrival marked the beginning of a period of acrimony that resulted ultimately in the termination of the CMS's work in the Leeward Islands within five years.

In a sense, the relationship between Dawes and the Bishop (and his Archdeacon) was doomed from the outset. Beyond differences of ecclesiology, theology, and morality, there was the letter from Dawes to D'Urban, which fell into the Bishop's hands shortly after his arrival in the Leeward Islands. Coleridge, a close friend of Keble, was a high churchman, who looked askance at Evangelicals.⁹² When Dawes first called upon the bishop to offer a summary of the CMS's work, the bishop relayed the following message: "I am afraid I can't receive them [Dawes and associates], I am in no way connected with that Society." In the same communication, Bishop Coleridge gave warning that the ecclesiastical laws of the metropole would be applied thoroughly in his bishopric.⁹³ From the beginning of his tenure, the Bishop made no attempt to accommodate Dawes and the CMS, and he served notice that Evangelical Anglican irregularities would not be countenanced in his diocese.

Dawes began to submit reports to London detailing how the Bishop and his Archdeacon, Thomas Parry, were beginning to implement measures that adversely affected the CMS's program.⁹⁴ In a letter labeled "Private," Dawes outlined the early consequences of the episcopal presence. According to Dawes, the Archdeacon's ideas "of clerical infallibility & female insignificance" were the cause of Parry's disapproval of

⁹² Coleridge offered the position of archdeacon to Keble. The latter declined because of his father's poor health. Goodridge, *Facing the Challenge of Emancipation*, 31-32.

⁹³ William Dawes to the Committee, 2 July 1825, CMS Archive, V/1/C/W/O/31.

⁹⁴ Parry would succeed Coleridge as Bishop of Barbados in 1842. However, it was at this time that the initial diocese was divided into the dioceses of Antigua, Barbados, and British Guiana.

the female societies on the island. Dawes produced a quotation that portrayed Archdeacon Parry as an out-of-touch academic, who knew “no more of the moral perplexities and miseries of the colonies, than if he had dropt from one of the planets.”⁹⁵ Not only was the Archdeacon a religious foreigner in Dawes’s estimation, he was an outsider in the Antiguan colonial context.

Thomas Parry, the archdeacon who would later become bishop, warrants discussion as it was he who played the central role in eliminating any possibility of the CMS’s educational program continuing. In October 1826, Dawes wrote to London explaining how Parry considered negotiations between the Bishop and the CMS “as of no force.” Further, the Archdeacon had “resolved not to nominate any Methodist to the Bishop” for teaching jobs in schools associated with the Church of England. Dawes also described the personnel changes that Parry had already implemented, unraveling the Evangelical patchwork Dawes had created over the course of the preceding decade.⁹⁶

Parry was a churchman with little patience for irregularities, and his later writings offer insights into his churchmanship. After ascending to the episcopacy Parry published a series of his ordination sermons. There were only five sermons published in the volume, and one was devoted to “Church Conformity.” In that sermon, he exhorted the ordinands to adhere to the Articles of Religion and honor their “promises to [the] Book of Common Prayer.”⁹⁷ Parry reminded the ordinands that “whether Church principles be popular or not,” they were, after all, “*our* [Parry and the priests entering his

⁹⁵ William Dawes to the Committee, 29 July 1825, CMS Archive, V/1/C/W/O/31.

⁹⁶ Minutes, CMS Archive, III/7/G/C/1, Vol. 8, p. 338.

⁹⁷ Thomas Parry, *Ordination Vows: Practically Considered, in a Series of Sermons* (London: Francis & John Rivington, 1846), 58–59.

diocese] principles.” In Parry’s conception, proper adherence to “the directions of our own Church” could provide a course between the extremes of “Popery on the one hand, as well as against Puritanism on the other.”⁹⁸ Parry’s identification of “Puritanism” as the threat at one end of the spectrum could be seen as an attempt to evoke memories of the religious violence belonging to the English Civil War and link nineteenth-century Evangelicals with a revolutionary tradition. Thomas Parry, throughout his ecclesiastical career in the West Indies, promoted conformity to the Church of England’s regulations, and his campaign against the irregularities introduced by Dawes in Antigua on behalf of the CMS was an early manifestation of that impulse.

Meanwhile, as the months passed, Dawes’s frustration mounted. According to Dawes, the Bishop and Archdeacon’s aim was “not the inculcation of real vital Xtianity, but almost exclusively, the accomplishment of what will produce a directly opposite effect, by supplanting the C.M.S. Schools, & abolishing the Wesleyan Methodist Mission altogether.”⁹⁹ In another letter, Dawes described how the Archdeacon sought to wrest the education of a group of slaves from Evangelical hands, but this was nothing in comparison to the blow to morality resulting from the Bishop’s toleration of dances hosted by planters. Dawes made little effort to check his contempt; he asserted, “I think it not too much to say that he [Coleridge] has compromised his Dignity, his Religion & every proper feeling, to procure favor with the Planters, & that, of some of the most licentious among them.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Parry, *Ordination Vows*, 60.

⁹⁹ William Dawes to the Committee, 19 September 1825, CMS Archive V/1/C/W/O/31.

¹⁰⁰ William Dawes to the Secretaries, 15 November 1825, CMS Archive, V/1/C/W/O/31.

Writing in November of 1825, Dawes speculated as to the consequences that would result from the Bishop's seizing control of the CMS's educational system. Under the Archdeacon and Bishop's leadership, "All the pious Teachers & Catechists would be dismissed" unless they agreed to break their ties with Methodism. They would be replaced by "immoral or profligate young men, & superintended by Ministers who have no experimental knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus."¹⁰¹ In October of 1826, Dawes penned a defense of the educational system he had developed in the Leeward Islands. He explained that the Methodists he collaborated with were willing to look past "party affiliation," and he had done likewise. In what could function as a summation of his project, Dawes asserted that his aim was to "make Bible Christians," and he had enlisted the help of those who would advance this cause.¹⁰² Within three years of that letter's composition, Dawes's name would drop from the CMS Annual Report, as would the mission on Antigua.¹⁰³ In the CMS report for 1827, one bleak sentence summarized the work on Antigua: "The numbers of Children attending for instruction in this Island are much diminished."¹⁰⁴ Ultimately, the CMS experiment in Evangelical cooperation proved to be untenable within the diocese of a High Churchman.

To this point, we have confined our examination to Dawes and the CMS, but a brief look at Bishop Coleridge's position is necessary. Near the crux of the disagreement between the CMS and Coleridge was the issue of control. Essentially, the CMS sought the Bishop's blessing to carry out their work in his diocese, and they wished to do so

¹⁰¹ William Dawes to the Secretaries, 15 November 1825, CMS Archive, V/1/C/W/O/31. This was Dawes's second letter of the day.

¹⁰² William Dawes to the Secretaries, October 1826, CMS Archive, V/1/C/W/O/31.

¹⁰³ Dawes and Antigua were listed lastly in 1829.

¹⁰⁴ *CMS Proceedings, 1827*, 166.

without his direct oversight or interference. The Bishop insisted that, just as in episcopal sees in England, he would control any Church affairs in his own diocese. It seems that the Secretaries of the CMS and Dawes wished to enjoy the benefits of belonging to the established Church without submitting to that Church's authority.¹⁰⁵

Although William Dawes (and by extension the CMS) and Bishop Coleridge belonged to the same church and shared the common objective of improving slaves' lives in anticipation of emancipation, a variety of obstacles prevented cooperation between the two parties. Dawes and Coleridge adopted different postures as they approached proprietors who made no pretense of Christian living. Dawes's attitude was harsh and dismissive, while Coleridge was willing to interact with such persons. Varied theological stances, coupled with different social outlooks, fostered suspicion and prevented cooperation between the two men. Given that Bishop Coleridge's ministerial duty potentially encompassed all residents of the Leeward Islands (unlike Dawes who labored to advance slave education), the Bishop's decision to associate with all proprietors, regardless of their moral station, is understandable. Moreover, Coleridge's office required a degree of decorum as he engaged planters, while Dawes's position allowed for candor in assessing the planters' morality and social habits. Most importantly, these two men perceived Evangelicalism quite differently. From within the movement, Dawes was, of course, sympathetic—he could take pride in the program under his direction. Conversely, Bishop Coleridge was suspicious of Evangelical designs

¹⁰⁵ On this episode see: Hans Cnattingius, *Bishops and Societies: a study of Anglican colonial and missionary expansion, 1698-1850* (London: S.P.C.K., 1952), 148-158. To achieve their designs, the Secretaries submitted an appeal to the Archbishop of Canterbury, who replied in support of the colonial bishops and expressed his regret that the matter had not been taken to the two West Indian bishops directly. Letters from the Archbishop and the Bishops of Barbados and Jamaica are in the CMS archive; see: C/W /O2/B/1 – C/W O2/D/1.

to subvert his authority. In his estimation, he was dealing with a faction that elevated its Evangelical identity above its attachment to the Church of England. Ultimately, the various differences that separated Dawes and Coleridge proved greater than their shared Anglican identity, and their respective agendas were incompatible.

Conclusion

The mission of the CMS in the Leeward Islands was irregular in numerous respects. Under the supervision of a lone layman, the CMS program in Antigua and the surrounding islands was shaped largely by William Dawes, who developed a program of education and relief. To achieve this end, Dawes sought the cooperation of like-minded Methodists and Moravians. While expedient and efficient, the choice to rely on non-Anglicans would prove costly when Antigua became part to the Diocese of Barbados. Even as Dawes and his associates expanded the scope of their work in Antigua, the CMS secretaries exhibited a degree of ambivalence toward the mission, which seemed to fall outside their central interest.¹⁰⁶

William Dawes was connected to Antiguan Methodism through his wife's familial connections to the Hart sisters of Antigua, and he in turn would fuse Evangelical Anglican missionary work and Antiguan Methodism. With the invaluable contributions of Elizabeth and Charles Thwaites, an inter-racial Methodist couple, the CMS program expanded from education into the realm of assistance to Antiguan women of color.

¹⁰⁶ The mission in the Leeward Islands was launched just as India was opened to missionaries with the revision of the East India Company's charter in 1813. This great prospect in the East excited the secretaries of the CMS (along with the leadership of all British Evangelical missionary societies.) The CMS leaders' ambitions with regard to India were articulated in the annual report for 1814. "Your Committee, will on this occasion begin with India; for, to India, the Society has ever looked as the most promising and extensive field of labour." *CMS Proceedings, 1814*, 284.

Throughout its three decades, the CMS mission in Antigua was largely dependent upon Methodists and, to a lesser extent, Moravians.

As in every field, practical problems arose in the West Indies. Beyond general shortages of personnel common to most foreign fields, political and social realities presented unique obstacles in the British West Indies. The CMS's entanglement with slavery and the necessity of retaining the planters' confidence may have diminished interest among Evangelical Anglicans, who the CMS recruited to send as missionaries elsewhere.

The Leeward Islands, along with the greater British West Indies, was a field distinguished by unique features, and the greatest of these was plantation slavery. The slave societies of the Caribbean posed a host of challenges for each of the Evangelical missionary societies operating there, but the CMS faced an additional hurdle. The SPG and parochial clergy both had become supportive, to varying extents, of the slave system in the British West Indies. Coupled with the fact that the Caribbean was (unofficially) SPG territory beyond the designs of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East, the CMS found itself in a context fraught with potential obstacles. In their own dealings with slavery, Dawes and his associates encountered practical and moral hindrances.

Ironically, in a context that posed numerous threats to the society's agenda in Antigua and other Leeward Islands, the single greatest obstacle to the CMS's mission came with the arrival of a bishop belonging to the same church. Having constructed an Evangelical network of teachers and assistants, Dawes seemed to be the head of a non-denominational enterprise rather than an Anglican mission. In addition to the facts on the ground, Dawes's pointedly Evangelical criticisms of the West Indian parochial clergy

and endorsements of Antiguan Methodism raised Bishop Coleridge's suspicions. Mutual mistrust and divergent agendas precluded the possibility of cooperation between the CMS and Bishop Coleridge. As this became apparent, the CMS leadership in London sought to work around this impediment to their work, but the church hierarchy could not endorse their plan to maintain control within the Bishop's diocese. This failure doomed the mission in Antigua as the Society's leaders chose to withdraw rather than cooperate with the Archdeacon and Bishop. This once promising campaign was terminated not because of indigenous difficulties but because of theological and ecclesiastical divisions within the Church of England.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in Sierra Leone

Introduction

The Methodist mission in Sierra Leone began relatively late (in 1811) and was small in scope throughout our period of inquiry. Although it was of shorter duration and limited in size, the Methodist mission to Sierra Leone faced a number of obstacles. As missionaries' relations with an existing community of Freetown Methodists are of central importance to the chapter, the first section of the chapter will offer an account of the migration of Methodism from Nova Scotia to Sierra Leone in 1792. The Nova Scotian Methodists' background will be discussed along with the challenges they faced upon arrival in Sierra Leone. As was the case in most venues, there were cases of missionary misconduct that affected the Methodist mission in Sierra Leone. Missionaries' detrimental actions were a limited problem in Sierra Leone, and they will be examined in the chapter's second section. Thirdly, the relationship between the missionaries of the WMMS and the CMS will be analyzed, including examples of cooperation and moments of hostility. In the chapter's penultimate segment, the damage wrought by disease and death will be documented. Finally, the chapter will conclude with discussion of the contentious relationship between Methodist missionaries and the Methodist Society in Freetown, including that relationship's demise in 1821.

Methodism in Sierra Leone prior to 1811

Methodism traversed a circuitous route as it migrated from England to the American colonies, on to Nova Scotia, and ultimately to Sierra Leone. The movement's

initiation in West Africa represents an intriguing episode that provides a quintessential example of the links that bound the Atlantic world together. When English Methodist missionaries arrived in Sierra Leone in 1811, Methodism in Sierra Leone was approaching the close of its first decade there. Methodism had been established in Sierra Leone as part of a second attempt by the Sierra Leone Company to orchestrate the migration of black loyalists from the Canadian Maritimes to Sierra Leone.

As an incentive to foment rebellion in American slave territories and gain the assistance of the slaves, Lord Dunmore promised that any black volunteers would be given their freedom at the conclusion of the American War of Independence. With the British surrender at Yorktown in 1782, the British faced the task of settling the slaves-turned-soldiers and their families. Dunmore's proclamation had been issued with the assumption that the British would prevail and would retain control of the American colonies. Many blacks who were in British custody at the war's end were evacuated to Jamaica, but there was also a contingent of black loyalists that was relocated to Nova Scotia.¹ Close to three thousand men, women, and children were manumitted and settled in Nova Scotia by the British. The black settlers received plots of land that were smaller than white settlers' allotments, and their situation proved to be far from ideal. Within a short time many of the relocated families were struggling to survive the harsh climate and were unable to sustain themselves on the barren parcels of land that they had been given.² Difficulties attached to the harsh terrain were not the only obstacles the black settlers faced—both dispossessed whites and free (and already established) blacks

¹ Lamin O. Sanneh, *Abolitionists Abroad: American Blacks and the Making of Modern West Africa* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999), 31-32.

² Sylvia R. Frey and Betty Wood, *Water from the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton University Press, 1992), 191-194.

opposed the new arrivals, who were viewed as rivals competing for limited resources. The liberated slaves faced subtle forms of opposition, such as being consistently underbid for work, and there were brazen acts such as the destruction of twenty of their homes.³

In spite of the temporal difficulties, the recently liberated slaves persisted in the religious traditions they brought with them from the American colonies. There were Baptists, Methodists, and members of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion among those who moved to Nova Scotia. The Methodist Annual Conference *Minutes*, which did not mention any black Methodists in Nova Scotia until 1788, claimed two hundred black Methodists in society in subsequent years and there may have been a higher number in reality.⁴

As their frustrations mounted, the liberated black loyalists took action. They heard of a colony being planned in Sierra Leone, and they sent a delegation to London to meet with the organizers. The representatives explained the difficulties that attended life in Nova Scotia, including the fact that they had not received all that had been promised from the British government.⁵ The Sierra Leone Company directors were quick to embrace the Nova Scotians, and a seemingly symbiotic union was forged. The Directors gained a stable, English-speaking, civilized, Christian population to rebuild their colony

³ Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History* (Montreal; Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 38-40.

⁴ Rack, Henry D., ed., *The Methodist Societies: The Minutes of Conference*, vol. 10, The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011) 612-761. According to Winks (*The Blacks in Canada*, p. 57), "there were well over two hundred Negro Wesleyans in the larger Nova Scotian towns."

⁵ *Substance of the Report of the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company* (London: James Phillips, 1794), 4-5.

around, while the black loyalists were given the chance to escape their untenable circumstances in Nova Scotia and start anew in the continent of their origin.

Following the initial encounter in London, the directors dispatched Lt. John Clarkson to Nova Scotia and issued a declaration detailing the agreement between the two parties. Clarkson, who faced elements of resistance in Nova Scotia, was responsible for the screening of those who applied for passage to Sierra Leone.⁶ Clarkson was to obtain “satisfactory testimonials of their character,” with special attention given to applicants’ “honesty, sobriety, and industry.” Those whose upstanding character was verified were promised passage to Sierra Leone, where the Company promised each man “a grant of not less than twenty acres of land for himself, ten for his wife, and five for every child.” The declaration also assured that “the civil, military, personal, and commercial rights and duties of blacks and whites shall be the same, and secured in the same manner.” Likewise, the directors reproduced the Act of Parliament that incorporated the Sierra Leone Company, which prohibited any contact between the Company’s agents and slavery.⁷ With promises of land, freedom, and equality, it is easy to see why more than a thousand black Nova Scotians chose to leave for Sierra Leone.

The first of the vessels bearing the Nova Scotians reached Sierra Leone in February of 1792, and these (at least) three-times displaced peoples disembarked singing a hymn of praise.⁸ As a number of historians have pointed out, Sierra Leone’s Christian

⁶ Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 66-73. Local authorities in Nova Scotia realized that the need to evacuate a large party of black loyalists reflected poorly on their handling of the matter. Therefore, they were initially reluctant to cooperate with Clarkson and those he represented.

⁷ *Report of the Sierra Leone Company, 1794*, 4-6.

⁸ Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 36.

identity was established with the arrival of these black Evangelicals and not with the later arrival of the British missionary societies.⁹ This created an unusual context in which the first and leading proponents of Christianity were colonists of African descent. The Nova Scotians' skin color can obscure the reality that, just like the Europeans, they were foreigners in Sierra Leone even though they were of African ancestry.

While there was a variety of denominations, including Baptists and members of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, represented among the Nova Scotians, the Methodist presence was considerable, as most of the black Nova Scotian Methodists chose to join the Sierra Leone project.¹⁰ Black Methodist pastors, such as Moses Wilkinson, made the voyage, allowing entire Methodist congregations to be transplanted across the Atlantic. Thomas Coke described how many of the Nova Scotians "had received their serious impressions under the ministry of our [Methodists] preachers, and had joined the Methodist societies in America." When the voyage to Sierra Leone severed their ties with Methodist connections in North America, the Nova Scotian Methodists maintained "an attachment to our doctrine and discipline, and cherished their partiality for both when they had no longer any connection with us."¹¹ Not only did the Methodists survive the move across the Atlantic, they managed to flourish. Coke summarized their progress by describing how their "exemplary lives" and "regular preaching" enabled the increase of their congregation. According to Coke, the Freetown

⁹ Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa, 1450-1950* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 180-181; Andrew Walls, "The Nova Scotian Settlers and Their Religion," *The Sierra Leone Bulletin of Religion* 1 (1959): 21-23.

¹⁰ Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 57.

¹¹ Thomas Coke, *An Interesting Narrative of a Mission, Sent to Sierra Leone, in Africa: by the Methodists, in 1811: to Which Is Prefixed, an Account of the Rise, Progress, Disasters, and Present State of That Colony: the Whole Interspersed with a Variety of Remarkable Particulars* (London: Paris & Son, 1812), 17.

Methodists even managed to construct a “preaching-house” that could accommodate four-hundred persons.¹² The experiment in relocating freed slaves from Nova Scotia to Sierra Leone proved to be a great boon for Methodism.

Methodist growth in Sierra Leone was maintained during a chaotic period of the colony’s early history, and this troubled period contributed to problems that would surface in later interactions with English Methodist missionaries. Among the array of factors that had made life in Nova Scotia undesirable, the failure of the British government to deliver reasonable tracts of land was the single greatest objection held by the black settlers. John Clarkson, who had witnessed the unsuitable arrangements in Nova Scotia, endeavored to avoid the replication of a similarly unjust distribution of land in Sierra Leone. Despite Clarkson’s intentions and efforts, the division of land among the Nova Scotians in Sierra Leone proved to be quite contentious.

The crux of the problem was simple: the Sierra Leone Company had promised larger parcels of land than it could deliver (at least expediently). Just as Lord Dunmore had done a decade earlier, the Company had formulated promises that depended upon assumptions. The directors’ central assumption was that they would have adequate arable land to assign to the settlers, but this proved to be an unrealistic expectation. The directors had been misinformed as to the quality of the land adjacent to the settlement at Freetown, and they described this as “a disappointment of the most serious kind, to which may be ascribed many of the unexpected charges that have attended the establishment of the colony.”¹³ The promise of land, which had been issued to attract black Nova Scotians, was made with no certain idea of the number of persons who

¹² Coke, *Interesting Narrative of a Mission*, 18-19.

¹³ *Report of the Sierra Leone Company, 1794*, 15-16.

would be entitled to the plots. As the figure swelled to over one thousand persons, the directors found themselves in a position that made their initial promises of land unrealistic.¹⁴

Once the entire fleet of sixteen ships arrived in Sierra Leone, the Company's problems mounted. Ill health inhibited progress on most fronts, and the number of fatalities began to rise rapidly. During the first rainy season it was estimated that 800 of the Nova Scotians were incapacitated by fever and other illnesses.¹⁵ Fifty-seven Europeans and ninety-eight Nova Scotians died within months of arrival in Sierra Leone.¹⁶ Illness forced the Company's surveyor to quit the colony. Human error also contributed to the colony's difficulties. A lack of competent leadership proved to be an ongoing obstacle.¹⁷ Additionally, the soldiers that had been sent to assist and protect the settlement proved to be a liability and were sent back to England. Tensions with surrounding peoples and European slavers and traders' open animosity were ongoing impediments to the colony's growth and stability. A French squadron's attack in October 1794 represented a particularly low point for the venture in Sierra Leone. The French seized or destroyed "[a]ll the moveable Property of the Company," and they captured "several" ships. The directors estimated that the loss at the hands of the French totaled £52,000.¹⁸ While this particular French raid cost the Company dearly, the

¹⁴ *Report of the Sierra Leone Company, 1794*, 7. The report mentions the directors' "great surprise" at the final figure of 1,196 persons who opted to leave for Sierra Leone.

¹⁵ *Report of the Sierra Leone Company, 1794*, 11.

¹⁶ Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*, 40.

¹⁷ Stephen J. Braidwood, *Black Poor and White Philanthropists: London's Blacks and the Foundation of the Sierra Leone Settlement, 1786-1791* (Liverpool U.P., 1992), 188-191.

¹⁸ House of Commons, "Report from the Committee on the Petition of the Court Directors of the Sierra Leone Company," *Reports of Committees, 1801-1802*, (100), 2.12, p. 9.

larger conflict with France hurt the project in Sierra Leone as transportation costs between England and West Africa rose considerably.¹⁹ Thus, during the Sierra Leone experiment's first years, a host of problems contributed to the slow pace of progress toward the directors' objective.

The consequences of these various problems must be examined on two fronts: the impact on the colony's development and, more particularly, the effects upon the Methodist immigrants from Nova Scotia. The totality of the problems facing the Sierra Leone Company forced the directors to dissolve the company, leaving the Crown to take direct control of Sierra Leone. In 1806, the transfer was made official with Parliament's approval. The rights and privileges that the Company had enjoyed were rendered "null and void," and it was "divested of and from all that Tract or District of Land commonly called . . . *The Sierra Leone Peninsula*, and all Forts, Castles, Buildings, or Estate [*sic*]." This conveyance came at the directors' initiation, as they had "expressed a Desire to make, and have humbly intreated [*sic*] His Majesty to accept a Surrender to His Majesty of all the Tracts or District of Land . . . with all Rights, Privileges, and Advantages granted to them" previously.²⁰ The immediate results of the mounting problems in the colony were the directors' realization that they could not sustain the project and their subsequent forfeiture of direct control of the colony. Their venture, although driven by an altruistic humanitarian motive, was commercial in nature, and the directors had to consider their shareholders' investments as they made decisions regarding the Company's settlement in

¹⁹ "Report from the Committee on the Petition," 1801-1802, pp. 7-9.

²⁰ House of Commons, "A Bill For transferring to His Majesty, certain Possessions and Rights vested in the *Sierra Leone Company*," 1806-1807, (69), pp. 1-2.

Sierra Leone.²¹ Hopes of profitability waned rapidly, and the directors' energies were devoted to mitigating the Company's losses.²² When considered as a commercial venture, the Sierra Leone Company was an outright failure. But, the Sierra Leone Company had been founded with a broader aim than mere profitability, and since figures such as William Wilberforce and Henry Thornton retained a degree of influence in Sierra Leonean affairs, all was not lost.

Of greater consequence than the colony's shift in structure, at least for Methodism in Sierra Leone, was the lingering distrust that the Nova Scotians harbored after a second British source of authority failed to deliver what had been promised. As Andrew Walls has noted, the Nova Scotians' cumulative experience must be recalled. These were persons who had begun their lives as slaves in the American South, survived the American War of Independence while aiding the losing side, were moved to Nova Scotia, and chose to leave Nova Scotia for Sierra Leone. Walls observed that their religious identity served as a cohesive force binding them together, and the Nova Scotians remained united regardless of their current position vis-à-vis the British authorities in Sierra Leone.²³ The Nova Scotians' misgivings, which had been engendered by the failures of the British government and the Evangelical Anglicans behind the Sierra Leone Company, tinted the settlers' dealings with figures connected to either of these two bodies. In particular, the Nova Scotians were uninterested in the work of Anglican colonial chaplains—who, in their identity as agents of the established

²¹ Philip D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 124–125.

²² Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*, 71.

²³ Walls, “The Nova Scotian Settlers,” 29.

Church and the CMS, represented both groups that the Nova Scotians viewed askance.²⁴ As later Methodist missionaries would discover, the Nova Scotians' suspicions extended to those with indirect connections to the British Government or the Church of England.

Melvill Horne's brief stint as a "missionary" in Sierra Leone offers a glimpse of the tension that later British Methodist missionaries would encounter.²⁵ Horne, who had served as a Methodist preacher and an Anglican curate, was influenced by Thomas Coke, and the latter recommended the former to the directors of the Sierra Leone Company for service in the colony.²⁶ Horne arrived in Sierra Leone in 1792, before Methodism's formal break from the Church of England. Horne's dual-identity as a Methodist and Evangelical Anglican was not the only unique facet of his tenure in Sierra Leone—he also worked in the period before the colony's composition was transformed by the influx of liberated Africans following 1807. Horne arrived in the same year as the Nova Scotians, and they, along with European colonists, would ultimately receive most of his ministerial efforts. Prior to his departure from England, he described how he had "often vowed unto Christ to preach him to the Heathens."²⁷ His plan to work beyond the Freetown Peninsula was rendered untenable when the Company's chaplain, Horne's

²⁴ Walls, "The Nova Scotian Settlers," 28.

²⁵ Although Horne left for Sierra Leone with the aim of missionary work among the local peoples of Sierra Leone (i.e., beyond Freetown), circumstances dictated that he take on the work of a chaplain in Freetown.

²⁶ John Vickers, *Thomas Coke: Apostle of Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969), 288; Schwarz, Suzanne, "'Apostolick Warfare': The Reverend Melvill Horne and the Development of Missions in The Late Eighteenth and Early Centuries," *The Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 85, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 71–72. Vickers claims that Horne was Coke's "protégé," and he also mentions the later doctrinal disagreements between the two.

²⁷ Melvill Horne, *Letters from the Rev. Melvill Horne, Late Curate of Madeley, Salop; Now Missionary at Sierra Leone, Africa, To His Friends at Madeley, Previous to His Departure from England*. (Madeley, 1792), 5.

cousin, Nathaniel Gilbert, was called back to London to attend to company business.²⁸

As his initial vision was altered by the Company's circumstances, Horne was disappointed as he was obligated to assume a role (chaplain for Europeans) that he did not desire. This initial and fundamental obstacle was exacerbated by the conflict between Horne and the Nova Scotian Christians.

A variety of issues fueled the discord between the chaplain and his charges, but there were two discernible strands that contributed to the enmity. First, and most importantly since it influenced the second, the Nova Scotians associated Horne with the Company establishment, which they had come to view with contempt.²⁹ Caught between religious and civil affairs, Horne was driven to despair. He described his predicament as follows:

Whether I will or not I must be a politician. The emergencies of things make it my duty to be an instrument of civil govern[en]t as well as a minster of Christ . . . I am obliged to vindicate the Company and their governors, and there is scarce a measure taken which I am not obliged to explain and justify. And what with the religion and politicks of the colony, I am ready to throw the business up in despair and to take a hasty leave of the place.³⁰

Horne found himself in an undesired and an unenviable position, but he consistently sided with the Company officials, although he was not always in their good graces.³¹

Theological and philosophical differences, which were undoubtedly accentuated by the politically tinged acrimony between Horne and the Nova Scotians, also precluded

²⁸ Suzanne Schwarz, "The Legacy of Melvill Horne," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 31, no. 2 (April 2007): 89. This Nathaniel Gilbert (1761-1807) was part of the Gilbert family of Antigua, which is discussed in the section dealing with Methodism in the West Indies. The Gilbert family brought Methodism to Antigua. Horne, like his cousin, was born in Antigua, although the former was raised in England.

