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Apostles of Commerce: The Fur Trade in the Colonial Northwest and the Formation of a Hemispheric Religious Economy, 1807-1859

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COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

APOSTLES OF COMMERCE:
THE FUR TRADE IN THE COLONIAL NORTHWEST AND THE
FORMATION OF A HEMISPHERIC RELIGIOUS ECONOMY, 1807-1859

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Always for Courtney

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ABSTRACT

The ethnic and national *mélange* that characterized the Pacific Northwest in the first half of the nineteenth century (Native Americans, Metis, Hawaiians, British, Americans, and French-Canadians all called it home) facilitated a wide range of local and trans-regional religious exchanges largely visible within the networks, resources, and methods of the area's foremost economy: the fur trade. I argue that this trans-continental commercialism, sustained in part by the trafficking of furs in the colonial Northwest, integrated into its system of operations a hemispheric religious economy, whereby fur trade and religious transactions manifested as conflated economic performances within the larger scope of imperial expansion. I explore a variety of religious encounters from the early stages of the trade to its collapse in the mid-century. After establishing a historiographical and interpretative framework in chapter one, I highlight, in chapter two, the interplay between indigenous prophecy and fur trade imports from eastern North America and Europe, which included not only durable goods, but also theologies and moralities. In chapter three, I underscore the role played by Hawaiian employees of fur trading companies in shaping a religious economy which linked the Northwest to a wider Pacific World exchange. In chapter four, I dissect the region's leading trade organization, the London-based Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), and their exploitation of religion as a means of preserving a monopolizing control over all commercial activity in the area. Lastly, in chapters five and six, I scrutinize the Protestant and Catholic mission economies, and their comparable yet contrasting forms of dependence on the capital of fur trading giants such as the HBC. In the end, I suggest that the diffusion of religion into the "secular" - into the "commercial" and "ecological" - during the early nineteenth century set a precedent for the contemporary Northwest as the "None Zone."

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

They called him Tsalakum. As the headman of a village on Whidbey Island - a twelve mile stretch of land that forms the northern barrier of what is now Puget Sound - he served as the primary liaison between his community and the Euro-American traders who began arriving in the early part of the nineteenth century. He was responsible for the welfare of his kin and conducted his negotiations with a shrewdness that became legendary within the ranks of trading organizations such as Hudson's Bay Company (HBC). In the early 1840s, he encountered a new type of trader on the Island. Although their skin was light, they wore long black garments instead of leather pantaloons and seemed to care very little about animal furs. They also distributed a different set of commodities. Instead of offering blankets, guns, and ammunition, these Black Robes (as they were called) offered greater spirit power in the form of water purification, which was said to ward off disease and improve one's fortunes in the arenas of gambling and warfare. These newcomers also gave gifts of significant value. Tsalakum himself "received a wooden strip [also known as the Sahale Stick] on which were marks to designate," according to one writer, "the centuries after the creation of the world and some of the principal events of sacred [biblical] history."¹ This stick was nothing the headman or any of his people had ever seen before and he accepted it with great pleasure.

The following year, one of these Black Robes (a priest named Francis Norbert Blanchet) was busy conducting a mission at the HBC trading post on the southern end of the Sound (Fort Nisqually) when a visitor arrived with an urgent message. It was the wife of Tsalakum, who

¹ F. N. Blanchet to the Bishop of Quebec, St. Paul of Walamette, 23 February 1841, in *Notices and Voyages of the famed Quebec Mission to the Pacific Northwest*, trans. Carl Landerholm (Portland, OR: Champoege Press, 1956), 62.

beseached the priest to return home with her, as the chief and others were ill and in need of intervention. To prove their identity and sincerity, she presented Blanchet with the same Sahale Stick her husband received months prior, except in this instance it had been "carefully enclosed in the skin of a sea-lion."²

The packaging of Tsalakum's Stick offers an apt metaphor for the broader relationship between religion and commerce in the colonial Northwest. The ethnic and national *mélange* that characterized the region during this era (Native Americans, Metis, Hawaiians, British, Americans, and French-Canadians all called it home) enabled a wide range of local and trans-regional religious exchanges largely visible within the networks, resources, and practices of the area's foremost economy: the fur trade. This trans-continental commercialism, sustained in large part by the hunting and trafficking of animal pelts, integrated into its system of operations a hemispheric religious economy, in which fur trade and religious transactions manifested as conflated economic performances within the larger scope of imperial expansion. Much like Tsalakum's Stick, religious actors found themselves enveloped in what is best described as an "ecology of exchange," cultivated from decades of fur trade encounters, and one that would prove vital to the transference of their own sets commodities across ethnic and regional lines. In the words of one local trader, "commerce [was], in truth,...hand maid to religion."³

² Philip M. Hanley, *History of the Catholic Ladder*, ed. Edward J. Kowrach (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1993), 22.

³ Archibald McDonald and Malcolm McLeod, *Peace River: A Canoe Voyage from Hudson's Bay to the Pacific, by the Late Sir George Simpson in 1828* (Ottawa: J. Durie & Son, 1872), 64.

Religion and Trans-Regionalism in the Pacific Northwest

This study centers on an area known commonly as the Pacific Northwest. As with any regional identification, it can be as restrictive or expansive as one imagines it to be. It could simply include the modern states of Oregon and Washington or it could stretch as far north as the Arctic Circle. I am most interested in the commercial and religious activity taking place along the Northwest's primary waterway, the Columbia River and its many tributaries, but only in such way that demonstrates the region's larger role as a nexus between Pacific and Atlantic World cultures. In short, this narrative expands as it contracts, all the while advancing a particular argument that amasses several prominent themes in historical scholarship.