²⁹ Schwarz, "'Apostolick Warfare,'" 75.

³⁰ Melvill Horne to Mary Fletcher, 10 June 1793, quoted in Schwarz, "'Apostolick Warfare,'" 75.

³¹ Schwarz, "'Apostolick Warfare,'" 75-76.

the possibility of an effective ministry by Horne in Freetown. Zachary Macaulay, the abolitionist and secretary of the Sierra Leone Company, witnessed Horne's travails and Macaulay's journal offers a glimpse of the conflict. In September 1793, Macaulay described how Horne preached a sermon designed "to expose the reigning of the folly of the Methodists of this place, the accounting dreams, visions and the most ridiculous bodily sensations as incontestable proofs of their acceptance with God and of their being filled with the Holy Ghost." Horne endeavored to demonstrate "that the Holy Spirit acted always in strict conformity to the word of God as delivered in the Scriptures," and that careful study of biblical passages could render greater (and more reliable) certainty. Horne's arguments failed to persuade the Nova Scotian Methodists, who found it to be "unpalatable."³²

Henry Beverhout, a Methodist preacher who was also a leader in the Nova Scotian agitation against the Sierra Leone Company, responded with a sermon in which "he warmly reprobated Mr. *Horne's* doctrine (without naming any one) as the doctrine of Satan." Beverhout also "endeavoured to restore to dreams and visions their ascendancy over the word of God." Ultimately, Macaulay "dissuaded Mr. *Horne* from taking any further notice of it," and he went on to speculate that "[p]erhaps it might be well if Dr. Coke or some delegate from him were to visit Freetown in order to establish some kind of discipline among the Methodists, for at present their government is a pure democracy, without subordination to anyone."³³ Macaulay's remarks, written in 1793, illustrate that there were political dimensions to this division as well. When he noted that the Nova

³² Zachary Macaulay, journal entries, 13 and 17 September 1793, in *Zachary Macaulay and the Development of the Sierra Leone Company, 1793-4, Part I: Journal, June – October 1793*, ed. Suzanne Schwarz (Leipzig : Institut für Afrikanistik, 2000), 61-62.

³³ Zachary Macaulay, journal entries, 13 and 17 September 1793, pp. 61-62.

Scotians were practicing “a pure democracy,” he likely had events in France in mind. As Macaulay’s observations reveal, the breach between Horne and the local Methodists was substantial and multidimensional.

While theological issues, such as biblical authority and pneumatology, were the ostensible sources of this conflict between Horne and the Nova Scotian Methodists, this conflict was also the result of the confrontation between Horne’s Enlightenment ideals and the Africans’ radically different assumptions about human existence. The influence of Enlightenment ideas upon the modern foreign missionary enterprise is widely recognized, with one leading missiologist describing it as “a child of the Enlightenment.”³⁴ Horne was wary of the Africans’ reliance upon preternatural manifestations, and his objections on this front were similar to those of other Evangelical Anglicans who encountered Africans’ enthusiastic Christian practices.³⁵

An interesting point of comparison can be drawn between Horne’s censure of the Nova Scotians and his description of his own efforts to discern God’s will for his own life. In 1792, Horne wrote from London to his former parishioners in Madeley, and he described his willingness to forfeit his life for the cause of evangelizing “the Heathens.” According to Horne, he agonized over the decision to leave Madeley in order to realize his long-held hope of ministry in Africa. Horne told his friends, “for your sake I have sought the Lord day and night with tears, that He would make my call

³⁴ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, American Society of Missiology Series no. 16 (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1991), 274. This is not the place to discuss the nature of “the Enlightenment,” but the Evangelical missionary enterprise exhibited several affinities with attributes generally associated with the Enlightenment project. Perhaps most notably, the progenitors of Evangelical missions were boldly optimistic, a trait held in common with prominent Enlightenment thinkers. Moreover, it seems that both parties were somewhat naïve as they articulated what the future of their respective enterprises would look like.

³⁵ Schwarz, “*Apostolick Warfare*,” 74.

clear, and not suffer Satan to deceive me as an angel of light. The result of all my prayers and meditations was, and still is, the belief that a dispensation of the gospel to the Africans is committed to my care.” Horne went on to acknowledge, “If I am deceived, I know of no remedy. I obey my best light, and leave the rest to the Lord.”³⁶ This letter, written a mere eighteen months before the conflict described by Macaulay in September 1793, seemingly eradicates much of the space between Horne and his Nova Scotian counterparts. Horne made no mention of consulting the Scriptures, and he candidly acknowledged the possibility that he may have misinterpreted what he took to be God’s leading. In an intriguing twist that revealed his linguistic, if not complete consistency, Horne’s discourse in Sierra Leone included his insistence that dreams and visions that were contrary to the Scriptures “might be considered as the suggestions of Satan transformed into an angel of light.”³⁷ Horne’s apparent hypocrisy was betrayed in his assumption that his “prayers and meditations,” which were made without the input of Christian brothers or sisters, had led him (presumably) to God’s will, while the Nova Scotians, who relied on dreams and visions in a communal context, were failing to do the same.³⁸ The means were different, but these were two different types of Christians acting in good faith as they sought to determine God’s will for their lives. In Horne’s estimation, the means that were familiar (and more reserved) were sound, and the Nova

³⁶ Horne, *Letters from the Rev. Melvill Horne*, 5.

³⁷ Macaulay, journal entry, 13 September 1793, p. 61.

³⁸ At least, Horne makes no mention of seeking the advice of his fellow Christians, which may have been complicated by the fact he was their curate and considering a move from the parish. Nevertheless, he had correspondents he could have sought out, and he makes no mention of this or anything else beyond his autonomous quest.

Scotians' foreign approach was more susceptible to error.³⁹ Finally, in the Nova Scotians' defense, it could also be pointed out that biblical figures in both testaments acted after receiving dreams or visions. Quite simply, the cultural chasm between the Nova Scotians and early Christians such as Peter and Paul (who each made choices with important consequences for Christianity) was not as vast as that which separated Horne from the persons that populated the biblical text he urged the Nova Scotians to utilize. It seems that Horne's philosophical presuppositions and cultural assumptions informed his position to a greater extent than his theology did.

Horne's frustrations continued to mount and he left Sierra Leone after a tenure of only fourteen months, but his short foreign missionary career (he would turn to promotion of mission within Britain) offers valuable insight into early Sierra Leonean Methodism. The conflict between Horne and the Freetown Methodists brings several into relief the complex identities of these figures. Horne, for his part, was an Anglican, Methodist, proponent of Enlightenment thought, missionary, and colonial servant. The convenient but inadequate moniker, "Nova Scotians," fails to encapsulate the multifarious identity of Horne's adversaries. Their attachment to Methodism, while of central importance, was merely one facet among many that defined this group. As descendants of African forbears who were either former slaves or freed blacks, these resilient men and women, like Horne, were the recipients of rich cultural and religious traditions. Like many of his contemporaries, Horne failed to grasp the experiences, assumptions, and traditions that shaped this group's thought and religious experiences,

³⁹ Clerical control was also a factor in this encounter, but Horne did not make much headway with this argument. Beverhout was also a Methodist preacher, and he "defended himself and the liberty of the pulpit, which being a favourite cause with the Methodists, gave him a great advantage." (Macaulay, journal entry, 15 September 1793, p. 62)

and this oversight proved to be an obstacle in encounters such as the one described in Freetown in 1793. Interactions between the Nova Scotian Methodists and British Methodists were not mere instances of co-religionists in dialogue—as Horne’s episode revealed, the various strands of identity present in both parties complicated these relationships. And, this would remain true two decades later, when the first WMMS missionaries arrived.

With the benefit of centuries of cross-cultural contact and substantial academic work, contemporary scholars, for the most part, offer a perspective that differs from Horne and Macaulay’s evaluation of the Nova Scotians’ religious life. Initially, it must be noted that not all recent historical work has reflected this development. In his appraisal, John Vickers placed himself in close proximity to Horne and Macaulay. In fact, Vickers seemingly took Macaulay’s opinions at face value and described how “the spirit of revolution, then abroad, inevitably appealed to their [the Nova Scotians’] simple minds.”⁴⁰ The work of the last decades has moved in an entirely different direction. According to Adrian Hastings, the clash between the Nova Scotians and the Company officials featured “two contrary views of the relationship between Christianity and colonial power.”⁴¹ Lamin Sanneh observed that “the Christianity of the blacks” had been “freed of its upscale Protestant inhibitions.”⁴² Following the work of scholars such as Hastings and Sanneh, a more fully formed conception of the Nova Scotian Methodists is attainable.

⁴⁰ Vickers, *Thomas Coke: Apostle of Methodism*, 289. It must be noted that Vickers wrote three decades before Hastings and Sanneh, and Andrew Walls’s work on early Sierra Leone was fairly recent when Vickers published his biography of Coke in 1969 (Walls began publishing on Methodism in Sierra Leone in the late 1950s.)

⁴¹ Hastings, *The Church in Africa*, 181.

⁴² Sanneh, *Abolitionists Abroad*, 62.

As the Nova Scotians' continued presence connected Horne's ill-fated stint in Sierra Leone and the later Methodist missionary endeavors there, this clash in 1793 provides essential contextual understanding to the struggles that Methodist missionaries would face in subsequent decades.⁴³ At first blush, the presence of a vibrant body of Methodists in Sierra Leone seems to be a great boon for any Methodist missionary efforts in the colony. However, as Horne's experience revealed, the reality was much more complicated. The Nova Scotians, who were steadfast in their devotion to Methodism, had made Methodism their own, incorporating their cultural assumptions and distinctives. This enculturation of Christianity proved a formidable obstacle to the work of Melvill Horne, and the Nova Scotians' experiences and unique brand of Methodism would likewise affect their interactions with subsequent Methodist missionaries.

Missionary Misconduct in Sierra Leone

Missionaries' misdeeds were not a major obstacle for Methodists in Sierra Leone, and this was likely the result of the later start (compared to the West Indies) and the small scope of the mission in West Africa. As will be discussed in the section on disease, there were only nineteen missionaries sent to Sierra Leone from the mission's initiation in 1811 to the close of our period of inquiry in 1835.⁴⁴ In comparison, the Methodist

⁴³ Horne returned to England somewhat disenchanted with Methodism, and he went on to promote ecumenical cooperation in foreign mission. He was an early supporter of the (initially non-denominational) Missionary Society, which would become the London Missionary Society. Schwarz, "The Legacy of Melvill Horne," 89; Melvill Horne, *A Collection of Letters Relative to Foreign Missions* (Andover: Galen Ware, 1810), 17.

⁴⁴ This figure includes only those who were recognized as missionaries in the period, thus excluding spouses and schoolmasters. At times the line between schoolmaster and missionary was blurred, but I have done my best to distinguish between the two offices.

mission in the West Indies was founded decades earlier, and it was substantially larger. In the Sierra Leone mission's first full year (1812), the Antigua District was staffed with twenty missionaries, more than would be dispatched to Sierra Leone in the entire period.⁴⁵ While the limited scope of the Sierra Leonean mission meant there were not as many missionaries who faced potential errors, there were several traces of trouble.

William Davies, a Welsh Methodist missionary, lost his wife, Jane, to fever in 1815. In his two remaining years in the colony Davies skirmished with the local Methodists on several occasions. During one period of conflict, a colleague reported that Davies was accused of "having slept with" a "woman who was a member of our [Methodist] society." The members of the society asked that Davies not take the pulpit until the matter was resolved, although this episode was merely one part of a larger rift between Davies and the society members.⁴⁶ Samuel Brown, who detailed the incident in a letter to London, noted that the society's leaders cited "Mr. Davies['] warmth of temper as the reason why they cannot trust themselves to his superintendancy." Ultimately, the colonial authorities cleared Davies, although Brown did not elaborate as to how they determined Davies's innocence. Other than describing the accuser as a "base woman," Brown did not offer any commentary on the case. Brown's decision not to assure the secretaries in London of his colleague's innocence is puzzling, but his silence could have been the result of any number of scenarios.⁴⁷ It is impossible to determine the veracity of the woman's accusation and assess Davies's innocence or guilt.

⁴⁵ *Methodist Magazine* 35 (September 1812): 715-716. In 1812 there was one other district in the West Indies, the Bahama [*sic*] District.

⁴⁶ This conflict will be treated in the final section of the chapter.

⁴⁷ Samuel Brown to Joseph Entwisle, 31 March 1817, WMSS Archive, WAC, Box 279, f. 1841.

However, it is apparent that the accusation of sexual impropriety contributed to an existing dispute between Davies and the members of the Methodist society.

At the close of our period of enquiry a substantial instance of missionary misconduct marred the Methodist mission in Sierra Leone. James Patterson arrived in Sierra Leone in 1836, and he paradoxically was a divisive figure who united Methodists in Sierra Leone. Patterson had the ignominious distinction of uniting British missionaries with African Methodists in their derision for him.

Edward Maer, a fellow Methodist missionary, considered Patterson's misdeeds to be the greatest threat that the mission had faced. According to Maer, the mission in Sierra Leone had "never before been assailed by men" who were "more malignant and more determined to rend and scatter our little flock."⁴⁸ In a subsequent letter Maer explained that he was compelled to depart Sierra Leone earlier than had been planned so that he could lay the evidence against Patterson before the secretaries in person. In the same letter he also listed the litany of charges against Patterson. Among the eleven accusations were: "insubordination & insolence," interrupting services on several occasions, "assaulting Mr. Crosby [a fellow Methodist missionary] in Bathurst St. Chapel," "deliberate falsehoods," "Perjury," "Labouring to disturb & break the peace of the Society," and "Threatening to prosecute the Leaders and Trustees." Perhaps most troubling of all and the offence that led to his initial suspension, Patterson was allegedly guilty of "cruelly flogging a little girl." Patterson had also "brought Constables into the house who under colour of a warrant , searched and ransacked the Mission House for property said to be stolen from him." Even more remarkable than the range of his

⁴⁸ Edward Maer to John Beecham, 30 January 1837, WMMS Archive, WAC, Box 280, f. 1860.

misdeeds was the fact that Patterson had accomplished all this in the span of approximately three months (since his arrival in October 1836).

Maer's account, while damning, was only one facet of the case against Patterson—the African Methodists provided the other. The African leaders of the Methodist Society wrote to the missionaries outlining their grievances with Patterson and requesting his removal from the colony. They cited Patterson's "general haughty carriage" and "his contemptuous treatment of our colour" among other grievances. The leaders had resolved "to do more than hesitate before we receive him again as a minister of the Gospel." In closing, the Africans stated their ultimate objective: "We therefore pray you to take [?] a passage for Mr. & Mrs. Patterson in the first vessel bound for England."⁴⁹

Maer had already taken action on this front—on 19 January he and Crosby had politely informed Patterson that he was to return to England on the next ship leaving Free Town. Maer and Crosby couched their command in the context of Patterson's desire to return to England, which they had heard him express "several times."⁵⁰ Patterson responded that he was "very much surprised" by Maer and Crosby's assertion that he had expressed a desire to leave Sierra Leone. The two men were "certainly under a great mistake in supposing" that they had heard Patterson express such sentiments. Patterson went on to touch on the Africans' complaints, which had not been mentioned in Maer and Crosby's letter.⁵¹ "I am aware that it has been reported that I came into this

⁴⁹ James Wise, et. al. to Maer, Crosby, and Sanders, 21 January 1837, WMMS Archive, WAC, Box 280, f. 1860.

⁵⁰ Edward Maer and Benjamin Crosby to James Patterson, 19 January 1837, WMMS Archive, WAC, Box 280, f. 1860.

⁵¹ The Africans' letter had not been drafted at this point in time; it would be written the next day.

Colony much prejudiced against the people, and that I was very much dissatisfied with my situation, that report however is utterly without foundation.” Patterson closed with the assertion that he could not “think of taking any steps preparatory to my departure from this Colony.” Although he was directly defying his superiors’ instructions, Patterson nevertheless signed the letter, “Your ob^t. [obedient] Servant.”⁵²

The conflict with Patterson continued as he refused to leave the colony. On 28 and 30 January he wrote to London in an attempt to convey his perspective. His letter and its postscript ran to eighteen pages, and he only stopped at that point because of the ship’s departure from Free Town. In his letter, Patterson sought to portray Maer and the other missionaries as spiteful and dishonest. There were even traces of his “haughty carriage” that the Africans had detected. Patterson referred to his colleagues as “Brethren” and then added: “(if so I may call them.)”⁵³ For the most part, Patterson sought to detail the harsh and unfair treatment he was enduring. He spent little time disproving the charges against him, but he did seek to portray his accusers as dishonest.

In early February Patterson aggravated the dispute by approaching the CMS missionaries in the colony and requesting that they investigate his suspension. Before acting upon Patterson’s request, the CMS missionaries contacted Maer, who was the Methodist superintendent. According to James Frederick Schön, CMS missionary and secretary of the mission, Patterson hoped that the CMS would investigate and submit a report to the WMMS Secretaries in London. Schön assured Maer that they would not

⁵² James Patterson to Edward Maer, 20 January 1837, WMMS Archive, WAC, Box 280, f. 1860.

⁵³ James Patterson to the Secretaries, 28 and 30 January 1837, WMMS Archive, WAC, Box 280, f. 1860.

act without the latter's permission, and he acknowledged that they had "no right" nor a "desire" to investigate without Maer's consent.⁵⁴

With his appeal to the CMS, Patterson had struck a raw nerve—Maer's response to Schön revealed his vexation. Maer was initially civil but firm as he pointed out that he had followed the "Rules of our Society" by presenting the case against Patterson to the members of the local society, "by whose unanimous vote Mr. Patterson was suspended." In the latter half of his concise note, Maer went on the offensive. The members of the local society directed him

to inform you that they do not need the interference of the Gentlemen of the Church Missionary Society in managing the affairs of the Wesleyan Society as it would not render service either to the Wesleyan Society or "to the cause of truth"—that they fully agree with one sentiment expressed in your letter "that the Local Committee [CMS] have no right" to interfere and as to no "desire" "they have" on that subject, the great day will declare.⁵⁵

It is impossible to ascertain if Patterson recognized the full effect his appeal to the CMS would have had, but it seems probable that he did. The fact that he went to the CMS rather than the colonial officials may indicate his intent to play upon the rivalry between the members of the two missionary societies.

The Patterson debacle was ultimately resolved by his death. Three months after his appeal to Schön and the CMS, Patterson contracted yellow fever. He fell ill on 15 May, and he died six days later, on 21 May 1837.⁵⁶ There was one final irony in

⁵⁴ J.F. Schön to Edward Maer, 8 February 1837, WMMS Archive, WAC, Box 280, f. 1860. This letter was copied by Maer and submitted to London.

⁵⁵ Edward Maer to J.F. Schön, 15 February 1837, WMMS Archive, WAC, Box 280, f. 1860. In a note to his superiors in London, Maer explained that the CMS missionaries were seeking to "rend our society and to weaken our ranks and add to their own." The friction between the CMS and WMMS will be examined in a subsequent section.

⁵⁶ Moister, *Heralds of Salvation*, 141.

Patterson's case. If he had obeyed his superiors and returned to England in January, he would have likely survived beyond his twenty-fifth year.

Missionary misconduct was not a significant problem for the small Methodist mission in Sierra Leone. While an infrequent phenomenon, the two instances discussed did affect the mission. In Davies's case, the accusation of impropriety served as a wedge that further alienated the missionary from the society members. Patterson's actions had a much greater impact upon the mission, but they served a very different purpose. As the society members were able to see that Patterson's misdeeds were anomalous within mission, they did not allow his actions to taint the entire cohort's reputation. The reaction to Patterson seemed to solidify the bond between the society members and the other Methodist missionaries, who shared a common enemy in Patterson. Patterson's appeal to the CMS did have a divisive affect upon the Evangelical missionary cause in Sierra Leone, as it prompted Maer to articulate his mistrust of Schön and the CMS.

Relations with the CMS

Consisting of moments of rivalry and instances of camaraderie, the relationship between the missionaries of the WMMS and CMS in Sierra Leone was complicated and heterogeneous. In addition to any ecclesiological and theological differences that were present, the CMS's close relationship with the colonial authorities was an omnipresent subplot that shaped many Methodist interactions with the CMS. Not only did the Anglican society's connection to the colonial government tincture its relations with the WMMS, it also shaped Sierra Leonean Methodists' perception of the CMS.

Before highlighting the points of tension between the two societies, moments of friendship and cooperation must be acknowledged. In 1826, William Piggott, a Methodist missionary, received a circulating invitation from a CMS missionary to a

meeting of four voluntary societies in Freetown. The societies were: the Sierra Leone Auxiliary Bible Society, Freetown Poor Society, Sierra Leone Auxiliary Prayer-book and Homily Society, and the Sierra Leone Auxiliary Church Missionary Society. The first two societies could have been broadly Evangelical in their aim and composition, but the latter two were clearly Anglican in their orientation. The fact that Piggott was invited to this session suggests that he was, at the minimum, in good standing with his counterparts in the CMS.⁵⁷

Cordial relations continued into 1828, when two Methodist missionaries spoke of their “Church Missionary Friends.”⁵⁸ The Anglican missionaries proved their friendship when disease decimated the Methodist mission in 1829. In what was one of the worst episodes to strike the Methodist work in Sierra Leone, not a single Methodist missionary survived to sustain the mission. In the wake of this disaster, two CMS missionaries took action and did what they could to protect the estates of the deceased and the mission’s property. In July 1829, William Keeling Betts and Thomas Davey wrote to the WMMS Secretaries to explain the steps they had taken and inquired as to the secretaries’ instruction.⁵⁹ A subsequent letter, written nine months later, conveyed the CMS missionaries’ displeasure that the Methodist leaders had not given their questions “a more full consideration, & more explicit answer[s].”⁶⁰ Although they were writing to

⁵⁷ John Raban (CMS missionary), circular invitation, 25 April 1826, WMMS Archive, WAC, Box 279, f. 1852.

⁵⁸ John Courties and John May to the Secretaries, 8 January 1828, WMMS Archive, WAC, Box 279, f. 1853.

⁵⁹ William Keeling Betts and Thomas Davey to the WMMS Secretaries, 22 July 1829, WMMS Archive, WAC, Box 279, f. 1855.

⁶⁰ William Keeling Betts and Thomas Davey, to the WMMS Secretaries, 20 May 1830, WMMS Archive, WAC, Box 279, f. 1855.

complain about the committee's neglect, the Anglicans' letter revealed that they were willing to assist the Methodist mission over an extended period of time.

One of the first Methodist missionaries to Sierra Leone, William Davies, enjoyed congenial relations with a CMS colleague. Davies related how he had "established a Missionary prayer-meeting here, on the first Tuesday in every month." He went on to explain that "Mr. Butscher unites with me: he is very friendly, and will preach or exhort in the chapel at any time, if I cannot attend."⁶¹ Butscher was a German Lutheran in service of the CMS, and he served as the colonial chaplain. Incidentally, Butscher's wife, Catherine, was a Methodist.⁶² As Davies's comments suggests, missionaries' relationships across denominational and organizational lines were often dependent upon the particular individual's traits.

In the case of Davies and his CMS colleague, Butscher's warmth helped to bring the two men together. Their friendship allowed for ecumenical cooperation, and thus we see the dynamics of interpersonal relationships shaping missionary practice in the field. In his journal, Davies described how he would minister alongside Butscher, even joining together to baptize more than one hundred students.⁶³ Here was a Methodist

⁶¹ William Davies to James Buckley, 10 August 1815, WMMS Archive, WAC, Box 279, f. 1840. It is worth noting that the editors of the *Methodist Magazine* altered Davies's description of Butscher's activities at the Methodist chapel. Where Davies had written "will preach," the editors published "is ready to preach." It seems they were making Butscher's participation more hypothetical, while Davies had been straightforward and definite. See: *Methodist Magazine* 39 (January 1818): 74.

⁶² George G. Findlay and W.W. Holdsworth, *The History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society* Vol. 4 (London: Epworth Press, 1922), 78.

⁶³ William Davies, *Extracts from the Journal of the Rev. William Davies, 1st, When a Missionary at Sierra Leone, Western Africa* (Llanidloes: Wesleyan Printing Office, 1835), 35-36. This account is somewhat puzzling. Just prior to this description, Davies described how half of the students went to church and half went to chapel on Sunday mornings. The baptisms occurred at night, but it is unclear if these children were being baptized into the Methodist Church or the Church of England—or perhaps there were two

missionary and a Lutheran missionary serving as an Anglican chaplain working alongside each other in sacramental service. This cooperation was the result of a profound friendship between two men and not the product of an ecumenical strategy crafted in London.

Shared experiences could strengthen the bonds of friendship, and this was the case, tragically, for Davies and Butscher. Both men lost their spouses to disease in Sierra Leone, and this shared burden brought the men closer together. Jane Davies died after Catherine Butscher, and following his wife's passing Davies moved into the home of his "beloved friend," "in order to change the scene, and forget the stroke."⁶⁴ Ultimately, death ruptured the relationship between Davies and Butscher. Butscher perished in June 1817, and Davies's journal conveyed his high estimation of the loss and the pain he was enduring. "O world of sorrow! O death! O grave! Behold, my bosom friend, the Rev. Mr. Butscher, has followed his beloved Catherine, and the little babe [the Butschers' child], and my dearest Jane, to the silent grave."⁶⁵ Davies, whose struggle following the loss of his wife will be dealt with subsequently, was nearing the limit of what he could endure. Six months later, in December of the same year, Davies chose to depart Sierra Leone.⁶⁶ The bonds of friendship could span ecclesiological divides, but, conversely, it seems just as likely that denominational distinctives could be seized upon with renewed vigor when missionaries were at odds with their counterparts from other missionary societies.

groups? Davies only stated that they were baptized "in the name of the Holy Trinity." Also, he mentioned that the governor was present, but Davies's account seems to be confused at this point.

⁶⁴ Davies, *Extracts from the Journal*, 33.

⁶⁵ Davies, *Extract from the Journal*, 41-42.

⁶⁶ Davies, *Extract from the Journal*, 52.

While relations between the Methodist and Anglican missionaries in Sierra Leone were generally good, there were moments of tension as well. Mentions of territorial protectionism and open antipathy appear in Methodist missionaries' correspondence, but bitterness harbored for the CMS because of its privileged position in the colony is the most striking aspect of antagonism.

The number of viable venues for missionary work in Sierra Leone was limited, and it might be expected that a degree of competition existed in the colony. Given the close proximity in which these two societies functioned, there were few traces of strain in the Methodist correspondence. One minor instance came from an unlikely source: William Davies, who openly cooperated with a CMS missionary. In May 1816, after Davies had spent time living with Butscher, Davies wrote to London and he made one of his many appeals for additional missionaries. Davies seemed to use the expansion of the CMS to incite his fellow Methodists in the metropole. He explained that there was a CMS missionary who had relocated "to a village in the neighborhood I have visited occasionally; I think that most of them will come by & by into this neighborhood, if I had missionaries I might have had many important stations in this place."⁶⁷ If this was Davies's intent, his designs were frustrated by the editors of the *Methodist Magazine*, who published his letter and its appeal for missionaries without mention of the CMS.⁶⁸ Davies's letter, regardless of his intent in mentioning the movement of the CMS, provides evidence of the complex relationship between the missionaries of the two societies.

⁶⁷ William Davies to James Wood, 27 May 1816, WMMS Archive, WAC, Box 279, f. 1840.

⁶⁸ *Methodist Magazine* 39 (November 1816): 879-880.

In 1817, Samuel Brown made a subtle yet telling remark about the Anglican chaplain and friend of the CMS, William Garnon.⁶⁹ Brown observed: “Mr. Garnon the Chaplain is an high Churchman and Methodism will not (I think) have any assistance from him and while we render honour to whom it is due, we must have a particular regard to the welfare of our Society.”⁷⁰ Brown’s distinction that he believed that Garnon’s identity as a “high Churchman” precluded the possibility of his aiding Methodism suggests that Brown perceived the chaplain’s situation within the Church of England, and not merely his identity as an Anglican, to be the determining factor in Garnon’s posture toward Methodism. Brown’s analysis allowed for the possibility of cooperation with Evangelical Anglicans.

At the conclusion of our period of inquiry as Edward Maer dealt with the misconduct of Patterson, the former offered pointed criticism of the CMS. As discussed above in the section on misconduct, Maer responded to the CMS missionaries’ conditional offer to evaluate Patterson’s claim of unfair treatment with a curt rebuff of their offer. When he forwarded this correspondence to the secretaries in London, Maer appended a note that expanded his accusations against the CMS in Sierra Leone.