The categorical pillars of my argument - religion, commerce, and region - encompass a sizable historiographic trajectory. To begin, in the 1970s and 80s two important changes occurred in the larger field of Western history. First, the more focused studies that dominated the literature on the American West in the mid-twentieth century (on topics such as fur traders, miners, and Native American communities) revealed to scholars a very different West from the one nineteenth-century historian Frederick Jackson Turner originally described in his famed "Frontier Thesis."⁴ Second (and in many ways a corollary to the first) condemnation of the

⁴ In 1893, at the young age of thirty-two, Turner stepped up to the podium at the annual meeting for the American Historical Association and delivered his now famous speech entitled, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." Prefacing his discussion with the "closing" of the frontier as reported by the 1890 census, Turner went on to convince his fellow historians that the frontier mattered and was a "fertile field of investigation." To do so, he argued that the "frontier spirit" formed the backbone of a cohesive and distinctive American identity. After all, the frontier was, for Turner, an ever-expanding line that compelled Americans to constantly adapt to new circumstances. This "perennial rebirth," as he phrased it, "furnish[ed] the forces dominating [the] American character." Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1921), 3. These "forces," according to Turner, encompassed two key elements: progress and individualism. In terms of progress, he interpreted the frontier as a salient example of social evolution. As the frontier expanded westward, so too did modern civilization in incremental stages. First there were "primitive" hunters. Then came ranchers followed by farmers who cleared the forests and cultivated the land. Then came merchants and finally manufacturers who ushered in a new era of modernization. This evolutionary model demonstrated to Turner that the crucible of the frontier provoked a sense of innovation and development that became the source of America's progressive sensibilities. In terms of individualism, Turner argued that the frontier engendered a strong sense of individual autonomy among families who had nothing but antipathy for direct control.

"grand narrative" by European post-structuralists started to penetrate American scholarship, prompting historians to apply even greater pressure to the sweeping nature of Turner's argument. In addition to striking some as racist and sexist, Turner's work was, for many scholars, "muddled and contradictory, so much so that it was fatally flawed as an analytical tool."⁵ That critique of Turner inspired many to restructure the ways in which the historical community interpreted the West and its role in American history. The hallmarks of the New Western paradigm were (and are) greater attention to racial, ethnic, and gender diversity, as well as the fluidity and instability of boundaries.

Taking cues from this post-Turnerian turn, recent histories on the North American fur trade have begun to look more intently at the trade's "material" dimensions.⁶ Questions pertaining to ecology, geography, environment, markets, and even race (role of Metis) and gender (role of native women as cultural intermediaries) have guided these newer works. In general, books such as Calvin Martin's *Keeper's of the Game: Indian-Animal Relationships and the Fur Trade* (1978) and Shepard Krech's *The Subarctic Fur Trade: Native Social and Economic Adaptations* (1984), as well as more recent edited volumes such as Jennifer Brown's,

Ibid., 32. He noted that frontier folk wanted nothing to do with the federal government or any other public institution for that matter. Instead, they cherished their individual freedoms and upheld the act of self-making as the greatest of virtues. Turner took this theory a step further by suggesting that the individualistic proclivities of frontier life formed the foundation of America's democratic principles. Simply stated, the notions of progress and individualism as experienced on the frontier conditioned the late nineteenth-century American ethos.

⁵ William Cronon, George Miles, and Jay Gitlin, "Becoming West: Toward a New Meaning for Western History," in *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Western Past*, ed., William Cronon, George Miles, and Jay Gitlin (New York: Norton, 1992), 4.

⁶ This is in contrast to prior histories. Most early narratives, such as Albert L. Belden's *The Fur Trade of America and Some of the Men who Made and Maintain it, Together with Furs and Fur Bearers of other Continents and Countries and Islands of the Sea* (1917), Clarence A. Vandiveer's *The Fur Trade and Early Western Exploration* (1929), and especially Hiram M. Chittenden's famous multi-volume set entitled *The American Fur Trade of the Far West* (1935) have tended to interpret the fur trade through the lenses of economic, political, and military history, focusing on, among other issues, the trade's formative role in European and American economic growth and imperial expansion. They also tended to be ethnocentric and often upheld the figure of the white trapper as a quintessential embodiment of the rugged, self-making frontier mentality popularized by Frederick Jackson Turner only decades prior.

W. J. Eccles', and Donald Heldman's *The Fur Trade Revisited: Selected Papers of the Sixth North American Fur Trade Conference* (1991) and Carolyn Podruchny's and Laura Peers' *Gathering Places: Aboriginal and Fur Trade Histories* (2010) all succeeded in highlighting the complex material negotiations of the trade, while expanding the conversation to include the voices of actors other than the stereotypical Euro-American trapper/trader.

Susan Sleeper-Smith's *Rethinking the Fur Trade: Cultures of Exchange in an Atlantic World* (2009) should also be included in this list. While its range of essays addressed many of the same topics found in these other new fur trade histories, Sleeper-Smith's guiding framework added yet another layer to the story. Inspired by recent shifts in regional studies, she argued that those involved in the fur trade during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including Native Americans, were participants in a much larger trans-regional economy. She wrote that "trade in peltry served a curiously modern function, evolving as part of a credit economy fueled by supply and demand," and added that "Indians exercised a precocious consumerism that was well adapted to the 'flexible specialization' that characterized early modern production in Europe, where goods could be refined or invented to serve the needs of the consumer."⁷ It was within this Atlantic World market where Indian demand for particular goods modified European production, just as European merchandise altered the social and economic order of indigenous America.

Moreover, newer studies on the North American fur trade have been more diligent in integrating elements of religion. We see this especially in works by ethnohistorians such as Martin, Krech, and Sleeper-Smith, who have all gone into great depth articulating the spiritual connotations associated with the hunting of game, the trading of pelts for foreign talismans, and the kinship bonds forged between native women and Euro-American furmen. We also see

⁷ Susan Sleeper-Smith, ed., *Rethinking the Fur Trade: Cultures of Exchanges in an Atlantic World* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), xvii.

religion in works by historians who studied the lives of Euro-American and Metis laborers. The best example is that of Carolyn Podruchny's *Making of the Voyageur World: Travelers and Traders in the North American Fur Trade* (2006). In it she devoted an entire chapter to the voyageur cosmology, which comprised a unique blending of French-Canadian Catholicism and aboriginal beliefs, and was dramatized in a collection of ritual performances meant to, in the words of Podruchny, "help voyageurs shape their changing values and teach these new values to one another."⁸