From the evidence we have had we are persuaded that the object of the [CMS missionaries] was merely to rend our society and to weaken our ranks and add to their own at our expense not that they cared for Mr. Patterson or for our Society or for the cause of truth but to do what they could to overturn the work in which we are engaged. Are Churchmen in England opposed to Wesleyan Methodism? These are more. Do they maline [*sic*] and slander it? These do

⁶⁹ Garnon was a chaplain appointed by the home government, but his selection had come at the suggestion of CMS leaders in London and upon his arrival in the colony he helped to advance the CMS’s objectives. See: Samuel Abraham Walker, *The Church of England Mission in Sierra Leone* (London: Seeley, Burnside and Seeley, 1847), 22; *CMS Proceedings, 1817*, p. 417-418.

⁷⁰ Samuel Brown to Joseph Entwisle, 31 March 1817, WMMS Archive, WAC, Box 279, f. 1841.

more. – Do they exert all their energy to lower us and oppose our plans? So do the gentlemen of the Church Mission in this Colony.⁷¹

Maer was not finished; he continued with similar allegations and he offered his opinion that Patterson had hoped to join the CMS. Maer's harangue packed a great deal of suspicion in the space of a few sentences. Particularly interesting was Maer's hypothesis that the sinister designs of the CMS missionaries in Sierra Leone were merely an extension of metropolitan Anglicans' anti-Methodist bias. While Maer seemed to be fully convinced of the CMS's nefarious plot to undermine the Methodist mission, the veracity of his claims cannot be substantiated. The body of evidence that Maer alluded to was not expanded upon, and Maer did not even suggest the nature of the proof against the CMS. Maer's relative isolation—similar accusations were not leveled by his Methodist colleagues—suggests that Maer may have exaggerated the extent of the CMS's attempts to grow their mission at the Methodists' expense. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that a number of Maer's colleagues were silenced by death, so potential corroborating claims may have been lost to disease. Despite its nebulous nature, the case of Maer's accusations demonstrates that the superintendent of the Methodist mission at the close of our period of inquiry viewed the CMS as a force hostile to Methodism within the colony.

The greatest point of tension with the CMS that Sierra Leonean Methodists, missionaries and Africans alike, articulated was the Anglican society's privileged position within the colony. In particular, Methodists were keenly aware of, and perhaps perturbed by and even envious of, the financial support that the CMS received from the colonial government in the colony.

⁷¹ Edward Maer to the Secretaries, 30 January 1837, WMMS Archive, WAC, Box 280, f. 1860.

Samuel Brown, in the same letter (March 1817) that he mentioned Garnon's churchmanship, reported of his tour of the various villages in the colony. Brown explained that the CMS missionaries in these various places filled a variety of roles, potentially including "Minister Magistrate School Master and Householder." Continuing in the same matter-of-fact tone, Brown noted that "half of their [CMS missionaries] salaries is [*sic*] paid by Government & the other half by the Church Missionary society."⁷² In Brown's presentation, the missionaries' binary income scheme was logical given the various secular and ministerial capacities they filled within the colonial system.⁷³ Two years later, the Methodist missionaries Baker and Gillison used the CMS's expenses as a point of reference. They explained: "Great as the sum may appear which is now needed for this mission yet it is but small compared to what one of the Church Missionary Stations cost."⁷⁴ Like Brown, Baker and Gillison were not overtly judgmental in their comment. There may have been an implicit criticism embedded within their remark, but their aim seemed to be providing the WMMS Secretaries with an indication of the operational costs they faced in Sierra Leone.

While Methodist missionaries were, at least in their correspondence to London, somewhat reserved when discussing the two societies' finances, the Freetown Methodists exhibited less restraint when they broached the subject. In April 1816, leaders of the Freetown Society wrote to London to implore the secretaries for an increase in the support of the missionaries sent to Sierra Leone. According to these Freetown

⁷² Brown to Entwisle, 31 March 1817.

⁷³ Typically, a CMS missionary would serve in Freetown as (essentially) a parish priest for the colonists there.

⁷⁴ John Baker and John Gillison to the Secretaries, 24 June 1819, WMMS Archive, WAC, Box 579, f. 1843.

Methodists, the missionaries among them were preoccupied with their insufficient funds and as a result “their minds have suffered great distraction and they have been unfitted or unable to perform the duties their high station required.” They went on to remind the secretaries that most items were significantly more expensive in Freetown than in London, and as evidence they provided a table that displayed the costs of merchandise and services in Sierra Leone. According to their calculations, a missionary’s annual expenses in the colony totaled £210.33.⁷⁵

After their attempt at educating the leadership in London as to the cost of living in Sierra Leone, James Wise and the other leaders of the society turned to the practices of the CMS missionaries:

The Missionaries of the Church Society who have not half nor perform and [*sic*] quarter of the work that is allotted for your missionary, have annually £100 worth of cloth which when it get [*sic*] here is equal to about £300 to them, half of their time being taken up in trade with it. We understand their Salaries are going to be enlarged too. – Now we know that whatever the public may say before the face of such carnal Merchant Missionaries, they must condemn them in their hearts. Such must be low in the estimation of all thinking men.⁷⁶

The Freetown Methodists’ criticism of the CMS is fascinating and of crucial importance as it reveals the complexity of the early British foreign missionary enterprise and the Sierra Leonean context in particular. As might be expected from a traditional interpretation of colonial-missional interaction, we have the persons on the receiving end of missionaries’ efforts challenging the missionary enterprise.⁷⁷ However, as the context

⁷⁵ James Wise, *et al*, to the Secretaries, 14 April 1816, WMMS Archive, WAC, Box 279, f. 1840.

⁷⁶ Wise to the Secretaries, 14 April 1816.

⁷⁷ Usually, we could refer to such people as “indigenous” rather than the awkward “persons on the receiving end of missionaries’ efforts,” but these Freetown Methodists were not natives of Sierra Leone. Of course, they were of African descent, but to describe them as indigenous in the Sierra Leonean context would be inaccurate.

of the letter makes abundantly clear, the Freetown Methodists were criticizing one facet of the missionary enterprise only to endorse another. Moreover, the crux of their grievance with the CMS was not a violation of Africans' rights or an attempt at protecting their traditional religions. On the contrary, it was Christian theology (what we might refer to as missiology today) that inspired James Wise and his colleagues to condemn the CMS's approach. They believed that the CMS missionaries were compromising their duty as Christian ministers by becoming preoccupied in trade, resulting in their identity as "carnal Merchant Missionaries." The Methodists' argument was against the dilution of the missionary enterprise, and it presented a call for the Methodist leadership in London to expand their funding of the work in Sierra Leone so that their missionaries could execute the missional task without distraction.

Illness and Death in West Africa

Disease profoundly shaped the early Methodist mission in Sierra Leone. The astoundingly high mortality rate among British Methodist missionaries precluded the possibility of the mission's growth, and it also caused the work to progress in fits and starts as missionaries frequently perished or were forced to retire to Britain. In this section, extracts from missionaries' correspondence and journals will be featured to illustrate the ways in which illness and death touched the Methodist missionaries in Sierra Leone.

The impact of disease was felt from the beginning of the mission. The first group of personnel sent out in 1811 consisted of one Methodist preacher, George Warren, and three local preachers, who would serve as schoolmasters. Warren was the natural leader of the group and was to superintend Methodism in the colony, but he

survived only eight months in Sierra Leone, succumbing to fever on 23 July 1812.⁷⁸ The most promising of the three schoolmasters, Jonathan Raynar returned to England (where he was ordained before leaving for the West Indies), leaving only two teachers to sustain the mission.⁷⁹ Thomas Hirst and John Healy maintained an educational presence, but it was apparent that the mission needed additional personnel if was to be viable. In the 1814 annual report, the leaders in London described how Hirst and Healy “do all they can, by reading sermons and by exhortations, to supply the place of Mr. Raynar.” They also explained that they were “using every exertion to find a successor for Mr. Warren,” but they had failed to do so. Until this objective was realized, the Methodist missionary leaders (who were now operating without Thomas Coke, who had departed for India) acknowledged that they held little hope of success in Sierra Leone.⁸⁰

Warren’s death in July 1812 was a serious initial setback for the mission, but it was only the first of many deaths to plague the Methodist mission in Sierra Leone. The spouses of missionaries, who filled numerous roles but were not recognized as missionaries because of their gender, suffered equally from the effects of fever and disease. Jane and William Davies arrived in the colony in 1815, and Jane would not survive the year. Prior to her death, she “had about 170 Negro children under her care.”⁸¹ According to her husband, Jane was zealous in her work, and the “cheerfulness

⁷⁸ W Moister, *Heralds of Salvation: Being Brief Memorial Sketches of Wesleyan Missionaries* (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1878), 31–32.

⁷⁹ Andrew Walls, “The Usefulness of Schoolmasters: Notes on The Early Sierra Leone Documents of the Methodist Missionary Society,” *The Sierra Leone Bulletin of Religion* 3, no. 1 (June 1961): 33–34.

⁸⁰ *The Annual Report of the State of the Missions, Foreign and Domestic, 1813* (London: Methodist Conference Office), 15.

⁸¹ William Davies to the Secretaries, 19 December 1815, WMMS Archive, WAC Box 209, f. 1839.

of her countenance” that she exhibited upon her return from her work indicated that “the Lord had poured his blessings.”⁸² Her death was a blow to the Methodist mission as it lost a valuable contributor, but it was a particularly painful loss for her widower. In December 1815 William wrote to report his wife’s death. His opening line poignantly conveyed the awful news: “With a heavy heart and much bodily weakness, I take up my pen to inform you that my Dear, Dear Jane is no more.” He also described how he had been “taken suddenly in the same fever,” and how he would “sometimes crawl to see her and she would do the same.”⁸³ Davies survived the fever, but the loss of his wife tintured the remainder of his tenure in Sierra Leone.

Davies remained in Sierra Leone for two years following his wife’s passing. Those two years were marked by moments of joy and satisfaction, but physical misery and emotional pain dominated Davies’s experience. The missionary’s diary, which was published after Davies’s return to his native Wales, offers glimpses of his suffering. A few months after Jane’s death, Davies noted that he was “[r]ecovering tolerably well from my weakness, but no rest at night, my mind wandering far and near.”⁸⁴ Davies expressed similar sentiments periodically during the balance of his days in Sierra Leone. While repeated bouts with fever and other physical ailments wore on Davies, he acknowledged that it was not only his physical trials that forced his return to Wales. In the month of his departure (January 1818), Davies wrote in his journal: “I must confess (no use to hide it) that I feel a great attachment to my country, parents, and friends, especially after losing my faithful partner. When she was with me, my home was where

⁸² Davies, *Extracts from the Journal*, 28-29.

⁸³ Davies to the Secretaries, 19 December 1815.

⁸⁴ Davies, *Extracts from the Journal*, 33.

she was; but it is now quite the contrary.”⁸⁵ Eventually, Sierra Leone would claim William’s life too. After years of suffering from malaria, he “succumbed to mental illness.” Davies took his own life in 1851, many years after his return to Wales.⁸⁶ The death of Jane Davies ultimately cost the Methodist mission in Sierra Leone two laborers, and the Davies’ example demonstrates how drastically disease affected the Methodist work in Sierra Leone

As the years passed, the number of Methodist missionary deaths continued to climb. In 1819, John Gillison, a local preacher who was only twenty-two years old, died within six months of his arrival in Sierra Leone. His colleague and friend, John Baker, had arrived with Gillison in Sierra Leone, and he too was afflicted by the same fever that claimed Gillison’s life. Baker survived and wrote to describe the deceased’s articulations of faith when the fever permitted moments of lucidity.⁸⁷ The next two to perish were also young men in the prime of life. George Lane and John Huddleston both succumbed to disease in 1823. On 20 April 1823, Huddleston wrote to London reporting Lane’s death, and two months later he penned his last correspondence.⁸⁸ In his letter of 28 June 1823, Huddleston described his mounting illness and mentioned his wife’s support and his steadfast faith.⁸⁹ Two days later Huddleston succumbed to yellow

⁸⁵ Davies, *Extracts from the Journal*, 52–53.

⁸⁶ Susan R. Howdle, “Davies, William,” *Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland*, <http://wesleyhistoricalsociety.org.uk/dmbi/index.php?do=app.entry&id=794> (accessed 9 July 2012).

⁸⁷ John Baker to the Secretaries, 20 August 1819, WMMS Archive, WAC, Box 279, f. 1843.

⁸⁸ John Huddleston to the Secretaries, 20 April 1823, WMMS Archive, WAC, Box 279, f. 1850.

⁸⁹ John Huddleston to the Secretaries, 28 June 1823, WMMS Archive, WAC, Box 279, f. 1851.

fever.⁹⁰ Early in 1825, Henry Harte became the fifth Methodist missionary to fall to illness.⁹¹ His colleague, William Piggott, reported Harte's enduring trust in Christ's saving power, which he maintained until the end.⁹² To the close of our period of inquiry in 1835 there were seven more missionary deaths in Sierra Leone.

The cycle of missionaries' deaths and the struggle to replace them in Sierra Leone was a common phenomenon throughout our period of inquiry. The *Methodist Magazine* printed the stations of ministers and missionaries each September (following Annual Conference), and a survey of these lists and the annual reports reveals the limited scope of the Methodist mission in Sierra Leone. In the wake of Warren's death, the listing for Sierra Leone in 1814 bleakly read: "One wanted."⁹³ Two years later, in 1816, two missionaries were listed, but this small gain eroded quickly.⁹⁴ By 1818, William Davies had returned to England, leaving Samuel Brown as the lone missionary. Through the close of the mission's first decade and throughout the 1820s, the number of missionaries listed for Sierra Leone oscillated between zero and two. In 1835, at the terminus of this study, three missionaries were stationed in Sierra Leone.⁹⁵ One consequence of the severe loss of life in Sierra Leone was that the Methodist mission in the colony remained limited in scope.

⁹⁰ Moister, *Heralds of Salvation*, 64–65.

⁹¹ This figure does not include Jane Davies, who was not recognized as a missionary by the Society.

⁹² William Piggott to the Secretaries, 20 January 1825, WMMS Archive, WAC, Box 279, f. 1851.

⁹³ *The Methodist Magazine* 37 (Sep. 1814): 714.

⁹⁴ *The Methodist Magazine* 39 (Sep. 1816): 716.

⁹⁵ *The Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine* 14 (Sep. 1835): 703. Two of those three missionaries, Edward Maer and Benjamin Crosby, died from disease in Sierra Leone.

Illness and death were commonplace in the early British foreign missionary enterprise, but the Methodist mission in Sierra Leone endured a stunning rate of loss. When considered in total, the evidence is astounding. Between 1811 and 1835 nineteen missionaries were sent to the colony.⁹⁶ Twelve men, many of whom were in their twenties, did not survive.⁹⁷ The mortality rate, while quite high (63%), tells only part of the story. As the case of William Davies illustrated, the survivors were profoundly changed. Beyond the lingering and multifarious pains that touched the bodies, minds, and souls of all Methodist missionaries in Sierra Leone, the institution was affected as well. The Methodist mission suffered from a lack of continuity in personnel, with most missionaries serving two years or less. Illness and, to a greater extent, death inhibited the growth of the Methodist mission in Sierra Leone.

Missionaries versus Methodists in Freetown

In the first decades of the nineteenth century Sierra Leone was a colony with a number of traits that were indicative of potential success for a Methodist mission. It was an English colony in which Evangelicals exerted a significant degree of influence. Beyond the religious sympathy among the colony's founders and supporters, there were more basic factors, such as the prevalence of the English language among the settlers and, in time, the liberated Africans too. Following the abolition of the slave trade in 1807, the Royal Navy delivered a steady flow of potential converts (in the form of liberated slaves) that could not have been reached under ordinary circumstances. It was

⁹⁶ As was mentioned previously, this figure follows the terminology of the period, and therefore does not include missionaries' spouses or schoolmasters who were not classified as missionaries.

⁹⁷ I used the WMMS archive, the annual reports, the *Methodist Magazine*, and Moister's *Heralds of Salvation* to compile these figures.

as if the African interior, along with wide swaths of coastal territory, were accessible in this single port on the west coast of the continent. But the greatest potential benefit that a Methodist mission in Sierra Leone would enjoy was the fact that Methodism already existed among the colony's inhabitants. Beyond that, they had requested assistance from the Methodist leadership in England. It is with that request that we will begin.

While this section will document the conflict that plagued missionary-Methodist relations in Sierra Leone between 1816 and 1821, the starting point for this discussion is a letter penned in 1806. In that year, a Methodist preacher in Freetown, Joseph Brown, wrote to Thomas Coke. Brown mentioned that he had written two years prior, and Coke's silence led Brown to assume that the letter had not reached its intended recipient. As he had in 1804, Brown was writing to request "a pious person, who could assist in preaching to the people, and taking the charge of our small flock." With an eye to practical concerns, Brown mentioned that the Governor might be able to provide a salary if the person sent was willing to teach in one of the colony's schools. Brown went on to explain that he was "old, and my assistant, Mr. Gordon, is likewise advanced in years," and there was "no prospect of any suitable person being raised up here, that could attend the little flock" of forty members. Perhaps with an eye to the unsuccessful stints of European chaplains like Melvill Horne, Brown mentioned that they were praying for a "person of warm zeal."⁹⁸

Brown's request would be granted, but the first Methodist missionary did not arrive until 1811. It must be remembered that Brown's second letter reached England in the decade prior to the formation of the WMMS, during the period of Coke's

⁹⁸ Joseph Brown to Thomas Coke, 5 July 1806, published in: *Methodist Magazine* 30 (June 1807): 283-284.

improvisational mission program. Coke, writing in 1812 after the initiation of the mission, asserted that he had received “many letters from them, beseeching us to send a missionary to the colony,” but he explained that work in West Africa could not possibly be successful “while our countrymen visited their shores either to murder or enslave them.”⁹⁹ Coke’s reasoning was sensible, but his argument undercut the substantial Methodist mission to the West Indies. At least a mission in West Africa would have been carried out among the survivors of the slave trade, while the work in the Caribbean focused entirely upon the victims. In any case, Coke’s energies were divided between the management of a large mission in the West Indies and incessant fund raising for missions. Moreover, there was also his foremost missionary objective: the Indian subcontinent. It is impossible to determine the precise reason for the delay in dispatching personnel to Sierra Leone, but each of these explanations, or a combination thereof, is certainly plausible. After the initial half-decade delay, the demise of George Warren, the first missionary to arrive, meant that the work was again postponed. William Davies, the second Methodist missionary to work in Sierra Leone, arrived in 1815, more than a decade after Brown’s initial plea for assistance. And, it was during Davies’s tenure that the conflict between Methodist missionaries and the leaders of the Freetown Society began.

Sources from the period offer only a partial view of the conflict that would separate Davies and the Freetown Methodists. William Davies, whose personal travails have already been discussed, arrived in Sierra Leone in the summer of 1815 and departed the colony in January 1818. Indications of rancor surfaced in the latter part of 1816, but it seems that the conflict had been mounting for some time. In December 1816, Davies

⁹⁹ Coke, *An Interesting Narrative of a Mission, Sent to Sierra Leone, in Africa*, 19.

subtly mentioned a “little difference” that had arisen between him “and some of the leaders.” Maintaining a degree of ambiguity, Davies explained, “I could not get them as regular as I wished.”¹⁰⁰ In a letter to friends in London, Davies offered more elucidation. Davies explained his impressions of the Methodists’ objections: “The Leaders of the Society in Free Town have declared against me and have refused me the pulpit, I am too plain for them, and truly I have found them a proud and stiff necked generation. I understand they are going to accuse me of lording it over them, of being too proud for a Methodist Preacher, and of paying too much attention to Government.” Davies went on to offer his own explanation as to why the leaders of the society opposed him:

The truth is, when we arrived here we found Methodism very low indeed, in the esteem of Government and the European Gentlemen of the Colony. My Dear departed Jane’s and my own conduct some how [*sic*] or other pleased the most respectable part of the Community, in consequence thereof some got jealous; Most of our Leaders as far as I can judge are of the American Republic Spirit and are strongly averse to Government, I am a Loyal subject to my King & wish to do the little I can for the support of that Government especially in a foreign part were [*sic*] there are not so many able advocates as at home.¹⁰¹

To drive home his point, Davies averred, “before God I can say I never sought for honour in this place. I tried to do as much good as I could.” In an odd juxtaposition, Davies then immediately went on to describe his new roles in the colonial government.¹⁰² He had become “the Senior alderman in Free Town and a justice of the peace.” While

¹⁰⁰ Davies, *Extracts from the Journal*, 36. This entry was written on 16 December 1816.

¹⁰¹ William Davies to Mr. and Mrs. Fleming, 1 January 1817, WMMS Archive, WAC, Box 579, f. 1840. It is impossible to say if Davies felt a greater liberty of expression with the Flemings, who were his friends in London. (He mentions visiting them in his published journal; see page 60.) Regardless, they promptly shared excerpts of the letter (which is what is extant in the archive) with the Methodist leadership; the excerpted copy bears the date 13 June 1817.

¹⁰² It is possible that Davies’s words had been altered as it was excerpted, but this would be an odd editorial move by a friend.

he had “objected as much as [he] could without absolutely giving offence to the Governor,” Davies could not resist the entreaties of Governor MacCarthy, who had been and continued “to be as a father” to him. As Davies’s explanation continued, the potential objections of the Freetown Methodists can be detected. Davies went on to state that he felt it to be his “duty to obey him [MacCarthy] as far as I can consistent with religion, which teaches me to fear God and Honour the King.”¹⁰³

It seems that Davies’s own testimony undermined, at least partially, his claim that it was jealousy on the part of the Society members and not their objections to his involvement in colonial affairs that had prompted the conflict.¹⁰⁴ His mention of the “American Republican Spirit” acknowledged the political dimension of the discord. Furthermore, his ill-timed description of his shift to colonial service gave legitimacy to the Methodists’ position. While Davies may have “never sought for honour” and had unwittingly conducted himself in a manner that ingratiated himself with Freetown’s respectable society, his journal leaves no doubt that he strongly desired and subsequently relished MacCarthy’s friendship and the prominence that accompanied it.

An anecdote recorded in his journal revealed Davies’s pride in entertaining the governor in his own home on multiple occasions, along with his notions about civilization and Christianity.

I have often heard him [MacCarthy] observing, after coming into my house, “Davies, such and such a man . . . is one of your members, is he not?” “How does your Excellency know?” “Why, he has white-washed his house, his fence around the premises is good, his garden is clean and productive.” “Your Excellency is right—he is a member; and Christianity alone can civilise: for

¹⁰³ Davies to the Flemings, 1 January 1817.

¹⁰⁴ In his seminal history of Sierra Leone, Fyfe offered this simple encapsulation of the dispute: “Davies, friendly with MacCarthy, refused to be treated as an equal. The Nova Scotian leaders accused him of arrogance and turned him out of the chapel. See: Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*, 139.

‘Godliness is profitable for all things,’ and when they get religion they will be industrious.”¹⁰⁵

Davies’s friendship with MacCarthy seemingly tintured the former’s decision to enter into colonial service. Davies’s emphasis upon obedience to the governor is puzzling—surely he was responding to a friend’s request, not a binding order issued by a figure of authority. Finally, Davies’s belief in the essential place of (British/European) civilization, taken in tandem with his attachment to the government, sheds light upon the Methodists’ potential objections. Their recent history with government in Sierra Leone and in Nova Scotia had been filled with disappointment, and these persons of African descent, who either remembered enslavement or were a generation removed from slavery, would have had legitimate grounds upon which they might question the continuity between Western civilization and Christianity.

The Sierra Leonean Methodists’ objections are not extant, but Davies’s colleague, Samuel Brown, described the rupture. As was mentioned in the section on misconduct, a woman of dubious reputation leveled an accusation of sexual impropriety against Davies. Brown described how the leaders of the society investigated the matter and were in the midst of their inquiry when Davies went to the local magistrate to have his name cleared.¹⁰⁶ The Freetown Methodist leaders responded to Davies’s indignation in kind, refusing to recognize his superintendency over them. This move, along with Davies’s shift into the employ of the colony, initiated the formal rupture of the relationship between West African Methodism and British missionary Methodism.

¹⁰⁵ Davies, *Extracts from the Journal*, 53. Further evidence of Davies’s pride in his friendship with MacCarthy can be found at the close of his journal, where he reproduced the Governor’s letters to him as an appendix.

¹⁰⁶ Brown to the Secretaries, 31 March 1817. Brown acknowledged that Davies’s “warmth of temper,” and not the woman’s accusation, was at the crux of the leaders’ objection to Davies’s leadership.

The contributing factors to this division were multifarious, and, having discussed those mentioned in the correspondence, the forces lying beneath the surface warrant discussion as well. On Davies's end, issues facing Methodists in the metropole must be considered. Davies had left Britain in 1815, only four years after Lord Sidmouth's proposed legislation threatened Methodism's status and raised questions about the movement's identity. In the wake of this scare, many Methodist took pains to demonstrate their loyalty to the crown and sought to ease any concerns about their revolutionary potential. As Andrew Walls has argued, this domestic context certainly had bearing on Davies as he sought to establish relationships with the colonial government and the missionaries representing the established Church in Sierra Leone.¹⁰⁷ When Methodism's precarious position within British religious and political life is considered, Davies's striving for acceptance within the colony's circles of power is understandable.

While Davies was at ease with the Church of England, and became an extremely close friend to a CMS missionary, the Freetown Methodists possessed a markedly different attitude toward Anglicanism. Even as Davies was deepening his friendship with Butscher (the CMS missionary), the society leaders were expressing their unflattering opinions of the CMS missionaries.¹⁰⁸ The difference in opinion on the Church of England that existed between Davies and the Freetown Methodists was the result of a fundamental difference in the two parties' understanding of Methodism. Of

¹⁰⁷ Andrew Walls, "A Christian Experiment: The Early Sierra Leone Colony," in *The Mission of the Church and the Propagation of the Faith*, ed. G.J. Cumming, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 122–123. Following Walls, Lamin Sanneh makes a similar point; see: Sanneh, *Abolitionists Abroad*, 119.

¹⁰⁸ Their description of the CMS missionaries as "carnal merchant missionaries" was discussed above. Another dynamic was the fact that nearly all of the CMS missionaries in Sierra Leone up until this point in time had been German Lutherans.

course, Methodism had begun as a renewal movement meant to augment religious life within the Church of England, and, while Methodism's departure from the established Church was well underway by 1816, British Methodists such as Davies discerned a lingering connection to the church that had spawned Methodism. As Andrew Walls points out, the Methodists of Sierra Leone differed at this point. The Methodism they knew had never authentically existed within the Church of England. More broadly, like the other non-Anglican Evangelicals in the colony, they were troubled by the Church of England's evolution into the colony's effective state church, even though it represented only a minority of the population.¹⁰⁹ The Sierra Leoneans' conception of Methodism, their distrust of government, and their desire to retain a degree of freedom contributed to the break with Davies and began the rupture of Methodism in the colony.

Unfortunately for Methodist relations between colony and metropole, the conflict with Davies was only the first installment of a two-act drama. In fact, the missionary-Methodist hostilities were renewed with the next group of British missionaries to arrive in the colony, and the second confrontation had far greater consequences. While Davies had taken action to restore his reputation, he withdrew from the Methodist Society in Freetown to work elsewhere. In the course of the second struggle, the dissension would not be resolved so innocuously. It ended with a Methodist missionary reading the Riot Act to an assembly of Freetown Methodists, dissolving the Society, and ultimately contributing to the rupture of the relationship between the Freetown Society and the Methodist Conference in Britain.

The Freetown Methodists, for their part, had continued on after Davies's departure much as they had before after Davies's departure, and they maintained

¹⁰⁹ Walls, "A Christian Experiment: The Early Sierra Leone Colony," 115.

communication with the Methodist leaders in London. In June 1819, they wrote requesting assistance with the construction of a new chapel. At the close of the letter, James Wise, a Freetown Methodist leader who had written on behalf of the society's trustees, repeated a frequent plea from Sierra Leone—he asked that additional missionaries be sent. Wise's own words are worth noting. He requested that the secretaries "send such acceptable Preachers as Messrs. Baker & Gillison."¹¹⁰ Wise was able to affirm two WMMS missionaries, but he was also subtly asserting their desire to avoid receiving a missionary of similar mentality to Davies. Despite the unpleasant encounter with Davies, it was clear that the Freetown Methodists hoped to maintain ties with British Methodism. It seems that the conflict with Davies had not tainted their impression of British Methodism as a whole.

Baker and Gillison, the two exemplars mentioned by Wise, were removed from service in Sierra Leone. Baker travelled down the coast with an eye to expanding the work into Gambia.¹¹¹ John Gillison, who had arrived with Baker in February 1819, succumbed to yellow fever in August of the same year, only two months after Wise's letter was written.¹¹² After annual conference in 1820, the stations of missionaries were published in the *Methodist Magazine*. As was too often the case, beside "Sierra Leone," "Two to be sent," was listed rather than the names of any missionaries. This void was filled with the arrivals of John Huddleston (in November 1820) and George Lane (in

¹¹⁰ James Wise to the Secretaries, 25 June 1819, WMMS Archive, WAC, Box 279, f. 1843.

¹¹¹ John Baker to the Secretaries, 24 July 1820, WMMS Archive, WAC, Box 279, f. 1845.

¹¹² Moister, *Heralds of Salvation*, 51-52. Gillison was aged twenty-two years at the time of his death.