Recent books on the fur trade in the Pacific Northwest have followed many of these same trends. For example, Elizabeth Vibert's 1997 monograph entitled, *Trader's Tales: Narratives of Cultural Encounters in the Columbia Plateau, 1807-1846*, delivered an excellent examination of male gender construction among Euro-American and indigenous trappers, while historian Gray Whaley in his 2010 book entitled, *Oregon and the Collapse of the Illahee: U.S. Empire and the Transformation of the Indigenous World, 1792-1859*, provided an equally informative assessment of the relationship between the Northwest fur trade and Euro-American/native sexual interaction within the larger context of European and American imperial politics. In terms of religion, both Vibert and Whaley also produced rich analyses that linked the fur trade of colonial Oregon to certain indigenous religious traditions such as the Prophet Dance complex that surfaced in the region in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Also, Whaley's book in particular did well to excavate some of the moments of conflict and cooperation between the area's leading trade organization, the Hudson's Bay Company, and the Methodist missions strewn throughout the Lower Columbia in the 1830s and 40s. Works such as Larry Cebula's *Plateau Indians and the Quest for Spiritual Power, 1700-1850* (2003) and to a lesser extent Christopher

⁸ Carolyn Podruchny, *Making of the Voyageur World: Travelers and Traders in the North American Fur Trade* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 53.

Miller's *Prophetic Worlds: Indians and Whites on the Columbia Plateau* (1985) also offered insight into the frequent intersections between religion and the fur trade in the Pacific Northwest, especially along the Columbia Plateau.

In general, the historiography of religion in mid-nineteenth century Oregon is quite extensive. For over 125 years, historians have explored the lives of legendary missionary pioneers such as Jason Lee and Marcus Whitman, arguing like Cornelius Brosnan did in his 1932 biography entitled, *Jason Lee: Prophet of the New Oregon*, that these Protestant clergy directly facilitated the growth of American settlement in the region, leading to the territory's eventual incorporation into the United States following the border dispute of 1846. For decades, this nationalist take on the Oregon missions fit neatly within the Turnerian narrative of American westward expansion. However, with the advent of New Western history came a reworking of these prior mission studies. Aside from Robert J. Loewenberg's landmark study in *Equality on the Oregon Frontier: Jason Lee and the Methodist Mission, 1834-43* - which was one of the first books on early Protestants in Oregon that carefully scrutinized the social, political, and economic implications of the Protestant missions - few exemplify the newer model better than *People of the Dalles: The Indians of Wascopam Mission* (1996). In it ethnohistorian Robert Boyd drew upon the journals and correspondences of Methodist missionary Henry Perkins to construct a smart analysis of the cultural interplay between mission representatives and Chinookan and Sahaptin natives.

Recent Catholic mission histories also have been productive in narrating these complex interchanges. Building on the foundational work of Clarence Bagley in his 1932 multivolume set, *Early Catholic Missions in Old Oregon*, historian Robert Carriker's biographical piece on Father Pierre Jean De Smet (1995) interpreted the life of the famed Jesuit through the lens of his

multi-layered relationships with indigenous peoples, foreign benefactors, local entrepreneurs, Protestant competitors, and even his fellow priests. Although not as extensive as its Protestant counterpart, U. S. Catholic mission historiography (by virtue of the very nature of the Church) has been at the forefront in challenging scholars to reconceptualize their understanding of regional boundaries and to explore the wider networks in which religious actors throughout the Pacific Northwest operated.

In recent years, histories that emphasize the fluidity of regional boundaries - employing categories such as "Atlantic World" and "Pacific World" as opposed to "American," "European," and "Asian" - have succeeded in overcoming what historian David Armitage referred to as the "artificial, but nonetheless enduring, divisions between histories usually distinguished from each other as internal and external, domestic and foreign, or national and imperial."⁹ For historian Laurie Maffly-Kipp, the Pacific Slope in the early nineteenth century offered an ideal milieu for applying this new model. In her 1997 essay, "Eastward Ho!", she argued that by "ignoring other movements - northward from Mexico, southward from Canada, and especially eastward from Asia - as well as the history of those who never wanted to move at all [Native Americans], furnishes us...with an incomplete historical narrative."¹⁰ To compensate, western scholars must, in her words, be willing to "learn [more] about the Pacific Rim and its peoples."¹¹ If this was not difficult enough, Maffly-Kipp urged scholars to weave all of these actors and events into a larger story that connects to the Atlantic World and ultimately to an emergent hemispheric

⁹ David Armitage, "Three Concepts of Atlantic History," in *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, eds., David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 25.

¹⁰ Laurie Maffly-Kipp, "Eastward Ho!: American Religion from the Perspective of the Pacific Rim," in *Retelling U.S. Religious History*, ed. Thomas A. Tweed (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 128.

¹¹ Ibid.

community.¹²

Keeping pace with these conceptual shifts, works on North American religions have become increasingly trans-regional in orientation. Recent books such as Carla Gardina Pestana's *Protestant Empire: Religion and the Making of the British Atlantic World* (2009) and Laura M. Steven's *The Poor Indians: British Missionaries, Native Americans, and Colonial Sensibility* (2004) each depicted an Anglophile world that reached across two continents and included a complex web of actors and networks not bound by geographic constraints. In Catholic historiography, Peter D'agostino's *Rome in America: Transnational Catholic Ideology from the Risorgimento to Fascism* (2004) offers the best example. D'agostino argued that the identity of North American Catholicism has been - contrary to the conventional narratives of American religious history - preeminently trans-national and uses this premise as a springboard for investigating the Trans-Atlantic flow of Catholic theologies and political thought in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Similarly, recent studies on religious peoples along the west coast of North America have begun to integrate into their analyses a wider Pacific World. There are few better examples of this than Jean Barman's and Bruce McIntyre Watson's *Leaving Paradise: Indigenous Hawaiians in the Pacific Northwest, 1787-1898* (2006), which devoted at least one chapter to describing the role of the missionary enterprise in establishing linkages between the Islands and Oregon through the use of Hawaiian labor.

To be clear, this new regional perspective is far from a pseudonym for Atlantic or Pacific World history. It also includes studies that explore the lives of religious peoples in the context of

¹² Ibid.,130. While some would argue that my focus on a "hemispheric community" belies my intention to craft a "Western" narrative, I would suggest that such a focus falls in line with the trends in New Western history - trends that have been instrumental in applying pressure to the rigidity of geo-political boundaries and in resisting the impulse to isolate the region. In my estimation, Pacific Rim history and even Northern Hemispheric history is the future of Western studies.

the "borderland." In the past, many of these works have centered on the Mexican-U. S. border, typified by books such as Luis Leon's *La Llorana's Children* (2004), which wedded together the plasticity of spatial, ethnic, and religious identities among Mexican-Americans. However, there are also studies that have focused on religious interaction along the boundary between the U. S. and Canada, such as C. L. Higham's *Noble, Wretched, & Redeemable: Protestant Missionaries to the Indians in Canada and the United States, 1820-1900* (2000), which in addition to its borderland perspective offered an excellent analysis of the continental and even trans-continental networks in which Protestant missionaries and their native constituents operated.

In addition to the contributions of prior scholars (to which much is owed), this project is anchored in an extensive collection of primary sources. These include: the journals, diaries, letters, and published narratives of fur traders; the records and correspondences of Hudson's Bay Company personnel; the journals, diaries, letters, and published narratives of Protestant and Catholic missionaries; and archaeological data from indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest and Polynesia. Very few, if any, of these sources are "new" to the academic community - no recent discoveries from among the dusty shelves of some long-forgotten archive. To the contrary, most are well-worn, having been perused and scrutinized by historians for well-over a hundred years and have served as the basis for much of the historiography. However, this is not to say that these "old" sources have no more secrets to divulge. When viewed through the lenses of a fresh interpretive framework, they surrender new insights with which we can craft a more nuanced narration of the religious lives of those who once called the Columbia home.

Markets, Exchanges, and Commodities

For better or worse, it all starts with Adam Smith. In his famed multivolume tome, *The Wealth of Nations* (originally published in 1776) the renown philosopher and economist examined what is best described as "the effects of economic incentives on human behavior."¹³ This included religious choice, which he argued was born out of the same rational self-interest as the choices of any consumer in any market (emphasizing the importance of "consumer sovereignty").¹⁴ According to economist Larry Witham, Smith also "viewed religion as having a supply side and demand side, each at the mercy of competition and monopoly," and added that in general he "used the same economic principles he applied to economic life to religious life."¹⁵ On these grounds, Witham crowned Smith, at least tentatively, as the "founder" of the Economics of Religion - a burgeoning subfield that has, in recent decades, shown promise as an analytical tool.¹⁶

In 1987, sociologists Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge composed a compelling monograph entitled, *A Theory of Religion*, in which they postulated that "religious commitment" could be systematically understood in economic terms. They argued that certain "axioms" (as they called them) relating to human behavior are applicable in any context. For instance, the hallmark of microeconomic theory - stating that "humans seek what they perceive to be rewards

¹³ Robert B. Ekelund Jr., Robert F. Hebert, and Robert D. Tollison, "Adam Smith on Religion and Market Structure," *History of Political Economy* 37, no. 4 (2005): 647.

¹⁴ Ibid., 648. It is important to note that the consistency of Smith's reliance on "consumer sovereignty" is a debate among contemporary economists. While individuals such as Ekelund, Hebert, and Tollison say it demonstrates coherency, others such as Charles Leathers and J. Patrick Raines have suggested that "the role of consumer sovereignty was more limited." Charles G. Leathers and J. Patrick Raines, "Adam Smith on Religion and Market Structure: A Search for Consistency," *History of Political Economy* 40, no. 2 (2008): 347.

¹⁵ Larry Witham, "Was Adam Smith an 'Economist of Religion' (paper, Association for the Study of Religion, Economics, and Culture, Arlington, VA, April 8, 2011), 1.

¹⁶ Ibid., 9.

and avoid what they perceive to be costs" - was, according to Stark and Bainbridge, just as translatable to the lives of religious peoples who also work to maximize their "exchange ratio" (how much rewards outweigh costs) through "compensators" that serve as "intangible substitutes for a desired reward (e.g. religious doctrine, devotionism, moral superiority, and so on)."¹⁷ In short, the authors attempted to articulate a social scientific theory of religious adherence centered on basic notions of market exchange and regulation. And while it is fair to criticize their work for being too denominationally-driven (or Protestant-centric) and failing to address adequately what they meant by "religion," they were successful in prompting scholars in the social sciences to think differently about the category.

One such social scientist was an economist by the name of Laurence Iannaccone. Beginning in the early 1990s, he published a series of articles with titles ranging from "Religious Participation: A Human Capital Approach (1990)" to "The Consequences of Religious Market Regulation: Adam Smith and the Economics of Religion (1991)" to "Religious Markets and the Economics of Religion." In works such as these Iannaccone helped break new ground in the areas of rational choice and human capital, and in the words of one admirer, "was the first to bring theory and data together under the technical rubric of the economics of religion."¹⁸ He was also instrumental in forming the Association for the Study of Religion, Economics, and Culture (ASREC), which according to its current homepage, "seeks especially to stimulate work [on religion] based on economic perspectives and the rational choice paradigm."¹⁹

Most recently, Larry Witham's own book entitled *Marketplace of the Gods* (2010) has

¹⁷ Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *A Theory of Religion* (New York: Lang, 1987), 27, 36, 46.

¹⁸ Larry Witham, *Marketplace of the Gods: How Economics Explains Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 110.