January 1821), who would both play roles in the second Methodist conflict in Freetown.¹¹³

There were similarities to the Davies affair, such as the missionaries' temperament, but the problem originated with a difference in opinion about control of the chapel. In part, this dispute was a disagreement about the relationships between the local society and the larger Methodist Conference, and clashing notions of local autonomy and missionary (as the representatives of the Conference) control were at the crux of the standoff. As the Freetown Methodists were funding the new chapel via subscriptions in the local community, they felt they should retain control of the property. Huddleston and Lane, whose position was informed by Methodist practices in Britain, insisted that the chapel's deed should be passed on to the Conference, of which, of course, they were the representatives in the colony. In this case, the merits of each position are discernible. Lane and Huddleston had British Methodist practice as precedent, but the Freetown Methodists, who had been disappointed more than once by British authorities, were reluctant to cede control of their property to the Conference leaders. Furthermore, they were only in the first years of the experiment in uniting with British Methodism, and they had not yet had a sustained successful relationship with a British missionary. When their context is considered, the Methodist settlers' apprehension is understandable.

¹¹³ In much of the literature, including *Methodist Magazine* articles and WMMS annual reports from the period, Huddleston's name is rendered Huddleston. When signing letters in his own hand, Huddleston did not utilize the final 'e,' and I will take him to be authoritative on this matter.

Lane, who played a lesser role in the disagreement, did not incense the settlers as his colleague, Huddleston, did.¹¹⁴ In fact, Lane chose to join his colleague, John Baker, in Gambia in order to avoid the discord.¹¹⁵ In his letter, Lane addressed the problem in his opening sentence. “I am very sorry to be obliged to inform you that recently we have been called to experience a great deal of trouble with the Society in this place, particularly with the leaders, stewards, and local preachers.” Lane went on to explain that he and Huddleston, “as Methodist missionaries,” were “bound of course, to see our Rules observed as far as we possibly can.” The Society leaders had countered, according to Lane, that “they had rules in their head; by which they meant to act!” Interestingly, Lane also mentioned that the African leaders considered an appeal to London futile since their request for intercession with Davies had not been fulfilled. As he proceeded, Lane made clear that this conflict shared two features common to many human struggles: money and power. Lane seemed indignant as he related the settlers’ recalcitrance: “Therefore (they observed) we shall keep our chapel [? – illegible] forever in our own hands.” At a meeting called to resolve the chapel issue, the leaders maintained their stance: they would not “build a chapel for the Conference,” and they continued, “if the Conference want a chapel, they must build one!!” The question of financing the chapel proved even more contentious. Lane explained that there were those (unnamed) who were agitating the society members, telling them “that they gave too much money at class! and that ‘White men (missionaries) come for thief [sic] their

¹¹⁴ John Baker, their colleague who had been away in Guinea, returned to Sierra Leone to find this disaster unfolding. Baker attempted to resolve the problem, and he also wrote several letters to London describing the turmoil. Baker made it clear that the society leaders had little, if any, problem with Lane. John Baker to the Secretaries, 31 January 1822, WMMS Archive, WAC, Box 279, f. 1847.

¹¹⁵ Findlay and Holdsworth, *History of the WMMS*, Vol. 4, p. 84.

money.” Closing his case against the Freetown Methodists, Lane asserted that these anecdotes enabled the WMMS leaders in London to “judge their [Freetown Methodists] spirit.”¹¹⁶

Lane’s correspondence was only the first in a series of letters submitted to London detailing the conflict with the society leaders. Many of the subsequent letters were the product of the main combatant on the missionary side, John Huddleston. In a letter written on the same day as Lane’s, Huddleston offered a similar account of the emerging schism. He described how the leaders called a society meeting with the design of drawing “the people from our instruction and from under our influence.”¹¹⁷ At the time Huddleston considered the leaders’ actions to be an affront that could not be tolerated.

Eight months after the dissolution of the Society, Huddleston responded to the WMMS Secretaries’ request for a defense of his handling of the dispute with the Freetown Methodists, and he stood firm and expressed his belief that he had handled things appropriately. He was also careful to make clear that he was not among those who had been in the wrong. In the months after the debacle Huddleston had prayed that he “might understand and know the causes, which generated and fostered the grievances; that made the Leaders proceed to such unchristian acts, with Missionaries who had only been a few months among them.” Shortly after this, Huddleston declared, “If I considered myself the author of the grievances of the leaders, I should not hesitate

¹¹⁶ George Lane to the Secretaries, 11 June 1821, WMMS Archive, WAC, Box 279, f. 1846.

¹¹⁷ John Huddleston to the Secretaries, 11 June 1821, WMMS Archive, WAC, Box 279, f. 1846.

to acknowledge it; but at present I do not.”¹¹⁸ There is a slight degree of ambiguity here—perhaps Huddleston was speaking to the legitimacy of the leaders’ complaints against him and he could not recognize anything he had done that could have justified the response he faced. Taken at face value, Huddleston’s statements place him in isolation from all other observers of this episode, including his allies. Particularly striking in Huddleston’s reflections are his lack of remorse and his thorough effort to assign all culpability for his dissolution of the Freetown Society to its irascible leaders. In his account, the dissolution of the Society was inevitable, and he employed a nonchalant tone as he described it. His presentation belied the fact that in his disbanding of the Society, Huddleston had realized the antithesis of the Methodist mission’s objectives in Sierra Leone.

John Baker, the Methodist missionary who returned from Gambia after Huddleston’s dissolution of the Society, occupied a unique and complicated position in this saga. While in Sierra Leone initially, Baker had enjoyed good relations with the leaders with whom Huddleston would clash. Upon his return to Freetown, Baker was critical of Huddleston’s handling of the matter, but he sided with his colleagues in their attempt to retain possession of the chapel. Baker served as an intermediary between the two factions, but he was unable to bring the two sides back into fellowship.

Having returned to Freetown on 11 January 1822, Baker “found things in [a] wretched state indeed.” Baker, who in times good and bad was given to dramatic presentation, described his own reaction as follows: “I can scarcely attempt a description of my feelings when I arrived; instead of Peace and Harmony as when I left; all is

¹¹⁸ John Huddleston to the Secretaries, 28 February 1822, WMMS Archive, WAC, Box 279, f. 1847.

dissension [?] & disorder & the Society a mere wreck.”¹¹⁹ As Lane and Huddleston had done, Baker offered a description of what had transpired. While Baker did not explicitly state that Huddleston was the source of the problem or exonerate the Freetown leaders completely, his account made clear that Huddleston’s intemperate manner was a significant factor in the conflict. Baker’s advice to the leaders in London made plain his evaluation of Huddleston.

Mr Huddleston should be immediately removed (but not B^r Lane) & I could wish from Western Africa for I am sorry to say he is of a Spirit which will ever prevent his usefulness among these People; Impatient of Controul [*sic*], Obstinate to a degree & affecting the Master in every thing. I know for a fact that in many instances he treated his Colleague [Lane, presumably] like a Servant, he has complained of it much to me & when I arrived here was actually on the due of writing to you on this Subject, under his Superintendancy there is little room to expect our Cause will prosper but rather dwindle away.¹²⁰

Baker’s description of Huddleston’s characteristics served to substantiate the complaints of the Society leaders in Freetown. Even sympathetic scholars followed Baker and the Freetown Methodists in their evaluation of Huddleston. In their multi-volume chronicle of the WMMS Findlay and Holdsworth generally presented Methodist missionaries in the best light possible. However, these partisan chroniclers acknowledged that Huddleston “would certainly appear to have been wanting in the more winning features of the Missionary’s character, and ruled his sable flock with a high hand.”¹²¹

Even after it became apparent that reconciliation between Huddleston and the Freetown Society was not a realistic prospect, there remained the issue of the chapel’s

¹¹⁹ Baker to the Secretaries, 31 January 1822.

¹²⁰ Baker to the Secretaries, 31 January 1822. The WMMS leaders did not remove Huddleston. He remained in Sierra Leone until July 1823, when he succumbed to fever.

¹²¹ Findlay and Holdsworth, *History of the WMMS*, Vol. 4, p. 83-84.

deed.¹²² Baker, who took the side of the local Methodists in the personnel dispute, was on the side of British Methodism when it came to the question of ownership of the chapel. He collaborated with Huddleston and Lane, and together they presented a memorial outlining their claim to the property to Governor MacCarthy.¹²³ So too, the “Persons, Trustees & Members of the Wesleyan Methodists Inhabitants of Sierra Leone” presented a petition to the Governor, and it was signed by one hundred and six men.¹²⁴ In an interesting turn of events, the colonial governor sided with the African Christians rather than the metropolitan interest. The Governor decreed “that the present enjoyment of the Chapel shall be given to the Trustees named in the Deeds (or the Survivors of them) & those associates with them in the Trust.” MacCarthy did not offer a ruling on the “Rights of the Ministers of the Conference,” but he did state “that no Minister or Missionary sent out by the Conference shall take upon himself to Preach or Teach in the Chapel without the Consent of [the] Trustees for the time being.”¹²⁵ This episode forces a reconsideration of traditional assumptions about the relationship between colonial rulers, missionaries, and local peoples. In this case, a colonial authority took measures to protect the religious autonomy of a group of Africans, who had a deed in their possession, from any undesired meddling by British missionaries.

¹²² In the same letter cited above (31 January 1822), Baker related how the Freetown Methodist leaders (who were willing to dialogue with him), were unwilling to receive Huddleston again and refused to write to the WMMS leaders in London.

¹²³ A copy of the memorial, along with additional commentary from Baker, and a copy of the Governor’s response are extant in the WMMS Archive, WAC, Box 279, f. 1847. The memorial was dated 18 January 1822.

¹²⁴ Baker described the petition, but he did not provide its contents.

¹²⁵ Baker reproduced the Governor’s decree in the letter that contained his reproduction of the memorial (18 January 1822.)

Finally, it should be noted that the lack of a formal institutional identity in earlier Methodist missions played a part in this episode. A deed from 1813, when Methodist missionaries were initiating the work in Sierra Leone, stated that the land in perpetuity belonged to “Thomas Coke his Heirs, and Assigns . . . and Successors.”¹²⁶ It must be remembered that in 1813 the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society did not yet exist; it was in this year that Methodists in Leeds formed the first local auxiliary society. Quite simply, there was no institutional entity that could have been recognized in the deed, only Thomas Coke who was recognized as the driving force behind Methodist missions could be identified. While Governor MacCarthy did not offer the logic behind his decision, it would seem that he recognized the leaders of the Freetown Society to be the heirs of Thomas Coke. Perhaps MacCarthy made this decision because of the inability of Methodist missionaries, because of human conflict and illness, to maintain a presence in Freetown. Another possibility, which was not mentioned by MacCarthy, was that Huddleston had made an unfavorable impression on the Governor, as he had done with nearly every other party in the colony.

Tensions between Methodist missionaries and local Methodists represented a significant, and perhaps improbable, obstacle to the Methodist mission in Sierra Leone. Seemingly, the existence of and invitation from a Methodist Society in Freetown might have provided a foundation that Methodist missionaries could build upon, cooperating with the Nova Scotian Methodists to spread Methodism among the other communities in Sierra Leone. As has been demonstrated, the development of the Methodist mission in Sierra Leone unfolded differently. Varied understandings of Methodist identity and

¹²⁶ This deed, signed by Governor Charles Maxwell and dated 14 April 1813, is in the WMMS Archive, WAC, Box 279, f. 1839.

other doctrinal differences contributed to the acrimony, but it seems that the personalities of the individuals involved were of singular importance in the two episodes of conflict. The temperaments of Davies and Huddleston are of crucial importance in interpreting these events.¹²⁷ The perception of these missionaries as arrogant and even tyrannical was the greatest factor contributing to the rupture of the relationship between British and Freetown Methodisms.

Conclusion

The Methodist mission in Sierra Leone was beset by a variety of problems as it sought to propagate Methodism in West Africa. The presence of Nova Scotian Methodists in Freetown held diverse implications for the Methodist missionary enterprise. These Freetown Methodists were loyal to one another and to Methodism, that is, the Methodism they had brought with them from North America. Their combative relationship with British Methodist missionaries—the Nova Scotians enjoyed a much more amiable relationship with British Methodism in the abstract—began during Melvill Horne’s brief stint in the colony in the 1790s. Although Horne was a colonial chaplain and not a Methodist missionary, he was a Methodist with a keen interest in missionary work. Nevertheless, it was Horne’s connection to colonial power, along with his failure to see the legitimacy of the Freetown Methodists’ practices, that doomed Horne’s encounter with West African Methodism. At the same time, Horne’s actions must not be viewed in isolation from the experiences of the Nova Scotians. Through

¹²⁷ Of course, the Society leaders’ mindsets and attitudes are another part of this equation, but we know substantially less about these individuals. The only observer close to neutrality, Baker, did not mention any deficiencies or eccentricities on this front. He, for his part, had managed a healthy relationship with the members of the Freetown Society.

examination of the Nova Scotians' dealings with the British Government, it becomes apparent that their mistrust of British authority had been forming for more than a decade. This lack of confidence in the Colonial Government tintured their perception of Horne, who was connected to the Government via his chaplaincy. The encounter between Horne and the Freetown Methodists is essential to understanding the dealings between the latter group and Methodist missionaries in the next decades.

Because of the diminutive size of the Methodist mission to Sierra Leone, missionary misconduct was not a major issue as there were, relative to the other missions examined, very few missionaries attached to the mission. To that point, many of the missionaries in Sierra Leone were incapacitated for extended periods of time, reducing or eliminating their potential for misconduct. Nevertheless, there were two isolated events. In the case of Davies, there was an accusation of sexual impropriety that was never substantiated. It is impossible to determine the veracity of the woman's accusation. The charge did not seem to be taken seriously by Europeans in the colony, and Davies was cleared when he appealed to the colonial authorities. Of course, Davies was a friend of Governor MacCarthy's, and it seems likely that he would have been given the benefit in the face of any doubts. As Davies's journal makes clear, his poor health coupled with his wife's death left him in an altered state. With the benefit of historical hindsight, we can deduce that his suicide, while much later, suggests that his faculties were affected profoundly. Finally, the Society leaders did not dismiss the woman's accusations out of hand and were willing to investigate the matter. The fact that they were already at odds with Davies complicates analysis of their decision to examine the charge against Davies. There are simply too many unknown aspects in this episode to draw a conclusion about

Davies's innocence or guilt, but the mere accusation exacerbated a division that was already injurious to the Methodist mission in the Colony.¹²⁸

Patterson's misdeeds at the close of our period of inquiry present an issue of a different sort as we consider the impact on the mission. While Patterson certainly alienated the African Methodists, the damage to the mission was not as considerable as might have been in other circumstances. The African Methodists of Sierra Leone recognized that Patterson's bigotry and arrogance were unique to him and not representative of British Methodism. The fact that his impertinence extended to his peers within the missionary ranks served to unite all Methodists, missionaries and African, together against Patterson. In a bizarre way, Patterson's offensive acts served the Methodist missionary cause as he helped all Methodists in Sierra Leone to unite against a common enemy.

The CMS presence in Sierra Leone proved to be beneficial to the WMMS on occasion, even as some Methodists in the colony perceived the Anglican society as a threat. The instances of cooperation, which were documented above, should not come as a surprise. These were two missionary societies connected by lingering metropolitan ties between Methodism and the Church of England, and both societies were driven by shared Evangelical convictions. In the case of the CMS and its employment of sympathetic German-speaking Lutherans, these Evangelical ties encompassed Continental Europe as well. Thus, as in the example of the relationship between Davies and Butscher, the personal ties of friendship could be combined with jointly held beliefs.

¹²⁸ It could be thought that the Society leaders, in their quest to undermine Davies, prompted the woman (who was attached to the Methodist Society) to level the accusation against Davies. The fact that this theory was not mentioned once by any of the parties defending Davies (including Davies himself) makes this seem an unlikely scenario.

In the case of this Welshman and German, they even cooperated to conduct services and perform sacramental rites. This was an example of how individual missionaries could improvise in the field and depart from the protocols of their respective societies.

Inter-society cooperation was generally not promoted within British missionary literature. In part, this may have been an attempt to avoid disturbing the more partisan members of the denomination, but there was also a basic practical reason for the relative silence. Each society needed to create the impression that its work was unique and successful so that financial support would increase. When there was a variety of voluntary societies seeking support from an individual Methodist, for example, it was important (from the perspective of the WMMS leadership) that the Methodist in question had good reason to support the WMMS before considering a contribution to the LMS or another organization. It is unlikely that the cooperation between Davies and Butscher would have raised the ire of the leaders of either society, but it was, nevertheless, a deviation from standard procedure. Davies and Butscher's partnership in ministry provides an example of an incongruity between metropolitan ideals and missionary conduct in the field that resulted in greater efficiency in ministry.¹²⁹

The relationship between Davies and Butscher was atypical of dealings between WMMS and CMS missionaries, with the majority of encounters being civil and polite, yet lacking warmth or enthusiasm. On the other end of the spectrum from Davies and Butscher was another minority position: Methodist missionaries who viewed the CMS as a menacing threat to the Methodist project in Sierra Leone. In instances such as Brown's mention of Garnon's high churchmanship, we see the Methodist belief that

¹²⁹ Davies's work with Butscher was, perhaps, not completely harmless in the eyes of Freetown Methodists. However, most interested parties did not voice objections.

Anglican ecclesiological beliefs would preclude assistance to the Methodist cause. It is notable that Brown's remark in 1817 was devoid of hostility, and this in sharp contrast to Maer's comments about the Church of England in the mid 1830s.

Maer was bold in his claims that CMS missionaries actively sought to poach Methodists from the fold, and it was clear that he was embittered toward the established Church. Maer's remarks were not centered on a particular type of Anglican; he merely spoke of "Churchmen."¹³⁰ This is somewhat ironic given that Brown alluded to Garnon's party affiliation during a period of time in which church parties were not as prominent as they were in 1837 when Maer attacked the CMS. It was during the decade of the 1830s that church parties came to the fore, and following 1833 in particular the divide separating Evangelicals and members of the High Church party increased significantly.¹³¹ Given the change in the British religious landscape during the 1830s, it seems probable that Maer's invective was informed by the state of affairs in the metropole.

Of course, Methodists occupied a point beyond Evangelical Anglicans in the religious spectrum, and it must be remembered that the Evangelical Anglicans of the CMS were viewed askance by those in the High Church party. Even before the shifts of the 1830s, the CMS endured a significant challenge from the High Church party in the Bath CMS controversy of 1815.¹³² While Methodists and Evangelical Anglicans were

¹³⁰ Maer to the Secretaries, 30 January 1817.

¹³¹ D. W Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), 94-95; Peter Benedict Nockles, "Church Parties in the pre-Tractarian Church of England 1750-1833: the 'Orthodox' - Some Problems of Definition and Identity," in *Church of England C. 1689 - C. 1833*, ed. John Walsh, Colin Haydon, and Stephen Taylor, 1993, 356-357.

¹³² On this episode see: William C. Barnhart, "Anglican Volunteerism, Ecclesiastical Politics, and the Bath Church Missionary Association Controversy, 1817-

separated on important points of polity, they held in common a vast corpus of theological convictions. A Methodist rhetorical assault upon an Evangelical Anglican represented a turn against a potential ally with a high probability of sympathy for the Methodist cause. Maer's attacks reveal how a combination of forces, including the Methodist departure from the Church of England and domestic ecclesiastical politics, joined with his personal disposition and affected the Methodist mission abroad. Rather than seeking the possible benefits of cooperation with the CMS, Maer viewed his Anglican colleagues with suspicion and disdain.

Illness and death loomed large in the early British missionary enterprise, but the Methodist mission in Sierra Leone endured one of the higher proportions of loss on this front. There were obvious effects of disease and death including a perpetual shortage of missionaries, discontinuity in the relationship between the local Society and British Methodism, and countless weeks of labor lost to ill health. As the case of William Davies demonstrates, the astounding statistics only reveal a fragmentary glimpse of the effects of disease and death. By statistical reckoning Davies was one of the fortunate minority who left Sierra Leone and survived the voyage back to Britain. Closer examination reveals that the death of Jane Davies and William's own bouts with sickness tortured him throughout the second half of his tenure in the colony. And the loss of his wife was the chief impetus prompting Davies's departure from the colony. Jane Davies, who was not even recognized as a "missionary" by her contemporaries, gave her life to the missionary cause, and her demise terminated her missionary career and eventually ended her husband's as well. The effects of disease and death were quantifiably terrible

1818," *Anglican and Episcopal History* 77, no. 1 (March 2008): 1–21; Mark Smith, "Henry Ryder and the Bath CMS: Evangelical and High Church Controversy in the Late Hanoverian Church," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 62, no. 4 (October 2011): 726–743.

as were the high costs that defy quantification, and in tandem they had a crippling effect on the Methodist mission in Sierra Leone, inhibiting its growth and keeping progress to a minimum. Finally, the effects of missionaries' deaths contributed to the downfall of the mission at the hands of Huddleston. Had the many missionaries lost to disease survived, there would have been a greater missionary presence. If Huddleston had been one member of a larger cohort, his peers would have tempered the excesses of his personality. The effects of disease were harmful in both obvious and insidious ways.

The conflicts that arose between the Nova Scotian Methodists and the British missionaries were of the greatest magnitude among an array of problems, and they were examples of a potential benefit proving to be an obstacle to the Methodist missionary cause. The Methodist mission to Sierra Leone, which was initiated in response to the request of Freetown Methodists, began with a Methodist beachhead already established. Rather than investing years in winning the first converts, Methodist missionaries could look forward to leading and partnering with a vibrant Methodist Society in Sierra Leone. There was potential for Methodism's expansion from amongst the Nova Scotians to the other groups represented in the rapidly expanding colony, which had been receiving liberated Africans for several years prior to the arrival of Warren in 1811. It was with high hopes that Warren and his accompanying schoolmasters were dispatched to Sierra Leone.

As was demonstrated, the Methodist missionaries were unable to capitalize on the presence of a Methodist Society in Freetown. The first two missionaries to live more than a matter of months, Davies and Huddleston, both failed to unite with the Society's leaders. Davies, who withdrew into colonial service, did less harm than Huddleston, who dissolved the Freetown Society and severed the ties between British and West

African Methodisms. Huddleston had been sent to expand the Freetown Society and strengthen the relationship between Methodism in the metropole and colony. In this case a Methodist missionary took a weighty action that was antithetical to the designs he had been sent to implement. The British foreign missionary enterprise was comprised of individuals shaped by diverse forces and with values and priorities that did not align perfectly with those that defined the society sponsoring their work. In the case of Huddleston we can see how the dubious decision of a single missionary could have tremendous impact on a mission.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Church Missionary Society in Sierra Leone

Introduction

The connection between Evangelical Anglicans and West Africa antedated the formation of the CMS, and thus it was only natural that this region would receive the Society's first missionaries. British Evangelical interest in West Africa, which was sparked by Thomas Clarkson and Granville Sharp's campaign against the slave trade, evolved into action in the late 1780s. Clarkson and Sharp persuaded William Wilberforce to represent the cause in Parliament, and in April 1791 a bill incorporating the Sierra Leone Company was introduced.¹ While efforts to eliminate the slave trade first attracted British Evangelicals' attention to Sierra Leone, the initial company project and subsequent colony provided the grounds for an experiment in the symbiotic union of the anti-slavery campaign with the nascent Evangelical missionary enterprise.²

The dual purpose that gave rise to Evangelical engagement in Sierra Leone dictated the course of the CMS mission in the colony. The original plan, which was conceived while the abolition of the slave trade was merely a hope, focused on the indigenous peoples living beyond Freetown. A distinct lack of success among these peoples, coupled with the influx of liberated Africans following 1807, compelled the

¹ Lamin O Sanneh, *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1983), 57.

² Andrew Walls, "A Christian Experiment: The Early Sierra Leone Colony," in *The Mission of the Church and the Propagation of the Faith*, ed. Cuming, G. J. (Cambridge University Press, 1970), 107–108.

secretaries to alter their designs.³ The liberated Africans seemed to be the ideal recipients of the Society's efforts, as they provided an opportunity to combine evangelism and anti-slavery action. In an effort to reduce these once-victimized persons' vulnerability, the CMS sought to provide education and vocational training for the liberated Africans. Simultaneously, these African pupils gained literacy, which enabled them to read the Bible, and they received instruction in the rudiments of Christian doctrine. The CMS mission consisted of various endeavors, including colonial parochial service and work among indigenous peoples, but by 1810 the education of liberated Africans was the central element of the Society's program in Sierra Leone.⁴

This chapter documents the various problematic factors that shaped the CMS mission in Sierra Leone. The CMS initially failed to secure Church of England clergy willing to serve in Sierra Leone, so Continental Lutherans and African Christians sustained the mission for its first years. An assortment of complications emerged as the strains of cross-cultural missionary work exposed tensions between CMS leaders and their Lutheran missionaries and between European missionaries and their African colleagues. Illness and death were constant threats to the work in Sierra Leone, and the consequences of these impediments were manifold. When Methodist missionaries arrived in West Africa, CMS missionaries at times considered them to be rivals who could encroach upon the work of the Society. Most CMS missionaries served the Society without incident, but there were several missionaries who engaged in behavior

³ The liberated Africans, or "recaptives" as they were called in the nineteenth century, were the persons freed from the slave ships that were caught during the British Naval blockade, which enforced the ban on the slave trade following 1807. The Royal Navy returned these diverse groups of Africans to Freetown, which was a natural destination given the anti-slavery interest already present in Sierra Leone.

⁴ Walls, "A Christian Experiment," 114.

that defied the principles that defined the CMS and threatened the work in Sierra Leone. Among the variety of issues that beset the CMS in Sierra Leone, the Society's colonial obligations proved to be one of the most taxing factors.

Before examining the evidence from the CMS archive, a brief survey of the relationship between the CMS and colonial government in Sierra Leone is necessary. As was mentioned at the outset of the chapter, the first missionary efforts were made under the auspices of the Sierra Leone Company. With this operation stalling and as the abolition of the slave trade transformed British interest in West Africa, the Sierra Leone Company ceded control to the British government and Sierra Leone became a Crown Colony in 1807.⁵ As the organizational arrangements in Sierra Leone evolved, the Anglican Evangelicals in London, who had been prominent in the company, were obliged to relinquish control of affairs in the colony. Although they forfeited direct authority, members of the Clapham Sect still enjoyed a degree of influence as they were consulted on questions pertaining to Sierra Leone during the colony's first years.⁶

Illness as an Obstacle

During the nineteenth century West Africa came to be known in Britain as the "white man's grave" because of the high mortality rate of Europeans in the region. At the time, it was believed that Europeans could not tolerate the extremes of the climate, and other inaccurate images, such as dense, impenetrable jungles, were also constructed in Britons' imaginations.⁷ In reality, Europeans were susceptible to malaria and yellow

⁵ Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 97.

⁶ Walls, "A Christian Experiment," 114.

⁷ Philip D. Curtin, "'The White Man's Grave': Image and Reality, 1780-1850," *Journal of British Studies* 1, no. 1 (November 1, 1961): 94.

fever because, unlike natives of West Africa, they had not acquired immunity to these diseases during childhood.⁸ While the notion of West Africa as the “white man’s grave” contained excesses and misrepresentations, the effect of illness upon the CMS’s early work in Sierra Leone was substantial.

Before moving to specifics from the missionaries’ correspondence, a statistical overview will offer a glimpse of the scope of the problem. The mission’s first decades featured an astounding loss of life. Between 1804 and 1824 the CMS sent seventy Europeans to Sierra Leone. Of the seventy, thirty-eight died and seven returned in poor health.⁹ Looking at West Africa as a whole, Philip Curtin found similarly dire statistics. Of eighty-nine European CMS personnel sent out between 1804 and 1825, fifty-four died, which made for a mortality rate of 60.5%.¹⁰ At the close of our period of inquiry in 1835, it was estimated that of the one hundred and nine Europeans sent to Sierra Leone by the CMS, only three missionaries and two catechists survived.¹¹ Throughout the decades under examination, illness and death represented a defining characteristic of the CMS mission in Sierra Leone.

While the striking mortality rate had a tremendous impact on the mission, the debilitating effects of non-fatal bouts of illness proved to be a significant hindrance to the work in Sierra Leone. Gustavus Nylander, the third CMS missionary sent to Sierra Leone, battled illness periodically during his nineteen-year tenure in the colony.

⁸ Philip D. Curtin, “The End of the ‘White Man’s Grave’? Nineteenth-Century Mortality in West Africa,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 21, no. 1 (July 1, 1990): 63.

⁹ Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 153.

¹⁰ Philip D Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 484.

¹¹ Thomas Sylvester Johnson, *The Story of a Mission: The Sierra Leone Church, First Daughter of C.M.S.* (London: S.P.C.K., 1953), 31.

Nylander's first years in West Africa were marked by various periods of illness. In an initial letter to London, Nylander mentioned that Renner (one of the first two CMS missionaries in Sierra Leone) was "taken ill in a fever."¹² Nylander's own health deteriorated, and he began to oscillate between periods of illness and good health.¹³ Writing in December 1811, Nylander cited "the imperfect state of my health" as he described the difficulties that he encountered in his work.¹⁴ Throughout the first decades of the CMS mission in Sierra Leone, days and even weeks of missionaries' potential labor were lost to illness, and this detracted from the mission's progress.

The deaths of missionaries and their family members became commonplace in the CMS's experience in Sierra Leone, and the high number of deaths led to the CMS leadership in London handling these matters in a detached manner. In 1818, Josiah Pratt wrote to Charles Wenzel, a Lutheran missionary in the service of the CMS. Wenzel's son had recently died, and Pratt offered only a single sentence on the subject: "You will feel as a father; but we may rejoice, we trust on behalf of the child."¹⁵ Immediately after this concise treatment, Pratt turned to the financial affairs that demanded attention following the child's death. Although Pratt's comments reflect the Christian hope in eternal life and while the deaths of children in the nineteenth century were a part of life in Africa and England, Pratt's comments fail to convey his concern for an employee who

¹² Gustavus Nylander to the Secretaries, 20 October 1806, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/E1.

¹³ Gustavus Nylander to the Secretaries, 9 April 1807, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/E1.

¹⁴ Gustavus Nylander to the Secretaries, 9 December 1811, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/E2.

¹⁵ Josiah Pratt to C.F. Wenzel, 22 June 1818, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/ E7.

had just lost a son (and who had endured the death of his wife in 1811).¹⁶ Similarly, Pratt came across as insensitive in a letter to a missionary in 1815. Pratt sought to articulate his displeasure with the missionaries' misdeeds in Sierra Leone. To make that point, he asserted: "The deaths of our labourers deeply affects us; but I cannot say that they so deeply affect me, as the errors and infirmities which accompany some of the survivors."¹⁷ Perhaps Pratt was employing hyperbole to convey his displeasure with the offending parties, but his choice of analogy seems to be ill conceived and potentially disconcerting to readers who had witnessed the tormented deaths of the persons to whom Pratt referred. The unfortunate frequency with which death touched the CMS mission in Sierra Leone created an environment in London in which tragic circumstances were considered mundane.

In contrast to the leadership's reserved response, widows, widowers, and surviving colleagues in Sierra Leone penned poignant letters describing their losses. Most of the correspondence written in the aftermath of a death displayed profound grief that was tempered by hope. John Collier's letter of August 1818 exhibited this balance. Collier wrote to report that he had lost his "dear wife & child." He continued, "I have been but a short time in Africa, but my sorrows have been multiplied; my troubles have been many. Yet for all this I faint not, I would take courage & go on; for the Lord is still my helper."¹⁸ Elizabeth Renner, who also endured the loss of a spouse, exhibited a

¹⁶ It should be noted that Wenzel himself would succumb to disease shortly after receiving Pratt's letter. He died on 1 August 1818.

¹⁷ Josiah Pratt to John Wilhelm, 18 October 1815, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/E5. Pratt was affirming Wilhelm, who was not one of the problematic figures. Pratt also mentioned that he "trembled to open the letters" of the latter party.

¹⁸ John Collier to Josiah Pratt, 22 August 1818, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/E7. In this same letter Collier reported the deaths of two colleagues.

similar response. She related that “Death came in, and I was deprived of my dearest and affectionate husband and friend, who fell asleep in the arms of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” Renner recognized that her husband’s death was part of “the Lord’s will” and that “the Lord’s will must be done.” After this acknowledgement she exclaimed, “But Oh what a sudden blow it was to me, a blow that I shall never, never forget; how shall I be able to stand it?”¹⁹ Elizabeth Renner, who closed her letter with instructions for the inscription of her husband’s gravestone, simultaneously recognized God’s providence and voiced the great depth of her pain. While faith sustained the survivors, the sense of loss touched CMS personnel in Sierra Leone and slowed the work of the mission as the survivors grappled with repeated losses.

European missionaries were not the only persons associated with the CMS to fall victim to disease. In 1816, Mary Ann Horton, an English school mistress, wrote to London and reported “a disorder amongst” her students at Leicester Mountain (near Freetown), which had “carried many out of time into eternity.” Edward Bickersteth, a CMS secretary, had toured the colony and recently visited the school, and there had been substantial loss of life since his visit. According to Horton, thirty-five of one hundred girls had died and another twenty were sick in the hospital, leaving only a “remaining few in school.”²⁰ As the outbreak of disease at Leicester Mountain in 1816 demonstrated, Africans attached to the CMS, and not just European employees, also perished prematurely.

¹⁹ Elizabeth Renner to the Secretaries, 20 November 1822, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/M3.

²⁰ Mary Ann Horton to Josiah Pratt, 19 July 1816, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/E5.

Relations with Methodist Missionaries

In 1811, Methodist missionaries arrived in Freetown, and CMS missionaries periodically reported instances of rivalry with their Methodist counterparts. Not all interactions between the two groups of missionaries were competitive or hostile—in some instances there was cooperation. For example, the minutes of a meeting of the Sierra Leone Auxiliary Church Missionary Society in 1821 contain an expression of goodwill between the societies. George Lane, a Methodist missionary, attended the meeting and voiced a very warm proposition. Lane proposed a vote on a measure of thanks for Governor MacCarthy’s support and also voiced his admiration for the CMS. He expressed his hope that he would “never be so narrow minded or so bigoted as to wish only the prosperity of the Society” to which he belonged. James Lisk, a young CMS teacher, seconded Lane’s motion and responded in kind. He anticipated the day when “we shall all have to appear in the presence of God, as one family, redeemed by the same precious blood, and having one older brother, the Lord Jesus Christ.” Lisk’s focus was not entirely eschatological; he expressed his hope that “what we have heard this day will animate us.” Lane’s motion, which Lisk had seconded, passed unanimously.²¹ There were sporadic instances of cooperation and fellowship between the missionaries of the WMMS and the CMS, but there were also moments of conflict.²²

Shortly after the first party of Methodist missionaries arrived in Sierra Leone, they received mention in CMS correspondence. Gustavus Nylander wrote to London and discussed a number of matters involving his work in the colony. He mentioned a

²¹ Sierra Leone Auxiliary CMS Meeting Minutes, 26 December 1826, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/ O42.

²² Another example of cooperation between the societies is presented in the chapter on the WMMS in Sierra Leone.

visit to the “Bullom shore,” a territory north of Freetown. Nylander had met with the “king at Bullom shore,” and secured permission for missionaries to enter the area. According to Nylander, the “Mahommedans soon will be willing to introduce their religion,” but he had received assurances from residents of Bullom that they wanted to learn the “Whiteman [*sic*] book.” Nylander then turned to a threat closer to the CMS. “Dr. [Thomas] Coke has sent out four Methodist Missionaries, and if we neglect Bullom shore, they will take it. One of them is, what they call a preacher appointed for Sierra Leone and the others only Missionaries to go abroad.”²³ Nylander’s description of the Methodists, which bore traces of condescension, was nearly identical to his mention of Islamic proselytizers. There were no indications of Evangelical affinities or any signs of welcome to fellow Christian missionaries in service of another English missionary society. On the contrary, there was territory to be defended from newcomers advancing (seemingly) a separate agenda.

As the years passed various encounters with Methodist missionaries in Sierra Leone and beyond were reported to London. Early in 1812 Leopold Butscher, a CMS missionary, sailed for England and stopped at the island of Gorée (in modern Senegal.) While in Gorée, Butscher met two missionaries who had been “sent out by Dr. Coke.” Butscher commented on the frustration of the Methodists, who felt “quite useless in Goree, as the inhabitants and especially the whites seem rather averse to a [*sic*] religious conduct.” Beyond religious indifference, the inhabitants believed that the island would return to French control, and therefore they desired education for the children in French rather than English, which the Methodists were seeking to offer. Butscher’s account

²³ Gustavus Nylander to the Secretaries, 9 December 1811, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/E2. It is very unlikely that the CMS secretaries were unaware of the Methodist mission to Sierra Leone.

offers little detail of the interaction, but he did reproduce his (unsolicited?) counsel. “I replied: ‘If the grown people will not incline to hear the glad tidings of salvation, begin with the children and safe [*sic*] them from destruction, and as there’s no French School Master here, the inhabitants will certainly rather send their children to an English School, than to none at all.’”²⁴ Perhaps Butscher sought to be encouraging, but his advice seems patronizing. The Methodists at Gorée were already attempting to establish a school. Moreover, Methodists had been engaged in education in other fields for decades, so it was not as if Butscher’s opinion was novel. Additionally, Butscher, who had been in Gorée for a matter of days, presumed to have a better understanding of the context than the Methodist missionaries stationed there for the long term. This encounter well outside of Sierra Leone offers a vignette of CMS-Methodist interaction in which territorial competition was not an issue. Even when competitive concerns were absent, CMS missionaries could harbor an air of superiority when dealing with their Methodist counterparts.

Kenneth Macaulay wrote to his second cousin, Zachary Macaulay, in 1815 and the latter forwarded the letter to the CMS secretaries. Macaulay’s observations included criticism of the Methodist missionaries in Sierra Leone. This report is illuminating in that it contains a description of Methodism from outside of the CMS, and it may have influenced the secretaries’ perception of Methodist activity in Sierra Leone. Macaulay offered friendly criticism of the CMS as he questioned the placement of missionaries, but his tone shifted as he turned his attention to the Methodist missionaries.

²⁴ Leopold Butscher to the Secretaries, 14 February 1812, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/E2.

Macaulay's discussion of Methodist missionaries was occasioned by his observation that hundreds of persons would risk the perils of a place like Sierra Leone for the sake of an attractive salary, and he questioned whether anyone would "brave it . . . for the salvation of millions of their fellow creatures?" According to Macaulay, the Methodists were willing to assume such risks with only a theological motivation driving them. Nevertheless, Methodists' ardor, which could be beneficial, drew Macaulay's criticism. While commenting on William Davies, a Welsh Methodist missionary, Macaulay revealed his misgivings about Methodism. He explained that Davies "(their head) is a really religious man and honest in his profession, but I do firmly think he is led away by an improper zeal for the honour of his sect." Macaulay went on to assert that Davies "conceive[d] they [Methodists] are a privileged [*sic*] society independent of all worldly governments and that no person can be really a Christian unless he is one of their persuasion."²⁵ From Macaulay's Anglican perspective, Davies was narrowly Methodistic, exclusivist, and somewhat delusional when it came to the belief that Methodism was untainted by connections to civil powers.

Macaulay was suspicious of Davies's Evangelical enthusiasm, which may not have been as great a concern among the Evangelical Anglican leadership of the CMS. When Macaulay denigrated Davies's pride in Methodism's purported independence from worldly authorities, the CMS secretaries likely found greater resonance. Not only was the Church to which they were devoted the established Church, but also the CMS leaders recognized that any mission in Sierra Leone was dependent upon the British government and British military's backing. It was naïve to think that Christian

²⁵ Kenneth Macaulay to Zachary Macaulay, 25 September 1815, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/E5.

missionary efforts of any sort were viable in West African without the presence of the Royal Navy and the degree of order that the British colonial government afforded.

The relationship between missionaries and colonial authorities sometimes came to the fore in disputes between Anglicans and Methodists. In 1820, the Reverend Samuel Flood, an Anglican chaplain, described a point of conflict with the Reverend John Baker, a Methodist missionary. Flood described how Baker claimed, in the presence of the governor, that Flood had “entered upon his labours, and robbed him of his Church.” Flood did not speak to the veracity of Baker’s claims. Instead, he described how he had been “immediately exonerated” by the governor, who had given Flood the directions that had prompted Baker’s complaint.²⁶ In this instance, the association between the CMS and the colonial government proved to be of tremendous importance, trumping cooperation (and perhaps even civility) between Christian missionaries.

Near the close of our period of inquiry, problems persisted between the missionaries of the CMS and their Methodist colleagues. In 1833 a shortage of personnel forced the CMS to abandon its work at Wellington.²⁷ Without CMS missionaries present to lead services, the trustees of the chapel at Wellington asked the Reverend Edward Maer, a Methodist missionary, to fill the void. According to Maer, the trustees contacted him three times, and he declined each time. Finally, at their fourth request, Maer acquiesced and contacted Governor Findlay, who instructed Maer to supply Wellington until the CMS could again provide missionaries. In a letter to the CMS missionary, James F. Schön, Maer asserted that he preached at Wellington chapel

²⁶ Samuel Flood to Edward Bickersteth, 13 May 1820, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/L2.

²⁷ Wellington is on the Freetown peninsula, less than ten miles from Freetown.

and following the service had “informed the people that I should only visit them occasionally until the Church Missionaries returned.” He then listed a variety of reasons why he hoped that the CMS would quickly find replacements for Wellington. Seeking to allay the suspicion of his CMS counterparts, Maer averred that he had “never once attempted to influence the Trustees in our [Methodists’] favour; nor done any thing to push myself upon the people.”²⁸ As Maer described the circumstances, he underscored the fact that he was not seeking to impinge upon the work of the CMS at Wellington.

When Schön gave an account of things at Wellington to the CMS secretaries, he portrayed Maer as opportunistically seeking to establish Methodism at Wellington in the absence of CMS personnel. Schön acknowledged that the Wellington trustees initiated contact with Maer, but from that point his account diverged from Maer’s. According to Schön, Maer was in the process of implementing Methodist designs at Wellington. As Maer himself was occupied on Sundays with four chapels in Freetown, “he proposed to the people to send one of their [Methodists’] exhorters from Freetown, to perform religious service twice on the Lord’s Day, and he did so hitherto.” Maer himself would visit Wellington on Monday evenings. In the event that he could not make the trip himself, Maer made arrangements for William Tamba, an African and long-time employee of the CMS who was serving a suspension imposed by CMS missionaries in Sierra Leone, to take his place. Maer had gone as far as “to divide the Communicants into Classes, under their respective leaders, gave regulations to them how to hold

²⁸ Edward Maer to J. F. Schön, 16 August 1833, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/M6.

Meetings amongst themselves.”²⁹ In Schön’s report, it was clear—Maer was attempting to transform the chapel into a Methodist stronghold.

Competition between missionary societies originated in the metropole and followed missionaries into the field. Within Britain each society strove to accentuate its unique attributes so that the grounds on which it should be supported were obvious. In the case of the CMS, this point was made in the 1814 annual sermon. Henry Ryder, then the dean of Wells, asserted: “There is also, as has often been pointed out, sufficient difference in our [CMS] plans, and even in our specific object, to entitle us to distinct support.”³⁰ While emphasis upon societal distinctives was necessary for metropolitan fundraising, such attitudes eliminated possibilities for cooperation between these two groups of Evangelicals. For example, the potential for greater efficiency in education was reduced as CMS missionaries passed on opportunities to work with Methodists, who held similar educational objectives in the colony. Beyond practical limitations, the friction between the missionaries of the WMMS and CMS also detracted from their ministry at a rudimentary level. Perceiving the cohort of WMMS missionaries as a threat rather than an ally affected the CMS mission as it displayed the divisive side of Evangelicalism to the residents of Sierra Leone. Missionaries of the CMS and WMMS, who held a great deal in common (and whose commonalities were amplified in a foreign context), were unable to cooperate consistently. Although there were instances of unity, CMS missionaries’ failings on this front compromised their work to a degree as they did not fully inhabit the ideals of Christian love and charity that they preached.

²⁹ J. F. Schön to the Secretaries, 14 August 1833, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/M6.

³⁰ *CMS Proceedings, 1814*, 256.

CMS Personnel Problems in Sierra Leone

The early CMS missionaries in Sierra Leone enjoyed several advantages that were unique to their context, and yet they faced a series of organizational problems as they sought to advance the CMS's agenda in West Africa. The first German Lutheran CMS missionaries had two distinct advantages in their favor.³¹ First, they were employed by a missionary society with leaders who were closely connected to the authorities in Sierra Leone and British government officials in the metropole, so the CMS missionaries had powerful advocates who could assist their cause as needed.³² For example, when the first CMS missionaries arrived in 1803, they carried a letter of introduction from Zachary Macaulay, one of the figures responsible for the creation of the colony. Macaulay assured William Dawes, the governor of Sierra Leone, that these German Lutherans were pious men, and he asked for Dawes's cooperation in getting these two settled in Susu territory (north and east of Freetown.)³³ In this instance, a powerful British Evangelical discussed missionary strategy with a colonial governor, who also happened to be a British Evangelical. Second, as Sierra Leone was the Society's first mission, and the CMS's only foreign field for the Society's first decade, the missionaries in Sierra Leone received the Society's unrivaled attention and support.

³¹ Of course, the fact that the CMS could not initially find Anglican clergy to dispatch to foreign fields was an organizational problem, but the society's inability to recruit ordained clergymen within the Church of England was a metropolitan concern. This chapter will include exploration of divergences of opinion between the Lutheran CMS missionaries and their Anglican employers. Also, "German Lutherans" refers to German-speaking Lutherans, who were from various parts of Central and Northern Europe.

³² Walls, "A Christian Experiment," 114.

³³ Zachary Macaulay to William Dawes, 10 June 1803, CMS Archive, C/A/1/E1.

In spite of these advantageous circumstances, organizational problems arose in Sierra Leone. In some cases these problems were in spite of the CMS's connection to colonial authorities, and in other cases the difficulties were the result of the relationship between the CMS and the colonial government. In this section, the following organizational problems will be examined: interpersonal dissension, disagreements between the CMS committee in London and German Lutherans in the field, tension between CMS missionaries and African assistants, and jealousy occasioned by varying salaries.

Issues with European Personnel

Before examining the specific cases of Renner and Hartwig, explanation of the CMS's employment of Continental Lutherans is necessary. As was outlined in the first chapter, the fledgling Society wanted to maintain its "Church principles" and send missionaries to the field who were episcopally ordained and could offer the sacraments to converts. They faced an embarrassing reality: they could not find an ordained Church of England priest willing to go to Sierra Leone on their behalf, and societal and ecclesiological pressures precluded the possibility of ordaining men expressly for missionary service.³⁴ The CMS leaders, unwilling to compromise (at least not yet) on the ordination question, faced a humiliating prospect: they were operating a missionary society without a single missionary. In good Evangelical fashion, they began to think of creative ways around this obstacle.

After two long years without missionaries, the committee members moved from discussion and debate to action. They invited the Rev. Christian Ignatius Latrobe, the English secretary for the (Moravian) Brethren's Society for the Furtherance of the

³⁴ These pressures were outlined in the first chapter.

Gospel among the Heathen, to meet with them on 1 February 1802.³⁵ They commissioned Latrobe with two tasks in their quest for missionary candidates. He was to make enquiries among Moravians on the Continent, and he would also solicit the assistance of the Rev. Carl Friedrich Adolf Steinkopf, the Lutheran minister to a German-language congregation at the Savoy Chapel in London.³⁶ Before turning to Steinkopf, who would become an integral part of the CMS's recruitment on the Continent, the Moravian response to Latrobe's query merits mention in light of the later difficulties that the CMS would experience.

On 11 March 1802, a Moravian bishop, Samuel Liebisch, responded to Latrobe's request on behalf of the CMS, and an English translation of the bishop's letter was transcribed in the CMS minutes. Liebisch told Latrobe that the Moravians had spoken "much upon the subject [of personnel for the CMS] in our Conference." Then came news that would have tempered any budding excitement among the CMS committee members: "but it appears to us a business of great delicacy." The Moravian leader continued to explain that if they heard of a "Candidate for this ministry, who is a Gospel preacher, or accounted a child of God," then they could examine the individual in question, which Liebisch pointed out would come at an expense to the Moravians. It was not, however, this practical matter that represented the most significant problem. Liebisch, with the benefit of experience, asserted: "But even such an examination we should not consider as sufficient to be able to warrant his [the candidate] being truly

³⁵ Latrobe's unique identity as an Englishman who had lived, been educated, and taught at Herrnhut allowed him to bridge the spheres of British Evangelicalism and Continental Moravianism. See: J. C. S Mason, *The Moravian Church and the Missionary Awakening in England, 1760-1800* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK; Rochester, NY: Royal Historical Society and Boydell Press, 2001), 114–115.

³⁶ CMS Minutes Vol. 1, pp. 58-59; III/7/G/C/1.

what he might appear.” The Moravian bishop then offered the cautionary tale of a candidate who brought excellent references and had looked the part during examination, but upon taking a position in a colony “brought us [Moravians] no honor, and thus it might be in the case before us.”³⁷ It seems that Liebisch, perhaps via Latrobe’s letter, sensed the eagerness of the CMS leaders and sought to save them from the harm that an ill-suited candidate could inflict upon a missionary society.³⁸ Liebisch’s advice, which proved prophetic within five years with Hartwig’s defection to the slave trade, was sage counsel that was absolutely impractical. Not only had they failed to find ordained men they knew well, the CMS founders had exhausted their networks that ranged over much of Britain. Liebisch’s warning was dashed against the stark reality facing the CMS, and they continued their quest for Continental assistance.

Carl Steinkopf, who had been introduced to the CMS committee by Latrobe, would function as the conduit joining the English Evangelicals and their resources with German-speaking Lutheran missionary candidates from the Continent. When he began assisting the CMS in 1802, Steinkopf was a relative newcomer to London, having only arrived in the preceding year.³⁹ From 1795 to 1801 Steinkopf had been the secretary of the *Deutsche Christentumsgesellschaft* (German Christianity Society) in Basel, which was created to link existing pietist groups and foster the creation of new societies.⁴⁰ During

³⁷ Samuel Liebisch to Christian Ignatius Latrobe, 11 March 1802, translated and transcribed in: CMS Minutes Vol. 1, p. 76; III/7/G/C/1.

³⁸ Latrobe’s letter to Herrnhut/Berthelsdorf (the Moravian center) is not extant in the CMS archive. Liebisch’s prompt reply suggests that Latrobe may have conveyed the CMS’s urgency (even desperation): Liebisch replied within five weeks of Latrobe’s attendance at the CMS meeting.

³⁹ He was not yet fluent in English, and Latrobe served as his interpreter initially.

⁴⁰ Paul Jenkins, “The Church Missionary Society and the Basel Mission: An Early Experiment in Inter-European Cooperation,” in *The Church Missionary Society and World*

his time with the *Deutsche Christentumsgesellschaft* Steinkopf had developed an impressive array of contacts in the pietist world of central and eastern Europe. Steinkopf drew upon his connections on behalf of the CMS, and he made arrangements to bring the Society's first two missionaries (Renner and Hartwig) from Johannes Jänicke's missionary training seminary in Berlin.⁴¹ In the next decade, Steinkopf would also be integral in securing a steady stream of missionaries from Basel training institution, which was founded in 1815.⁴² Thus began the symbiotic relationship between these two bodies of like-minded Christians, with the CMS bringing to the partnership its financial resources and access to the territorial openings that the British Empire provided.

Lutherans in Service of the CMS

Personnel issues plagued the CMS mission in Sierra Leone from the outset—the first pair of German Lutherans sent to Sierra Leone were quickly at odds. It became apparent to those in the colony that the CMS secretaries' directive to send Melchior Renner and Peter Hartwig together to work among the Susu people was untenable because of the acrimony between the two men. Members of the nascent Committee of Correspondence for Missions to Africa and the East (this was prior to the change in name to CMS) in Sierra Leone wrote to London in 1806 to explain the grounds upon which they were obligated to disregard the secretaries' instructions. They explained that it would “not forward the interests of the Mission to send Mess^{rs} Renner and Hartwig out together.” Seeking to document their rationale, they titled a section of their letter,

Christianity, 1799-1999 (Grand Rapids and Richmond, UK: Eerdmans and Curzon Press, 2000), 51–53.

⁴¹ Charles Hole, *The Early History of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East to the end of A.D., 1814*. (London: Church Missionary Society, 1896), 114.

⁴² Jenkins, “The Church Missionary Society and the Basel Mission,” 48-53.

“Reasons for Mess^{rs} Renner and Hartwig being separated.” The Lutherans’ “frequent disagreements” and “their avowed repugnance to act in concert, or even to live together” precluded the possibility of a joint assignment. Moreover, “the peculiarities of their tempers which seem wholly unfitted to correct each others’ deficiencies” also hindered any arrangement that would require cooperation between the missionaries.⁴³

Additionally, the indolence of the early missionaries, save for Renner, was corroborated in 1809 by a first-hand account from Zachary Macaulay’s own brother.⁴⁴ Personality conflicts and a distinct lack of zeal inhibited the execution of the CMS’s vision in Sierra Leone during its first years, as Hartwig and Renner failed to minister among.

Friction between the Committee of Correspondence in Sierra Leone and the leadership in London also proved to be an obstacle to the Society’s progress. The missionaries’ manifest shortcomings had prompted the local committee to seek to return at least one missionary to England.⁴⁵ The secretaries in London would not relinquish such powers to a committee in the field, and this decision caused dismay in Sierra Leone. In 1807 the local committee resolved that since it was “not intended to possess the Power of ordering a Missionary to return home,” and since “the powers of this committee being thus tacitly withdrawn it can no longer subsist.” They also determined that Governor Ludlam, who had been part of the committee, would continue to pay to

⁴³ Thomas Ludlam, Alexander Smith, and Abraham Vanneck to CMS Secretaries, 30 September 1806, CMS Archive, C/A/1/E1. This episode will be revisited in the section on colonial complications because Thomas Ludlam, who was the governor at the time (and the first governor of Sierra Leone when it became a crown colony), wanted Renner to stay in Freetown to serve as a minister for British colonists and soldiers.

⁴⁴ CMS Minutes Vol. 1, p. 274; III/7/G/C/1.

⁴⁵ They did not identify the individual in question in their resolutions, but it was likely Peter Hartwig, who would leave the CMS in 1808 and begin working for slave traders operating north of Sierra Leone.

the missionaries the allowance of £100 per annum from the Sierra Leone Company's funds "until further orders from England" arrived. While the committee would be dissolved that same month, the members stated that they would continue to support the work as individuals.⁴⁶ The question of control was problematic, as both sides could make defensible claims. From the perspective of those in Sierra Leone, it seemed logical that they should be able to make personnel decisions since they were witnesses to the missionaries' actions, or lack thereof. However, the CMS secretaries in London could not operate in a system in which they ceded control of their personnel to local committees with little or no concern for the Society's expanding global agenda.

Additional tension arose as a result of differences that existed between the German Lutherans working in Sierra Leone and their Evangelical Anglican employers in London.⁴⁷ The CMS leadership's choice to send Germans with Lutheran orders as missionaries opened the door to a variety of complications, including: differences of theology and ecclesiology, linguistic limitations, and cultural variances. These tensions manifest themselves variously in the correspondence, as criticisms passed in both directions between Sierra Leone and London.

Melchior Renner, the CMS's first missionary, articulated some of his misgivings in a letter written one year after his arrival in Africa. He speculated that in the "East

⁴⁶ Local Committee Resolutions, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/E1. The document does not bear a date, but its placement in the archive indicates it was produced in 1807.

⁴⁷ J. Pinnington has traced several of the obstacles that existed between the Anglican Evangelicals and the German Lutherans. According to Pinnington, the Lutherans were not entirely forthright with their English counterparts, as several of the candidates had reservations about Anglican theology (including parts of the Articles of Religion) that they did not express. J. Pinnington, "Church Principles in the Early Years of the Church Missionary Society: The Problem of the 'German' Missionaries," *Journal of Theological Studies* 20 (1969): 523-533.

Indies, where so many churches are formed at once” the missionaries must be somewhat flexible when considering a person to be a Christian. Renner went on to share his assumption that Christianity would not enjoy any tremendous advance into the “Heathen world . . . until the fulness [*sic*] of time is at hand.”⁴⁸ Renner’s critique was twofold, encompassing theology and practice, and the German’s theological assertion will be examined first.

Renner was challenging the optimism that was ubiquitous in the early British foreign missionary enterprise, and this confidence was informed by Evangelicals’ millennial views.⁴⁹ While he was committed to the work of making disciples of all nations, Renner was not of the opinion that the realization of this objective would initiate a chain of events resulting in the end of days. As he made clear, these things would transpire in due course.

⁴⁸ Melchior Renner to Josiah Pratt, 26 April 1805, CMS Archive, C/A/1/E1.

⁴⁹ J. A. De Jong has written on the place of millennial thought within the British foreign missionary enterprise. He found that within the Evangelical milieu the CMS founders were among the least affected by millennial ideas, but the influence of millennial thinking increased during the Society’s first decade. See: J. A. De Jong, *As the Waters Cover the Sea: Millennial Expectations in the Rise of Anglo-American Missions, 1640-1810* (Kampen, The Netherlands: J. H. Kok, 1970), 159–198. Evidence of the growth of millennialism within the CMS can be found in the 1811 annual sermon, which was delivered by the veteran of Sierra Leone, Melvill Horne. Horne asserted: “From these sings in heaven and earth, in the State and in the Church, it is visible to those who read them with a Christian eye, that some grand and universal change is taking place in religion and morals.” Later in the sermon he acknowledged that it was “difficult, perhaps impossible, to ascertain, with precision, the commencement and termination of the grand prophetic period of 1260 years, determined for the desolation of the sanctuary,” but Horne followed his cautionary note thusly: “it is obvious, that that period has now nearly elapsed, and that the redemption of the Church draweth nigh.” Horne believed that in the near future those belonging to Christ would “see the fulness [*sic*] of the Gentiles flowing to her [the traditional lands of Israel and Judah], and the kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ, until righteousness cover the earth, as the waters cover the great deep.” *CMS Proceedings*, 1811, p. 178-179.