¹⁹ "Welcome to ASREC," Association for the Study of Religion, Economics, and Culture, <http://www.thearda.com/ASREC>.

become one of the more accessible overviews in the genre. Like many of his predecessors (Smith included), he began his analysis with the concept of rational choice, which he admitted has its shortcomings and share of critics. But despite any external forms of conditioning (whether cultural or social), most people, he writes, "have good reasons" for deciding to choose a particular religious community or theology or doctrine or ritual over another.²⁰ Like any consumer, the religious person weighs their decision in terms minimizing costs and maximizing net benefits, expends their capital strategically in ways that yield immediate or delayed reward, and exploits market competition to their advantage at least within the limits of regulatory measures.²¹ In his words, when one takes into consideration the "basic human tendency to seek benefits over costs," it becomes apparent that "people are thinking through their religious choices," and that this economic rationalism represents the beginning point in explaining religion "at the levels of the individual, household, group, and marketplace."²²

As with similar works, the centerpiece of Witham's text was his concept of the religious economy. He defined it as follows:

All religious activity going on in a society. As in any market, this economy includes current and potential adherents and can be made up of as few as two organizations, but however many there are, they seek to attract and maintain adherents by presenting unique religious cultures.²³

He added that,

In theory, a religious economy has relatively stable niches of consumers, ranging from strict to liberal. When unregulated, a religious economy produces a great

²⁰ Witham, *Marketplace of the Gods*, 32.

²¹ The notion of "maximization to the margin" is not always as clear as described above. Borrowing terminology from Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, Witham wrote that "'human reasoning is often somewhat unsystematic and intuitive, and that maximization is often only partial and somewhat half-hearted.'" Ibid., 31.

²² Ibid., 15, 32.

²³ Ibid., 213.

variety of religions...due to the easy entry of religious suppliers and potential for increased variation in the tastes of consumers. The primary historical dynamic in a religious economy is the gradual rise of dominant religions and competition from new sectarian ones, which may, in turn, become dominant.²⁴

For Witham, religious economies existed in all shapes and sizes and could be found in any historical and social context where competition was sufficient enough to form and sustain a market.

Networks were also an important ingredient. He argued that all markets are relational, comprised of intimate and loose associations built around the buying and selling of commodities. At their core, the networks formed in these markets are praxis-oriented, insofar as people work to construct, maintain, and dismantle them. To borrow from social theorist Bruno Latour, networks only emerge when actors physically act to create them, and in markets people create them through personal or impersonal exchanges. Yet, it is important to note that these exchanges and the relationships they create are rarely balanced. Although "relatively stable" they are, as theorist Manuel Vasquez reminds us, "always contested differentials of power, of inclusion and exclusion, of cooperation and conflict, of boundary-crossing and boundary-making."²⁵ They are, he adds, "sociopolitically, culturally, and ecologically embedded relational processes that constrain and enable practices as diverse as place-making and identity-construction."²⁶ Paying attention to networks of exchange, then, allows us to observe the fluidity of markets (religious or otherwise) as they transcend geopolitical borders and establish and remake social and cultural landscapes.

Attention to networks of exchange also allows us to map the ways in which religious

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Manuel Vasquez, *More than Belief: A Materialist Theory of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 298.

²⁶ Ibid.

markets intersect and become intertwined with "secular" ones. According to Vasquez, "the production, circulation, and consumption of religious goods have always interacted with the dynamics of 'profane economies,'" and it is "a networks approach to religion [that] can help us...to identify the specific processes, actors, and contexts that make the sacred and profane convertible to each other."²⁷ Moreover, Vasquez was right to point out that this interplay sometimes takes the shape of what Karl Marx famously coined as the "fetishism of commodities," the end result being that a social relation "assumes...the fantastic form of a relation between things" - that is the commodities themselves take on an almost "mystical character" divorced from the actual value of their production.²⁸ It is in "these kinds of transmutations," to quote Vasquez once more, where religious and non-religious commodities become entangled in the same web of "metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties," making it possible for economic actors to deal in both simultaneously.²⁹

It is also important to remember that these "things" (whether they be religious or not) have a life unto themselves. They come in and out of commodification, are handled by many different people across space and time, take on new cultural relevancies, and serve a variety of functions. Their identity becomes just as fluid as the markets in which they are exchanged and the peoples' identities who exchange them. Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, in his edited volume entitled, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (1986), illustrated this point using the example of the "Kula" found among indigenes living in the islands off the coast of Papua New Guinea. It is, in his words, "an extremely complex regional system

²⁷ Ibid., 305-306.

²⁸ Jon Elster, ed., *Karl Marx: A Reader* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 63-64.

²⁹ Vasquez, *More than Belief*, 306.; Elster, *Karl Marx*, 63.

for the circulation of particular kinds of valuables, usually between men of substance."³⁰ During these ceremonies, objects such as necklaces and armshells are exchanged and "acquire very specific biographies as they move from place to place and hand to hand, just as the men, who exchange them gain and lose reputation as they acquire, hold, and part with these valuables."³¹

As the men of the Kula discovered, the exchange of "things" opens the door to alterations in one's identity. French anthropologist Marcel Mauss once argued that to exchange something (whatever it may be) is to trade away a piece of oneself and receive the piece of another, often creating something hybridic in the process. Applying this concept to the history of North American religions, Catherine Albanese stated that things exchanged can "contain...moral and spiritual capital," that is, "over the gesture of a practice shared, they carry...the ultimate and proximate habits of mind and life that compose...a culture at the moment of being shared."³² For her, the nucleus of all religious production in the American context (from the colonial period to the present) has been the same as the nucleus of all commercial activity: that is, the act of exchange. "Whatever their ascribed religious identity," she wrote, "Americans were professing religions that bore the signs of contact with those who were other and different. American religions were changed religions, and they were new religions, even if they evoked the stuff of tradition and the trappings of former cultures and times."³³

R. Laurence Moore offered a different, but no less compelling, economic narration of

³⁰ Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 18.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Catherine L. Albanese, "Exchanging Selves, Exchanging Souls: Contact, Combination, and American Religious History," in *Retelling U.S. Religious History*, ed. Thomas A. Tweed (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 203.