Renner's relative pessimism was also likely the product of his position outside of British culture, which offered him a different vantage from which to consider the relationship between the growth of Christianity and the spread of British culture. The British foreign missionary enterprise was predicated upon the belief that the task of evangelization was incumbent upon Britons because of their nation's relative stability and the opportunities that their expanding empire afforded them. The notion of Britain's singularity appeared frequently in early missionary literature. For example, the CMS's first annual report exhibited this thinking.

[The founders of the CMS] hope, that since God has so signally defended this Island with his mercy as with a shield, his gracious hand, to which, amidst the wreck of nations, our safety has been owing, will by us be acknowledged, and his goodness gratefully recorded, even in distant lands. They [the founders] pray, that, while every country under Heaven brings the tribute of its stores to Great Britain, she may return to them treasures more valuable than silver and gold.⁵⁰

Recognitions such as this could motivate Britons to action as a response to their perceived providential blessings, but this belief in Britain's unique role in the world permeated other aspects of their missionary thinking beyond motivation. When Continental Protestants such as Renner were confronted with rhetoric that underscored Britain's greatness and credited this status to divine favor, it is easy to see how they would perceive things differently. Even if they did recognize Britain's temporal power, Christians of other nationalities could easily balk at the notion that Britain played a unique role in the unfolding of history.

In his study of the Basel mission on the Gold Coast, Jon Miller analyzed the conflict between the German and British wings of the missionary movement. Miller pointed out that German missionaries in service of the CMS and LMS became

⁵⁰ *CMS Proceedings*, 1801, pp. 13-14.

disenchanted with their British counterparts' optimism, postmillennialism, and triumphalism.⁵¹ Renner's example seems to fit with Miller's conclusion. While Renner did not explicitly mention British triumphalism, it must be remembered that he would have been reticent to express such criticisms to his superiors. In this section of his letter, Renner's tone and content were at odds with the boldness and aplomb typically found in missionary correspondence and visible with even greater regularity in mission publications. For example, Renner begged of Pratt's pardon for his "irregular thoughts," but Renner persisted, suggesting that Pratt would "allow, that the conversion work, in our present days [*sic*] is much polluted."⁵² Renner's remarks drew a connection between domestic theological expectations and dubious practices in the field, and to those practices we shall turn.

Moving from his general theological opinion to his specific context in Sierra Leone, Renner intimated his displeasure with what he perceived to be unrealistic and misguided expectations within missionary societies.⁵³ Renner claimed that missionary societies, in their focus on statistical advance, compelled their missionaries to make claims that were somewhat dubious. According to Renner, "the poor Missionaries have been almost compelled by their respective societies, at home, to state the half converted, and those to whom they gave the names of Christians, as real believers." He went on to assert that the "poor sendling" was obliged "to meet the expectations of them who sent him, and this causeth him to do something in one way or another; either by making

⁵¹ Jon Miller, *Missionary Zeal and Institutional Control: Organizational Contradictions in The Basel Mission on the Gold Coast, 1828-1917*, Studies in the History of Christian Missions (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), xi.

⁵² Renner to Pratt, 26 April 1805.

⁵³ I am following Renner, who kept his examples in the abstract, but, of course, the society that he knew best was the CMS.

fashionable converts, or convert some by guile, by constraint.”⁵⁴ Renner did not explicitly identify the motivation(s) that caused society leaders to exert such pressures upon their missionaries, but his comments came on the heels of his remark quoted above, which touched upon eschatology.

Renner was certainly aware that any subscription-funded mission was in dire need of progress reports, which could be packaged and passed on to supporters as evidence that their gifts had been efficacious. While Renner likely viewed this system with suspicion, his criticisms were connected to the theological critique lodged immediately prior. The juxtaposition of Renner’s remark about the limited growth of Christianity “until the fulness [*sic*] of time” and the “expectations” of the sending societies, reveal Renner’s perception of a significant flaw in the British approach to foreign mission. In Renner’s estimation, the mission leaders in Britain were desperate for reports of substantial growth so they would be supplied with evidence of phenomena they already believed without doubt. When progress was difficult to discern, as in the case of the CMS’s only mission in 1805, British missionary leaders faced a practical obstacle and a theological challenge. Renner seems to have implied that if the British evangelization of the world slowed or failed, his superiors in London (and their colleagues at the other British Evangelical missionary societies) would face the task of reconceiving Britain’s unique providential role.

Renner’s observations reveal his complicated relationship with English Evangelicalism. On the one hand, Renner relied on concepts, such as the notion of “real believers,” that were familiar to and affirmed by his superiors in London. This comes as no surprise, as W. R. Ward documented how currents of theological influence had

⁵⁴ Renner to Pratt, 26 April 1805.

flowed for centuries in both directions between the Evangelicalisms of Britain and the Continent.⁵⁵ At the same time, Renner challenged British Evangelicals' dependence on statistical advance and the diverse motives that fueled that appetite. Renner suggested that the domestic desire to see numerical advance in the field placed missionaries in problematic circumstances in which they felt compelled to submit impressive reports regardless of the reality on the ground. Renner's criticisms expose the early tension between the CMS's Lutheran missionaries and the Society's Evangelical Anglican leadership, and they also reflect the larger divide between British Evangelicalism and Continental pietism.

While Renner's remarks in 1805 might potentially be assigned to initial growing pains in the relationship between the Society and its Continental missionaries, a reprimand issued fourteen years later indicates that there were persistent issues complicating the work of Melchior Renner in the eyes of his superiors in London. Early in his fifteenth year of service in Sierra Leone, Renner submitted a report in which he related assumptions and practices that unsettled the CMS directors. In particular, Renner's comments on baptism struck his audience in London. In June of 1819, two leading figures in the CMS, Josiah Pratt and Edward Bickersteth, wrote to Renner. First, they drew attention to Renner's troubling statement: "You say, 'people that have received instruction should certainly be allowed the Christian privileges.'" The Anglicans were quick to voice their disagreement; they rebutted: "Receiving instruction is no qualification, of itself, for baptism; it is the means of qualification." Pratt and Bickersteth went on to list the other grounds upon which readiness for baptism

⁵⁵ W. R. Ward, "The Eighteenth-century Church: A European View," in *The Church of England, C. 1689 - C. 1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism*, ed. John Walsh, *et. al.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 290–292.

depended, including “irreproachable outward conduct” and an understanding of the instruction received. Finally, they challenged the notion that the exclusion from Christian burial offered sufficient “reason for the administration of Baptism to an unfit subject.” On the contrary, this practice would lead to “a perversion of this divine ordinance, injury to the baptized individual, and danger to others.”⁵⁶ The CMS leaders were firm and direct as they sought to correct their Lutheran missionary.

Renner’s comments must have been unsettling for the CMS secretaries on a variety of counts. First, Renner was one of the more stable figures representing the CMS in Sierra Leone, and he was also one of the fortunate missionaries who enjoyed a lengthy tenure in the colony’s inhospitable climate. If he was capable of an error involving a rudimentary Christian doctrine, what might less stable missionaries believe and implement? Second, this letter was penned in the middle of his second decade of service in Sierra Leone. Questions regarding his beliefs and practices over the previous years likely arose in London. Finally, the CMS secretaries in London would have seen the number of baptisms that Renner reported in a new light, as they pondered the spiritual fitness of the persons who had been baptized by a missionary in the service of the CMS.

The potential connection between Renner’s two letters is intriguing. At first blush, it seems that Renner’s contempt for the “making of fashionable converts” through dubious means, which he had decried in his first years of service, had waned.⁵⁷ Perhaps the young missionary’s idealistic (and theologically defensible) resistance to the organizational mechanisms of his society had faded, and Renner had gradually adapted his theology so that he could satisfy his superiors’ desire for numerical increase. While

⁵⁶ Josiah Pratt and Edward Bickersteth to Melchior Renner, 26 June 1819, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/E8.

⁵⁷ Renner to Pratt, 26 April 1805.

the historian working through the CMS archive encounters these two letters in a matter of days, it must be remembered that a decade and a half separated the two letters. That is to say, neither Renner nor the secretaries in London likely discerned the sharp contrast that is available to the historian with both letters in hand.

Nevertheless, Renner's transformation is fascinating, as his status shifted from critic of the push for baptisms to the recipient of chastisement for his own recklessness in selecting candidates for baptism. Given that there is a discernable change in Renner's own position, his later baptismal practices seem to reflect his own adaptation and not the position of Continental pietists. If anything, his criteria for baptismal candidates represent a move away from Evangelical understandings on either side of the English Channel. Renner's evolution reveals another layer of complexity as missionary challenges are studied, serving as a reminder that missionaries' positions were not static over the course of their careers. In Renner's case, it seems that he adapted his baptismal standard in order to meet British objectives that he had viewed askance in 1805.

Issues with African Personnel

As the CMS work in Sierra Leone progressed, Africans began to join the CMS, and usually they were styled "native teachers" or "native school masters" by those in the Society.⁵⁸ Clearly, this development was a great boon for the CMS as it signaled the African embrace of Christianity, and the CMS enjoyed the benefit of teachers who understood African culture innately. There were notable successes in this experiment in

⁵⁸ The number of Africans employed by the CMS increased as the years passed, and during the middle decades of our period inquiry the African presence was considerable. For example, in 1826 twenty-three of the thirty-five CMS employees in Sierra Leone were African. See: Alphabetical List of Persons employed by the CMS, in our near the Colony of Sierra Leone in December 1826," CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/M4.

cross-cultural cooperation. For example, the liberated Yoruba, Samuel Ajayi Crowther, gained a degree of celebrity in England and was consecrated as the first black African bishop in the Church of England in 1864.⁵⁹ Beyond the prominent example of Crowther, there were numerous contributions made by Africans to the CMS's work in Sierra Leone. William Johnson, a Lutheran from Hanover and CMS missionary, offered a glowing evaluation of his African colleague, David Noah. In his candid evaluation, Johnson asserted that Noah was "more useful than some Schoolmasters and Missionaries" who were compensated at European pay rates. Beyond his utility, Noah's "zeal, activity, true piety, and use to [*sic*] the Climate, [*made*] him superior" to a number of his European counterparts.⁶⁰ Crowther and Noah represent a sampling of the best fruits of the relationship between the CMS and its Africans co-laborers, but this partnership was also strained by a variety of conflicts.

Difficulties in incorporating indigenous Christian workers into European missionary societies' programs were not confined to the CMS's experience in Sierra Leone—questions regarding non-European Christians' ordination and missionary service arose frequently in most early Protestant missionary fields.⁶¹ Since Sierra Leone was the CMS's first mission, there were no precedents in place that could guide policy on this matter. As the CMS directors and missionaries sought to integrate Africans into their

⁵⁹ Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa, 1450-1950* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 340–341; Andrew F. Walls, "The Legacy of Samuel Ajayi Crowther," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 16, no. 1 (January 1992): 15–16.

⁶⁰ William Johnson to the Secretaries, 12 July 1820, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/M2.

⁶¹ Jeffrey Cox, *The British Missionary Enterprise Since 1700* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 152-158.

program in Sierra Leone, problems common to all missionaries arose along with conflicts that were occasioned by divisions between the Africans and Europeans.

As with any group of missionary personnel, the African employees of the CMS encountered the pitfalls of missionary service under the auspices of a particular society and denomination. Just as in the West Indies, the association between a CMS employee and Methodism was problematic in Sierra Leone. In 1822, George Fox, a “Native Assistant” at Freetown, was concerned that his connection to Methodism had prevented a pay increase from the CMS and might result in his dismissal from the Society. Even though Fox always went “to church [i.e., the Anglican service] in the morning” with his students and only attended Methodist meetings at alternative times, he had been cautioned by a CMS missionary against this arrangement. Fox indicated that if he were forced to choose between his association with Methodism and his work for the CMS, he would maintain the former.⁶² While denominational affiliation was the source of Fox’s predicament, his ordeal did feature the most problematic aspect of the African CMS employees’ experience with the mission: the question of salaries.

As Europeans and Africans began to labor together on behalf of the CMS, the Society faced decisions regarding the status and remuneration of the Africans. Even rudimentary issues regarding Africans’ salaries proved problematic. William Johnson, in the journal entry cited above (1820), described a group of Africans who were accused of

⁶² The letter conveying this account is an unsigned (and unattributed) extract that was written to William Allen, the English Quaker and anti-slavery activist. It is featured in the CMS letter book and mentioned in the CMS minutes: Anonymous to William Allen, 29 June 1822, CMS Archive IV/1C/A/1/M2; CMS Minutes Vol. 6, p. 261; III/7/G/C/1. The author knew Fox and believed in his merits, and it seems that the writer was not attached to the CMS. As the letter appears in the letter book, it is unclear which William Allen was the letter’s recipient. At that time, there was an African CMS employee of the same name. The CMS minutes clarify this matter, identifying Allen parenthetically as belonging to “the Society of Friends.”

joining “the Missionary Society for the sake of money.” In order to disprove this speculation, the group asked Johnson to inform the CMS committee “that they wished, in future, to have no money at all [paid from the CMS]; which would remove all suspicion.”⁶³ Even the mere fact that a salary was received proved to be problematic in at least one instance.

Once it was established that salaries were going to be paid to Africans, decisions regarding levels of remuneration arose. The CMS opted for a system in which there was a great disparity between the salaries of most Africans and most Europeans, with the lowest paid Africans earning £8 per annum while a European couple received a salary of £200.⁶⁴ Issues beyond race and nationality complicated the CMS’s payroll in Sierra Leone. In the first decades of the mission the Europeans, with superior education and training (and in some cases, ordination), generally held higher positions with greater responsibility than their African counterparts.

George Fox, a year after the episode regarding his Methodist activities, wrote to his English colleague, James Norman, and articulated his frustration with his wife’s trifling salary. While the issue of remuneration ostensibly occasioned his letter, Fox’s opening paragraph suggests there were various and profound issues that were contributing to his vexation. Wasting no time with platitudes, Fox opened with the following harangue:

Although we (Africans) are not allowed to speak for ourselves in the Quarterly Meeting, and perhaps, are not looked upon as creatures of the same species with yourselves, or perhaps you think that because some are not able to put two consonants correctly together, is the case with all, but I can assure you Sirs that for my part – I could have said something well on my own behalf. Altho’ it

⁶³ Johnson to the Secretaries, 12 July 1820.

⁶⁴ “Alphabetical List of Persons employed by the CMS,” 1826. Additional examples will be provided below.

might, or would not have been to any effect, for all looks to their own quarters—
However since it has been so determined by all, it remains for me to acquiesce.

Fox detailed his objections, which centered on the fact his wife labored for an inadequate wage. Fox pointed out that there were missionaries' widows who were being allowed to draw half of their deceased husbands' salaries in addition to their own salaries.⁶⁵ Fox's letter is intriguing because he linked the Europeans' bias against Africans with his wife's modest wage. Fox, who would remain one of the CMS's most valuable African employees for a number of years, was persuaded that his European colleagues were prejudiced against Africans, and this bigotry resulted in practical disadvantages for Fox and his fellow Africans.

James Norman, the letter's initial recipient, forwarded Fox's letter, and it ultimately arrived in London. At a meeting on 18 October 1823 the secretaries read and discussed Fox's letter to Norman. During this same meeting they reviewed the minutes of a mid-summer [i.e., following Fox's letter] quarterly meeting of CMS personnel in Sierra Leone. The missionaries gathered at the quarterly meeting decided to increase Mrs. Fox's annual salary to £45. The missionaries had addressed the immediate problem by increasing the offended party's salary, but they did not uniformly increase all African school mistresses' salaries.

The leadership in London approved this ad hoc approach at their meeting in October. After asserting their approval, they offered this summary statement on Fox's letter. They resolved,

That the Committee remark with pain the spirit indicated in Mr. George Fox's Letter to Mr. Norman, and strongly urge on him the duty of cultivating a spirit of humility, meekness, and charity; but that, as he represents the said Letter to have

⁶⁵ George Fox to James Norman, 27 June 1829, CMS Archive IV/1/CA/1/O93.

been intended by him for a private one, the Committee abstain from animadverting further upon it.⁶⁶

The committee members' handling of Fox's letter raises questions. Focusing on Fox's reaction solely, the secretaries made no mention of his portrayal of a mission with significant problems. It is difficult to determine how they could ignore Fox's accusations, which should have been troubling. Perhaps they doubted the veracity of the report, but the fact that they granted Fox's request and retained him over the long term suggest he was a figure that they trusted. Nevertheless, there is a discernible skepticism in their resolution—they could have stated the fact that Fox wrote to Norman privately rather than offering room for doubt by stating that “he represents the Letter to have been intended by him for a private one.” Given that Fox addressed the letter to Norman and was clearly concerned with the local context, it seems there would be no reason to question Fox's claim. All CMS employees knew that letters to London were considered to be public correspondence and could even be published, but the same standards did not apply to a personal letter between missionaries. In fact, Fox could have taken issue with Norman's decision to share a letter that had been addressed to him alone.⁶⁷ This bizarre episode in 1823 was unusual given the direct nature of Fox's accusations, and it provides insight into one African employee's perspective of the CMS enterprise in Sierra Leone.

Three years later, in 1826, the missionaries in Sierra Leone submitted a table with the name, salary, occupation, and residence of all CMS employees in the colony. Great disparities in income persisted between “native” and European employees. The lowest

⁶⁶ CMS Minutes Vol. 6, p. 508-513; III/7/G/C1.

⁶⁷ One plausible, but speculative, line of thinking could have been that Fox would have been certain that a letter with such inflammatory language would have been forwarded to the leaders in Sierra Leone and London.

paid employees were the native assistant school mistresses, native assistant school masters, and native ushers. Africans working in these positions earned between £8 and £12 per annum, and African school masters earned salaries ranging between £24 and £36. Native teachers, including William Tamba, William Davies, and David Noah, earned a salary of £80. These salaries, which were ten times greater than those of their lowest-earning African colleagues, were substantial, but not on par with Europeans in lesser positions. Frederic and Mary Gatesman, who were European school teachers, earned a joint salary of £200, which was more than twice the salary for Africans working in the same capacity. The Foxes' salary jumps off the page as it much closer to European levels; the couple earned a joint salary of £145. Another interesting feature of the report was the mixed-race couples employed by the CMS. John (European) and Frances (African) Pierce were school masters, and they earned on par with a European couple similarly employed.⁶⁸ While arguments, such as Europeans' expectations with regard to standard of living, could be made in defense of the CMS's wage scheme in Sierra Leone, the two-tiered system with its disparities was problematic because Africans, such as George Fox, were aware of the fact that they earned lesser salaries than their European counterparts who were employed in comparable roles.

In its first decades in Sierra Leone the CMS mission faced a variety of obstacles relating to its European and African employees. When considered broadly, perhaps personnel problems should have been expected—this was an Evangelical British mission society working in a British colony relying on (initially) Lutheran missionaries who supervised African assistants. The potential for ideological and cultural differences was substantial. There were issues, such as the complaints of embittered Africans like

⁶⁸ “Alphabetical List of Persons employed by the CMS, 1826.”

George Fox, that may have been anticipated given the disparity in the Society's salaries scheme. Other difficulties with personnel would have been difficult to foresee. For example, the shift in Renner's baptismal practice took the CMS leaders by surprise, and his decisions regarding this sacrament shaped the CMS mission as he baptized persons that the secretaries felt were not prepared for baptism. This was the nature of the missionary enterprise. It was not Josiah Pratt in the field implementing his own ideas—the CMS was reliant upon Melchior Renner to determine which individuals were ready to receive the sacrament of baptism. And in this particular case, the missionary's actions differed from the expectations of the Society's leaders in London.

Cultural Assumptions and the Alteration of Theological Convictions in West Africa

When European missionaries arrived in Freetown they brought with them preconceived notions of African culture and African civilization, or in their estimation, the lack thereof. Beginning with a pessimistic set of assumptions, many CMS missionaries found evidence that reinforced their expectations. This was, of course, problematic as these assumptions tinted the missionaries' opinion of the very people they had come to work amongst. Beyond the practical consequences of assumed European supremacy, such as mutual mistrust, these assumptions represented a significant theological problem. In a number of episodes, European missionaries spoke of the impossibility of the conversion of groups of Africans, who were deemed to be beyond the pale.

Reports reflecting low estimations of Africans began with the CMS's first pair of missionaries. Peter Hartwig, one of the Society's first two missionaries, was sent into the Susu territory and penned a report in August of 1805. In what was likely the first account of an indigenous people submitted by a CMS missionary, the twenty-five year

old Hartwig could only offer one compliment to the Susu people.⁶⁹ According to Hartwig, they possessed a “great deal of simplicity.” Hartwig found this encouraging, because otherwise he found them to be “very dirty, lazy & superstitious.”⁷⁰ Considering that he was writing to his superiors in London who cared deeply for Africans, Hartwig’s descriptors are puzzling. It may have merely been the recklessness of youth, or, perhaps, he sought to educate the secretaries (who had only limited, if any, contact with Africans). In 1806, the CMS annual report featured an excerpt from Hartwig’s journal. Hartwig observed that a “Susoo man is a very simple creature; and on this ground it is, that the traders are able to make him believe and do whatever they please.”⁷¹ Hartwig went on to assert that this naïveté could be advantageous to Christian missionaries, but the observation also revealed that Hartwig had seen an opportunity that could be exploited for gain. Within one year of penning that journal entry, (or about the time that CMS subscribers were reading the annual report) Hartwig’s ties with the CMS would be severed as he began to participate in the slave trade. It seems likely that his low estimation of Africans enabled Hartwig to become part of the trade in human beings.

While Hartwig’s engagement in the slave trade was aberrational and extreme, other CMS missionaries made more subtle remarks that betrayed their presuppositions about Africans. In 1819, Christopher Taylor, an English CMS schoolmaster, wrote to Josiah Pratt, and he included an anecdote that conveyed a glimpse of his perception of indigenous African culture. He described how he saw an African man with hair that was

⁶⁹ Hartwig’s CMS colleague, Melchior Renner, remained in Freetown serving as chaplain.

⁷⁰ Peter Hartwig to the Secretaries, 16 August 1805, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/E1.

⁷¹ Appendix I, Extracts of the Journal of the Rev. Peter Hartwig, in the Rio Pongas, *CMS Proceedings, 1806*, 63.

half shaved and the other half was braided. On Sunday he spoke “against their country fashions,” and his effort “had the desired effect, for on the Monday after I saw that all his braids were gone.” A conversation with the man confirmed that he had taken action because of Taylor’s message, and Taylor then “took occasion to speak to him of Jesus & his salvation.”⁷² This episode offers an intriguing glimpse of a missionary’s assumptions of and actions toward African culture.⁷³

First, the fact that Taylor addressed the question of cultural customs while speaking to the Sunday assembly illustrates the union between religion and civilization. The elimination of cultural vestiges was part of the missionary’s task in Taylor’s estimation. Secondly, Taylor spoke of the man’s hairstyle as if its incompatibility with Christianity was axiomatic—he assumed that Pratt needed no explanation. In both the field and metropole it was understood that the spread of Christianity was predicated upon the progress of civilization, which involved the eradication of superstition. Taylor closed the account with expression of his hope that God “would have mercy upon this place & that the standard of the cross may be raised instead of heathen superstition.”⁷⁴ Taylor’s assumptions, both his own presuppositions and his expectation that Pratt was of like mind, reveal how a CMS missionary viewed the relationship between civilization and Christianity.

⁷² Christopher Taylor to Pratt, 17 April 1819, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/E/7A.

⁷³ Taylor was working at Charlotte, which was a village formed to accommodate liberated Africans. It was likely that this unnamed African man was a liberated African and not a Nova Scotian or other type of established settler. Beyond the geographical indicator, his prompt compliance suggests he was not part of the Nova Scotian contingent, which was comprised of individuals slightly less pliable when it came to following European directives.

⁷⁴ Taylor to Pratt, 17 April 1819.

Gustavus Nylander, who had one of the longest tenures of the early CMS missionaries in Sierra Leone, provides an example of the balance between theological hope and cultural pessimism. Most Evangelical missionaries faced this tension. Their Evangelical convictions instilled within them the firm belief that the grace of God could transform the most hardened sinner, and it was this very same grace that had rescued each of them from sin. Neither their own merits nor the merits of their English or German civilizations had reconciled them to God. While their mission was predicated on the belief that this grace was efficacious for Africans, missionaries were shocked by the recalcitrance and indifference they encountered. Quite simply, their message of good news was not embraced rapidly in most instances, and this reality fostered discouragement. As despair took hold, there were instances in which empirical evidence of the resistance to the Christian message, reinforced by assumptions about the development of civilizations, transformed missionaries' belief in this fundamental theological principle.

Nylander arrived in the Bullom region in July of 1813. Although he was instructing only eleven children, Nylander harbored the expectation that this humble project would expand. He believed that there was "great reason to hope that their children being instructed in the Christian Religion may come to God and Christ and at last may convince their parents of better things."⁷⁵ Although the work was limited in scope initially, Nylander's theologically informed hope allowed him to see a great potential. Nylander closed his letter on this hopeful note: "May God give grace to our undertakings and crown our labours with success."

⁷⁵ Gustavus Nylander to the Secretaries, 23 July 1813, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/E3.

Four months later, in November 1813, Nylander again wrote to London, and his optimism had waned considerably. He had managed to add two students, (bringing his total from eleven to thirteen) but his hopes for the conversion of their parents had dissipated. According to Nylander, “There are no prospect of doing any good among the grown up people of this country for they are so taken up with witchcraft and other superstitions that it is impossible to convince them; and they are very backward in bringing their children to school.”⁷⁶ Nylander’s pessimism, while understandable, cut against the theological assumption that underpinned his work and that of the entire CMS. The frustration that weighed upon Nylander blinded him to the essence of his convictions—he had forgotten that he too was once mired in sin and freed by powers beyond those of human agency.

In an interesting coincidence, this very sentiment was articulated at a CMS function in England within months of Nylander’s dispirited dispatch. In the 1814 annual sermon Henry Ryder spoke of the “chief qualification of our Missionary, and the chief aim of his ministry.” Ryder went on: “We hear him saying—I myself am a redeemed sinner, a ransomed captive, *a brand plucked from the burning*, a prisoner delivered from the grasp of the tyrant.”⁷⁷ As Ryder reminded those assembled at the CMS annual meeting, CMS missionaries were attempting introduce all peoples to the savior that had rescued them from sin. In a better-known articulation, a founder of the CMS had expressed in

⁷⁶ Gustavus Nylander to the Secretaries, 24 November 1813, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/E3.

⁷⁷ *CMS Proceedings*, 1814, p. 259. Henry Ryder delivered this sermon on 3 May 1814.

verse how “amazing grace” had saved him from his wretched state.⁷⁸ This tenet of Evangelicalism was sometimes obscured by the dramatic cultural differences that confronted early missionaries. In the midst of trying circumstances, when progress was difficult to discern, there were moments when belief in Africans’ obdurate devotion to “superstition” undercut missionaries’ theological convictions, or, at the very least, the convictions placed on their lips by a clergyman seeking to cultivate support in the metropole.⁷⁹

Peter Hartwig, who at last mention had gone off to participate in the slave trade, eventually abandoned the nefarious traffic and sought to reconcile himself with the CMS. He also sought to re-establish his relationship with his wife, Sarah, whom he had also abandoned when he left Freetown to join the slave trade. In 1814, Hartwig wrote to Sarah, imploring her to leave England and return to Sierra Leone, where he hoped to serve again as a missionary. Interestingly, Hartwig’s experiences instilled in him a resistance to the error of underestimating the power of God’s grace. Hartwig, who had been dramatically saved, was confident in God’s ability to bring salvation to Africans. When Hartwig stated that he trusted “that by the Grace of God” he would be able to “steadily persevere in the great work for which [he] first was set apart,” this was no mere theological platitude. Hartwig expressed his hope that Africa would “receive with pure affection, and an open heart the good news of the Gospel.” He was not naïve as to the difficulties that attended this task, but he asserted his belief that “God is also sufficient and [*sic*] to do more than we are able to ask.” As Hartwig described his return to the

⁷⁸ John Newton wrote “Amazing Grace” well before his involvement in the Eclectic Society and the founding of the CMS, but it can still serve as an example of Evangelical theology.

⁷⁹ This is not to say that the only function of the annual sermon was fundraising, but it certainly was one of several objectives that annual sermons

ministry, he encapsulated the theological principles that proved elusive to some of his colleagues. “Tomorrow I am going in the name of Jesus, my Redeemer, to preach the Gospel of Salvation again to the Africans, I may say to a field of dry bones: the Great God will send his Holy Spirit to give life to the dead and lost sons of Africa.”⁸⁰

Ironically, Peter Hartwig, the CMS missionary who did the most to tarnish the Society’s reputation, grasped and articulated the theological vision that undergirded the entire mission.

Edward Bickersteth, one of the CMS secretaries, toured Sierra Leone in 1816, and he, as Hartwig was ultimately able to do, managed to balance the difficulty of the missional task with an Evangelical confidence in God’s grace. And, like Hartwig and other CMS missionaries, Bickersteth had witnessed the African context firsthand.

Bickersteth’s account of his trip to Sierra Leone was published in the Society’s annual report for 1816. Like some of the CMS missionaries, Bickersteth recognized the “Native Mind” was in a “very low state” in the colony. However, Bickersteth did not attribute this to an intrinsic deficiency in the African character. On the contrary, he considered it to be “the natural result of that iniquitous traffic, which has so long existed on this coast, and is yet very far from being entirely suppressed.” Rather than belittling the Africans or assuming the superiority of European civilization, Bickersteth recognized the profound harm that Europeans were inflicting on the peoples of West Africa.⁸¹

As he spoke to the maintenance of the mission among the Susu, which Nylander had dismissed, Bickersteth was direct in his estimation of the challenge this work posed

⁸⁰ Peter Hartwig to Sarah Hartwig, 6 June 1814, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/E4.

⁸¹ Edward Bickersteth, “Special Report on the West Africa Mission,” *CMS Proceedings, 1816*, 161. Bickersteth made a similar claim, connecting Africans’ “lowness of mind” with the slave trade, further in his report (on page 169.)

to the Society. He reported that “Many of the Natives are, indeed, very perverse, ungrateful, and ignorant; but,” Bickersteth continued, “they have hardly yet had an opportunity of distinctly hearing the glad tidings of salvation.” According to Bickersteth, the missions among the Susu and on the Rio Pongas should be abandoned only if the indigenous peoples “send the Missionaries away by persecution.”⁸²

While Bickersteth’s published remarks may have helped to shape opinion among supporters of the CMS, his most poignant theological defense of missionary work in difficult contexts was issued in private correspondence. In 1817, Bickersteth responded to a letter from Govern MacCarthy, who had suggested that the less successful missions be closed. Bickersteth was tactful yet firm in his reply to the governor (who was an ally of the CMS):

I am persuaded that your Excellency did not intend by the observations, in your Letter, to intimate that either the Susoos [Susu], Bagoes, Bulloms – or any other nations are so much degraded as to be inaccessible to Christian truth, when wisely and continually brought before them, because we are commanded by one who cannot err, to preach the truth to all men through the world.⁸³

Bickersteth’s reminder struck near the crux of the CMS’s mission, which entailed carrying the Christian message to all peoples regardless of any perceptions about their potential reception of Christianity.

Missionary Misconduct

Among the various problems that the CMS encountered in Sierra Leone, the indiscretions of the society’s own missionaries were among the most detrimental to the work. The missionaries’ misconduct was harmful for a variety of reasons, including the

⁸² Bickersteth, “Special Report,” 169.

⁸³ Edward Bickersteth to Charles MacCarthy, 8 October 1817, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/E6.

damage to the Society's reputation among colonists, but the most problematic aspect of the delinquency was the fact that Africans were usually the victims. The very people to whom the missionaries had been sent to minister endured the consequences of mistreatment and sexual misconduct. The severity with which Josiah Pratt viewed missionaries' errors, which has been mentioned previously, was extreme. Pratt asserted that the misdeeds of the living missionaries troubled him more than the deaths of CMS missionaries.⁸⁴ While Pratt was perhaps insensitive in his condemnation, his remarks demonstrate the degree to which missionary misconduct could jeopardize the mission.

The CMS mission in Sierra Leone, the Society's inaugural foreign field, did not enjoy an auspicious start. The initial pair of missionaries, Melchior Renner and Peter Hartwig, failed to cooperate with each other amicably and their first months were rather unproductive.⁸⁵ In fact, one observer reported to the CMS secretaries as follows: "In short were the good people of England and other places aware to what little account their money was given for Missions to Africa and the East they would be more cautious how they gave it!"⁸⁶ Unfortunately for the CMS, bickering and idleness were only the first of several problems. Renner, who would ultimately serve the Society for seventeen years, was one of the more reliable CMS figures during the Sierra Leone mission's

⁸⁴ Pratt to Wilhelm, 18 October 1815.

⁸⁵ Minutes of the Committee of Correspondence for Missions to Africa and the East (in Sierra Leone), 30 September 1806, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/E1. This committee, which included the governor, reported that Renner and Hartwig could not be sent out together because of their "frequent disagreements" and inability to "even live together."

⁸⁶ J. Hill to Josiah Pratt, 21 March 1806, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/E1. Hill, whom I cannot find mentioned elsewhere in connection to Sierra Leone, was clearly supportive of the work of the CMS and on friendly terms with Pratt. Gustavus Nylander, the CMS missionary who arrived in 1806, wrote to London to express his surprise at how little his two predecessors had managed to accomplish. Gustavus Nylander to the Secretaries, 20 October 1806, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/E1.

tumultuous first decades. Renner's initial appointment was not, however, among Africans—his first two years in Sierra Leone were spent as a chaplain to the colonists in Freetown. This meant that the entirety of the CMS's mission among natives of Africa was the responsibility of the young Lutheran, Peter Hartwig.

A sampling of Hartwig's various missteps have already been mentioned, but it was his defection to the slave trade that caused the greatest harm to the CMS and its reputation. The very existence of the colony was owed to the anti-slavery impulse, and the CMS leadership hoped to form a symbiotic relationship between anti-slavery efforts in Sierra Leone and Christian missionary work in the colony. Hartwig's transformation from missionary to a participant in the slave trade was the realization of worst-case scenario for the Society as it struck at both of the societies' chief objectives in Sierra Leone.

Hartwig's correspondence exhibited indicators of potential problems, or at least remarks that appear ominous in retrospect, early in 1806. In February of that year, Hartwig wrote to the secretaries and depicted Sierra Leone as a barbarous place filled with treacherous inhabitants. He also mentioned several Europeans who opted to join the slave trade.⁸⁷ One year later, in February 1807, the members of the CMS corresponding committee in Sierra Leone wrote to London and offered a report of the dissolution of the relationship between the Society and Hartwig. Nylander had "casually mentioned to a member the Committee" that Hartwig intended to leave the colony on the following day. Rather than allowing Hartwig the satisfaction of quitting the Society, the corresponding committee "resolved immediately" to dismiss him from service to the

⁸⁷ Peter Hartwig to the Secretaries, 17 February 1806, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/

CMS.⁸⁸ Hartwig had indeed prepared to leave, and Governor Ludlam, who was also a member of the corresponding committee, determined that Hartwig would be forcibly detained in the colony only if he attempted to depart with CMS property. As this was not the case, Hartwig left the colony in a canoe that belonged to an African chief.

Hartwig's removal (or departure) from the CMS was complicated. On the one hand, his own remarks denigrating Africans were somewhat problematic. Additionally, members of the corresponding committee neither respected nor liked Hartwig, and it seemed that he could do nothing good in their eyes once they had concluded that he was feckless. Adding to Hartwig's condemnation, Leopold Butscher, a CMS missionary who arrived in Sierra Leone in May of 1806 with Nylander, reported that Hartwig "was a great defender of the slave trade" and was given to "cursing and swearing."⁸⁹ These factors diminished Hartwig's status in London, but his erstwhile colleague, Melchior Renner, submitted the most damning testimony against Hartwig.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Committee of Correspondence (in Sierra Leone), 16 February 1807, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/E1.

⁸⁹ Leopold Butscher to the Secretaries, 30 June 1807, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/E1.

⁹⁰ After initial observers and subsequent scholars had formed a consensus that endured two hundred years condemning Hartwig for his participation in the slave trade, the husband and wife team of Bruce Mouser and Nancy Fox Mouser have sought to rehabilitate Hartwig's reputation. Their chief objectives are twofold. They attempt to document the mitigating factors that can help to explain Hartwig's decision to leave Sierra Leone and quit the CMS. Second, they seek to demonstrate how the complex worlds of West African trade, commerce, and the slave trade must be disentangled before Hartwig is condemned as a slave trader. Renner's campaign against Hartwig is the central piece of the Mouser's first argument. Bruce L. Mouser and Nancy Fox Mouser, *Case of the Reverend Peter Hartwig, Slave Trader or Misunderstood Idealist?: Clash of Church Missionary Society/Imperial Objectives in Sierra Leone, 1804-1815* (Madison: African Studies Program University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2003), 1–73. A few words on the Mouser's project are in order. First, they freely acknowledge that Hartwig contributed to his downfall (p. 58), and they recognize that it is impossible to exonerate Hartwig absolutely on the count of participation in the slave trade, as there are large gaps in the historical record (p. 52.) They rightly point out that the original premise was founded on

As has been mentioned previously, Renner and Hartwig were at odds throughout their time together in Sierra Leone, and as the senior member of the pair Renner's accounts of events in the colony were given preference in London. While it is clear that Hartwig was guilty of insubordination in several instances and poorly suited for aspects of missionary life, it is equally obvious that Renner's contempt for Hartwig tainted his judgment when making decisions on behalf of the CMS that involved Hartwig. Scholars sympathetic to Hartwig's plight have even argued that it was Hartwig who sought to extend the work of CMS beyond colonists in Sierra Leone, while Renner adapted to the expectations of colonial authorities in Freetown and was happy to serve as the colonial chaplain that they desired.⁹¹ Renner was responsible for circulating the ideas that Hartwig had joined the CMS only to avoid service in the Prussian Army and for the most damning report of all: Hartwig's participation in the slave trade.

Contrary to the accounts issuing from the corresponding committee, Butscher, and Renner, Gustavus Nylander presented a minority report. Nylander acknowledged that Hartwig was "weak," and Nylander also explained that he allowed Hartwig to behave in ways that he would not have tolerated in "any other brethren." While Nylander was forthright in his description of Hartwig's shortcomings, he added an additional element to the account when he described the manner in which Hartwig was treated. According to Nylander, Hartwig's incompatibility with Renner and others in

the fact that Hartwig worked for and associated with persons who, as part of their varied enterprises, dealt in the slave trade. It remains unclear what duties Hartwig was responsible for in these operations, but this association was enough for Renner and the corresponding committee (whose members were not fond of Hartwig) to conclude that the young German had gone over to the slave trade. In terms of the immediate impact on the CMS mission, the conclusion of Renner and the colonial authorities was all that mattered since they offered the narrative that was overwhelmingly accepted in Sierra Leone and London.

⁹¹ Mouser and Mouser, *Case of Peter Hartwig*, 27, 37.

Freetown, coupled with his linguistic talents, meant that he was left in isolation in the Rio Pongas area in circumstances that were ill suited to the appointment of a single missionary. Nylander empathized with Hartwig's plight. While he could not "justify Mr. Hartwig in his behaviour," Nylander acknowledged that had he been in Hartwig's position, "I do not know how I would have acted."⁹² Nylander's insights suggest that the demise of the association between Hartwig and the Society was not the result solely of the former's selfishness and immaturity—Hartwig had been placed in an impossible context.

Finally, in March 1807, Hartwig wrote to bid the CMS secretaries farewell. On board a ship near Freetown, he wrote to inform the leadership in London that he had been taken in by a Captain Turner and was bound for America. Coincidentally, Hartwig's letter was dated 24 March 1807, one day before Parliament passed legislation abolishing the slave trade. In spite of the adverse experiences that Nylander and Hartwig described, the letter bore few traces of animosity. Hartwig did mention how the corresponding committee in Freetown had ejected him from the colony with only the clothes on his back, but he was warm and even nostalgic in his comments to the secretaries of the Society. Hartwig closed the letter in dramatic fashion: "Finally farewell – I shall see you again, but in this life probably no more."⁹³ Although Hartwig's case was complicated and he would attempt reconciliation with the CMS seven years later, the defection of one of the Society's first two missionaries to the slave trade was a severe blow to the CMS mission in Sierra Leone and beyond.

⁹² Gustavus Nylander to the Secretaries, 29 April 1807, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/E1.

⁹³ Peter Hartwig to the Secretaries, 24 March 1807, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/E1.

Hartwig inflicted harm to the CMS with his notorious departure, but there were also instances of active missionaries harming the cause. Harsh treatment of Africans at the hands of CMS personnel occasionally plagued the Society, and the case of Robert Beckley in the mid 1820s is illustrative of this phenomenon. Beckley, an Englishman, arrived in the colony in 1820 and served as a schoolmaster for five years. Late in his tenure, reports of Beckley's inhumane treatment of his students reached London. The Reverend John Gerber, a Swiss CMS missionary, summarized the proceedings against Beckley at Kent in November 1825. According to Gerber, Beckley, when punishing "little Boys & Girls," would place iron rings around their necks and join them with chains. He would also banish boys to a small compartment beneath the classroom floor, which was accessible via a trap door in the floor. Gerber pointed out that these actions were "highly improper to be performed by any Servant of our Society as well as illegal for a Magistrate."⁹⁴ A second letter corroborated Gerber's account and added additional charges against Beckley. In a system tantamount to slavery, Beckley forced the boys under his charge to labor on his farm, and he offered neither reward nor remuneration for the boys' efforts.⁹⁵ Beckley's tyranny and forced-labor scheme were damaging to the CMS because they blurred, or even removed, the line that divided the Europeans engaged in the missionary enterprise from those who would mistreat them in order to advance their own interest.

⁹⁴ John Gerber to "Dear Brethren" (It seems that he has addressed this letter to his fellow missionaries in Sierra Leone, but this is unclear. In any case, the letter reached the secretaries in London.) 7 November 1825, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/M4.

⁹⁵ James Johnston[e] to "the Chairman of the Quarterly Meeting," 6 April 1826, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/M4. Johnston was a village administrator at Kent, where Beckley had worked.

Along similar lines to the cruelties inflicted upon the African children in Kent, sexual improprieties also tainted the work of the CMS in Sierra Leone. In particular, the exploits of Thomas Davey, an English CMS missionary who spent ten years in Sierra Leone in the service of the Society, harmed its reputation. Davey's tenure in the colony was divided by a return trip to England in 1824-1825, during which he was ordained.

In December 1830, Davey wrote to a colleague and tendered his resignation. He explained, "Circumstances have lately transpired in my conduct which have exceedingly filled my mind with regret, and which imperatively demand my withdrawing myself altogether from the service of the Church Missionary Society."⁹⁶ The recent events that Davey referred to seem to involve his indiscretions becoming known, and it seems unlikely that his exploits were confined to an isolated event.

Davey was known to have seduced a young African woman in his care, but the social dynamics between European men and African women meant that seduction and compulsion could look very similar in some instances.⁹⁷ This particular case, which attracted the attention of the colonial authorities, was not Davey's only error in this realm. He died on 14 August 1831, but his misdeeds continued to surface in the years following his death. His widow, Phoebe, in February 1832, brought an accusation against the spouse of a CMS missionary. She alleged that her late husband and Mary Anne Betts, the wife of William Keeling Betts, had been involved in an adulterous

⁹⁶ Thomas Davey to George Metzger, 9 December 1830, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/O80

⁹⁷ This was reported in correspondence between colonial officials in Freetown and CMS missionaries in Sierra Leone, which was forwarded to the CMS leadership in London. Alexander Findlay to Charles Haensel, 15 December 1830, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/O4.

relationship.⁹⁸ According to Phoebe Davey, her husband had confessed the affair to her prior to his death. When confronted, Mary Anne Betts acknowledged Davey's advances, but she insisted that he had not realized his objective.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, she was banished to England for a period of months.

Davey's selfishness and irresponsibility had far reaching consequences, and the personal fallout will be examined first. Sarah and Henry Palmer, an African couple attached to the CMS, were married late in 1830. Six months into their marriage Sarah gave birth to a "fair white child." While it could not be proved definitively, it was generally believed that Davey was the child's father. As this unfortunate account was related to the CMS secretaries, William Betts described the "shame & trouble" that Henry Palmer was enduring. Not only had Davey indelibly marred the union, but there was also further controversy involving Davey's widow and Sarah Palmer's pregnancy. Phoebe Davey, who supposedly knew her husband to be the father of Sarah Palmer's child, allegedly attempted to terminate the African woman's pregnancy (by giving her a "medium" that would abort the pregnancy) since she knew that the infant's skin color would betray her husband's infidelity.¹⁰⁰ Clearly, there was tremendous emotional damage inflicted on a variety of people associated with Thomas Davey.

While the personal consequences were great, Davey's actions also had public repercussions for the CMS. In the wake of his scandalous actions becoming common knowledge, the colonial government and CMS missionaries frantically corresponded as

⁹⁸ Mary Anne Betts had been a widow at the time of the alleged affair. Her first husband, Christopher Taylor, died at sea in 1825.

⁹⁹ William Keeling Betts to the Secretaries, 11 February 1832, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/M6.

¹⁰⁰ Phoebe Davey to Charles Waensel, 2 January 1832, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/O80.

they sought to rectify matters and mitigate the damage. Governor Findlay asserted that Davey had “been guilty of one of the most demoralizing [*sic*] and atrocious acts,” and this was especially so given Davey’s “religious calling.” In the governor’s estimation, Davey’s actions would have been unacceptable under any circumstances, but the fact that Davey had “unpardonably defiled” a young woman who had been entrusted into his guardianship in order “to prevent her from falling into error” made his case particularly disturbing.¹⁰¹ The Governor of Sierra Leone, who worked closely with the CMS, was firm in his condemnation of Davey’s misconduct. Because of the association between the CMS and the colonial government, a CMS missionary’s transgressions drew the attention of the CMS leadership and the colonial authorities.

On the same day that Findlay wrote to Haensel, 15 December 1830, the latter wrote to colonial officials in Freetown, told of Davey’s separation from the Society, and explained how missionaries’ appointments would be shifted to fill the void that Davey’s resignation had created.¹⁰² The following day, the colonial secretary, Henry Rishton, responded to Haensel, and he conveyed the news that the governor approved “of the arrangements of the C.M.S. in every thing provided Mr. Davey [was] immediately removed.”¹⁰³ In the initial correspondence, the two parties moved in tandem and were in agreement.

Haensel’s next letter bore traces of disagreement, which would expand to open hostility as the correspondence continued. The governor had referred to the “vice

¹⁰¹ Findlay to Haensel, 15 December 1830.

¹⁰² Charles Haensel to Alexander Findlay, 15 December 1830, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/O4.

¹⁰³ Henry Rishton to Charles Haensel, 16 December 1830, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/O4.

practized [*sic*]” among the African girls at the CMS school in Bathurst, where Davey served, and he directed that the girls who had been exposed to Davey should be transferred to Regent, where they would be under the leadership of Betts. Haensel balked at the governor’s intimation that “vice” had been endemic at Bathurst, and he disagreed with the decision to relocate the girls to Regent. Such a change would be “impracticable while we [CMS missionaries] are in charge of the school.” Haensel suggested an alternative penance for the CMS: they would “relinquish . . . the charge of the Liberated African children,” while remaining responsible for the education of children born in the colony. Ironically, as Haensel sought to alter the governor’s designs, he signed the letter “Your Excellency’s most obedient humble servant.”¹⁰⁴

Governor Findlay’s response conveyed his disappointment in Haensel’s proposition and questioned the motivation behind the CMS missionaries’ intention of substituting their plan for his. From the governor’s perspective, there were no legitimate grounds for the Society to withdraw from the education of the liberated African children, and this assumption prompted him to surmise that there must be some reason for the proposition. “It shews,” the governor asserted, “Sir, a disposition on the part of the members of your Society to conceal from the Public the crime with [*sic*] the Rev^d. Mr. Davey has been guilty of.” Findlay went on to criticize Haensel for taking Davey into his home after the latter’s resignation, and then the governor intimated that Haensel and his colleagues maintained a willful ignorance as to the scope of the corruption at Bathurst. Further inquiry at Bathurst would “expose to the world facts which must inevitably detract from the character which the Church Missionary’s [*sic*] have hitherto

¹⁰⁴ Charles Haensel to Alexander Findlay, 16 December 1830, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/O4.

maintained in this Colony.”¹⁰⁵ The governor’s accusations were quite weighty—he believed that the missionaries were willing to abandon a crucial aspect of their mission, the education of a large (and growing) segment of the African population, in an attempt to preserve the Society’s reputation.¹⁰⁶ Even if Findlay had completely misjudged the missionaries’ rationale, the CMS missionaries still had a problem: the governor of the colony believed that they had attempted to hide Davey’s sexual misconduct from the public’s view and were willing to compromise their mission in order to do so.

CMS Missionaries’ misdeeds were diverse in kind but were alike in the harm they did to the Society’s work in Sierra Leone. Peter Hartwig’s connection to the slave trade struck a serious blow to the reputation of the CMS. Given the connection between the CMS leaders and the founding of Sierra Leone as a piece of the campaign against the slave trade, Hartwig’s decision could hardly have been more inopportune. Although Hartwig’s departure meant that the CMS lost one half of its entire missionary force, the greatest harm done was to the name of the CMS. The CMS, an organization with a number of prominent leaders devoted to the fight against the slave trade, had, at least in popular perception, sponsored a slave trader’s relocation from Europe to West Africa. Two decades later in the 1820s, Robert Beckley’s abusive behavior similarly harmed the CMS reputation but was distinguished by the fact that his victims were Sierra Leoneans. Hartwig, of course, had quit the colony before becoming entangled with the slave trade.

¹⁰⁵ Alexander Findlay to Charles Haensel, 20 December 1830, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/O4. Although Findlay did not explicitly state his reasoning, it seems he believed that a move involving the children of single gender would be more conspicuous than a division based upon place of origin. Therefore, the missionaries were attempting the latter.

¹⁰⁶ The matter dropped from the correspondence extant in the archive, but the governor’s argument was plausible. Of course, had the correspondence continued and/or survived it was unlikely that Haensel would have acknowledged in writing that the governor was correct.

While Beckley's cruelty was perhaps more commonplace, the severity of his actions was enlarged by the fact that his victims were those to whom he had been sent to minister to. Likewise, Davey's licentious deeds had a similar effect, but his debauchery injured both Sierra Leoneans and members of the missionary community alike. Unlike Hartwig, both Beckley and Davey were guilty of abusing their power in the colony and the trust that accompanied their status as Christian missionaries in Sierra Leone. In each of these three cases, the line that separated the CMS missionaries from other Europeans in West Africa was blurred, if not obliterated. All three men reduced, at least in the short term, the CMS's ability to advance its agenda in the colony. Given that their actions were antithetical to the designs of the CMS leaders in London, these missionaries' transgressions provides evidence of the alteration of the CMS vision by its agents in the field.

CMS Missionaries & Colonial Religion: The Price of Privilege

The extensive communication between the governor and the CMS missionaries in the aftermath of the Davey debacle illuminated the association between the CMS and the colonial government in Sierra Leone, and now this complicated relationship must be examined. The CMS mission in Sierra Leone is a study in contrasts. Seemingly, the Society was positioned for unchallenged success. Sierra Leone was the Society's only foreign field for several years, and it was the beneficiary of five years of pent-up anticipation and energy. Additionally, the Evangelical Anglicans and their allies, who had founded the CMS, were responsible also for the colony's re-founding. The advantages of the alignment between the CMS and the colonial authorities are, perhaps, obvious. Unlike the West Indian context, in which colonial legislatures sought to restrict and even prohibit the work of Evangelical missionaries, the CMS enjoyed the cooperation and

support of Sierra Leone's governors. The Society's affiliation with the government also allowed for the usage of colonial funds to support missionaries in some instances. With government cooperation and financial support, the association with the colonial government offered significant benefits. However, the close relationship between the CMS and the colonial government came with expectations on the part of both parties. The CMS faced a fundamental problem: the Society's missionaries were obliged to serve as clergy for colonists in Freetown, and this frequently precluded the possibility of participating in ministry and education among Africans living outside of Freetown.

One of the first letters in the Sierra Leone section of the CMS archive is a letter from Zachary Macaulay to William Dawes, dated 3 June 1803. Macaulay wrote to Governor Dawes on behalf of the CMS to inform the latter of the impending arrival of the Society's first two missionaries. Macaulay, who was secretary of the Sierra Leone Company and attached to the Evangelical Clapham Sect, instructed Dawes to begin to make arrangements for the missionaries' accommodations. If possible, Dawes was to begin negotiations with local chiefs to prepare the way for the two Germans.¹⁰⁷ Macaulay's letter serves an example of the compliance that the CMS leaders expected of colonial authorities in Sierra Leone and the influence wielded by the Evangelical Anglicans in London. Additionally, as the letter from Macaulay to Dawes exemplifies, such requests frequently were posed within the context of a personal relationship and, in the case of Macaulay and Dawes, friendship.¹⁰⁸ English Evangelicals' influence in the

¹⁰⁷ Zachary Macaulay to William Dawes, 3 June 1803, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/E1.

¹⁰⁸ Macaulay and Dawes were good friends. Dawes named his second son "Macaulay."

colony of Sierra Leone enabled the CMS to secure the cooperation of the colonial government.

CMS missionaries in Sierra Leone served two constituencies —the colonists and the Africans (native and recaptured), but it was the former group who received the CMS missionaries' first attention. From the outset of the mission, parochial duties in Freetown vied for missionaries' attention. And, as the case of the inaugural pair of CMS missionaries demonstrated, ministry in Freetown generally prevailed in such challenges. Melchior Renner and Peter Hartwig arrived in Sierra Leone in 1804. A letter from Governor Thomas Ludlam to the CMS committee revealed the practice of siphoning of talent practiced in Freetown by the colonial authorities. Ludlam bluntly declared Hartwig's inadequacies: "He is weak and Indolent, and overly laughed at by those who are indifferent or who are Enemies to the cause. The weakest of our Black Settlers have eyes sufficient to discern his failings." It was no surprise, given the governor's assessment of Hartwig, that he would not suffer the twenty-five-year-old German to serve the colonists in Freetown. If Hartwig were to officiate, the church would become "more deserted than it is."¹⁰⁹ Thus, it was necessary for Renner, who possessed greater talents in Ludlam's estimation, to remain in Freetown. The precedent, established by the governor, dictated that the most able missionaries would be retained for colonial service in Freetown and the remaining personnel would be released to execute the Society's objectives among the colony's African inhabitants.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Thomas Ludlam to John Venn, 20 March 1806, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/E1.

¹¹⁰ Of course, language was a factor in such decisions. If a German missionary's English was poor, regardless of his other merits, colonial service in Freetown would be difficult.

The CMS missionaries themselves chafed against the tethers of colonial responsibility. Gustavus Nylander arrived in the colony in 1806, two years after Renner and Hartwig. In Nylander's initial letter back to London, he related his surprise at how little his predecessors had accomplished. Nylander did allow for the fact that Renner's ministry in Freetown was part of the problem.¹¹¹ Writing five years later, Nylander sought to secure his own release from Freetown. In a letter to his superiors in London, he raised the following question: "If I was, or have been useful in the Colony may I not be so among the natives too?" Nylander, who was seemed somewhat despondent, reckoned the five years invested in colonial service in Freetown, in some respects, as "lost." Adopting another tack, which was cited as evidence of the nascent rivalry with Methodist missionaries, Nylander sought to cultivate the secretaries' interest in the territory beyond Freetown by mentioning that Thomas Coke had "sent out four Methodist Missionaries, and if we [the CMS] neglect Bullom shore, they will take it."¹¹² Nylander hoped that, perhaps, a dose of Evangelical competition could liberate him from his confinement in Freetown.

Throughout the first decades of the nineteenth century, CMS missionaries continued to write to London to object to their colonial appointments in Freetown. In 1814, Leopold Butscher lamented his appointment as Freetown chaplain in a letter to London. He observed, "I am now styled Chaplain here, which is a bigger name among the generality of men than that of Missionary, but I rather think it less before God."¹¹³

¹¹¹ Gustavus Nylander to the Committee, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/E1.

¹¹² Gustavus Nylander to the Secretaries, 9 December 1811, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/E2.

¹¹³ Leopold Butscher to the Secretaries, 25 July 1814, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/E3.

Eventually, as Freetown grew and other ideologies emerged alongside Evangelicalism, CMS colonial chaplains began to face questions of conscience. Early in 1819, Governor MacCarthy wrote to complain that the CMS chaplains were refusing Christian burial for residents' whose lives had not been lived in a Christian fashion.¹¹⁴ Such tensions between Evangelical ideals and civic Anglican religion only mounted with time.

William Keeling Betts, the first English CMS chaplain mentioned so far, lodged a series of objections to his appointment in Freetown. Writing in 1828, Betts cited several reasons why he should be transferred from Freetown. Betts, in a thoroughly Evangelical critique, asserted that the Freetown chaplain's function was to perform cultural rites in order that Europeans might enjoy the comforts of religion. This was not the cause that had prompted him to join the CMS, nor had he forfeited a Cambridge education to recite the service for cultural Christians in a colonial service. Betts expanded from his own disappointment to offer a general missiological criticism. He pointed out that his labors among Europeans in Freetown were not part of the Society's proper work.¹¹⁵

Betts's pleas fell on deaf ears, and he remained in Freetown. He sustained his campaign with a series of letters in 1829. He lamented the dearth of piety among his European parishioners.¹¹⁶ Betts further argued that his current duties were not the true work of a missionary, and he pointed out that the entire cohort of CMS missionaries in

¹¹⁴ Charles MacCarthy to Edward Bickersteth, n.d. (received in London on 20 March 1819), CMS Archive IV/1/C/A/1/E7.

¹¹⁵ William Betts to W. Marsh, 4 September 1828, CMS Archive IV/1/C/A/1/M4.

¹¹⁶ William Betts to Thomas Woodrooffe, 9 February 1829, CMS Archive IV/1/C/A/1/O42.

Sierra Leone shared this conviction.¹¹⁷ Finally, Betts was driven to issue an ultimatum. He was being pressured to officiate at the marriage of the Portuguese consul to a very young woman, who had been introduced initially as the man's daughter. If forced to comply with this absurdity, Betts threatened to resign and sever all ties with St. George's parish in Freetown.¹¹⁸ In Betts's assessment, his quotidian responsibilities did not align with his own missional objectives or with the society's founding principles.