³³ Ibid.

religion in U. S. history. In his book entitled, *Selling God: American Religion and the Marketplace of Culture* (1994), he challenged the age-old thesis of secularization by arguing that "what we usually mean by speaking of secularization has to do not with the disappearance of religion but its commodification."³⁴ His primary focus was on the ways in which "religious influences established themselves in the forms of commercial culture," which consumers purchased, beginning in the nineteenth century (with the changes in market behavior brought about by industrialization), "as a means of self-improvement and relaxation."³⁵ Speaking broadly, Moore added that the "commercial aspects of religion are traceable in any century," and "to say that religion is involved in market trade is not to pose a unique problem of modernity," but is, in some ways, a Western tradition that goes all the way back to the birth of Christendom.³⁶

Building on the work of these historians, social scientists Roger Finke and Rodney Stark provided their own rendition of American religious history as spoken in the language of the market.³⁷ In their 2005 monograph entitled, *The Churching of America, 1776-2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy*, they proposed a new narrative that emphasized among other factors the changes in local and federal regulation concerning religious engagement, the

³⁴ R. Laurence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 5.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ A similar social scientific investigation of a historical event and/or process comes from the work of economists Robert Ekelund, Robert Hebert, and Robert Tollison. In a 2002 article published in the *Journal of Political Economy*, they presented an economic analysis of the German Reformation. Treating the Roman Catholic Church "as a firm," they argued that its "monopolistic practices" and "price discrimination" in early modern Europe "encouraged" the emergence of "rival firms," who could "make redemption cheaper." Robert B. Ekelund, Jr., Robert F. Hebert, and Robert D. Tollison, "An Economic Analysis of the Protestant Reformation," *Journal of Political Economy* 110, no. 3 (2002): 646, 669. They also suggested that this "Protestant entry was facilitated in emergent entrepreneurial societies characterized by the decline of feudalism and relatively unstable distribution of wealth." Ibid. Theological and doctrinal competition became interwoven into the region's growing capitalist fervor, leading the authors to conclude that the "Protestant Reformation was [indeed] an economic phenomenon with roots in intertemporal benefits and costs to church members and disaffected groups." Ibid., 668.

significance of new forms of religious supply, and the importance of voluntarism in the establishing religious markets. Undergirding their analysis was the presupposition that "where religious affiliation is a matter of choice, religious organizations must compete for members," and the "'invisible hand' of the marketplace is as unforgiving of ineffective religious firms as it is of their commercial counterparts."³⁸ Furthermore, they justified their "market-oriented lens" by arguing that "some well-established deductions from the principles of supply and demand can illuminate what might otherwise seem a very disorderly landscape."³⁹ In other words, economic models serve the same purpose of any interpretative framework - they help organize complex sets of data into carefully constructed typologies from which one can extrapolate meaningful conclusions.

Nevertheless, American religious historian Leigh Eric Schmidt believed that Finke's and Starks' analysis imposed too much order. In his chapter entitled "Practices of Exchange: From Market Culture to Gift Economy in the Interpretation of American Religion" (1997), he suggested that scholars of North American religions should move away from the market-centered approach, which in his words is of "limited use when it comes to the study of popular or lived religion," and focus more intently on "practices of exchange" that revolve around the notion of the gift.⁴⁰ He claimed that "as an interpretative construct, a gift economy suggests the more complex motivations of religious actors as they meet associate, sacrifice, struggle, jostle, and

³⁸ Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 9.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Leigh Eric Schmidt, "Practices of Exchange: From Market Culture to Gift Economy in the Interpretation of American Religion," in *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice*, ed. David Hall (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 72.

contend" - an alternative to the cold, calculating temperament of the market.⁴¹ Although compelling, Schmidt's work begs the question: where does market culture end and gift economy begin? The author, himself, did not seem to have a clear answer. He wrote that "the gift economy, far from pointing to a realm independent of the market or somehow above competition, encapsulates the tensile notions of rivalry and altruism, mass commodity and personal inventiveness, calculation and offering."⁴² If the building-blocks of market culture (competition, commodities, calculation, and so on) also exist in a gift economy, then differentiating between the two becomes little more than an exercise in subtlety.

The ambiguity that characterizes the relationship between market and gift exchange has occupied economic and anthropological scholarship since the mid-twentieth century. What has worked its ways in academic jargon as the substantivist - formalist debate, scholars (particularly those in the field of Economic Anthropology) have long argued over the merits of market language in analyzing the economic lives of people living outside the industrialized West. Influenced by the work of mid-century economist Karl Polanyi and the post-structural discourse of the 1960s and 70s, anthropologists began to argue that economic systems are culturally conditioned and that market language should not be imposed on non-capitalist societies (what they viewed as a form of academic imperialism). These substantivists (as they were labeled) encountered resistance from so-called neo-formalists who contended that wherever there is scarcity and reasonable choices there will be commodities and markets to exchange them. While they conceded that these markets may look quite different from the markets of the West (which are based on monetary exchange), they are markets nonetheless and can be analyzed as such.

The fur trade offers a unique case study in the legitimacy (and/or illegitimacy) of both

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

positions. In the late 1970s, economic historians Arthur J Ray and Donald Freeman were instrumental in pushing forward the notion that the fur trade "is impossible to label neatly as 'gift trade,' or 'administered trade,' or 'market trade,' since it embodies elements of all these forms."⁴³ Historian Richard White picked up on this idea in the early 1990s and suggested that despite the difference in native conceptions of exchange, "they had indeed become part of a world market," and "when they accepted European goods and gave furs in return, a still emerging market system in Europe impinged on their lives."⁴⁴ Although he was certainly willing to recognize the penetration of western market capitalism in indigenous America via the fur trade, White took umbrage with the reductive tendencies of the formalist school. He argued that "in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century *pays d'en haut*, gifts were not merely bribes or wages; allies were not simply mercenaries; women were not merely prostitutes; missionaries did not just buy their converts." He added quite simply that "life was not a business, and such simplifications only distort the past."⁴⁵

White's point is well-taken, but his own preconception of what qualified as "economic" limited his vision and in some ways doomed his approach to the same reductionist fate as the formalists he criticized. Reducing economics strictly to physical transactions - buying, selling, or gifting of material goods and services, monetary exchange, and so on - hampered his ability to see similar transactions at the metaphysical level, and more importantly caused him to miss the moments when these physical and metaphysical transactions became tangled within a common

⁴³ Arthur J. Ray and Donald B. Freeman, *Give Us Good Measure: An Economic Analysis of Relations between the Indians and the Hudson's Bay Company before 1763* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 236.