In addition to facing internal strains, the CMS leaders occasionally found themselves at odds with their colonial counterparts in Sierra Leone. An episode in 1822 provides an example of the tensions that arose between the twin pillars of church and state in Sierra Leone and beyond. The CMS secretaries learned of two men to be appointed as colonial chaplains to the Gold Coast (modern-day Ghana), and as they learned about these two appointees, the secretaries became concerned.

Zachary Macaulay wrote to Governor Charles MacCarthy and conveyed the grounds on which the CMS leaders objected to the selection of chaplains for the Gold Coast. Macaulay began by affirming the CMS's singular commitment to Sierra Leone: "I mean to renew on every occasion my strongest expression of the solemn obligation the Society is under to regard the claims of Sierra Leone as paramount to every other, including under that name the whole of its dependencies also." Macaulay signaled his interest in the entire region with his last phrase, and he then turned to the Gold Coast. The CMS leaders were pleased that the Gold Coast was opening, but he expressed their dismay at the fact that the process had unfolded without the involvement of the Society.

¹¹⁷ William Betts to Dandeson Coates, 20 June 1829, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/O42.

¹¹⁸ William Betts to the Secretaries, 4 September 1829, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/O42.

MacCarthy had contacted Lord Bathurst, who had in turn acceded to the governor's plan. The chaplains were subsequently appointed and approved by the Bishop of London. This sequence of events, which had unfolded without the involvement (or even awareness of) the CMS, gave Macaulay "some disquiet."¹¹⁹

Macaulay's concern centered on the character of the newly appointed chaplains. He explained that it would be "great inconvenience" to the CMS if there were chaplains in West Africa "whose great object in accepting the offices might be the salaries attached to them, or who might be disposed to regard with distrust and even with aversion, the persons acting under the Church Missionary Society." Macaulay continued with a vague mention of "[s]chisms and divisions and angry differences among the clerical part of your [MacCarthy's] Establishment." Finally, he articulated his precise fear:

Should these two Chaplains be men, part of whose system it was to regard the Church Missionary Society as methodistical and heretical, and all countenance given to sectaries as a violation of their duty, you would have Sierra Leone and its dependencies converted into a sort of Arena of theological debate and contention.

Macaulay had detected evidence of anti-Evangelical hostility and "a considerable dislike to the Missionary Society" among those influencing the appointments, and this was a sobering concern for the CMS's leaders.¹²⁰

Macaulay depicted a scenario in which questions would be raised "about clerical rights and jurisdiction, about Lutheranism and Episcopacy and Methodism and all the train of disputable points," and he predicted that "you will have Chaplain frowning upon Chaplain." Macaulay, and his colleagues at the CMS, did not wish to see domestic ecclesiological and theological divisions duplicated in West Africa. As he closed his

¹¹⁹ Zachary Macaulay to Charles MacCarthy, 1 November 1822, CMS Archive, IV/1/C/A/1/M2.

¹²⁰ Macaulay to MacCarthy, 1 November 1822.

letter, Macaulay expressed his hope for a “fixed plan of procedure for religious concord and unity in the Colony.”¹²¹ Macaulay’s implied message was clear—it was imperative that West Africa remain in Evangelical control. The benefits that the CMS gained from its association with the colonial government did not accrue without associated costs. The union between the Society and civil authorities involved compromise and relinquishment of a degree of control over religious affairs in West Africa by the CMS leaders.

Conclusion

An array of factors complicated the first three decades of the CMS mission in Sierra Leone. Illness and untimely deaths were prominent features of most British missionary ventures in the early nineteenth century. With a steady supply of Continental reinforcements replenishing its ranks, the effects of illness and disease did not decimate the CMS mission in Sierra Leone. Nevertheless, missionaries’ physical suffering and deaths did affect the work in Sierra Leone and touched the leaders in London. Dealing with the periodic loss of personnel to disease hardened figures such as Josiah Pratt, who dealt with the institutional consequences of missionary deaths but was not in close physical or emotional proximity with those enduring the losses. This touched the mission by establishing a division between the metropolitan leadership and missionaries in the field, as the latter sensed that the former did not fully grasp the trials that accompanied work in West Africa. Within Sierra Leone, the loss of laborers temporarily to disease and permanently to death slowed the work and forced the Society’s leaders to reduce their expectations for progress. Beyond these practical consequences, the

¹²¹ Macaulay to MacCarthy, 1 November 1822.

survivors endured profound trials with diverse effects for the mission. In many cases, the widows, widowers, and bereaved friends found solace in faith and were able to continue their work eventually.

CMS missionaries in Sierra Leone displayed ambivalent attitudes toward their Methodist colleagues. There were moments in which cooperation and friendship were prominent, but competition and even antagonism dominated many encounters between the two groups of missionaries. Their failure to cooperate consistently with their Methodist counterparts meant that the CMS missionaries did not realize an opportunity to increase the efficiency of their work, particularly in the realm of education. Hostile attitudes toward their fellow Christians missionaries—fellow Evangelical missionaries, nonetheless—functioned as a distinct point of discontinuity between the CMS missionaries' behavior and message.

A comparison between the CMS's relationship with Methodists in the West Indies reveals how contextual circumstances could alter the simultaneous work of a society in two places. William Dawes and the CMS relied upon extensive cooperation with Methodists in Antigua, and without the work of Antiguan Methodists the CMS's program could not have been sustained. Part of this approach was due to Dawes's personal connection to Antiguan Methodism, but the reality was that Antiguan Methodists represented the only potential source of employees that shared the CMS's Evangelical convictions and interest in providing education for Antiguan of color. In Sierra Leone, where the CMS enjoyed a privileged position and could sustain its work with the cooperation of the colonial Government, cooperation with Methodists was an option that could be seized upon or refused, not a necessity essential to the mission's viability.

From the outset, difficulties with its personnel shaped the CMS mission in the colony. Animosity between Renner and Hartwig plagued the mission initially, with the result being a significant delay in executing the CMS leaders' designs in the colony. The founders of the Society had endured four embarrassing years without missionaries to send abroad, but they could not have foreseen that those first missionaries would further delay the implementation of the Society's objective of working with indigenous peoples in Africa. It was, after all, missionary work among the peoples of "Africa and the East" that the founders of the CMS had claimed would distinguish their enterprise from the SPG. When Renner and Hartwig failed to proceed beyond Freetown, they were altering the designs of their employers.¹²²

Beyond the interpersonal difficulties that Renner and Hartwig posed for the CMS committees in Freetown and London, Renner's correspondence betrayed subtle differences between his conception of the missionary project and the understanding of his British Evangelical superiors in England. In particular, Renner opposed the British Evangelicals' penchant for reports documenting statistical increase, and he protested the pressure he felt to meet expectations in a realm that was unsuited to numerical targets. Motivated by theologically informed optimism and a desire to see institutional advancement, the CMS leaders articulated their desire to see steady increase in the number of baptisms performed by their missionaries. In his reaction to their prompting, Renner expressed his suspicion that statistics were being inflated or dubious candidates were being baptized, and he founded his skepticism upon his belief that their age was

¹²² Hartwig did eventually move beyond Freetown in April 1806, but this was two years after arriving in Sierra Leone. This development was as much a banishment of Hartwig as it was a strategic advancement of the mission. See: Mouser and Mouser, *Case of the Reverend Peter Hartwig*, 36.

not a unique period in history that would witness the rapid conversion of all peoples. This was a case of theological discontinuity between the Society's leadership and a missionary in the field, and it had tangible effects on the work of the CMS in Sierra Leone. As Renner felt little urgency to baptize people in Sierra Leone, he remained content working in Freetown and associating primarily with colonial officials and other Europeans. Meanwhile, the CMS leaders' hope of reaching the peoples outside of the colonial center were not realized during the first years of Renner's appointment.

Renner's ability to survive the Sierra Leonean climate allows observation of his transformation over an extended period of time. In particular, a distinct change in his baptismal thinking is discernable. As was mentioned in the preceding paragraph, Renner began his tenure in Sierra Leone with baptismal standards that were thorough and exacting. Fifteen years later, his superiors in London chastised him for baptizing individuals who were not ready to receive the sacrament. Renner's example sheds light upon one of the great variables in examination of missionary history—like all other human beings, missionaries' thinking on issues could change over time. In some cases, these alterations were minor and on the periphery of the many doctrines and practices germane to missionary work. However, as Renner's shift on baptism indicates, missionaries could modify central tenets of their work. Of course, it would have been impossible for the CMS secretaries to anticipate that Renner would dramatically alter his baptismal practices, but the result was, nevertheless, the alteration of their desired aim in Sierra Leone.

In examining the preceding personnel issues, the divisions were distinct, with separations apparent between metropole and colony and between British Evangelicals and Continental pietists. Turning to the dissatisfaction of the CMS's African personnel,

we find the African-European divide to be as, if not more, prominent than the metropolitan-colonial distinction. The CMS's central committee and the leading CMS figures in Sierra Leone were in agreement that a two-tiered salary scheme favoring Europeans should be used. As George Fox's protests make clear, this system was not viewed favorably by all of the CMS's African workers. While the basic design of the system was keeping with the designs of the CMS leadership in London, Fox's criticisms revealed attitudes and practices among the CMS missionaries in Sierra Leone that certainly displeased the CMS secretaries. When Fox questioned whether the Africans were perceived to be "creatures of the same species," the CMS secretaries realized that their anthropological positions were not being fully reflected by their missionary representatives in the colony. So, it seems that a portion of the Africans' frustration originated with central leadership, even as the more troubling aspect of Fox's criticism was at odds with the secretaries' intent. Further complicating matters, it seems possible that Fox's frustration with the salary system, which did provide concrete evidence of an African-European distinction, may have tintured his perception of the Europeans' entire approach to their African colleagues. Nevertheless, in this instance we find a complex case in which a personnel problem issued from London and was exacerbated by missionaries in the field, and, as this divisiveness alienated African Christians, it altered the CMS's short-term vision of a unified European-African missionary cohort and detracted from the ultimate objective of a viable Anglican church in West Africa.

Many European missionaries' assumed the worst of African civilizations and perceived the debilitating effects of these deficiencies in the Africans they encountered. This fundamental assumption, when reinforced by a failure to discern progress in their work, led some CMS missionaries to forfeit a foundational Evangelical conviction.

Evangelicals believed that all of humanity required a pronounced conversion from a life of sin, and it was this tenet that prompted them to launch foreign missions in the first place. Moreover, they believed that as each individual was justified by faith, and there was nothing that the individual could do to effect his or her own salvation. All that was required was the embrace of the free gift on offer.¹²³ When CMS missionaries dismissed the possibility of Christian advance among a group of indigenous persons, they had lost sight of this fundamental principle. The result of these assumptions was the modification of a belief that was near the crux of the CMS's understanding of its mission.

Missionary misconduct, as the term suggests, serves as an example of straightforward deviation from a society's objectives. While the category is easily defined, the effects of missionaries' misdeeds were diverse and far-reaching. In some cases, such as Peter Hartwig's participation in the slave trade, damage was done in the concrete and abstract. Hartwig's assistance to a slave trader harmed the persons enslaved in that operation, but the broadest consequence was the tremendous harm done to the reputation of the Society. After Hartwig's notorious defection, the CMS faced an incongruous existence in West Africa as it was linked both to the abolitionist cause and the slave trade. Within the colony of Sierra Leone CMS missionaries deliberately harmed the persons to whom they had been sent to serve as minister of Christ. Of course, these actions were in direct opposition to the directives given in London, and these instances of abuse damaged the vision that the CMS leaders held for Sierra Leone.

The CMS's privileged position in Sierra Leone brought various benefits and came with certain costs. As Sierra Leone evolved from a joint-stock company to a

¹²³ D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), 6.

Crown Colony, CMS leaders found themselves sharing power with colonial figures. In some cases, colonial figures made decisions regarding the placement of CMS personnel. In addition to the loss of autonomy, CMS missionaries were obligated to serve British colonists in Freetown. Several of the missionaries who functioned essentially as parish priests for colonists came to see their endeavors as separate from the work of a missionary. Additionally, tensions arose between the servants of an Evangelical missionary society and some parishioners in Freetown. As colonial service occupied the most able missionaries sent to the field, it represented a significant obstacle to the CMS's execution of its mission in Sierra Leone. Moreover, as the CMS founders had indicated that they would distinguish themselves from the SPG by working with indigenous peoples and not amongst colonists, this aspect of the CMS mission in Sierra Leone represented a departure from its foundational designs.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

Careful examination of early Methodist and Evangelical Anglican missions reveals that these were hybrid ventures. The Methodist and CMS missions in the West Indies and Sierra Leone were the products of the union of and, sometimes, confrontation between, metropolitan ideals and colonial realities. As there were great variances in Britain's diverse colonial holdings, the extent to and manners in which particular colonial contexts affected missionaries and the missions were inconsistent. Missionaries, who provided the other set of variables in this equation, brought vastly diverse experiences, expectations, assumptions, eccentricities, and attitudes to each unique colonial context, and these idiosyncrasies affected missions in minor and significant fashions. In this concluding chapter, salient findings of this study will be analyzed and comparisons will be drawn between the various contexts.

Methodists in the West Indies

From the outset, the near-impossible circumstances Methodist missionaries encountered in the West Indies must be acknowledged. In order to operate in societies dominated by the planters, a degree of compromise was inevitable for Methodist missionaries with either reservations about or objections to slavery. Beginning with John Wesley himself, there were many Methodists in Britain who opposed the slave trade and slavery, but such a position was more easily maintained in the metropole than in the British West Indies. The important contextual differences must be remembered. The slave societies in the West Indies had been designed to perpetuate and protect the

institution that enabled their existence, and threats to this delicate order were not tolerated.

In the West Indies Methodist missionaries faced challenges, such as illness and death, which were common to other fields. These practical obstacles meant that Methodist societies were left without leaders while replacements were obtained. Likewise, the difficulties of communicating across the Atlantic meant that Thomas Coke and his successors in the WMMS were forced to relinquish a degree of control, as they could not offer immediate instruction to their charges in the Caribbean. With approximately a three-month lag (in a best case scenario) in round-trip communication, mundane restrictions of nineteenth-century correspondence meant that missionaries sometimes were forced to take action without input from London. With a shared aim in the region and a number of theological affinities, the Moravians in Antigua seemed an unlikely source of contention. Nevertheless, Methodist missionaries' complaints sparked a minor conflict, which ultimately reached London and temporarily strained relations between Moravian and Methodist missionary leaders.

The planters of the West Indies stood to lose everything with the collapse of slave society, and therefore the opposition to Methodism, which was perceived as a potential threat, was formidable. Targeting not only Methodist missionaries, but also the employees of the BMS and LMS, the various colonial legislatures in the region passed various laws that limited Evangelical missionaries ability to carry out their work. The antagonism toward Methodism also took unlawful and violent forms, and Methodist missionaries, who were fortunate enough to escape severe harm for the most part, were threatened by mob violence occasionally and the mission's enemies destroyed the Methodist chapel in Bridgetown (Barbados.) The forces, both organized and

spontaneous, that challenged Methodism in the West Indies were formidable, and this campaign of restriction and intimidation must be considered as Methodist missionaries in slave societies are evaluated. In some instances, the consequences of life in these hostile conditions seemed to alter Methodist missionaries' assumptions about the African slaves they had come to evangelize. It seems that existence in a society that reinforced the inferiority of black Africans at every point ultimately took a toll, and the insidious effects of the plantocracy's propaganda touched Methodist missionaries. The discontinuity between missionary thinking and metropolitan Methodism's anthropology was exposed in the editing of Charles Hodgson's phrasing in 1808. Hodgson's observation mentioned "the Natural disposition of all the Blacks," and the editors in London altered his utterance. Hodgson, in speaking of the intrinsic attributes of black Africans was contradicting a foundational principle of the Methodist missionary enterprise: the universality of human nature.

Methodism proved to be adaptable in a variety of cultural contexts, and this characteristic enabled its impressive numerical gains in the West Indies and also led to moments of compromise in a setting that was, in many ways, antithetical to aspects of Methodism's essence. As was documented in chapter two, Methodist missionaries struggled with issues as basic as the liberation of slaves acquired through marriage to West Indian women. Other episodes were less prominent but equally problematic. As Methodist missionaries strove to demonstrate the compatibility of their work with slave society—again, a task that was incumbent upon them if they were to continue in their labors—they argued that Methodism could offer valuable support to the slave system. In some cases, they went as far as to state that Methodism made slaves better slaves. There were also instances in which Methodist missionaries were incorporated into the

official mechanisms of slave society, as was the case with James Catts in Dominica. Finally, the survey of planters revealed how Methodism was fully compatible plantation slavery, and, in several cases, the work of the Methodist missionary was said to improve operations on a given plantation. While Methodist missionaries were cast in impossibly difficult circumstances in the West Indies, there can be no doubt that in some regards they were too willing to adapt to the norms of slave society.

The CMS in the West Indies

The CMS mission in Antigua, which was intended to extend throughout the Leeward Islands, was largely the product of William Dawes's improvisational leadership. In this atypical mission that was operated without the dispatch of personnel from Britain, Dawes created a CMS-supported educational and philanthropic enterprise that was executed primarily by Antiguan Methodists. While Dawes was open to Methodism, perhaps too open in the estimations of Josiah Pratt and the other CMS secretaries, he was connected to Antiguan Methodism through his wife's family. Bound by shared theological convictions and familial bonds, William Dawes erected an Evangelical program that would flourish until the arrival of Bishop Coleridge in 1825. The demise of the mission because of the appointment of a colonial bishop could not have been foreseen, and Dawes's approach proved effective in the short term. While his decision to rely on Antiguan Methodists would ultimately prove costly in the end, the choice to hire like-minded Evangelicals enabled Dawes to advance the CMS agenda in Antigua for a decade.

Dawes's work in Antigua erodes a number of distinctions and reveals the degree to which an individual's identity and idiosyncrasies could affect a society's program. With three terms as the Governor of Sierra Leone behind him, Dawes's past even

tinctured the mission. When Governor D'Urban inquired about the state of affairs in Antigua, Dawes perhaps felt he was writing to an equal rather than to an individual of superior rank. And this assumption may have emboldened him to respond so candidly. Additionally, Dawes had been a CMS secretary while in England, and he was thus no ordinary missionary devoid of understanding of the CMS's inner workings. In fact, he was not a missionary at all. As he was not ordained, Dawes had been commissioned as a "catechist" after volunteering to assist the CMS in advance of his departure for Antigua. Dawes's complicated identity makes analysis of "missionary" agency in the CMS's Antigua mission all the more intriguing. The CMS's program in Antigua, reliant primarily on the island's Methodists, was the creation of a former secretary of the CMS. Likewise, when the secretaries were forced to censure Dawes for his criticisms of the island's Anglican clergy and his endorsement of Antigua Methodism, they were chastising a senior CMS figure with decades of service to the society (in various roles.)

The example of William Dawes in Antigua reveals how significant an individual's personality and experiences could be in shaping a mission, or, in the case of Dawes's letter to D'Urban, harming a society's work. The secretaries' enthusiasm at Dawes's initial offer to serve the society in Antigua was understandable, as they were placing the initiation and design of the mission in the hands of a senior figure with experience in the domestic leadership of the CMS and an extensive background in colonial administration. In theory, Dawes, save for the fact that he was not ordained, would have seemed to be an ideal superintendent of a CMS mission. In reality, the extent to which Dawes put his own stamp upon the work in Antigua would have tremendous ramifications of a diverse nature. Initially, Dawes's system flourished on both educational and philanthropic fronts,

but the distinctly Evangelical nature of the enterprise would ultimately prove problematic.

The conflict between Dawes and the bishop and his archdeacon provides an example of how complicated the missionary enterprise could be. In this episode, questions of ecclesiology and church order contributed to the demise of a mission. This confrontation between members of the same church reminds us that fault lines could emerge in unpredictable places—it would seem that the work of the CMS would only be enhanced by the presence of an Anglican bishop. Closer examination reveals that the mistrust was caused largely by Dawes's harsh criticisms of the Antiguan Anglican clergy prior to the bishop's arrival, which served to confirm Bishop Coleridge's assumptions about Dawes's Evangelical beliefs. The termination of the CMS work in Antigua demonstrates how forces within a single denomination could clash and hinder the missionary effort.

The WMMS in Sierra Leone

The Methodist mission to Sierra Leone was unique among the four missions considered here in that the work was launched in response to a request from the field. Seemingly, this mission was positioned for success as it had the benefits of a sympathetic colonial government and Methodism was already established in the colony. As was related in chapter three, the mission did not enjoy success at every point.

From their disappointments in Nova Scotia to the difficulties obtaining parcels of land in Freetown, the Nova Scotian settlers had a history of contentious dealings with British authorities. In the early work of Melvill Horne in Sierra Leone the tension along British-African lines was discernible, and Horne left Sierra Leone somewhat disillusioned.

These episodes, which transpired years before the arrival of the first Methodist missionaries in 1811, would have bearing on the work of the WMMS in Sierra Leone.

In Sierra Leone the CMS enjoyed a privileged status because of the connections between the colonial leadership and that of the CMS. In some instances, the Methodists opted to cooperate with their Anglican (or Lutheran, in service of the Church of England) colleagues. Most notably, William Davies (Methodist) and Leopold Butscher (CMS) formed a fast friendship and ministerial alliance. Other inter-societal dealings were of a different tone, with Methodists such as Edward Maer expressing suspicion of and even enmity toward CMS missionaries. Such hostility was detrimental to the WMMS as it precluded the possibility of cooperation, which could make the work more efficient.

The Methodist mission in Sierra Leone faced an unusually high mortality rate, and the effects of disease and death were numerous. The loss of a spouse, as William Davies's experience demonstrated, could alter a missionary's frame of mind and prompt a departure from the field. The loss of missionaries to disease also meant that there was a perpetual shortage of personnel and a lack of continuity in the missionary presence. Moreover, the diminutive size of the Methodist missionary cohort meant that the excesses of a single missionary, such as John Huddleston, could have profound effects on the mission. Had numerous missionaries staffed the mission, it would have been difficult for the actions of a single missionary to take precedence.

The conflict between Davies and the Nova Scotians was harmful, but the mission survived. In the later confrontation between Huddleston and the Nova Scotian Methodists, the relationship between British Methodism and Freetown Methodism was ruptured. The personalities of those involved, especially Huddleston's but also those of

the Nova Scotian leaders, contributed to this unfortunate episode. Although this conflict was informed by existing tensions between the Nova Scotians and British authority, Huddleston's temperament was of equal importance. In this case, we see how the attributes of a single missionary could have significant consequences for a mission.

The CMS in Sierra Leone

The inauspicious start of the CMS mission in Sierra Leone was due in part to the enmity between the first two Lutheran missionaries, Melchior Renner and Peter Hartwig. Their relationship had already deteriorated a great deal prior to their arrival in Freetown, and their failure to cooperate meant that CMS's mission was further delayed (even after the arrival of its missionaries in Freetown.) In this episode, the dispositions of two missionaries obscured the society's goals. While this was nothing heinous or sinister, the initial consequences and lingering effects were significant for the CMS in its first foreign field. In the short term, Renner and Hartwig's feud meant that the secretaries' desire to station the two together outside of Freetown was impossible as they could not even live together. The lasting impact of this feud was felt acutely when Hartwig defected to the slave trade in 1807. Of course, Hartwig made this unfortunate choice, but as careful study of his correspondence and journals reveals, Renner's animosity toward Hartwig contributed to the latter's decision to abandon missionary work. In this instance, the seemingly minor failure of two missionaries to get along would have a severe effect on the reputation of the CMS in West Africa.

The correspondence of CMS missionaries in Sierra Leone reveals that there were instances in which their practices and ideals did not align with those of the society. For example, Melchior Renner complained about the secretaries' expectation for statistical advance, and he would later be criticized for his laxity in evaluating candidates for

baptism. There were also tensions between the society's European and African employees, and the African employees accused their European colleagues of discrimination based on ethnicity. In this dispute, which involved disparities in remuneration, it seems that the society's missionaries in the field had distorted its understanding of humanity's universality.

As was documented in chapter five, CMS missionaries' service as colonial chaplains proved to be problematic and represented a departure from the society's objective of ministering to "the heathen." It was CMS missionaries themselves who objected to the practice and argued that in serving European colonists they were not engaging in the true work of the society. Moreover, they were not executing the task for which they had volunteered. The CMS enjoyed numerous benefits because of its association with the colonial leadership in Sierra Leone, but those benefits came at an expense. According to missionaries such as Gustavus Nylander, the cost was too great as it required the essence of the mission to be altered.

Final Considerations

The unraveling of the CMS mission in the West Indies adds an important reminder to our consideration of colonial difficulties: colonial contexts were not static and change could arise in unlikely places. When Dawes began his work in Antigua in 1813, the oversight of a colonial bishop was not a factor he had take into account as he hired teachers for his schools. Even Dawes's letter to Governor D'Urban in October 1823 was written in the year before Bishop Coleridge's consecration. It seems likely that Dawes would have exhibited greater restraint had the bishop already been present in Antigua. Bishop Coleridge's arrival in 1825 radically altered the Antiguan context in which the CMS had enjoyed a degree of ecclesiastical freedom.

In the West African context, the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 and the resulting return of liberated Africans to Freetown altered the work of the CMS in Sierra Leone.¹ In both the West Indies and Sierra Leone, these changes were unforeseen when the CMS began its work. As with the appointment of the colonial bishops, the abolition of the slave trade was hoped for in 1804 (when the first CMS missionaries arrived in Freetown), but it could not be anticipated with any certainty. The influx of liberated Africans proved to be a benefit to the CMS, and later for the WMMS as well, because persons who would never have been reached otherwise were deposited in a single location. And both missions were established in that place. Transformations within colonial context could be detrimental or bring benefits to a mission, but it is important to remember that conditions in colonial contexts were not unchanging.

As scholars such as Andrew Porter have demonstrated, the British foreign missionary enterprise was more complex than either its harshest critics or partisan apologists have recognized. The evidence presented here advances our understanding of missionaries' plights in two contexts that were very different even as they were bound together by the transatlantic slave trade. The image that emerges is multi-faceted and resists broad generalizations such as the missionary as imperial agent or the missionary as hero. In reality, the missionary enterprise was marked by a vast diversity of intentions and actions, and missionaries' deeds were, to varying degrees, shaped by the markedly different colonial contexts in which they operated.

When we consider the notion that missionaries were merely agents of imperialism, we find it to be inadequate, although it is accurate in some applications. There were individuals, such as the Methodist missionary William Davies in Sierra Leone,

¹ The WMMS work in Sierra Leone began in 1811.

who sought to cultivate a close relationship with the colonial government in the colony, and even became engaged in the colony's enterprises. What makes Davies's case striking is the fact that he was the employee of a society that explicitly forbade political participation on the part of its missionaries. It must be remembered that this rule had been formulated to allay domestic suspicions about Methodists' revolutionary leanings, and Davies broke the rule while moving in the opposite direction, lending his support to the colonial establishment in Sierra Leone.

Ironically, Davies's counterparts in the CMS, the employees of a mission belonging to the established Church, were given assignments that constituted colonial service, functioning as chaplains for European colonists in Freetown. While missionaries such as Melchior Renner seemed to embrace such a role, there was also missionary resistance to this arrangement, which united the mission and colony. Gustavus Nylander and Leopold Butscher, Lutherans in service of the CMS, were also directed to function as colonial chaplains in Freetown. These two missionaries protested against this system and attempted to remind the CMS secretaries that this was not the true aim of the society, and they also argued that they had not volunteered for (British) colonial service. Nylander and Butscher did not raise the point (likely because they were foreign to the Church of England and its parties), but when the CMS drifted toward ministry among British colonists it was entering a realm inhabited by the SPG. At its founding, the CMS initiators had insisted that their society would work with those beyond the reach of the SPG, "the heathen." While the relationship between colony and mission was always vulnerable to exploitation, it must be recognized that missionaries' held very different conceptions of their own relationships to the colonial structures that enabled their work.

While there are numerous examples of missionaries who did inhabit the heroism claimed by enthusiasts for the missionary cause, the correspondence examined here reveals a great deal of diversity within the motivations and actions of WMMS and CMS missionaries. There were missionaries, such as the Methodist missionary William Shrewsbury, who courageously stood against slavery and was forced to flee Barbados in order to avoid mob violence. At the same time, many of his peers in the West Indies who capitulated to the pull of slave society and compromised in various ways. The missionary enterprise was executed by ordinary Evangelical Christians, and, like any large-scale undertaking, there were participants who acted valiantly and others who were corrupted.

Once they arrived in the colonies, missionaries assumed a dual-identity as servants of their missionary society and, simultaneously, colonial residents (and in the case of some missionaries in Sierra Leone, colonial employees.) Missionaries responded variously to life in colonial contexts, with some missionaries adapting minimally and others conforming to the norms of their new environment in significant ways. In each of these contexts, there were complex amalgamations of factors that could potentially influence a missionary. These contextual factors are of tremendous importance as they shaped the missionary enterprise in an important way. Given the evidence that has documented these various shifts in the field, we may conclude that the missionary enterprise was a combination of metropolitan visions and colonial realities.

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