⁴⁴ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 95. Although White's study is on the Algonquian of the *pays d'en haut*, his comments are just as applicable to the indigenous communities of the Pacific Northwest during the first half of the nineteenth century.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

web of economic activity. Women may not have been "merely prostitutes," but many did use their sexuality as currency for obtaining greater spirit power or protection; and missionaries may not have bought their converts, but they did use certain tactics of persuasion in convincing local indigenes to consume their brand of Christian theology, especially when faced with competition from other aspiring religious organizations.

This critique of White is not meant to be a rebuttal on behalf of the neo-formalist school, nor is it to say that economic models are the only suitable means for analyzing religious encounter. Quite the opposite, they (like any other interpretative framework) have their limitations. As we will see periodically, there were those moments of religious interaction that seemed to defy any kind of economic formulation. These are, however, welcome additions to the present narrative insofar as they serve the worthy purpose of reminding us once again that the business of life can indeed be a complicated one.

Overview

This narrative runs along a loose chronology. It begins in the early days of the interior trade during the first decade of the nineteenth century and ends at the mid-century mark with the statehood of Oregon and steep decline in the HBC's regional authority. It is also somewhat thematic. Each chapter focuses on a different set of "players" who were active at various moments in building and shaping the religious economy at its local and trans-regional levels.

Chapter Two is an ethnographic study that centers on the exploits of the famed Kutenai female berdache, known to many as Kauxuma-nupika. She served as a foil for trader and cartographer David Thompson to solidify his own imported notions of Anglican morality; acted as a purveyor of ecological knowledge for newly arrived traders to improve their profits; and

played a pivotal role in the rivalry between two opposing fur trading companies, all the while claiming to be imbued with great spirit power (due to her gender transformation) and prophesying either impending doom or a coming utopia to indigenous peoples up and down the Columbia River. I argue that in her numerous ventures, religious transactions and fur trade transactions become indistinguishable.

Chapter Three integrates the South Pacific into the conversation. I show that in addition to their engagements in the Northwest fur trade, Hawaiian laborers also participated in transactions during which concepts such as religious continuity, commercial success, community construction, and human capital overlapped under the larger umbrella of trans-oceanic exchange. I focus on a series vignettes, including a ritual of interment for a fellow comrade lost at sea, in which the Hawaiian mourners used certain commodities of the trade as religious artifacts; a terrifying night under the stars and a Euro-American trader desperate to eradicate "superstitious beliefs" from his valuable Hawaiian workers, so as to increase the productivity of his hunting party; an imported ritual dance at the HBC post of Fort Nisqually and the absorption of the "Kanaka" performers into the wider, multiethnic fur trade community; and the commodification of Hawaiian labor within the fledgling economies of the Protestant and Catholic missions. I contend that the operations of the fur trade enabled workers in the Columbia to engage in religious transactions that positioned the region firmly within the broader spectrum of the Pacific World.

Chapter Four discusses the religious operations of fur trading companies. The focal point is on the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), whose power in the Columbia lasted for over two decades. Specifically, I note that the Company (as it was called) used their regulatory powers over religious participation - deciding what and how many Christian missionaries could enter the

area - in order to preserve its fragile monopoly over all economic activity. I also highlight the ways in which the HBC (whose governing body was in London) issued certain policies for the funding of religious and moral instruction for employees and their families; the religious marketplace that formed at their regional headquarters of Fort Vancouver; and the manner in which HBC personnel proselytized alongside, and as part of, their official duties in the trade. Overall, I make the claim that the Company (as a trans-regional entity) consider religious engagement and commercial success to be collaborative projects.

Chapters Five and Six serve as a two part series detailing the Protestant and Catholic mission economies that first formed in the Columbia in the mid-1830s and continued until their slow decline beginning in the early 1850s. I begin both with an overview of the missions' operations, which in many cases merged religious and commercial activities. I then discuss the trans-regional networks in which these Protestant and Catholic missionaries participated, focusing on both the physical and metaphysical exchanges which they relied on for the success of their respective enterprises. Lastly, I explore the intermingling between missionaries and representatives of the fur trade, many of whom played a central role in supplying and even financially supporting the work of the missions. In both chapters, I argue that the resources, networks, and strategies of the fur trade made it possible for both Protestants and Catholics to conduct business in the region.

During his tenure with the HBC's "Columbia Department," trader John McLean encountered an indigenous community who had been visited long ago by a Catholic priest. Many had been baptized and catechized and McLean presumed they had converted wholeheartedly to the Christian faith. However, what he observed while among them led the aging trader to question their loyalty. To his disgust, he commented in his journal that even the

practices of "baptized" Indians continued to bear the stain of "primitive superstition." He reinforced this claim with a brief anecdote in which he witnessed first-hand several of these Christian natives sacrificing a beaver, which in his words had been "appropriated to the spirit" to ensure successful trapping.⁴⁶ Scenes such as this were commonplace in the Pacific Northwest during the first half of the nineteenth century, and not only among natives. They appeared in all walks of life and it is with this premise that we proceed.

⁴⁶ John McLean, *Notes of a Twenty-Five Years' Service in the Hudson's Bay Territory* (London: Richard Bentley, 1849), 108.

CHAPTER TWO

FUR TRADE IMPORTS, INDIGENOUS SPIRITUALITY, AND THE CONFLATION OF ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE: THE CASE OF KAUXUMA-NUPIKA

The residents of Fort Chipewyan were terrified. For some time, traders at the HBC post in what is now northern Alberta had entertained rumors that local natives were plotting to "destroy the house and all its inhabitants."⁴⁷ According to explorer and trader John Franklin, the indigenes had been "instigated to this rash design by the delusive stories of one among them, who had acquired great influence of his companions by his supposed skill in necromancy."⁴⁸ The soothsayer had "prophesied that there would soon be a complete change in the face of their country; that fertility and plenty would succeed to the present sterility; and that the present race of white inhabitants, unless they became subservient to the Indians, would be removed, and their place filled by other traders, who would supply their wants in every possible manner."⁴⁹

Upon his return to the region, Franklin met a man named "Mr. Stewart" (likely John Stuart) who provided some of the back-story. He wrote that the tale "originated with a woman," who "while living at the N. W. Company's Post, on the Columbia River, as the wife of one of the Canadian servants,...formed a sudden resolution of becoming a warrior; and throwing aside her

⁴⁷ John Franklin, *Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea in the Years 1819-20-21-22*, vol. 1, (London: John Murray, 1824), 237.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid. In his second narrative, Franklin offered another rendition of the prophecy. He wrote, "The northern Indians had cherished a belief for some years, that a great change was about to take place in the natural order of things, and that among other advantages arising from it, their own condition of life was to be materially bettered." John Franklin, *Narrative of a Second Expedition to the Shores of the Polar Sea in the Years, 1825, 1826, and 1827*, vol. 2 (London: John Murray, 1828), 305. 1930s Ethnohistorian Leslie Spier connected this particular prophecy to what he referred to as the Prophet Dance complex that began in late eighteenth century when volcanic ash from a nearby eruption covered the landscape up to ten inches thick in parts. Many Plateau natives interpreted this volcanism as a sign of an impending apocalypse while some began to prophecy an ancestral return and a coming utopia. Among other things, Spier argued that the Prophet Dance was the predecessor of the more familiar Ghost Dance that emerged further south in the latter half of the same century. Leslie Spier, *The Prophet Dance of the Northwest and its Derivatives: The Source of the Ghost Dance* (Menasha, WI: Banta, 1935).

female dress, she clothed herself in a suitable manner."⁵⁰ Once she had declared herself a warrior, Franklin noted that "she sallied forth to join a party of her countrymen then going to war; and...displayed so much courage as to attract gender regard, which was so much heightened by her subsequent feats of bravery, that many young men put themselves under her command....She became the principal leader of the tribe, under the designation of the 'Manlike Woman.'"⁵¹

The romance of a native female escaping her supposed "slave-like" status to become a noble and courageous leader captured the imagination of many.⁵² Even some of the earliest Euro-American travelers in the region made note of her. Works such as David Thompson's *Narrative of his Explorations in Western America, 1784-1812* (compiled and published by the Champlain Society in 1916), Alexander Ross' *Adventures of the First Settlers on the Oregon or Columbia River* (1849), Gabriel Franchere's *Relation d'un Voyage a la Cote du Nord-Ouest de l'Amerique Septentrionale, dans les Annees 1810, 11, 12, 13, et 14* (1820), John Franklin's *Narrative of a Second Expedition to the Shores of the Polar Sea in the Years, 1825, 1826, and 1827* (1828), and possibly the journals of trader John Work and ABCFM missionary William H. Gray all offered at least some information on her physical appearance and behavior. With the addition of Washington Irving's second-hand account entitled, *Astoria* (1836), this small corpus comprises the overall canon.

Not surprising, secondary studies have been limited. Although she does appear frequently in books and articles on topics ranging from Native American prophetic movements

⁵⁰ Franklin, *Narrative*, 305. Although debatable, it seems likely, based on this particular description, that Franklin (or "Stewart") was referring to the same Kutenai female encountered by the Northwester David Thompson years prior at Kootenae House on the Upper Columbia and again at Astoria on the Pacific Coast.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 306.

⁵² Will Roscoe, *Changing Ones: Third and Fourth Genders in Native North America* (New York: St. Martin, 1998), 81.

to gender variability in indigenous communities to studies on fur trade history in general, the "Manlike Woman" makes only a brief appearance, often accompanied by thin analysis. No work has been as comprehensive as Claude E. Schaeffer's 1965 article in *Ethnohistory* entitled, "The Kutenai Female Berdache: Courier, Guide, Prophetess, and Warrior." The success of this piece lies in the author's ability to move effortlessly between written sources and the oral traditions of his 1960s Kutenai informants. In so doing, he is able to offer a rich reconstruction of his/her life. However, such "up-streaming" (as the use of oral tradition has come to be called) is not without its dangers. The inherent ambiguities associated with oral transmission make the use of most tribal histories problematic for the historian looking for "concrete" evidence on which to support his or her claims. Yet, as Schaeffer discovered, such stories can serve as a useful supplement by offering possible detail that may be lacking in textual accounts, provided its use is properly identified, properly qualified, and that it clearly supports the data found in other primary sources.⁵³ When carefully employed, such an ethno-historical approach can, indeed, be productive and even necessary when it comes to analyzing the life of an enigmatic figure such as the "Manlike Woman."

As far as we know, her name was Kauxuma-nupika (or Kocomenepeca).⁵⁴ She was a Kutenai woman who married a French-Canadian voyager, divorced, claimed her gender changed to that of a male, professed that through such gender variability she had acquired great spiritual

⁵³ Schaeffer offers an excellent example. He writes, "Wherever possible I have attempted to supplement and interpret the former [written historical record] in the light of information which I collected among modern Kutenai Indians. Since the origin of each variety of data has been identified, it will be possible for the reader to distinguish between the respective sources readily. The possibility of errors in contemporary Kutenai testimony must not be overlooked inasmuch as a century and half has elapsed since the Kutenai berdache's death. I have attempted to identify and point these out as they occur in the traditional material to follow." Claude Schaeffer, "The Kutenai Female Berdache: Courier, Guide, Prophetess, and Warrior," *Ethnohistory* 12, no. 3 (1965): 194.

⁵⁴ Throughout this chapter I will be using the female pronoun to refer to Kauxuma-nupika. The use of such language is not meant to discredit or weaken the subject's claim of gender variability. It is merely to correspond with the language already used in much of the primary and secondary literature.

power, and began to prophecy up and down the Columbia River, all the while preserving an close attachment to the larger trade, serving as a wife, courier, and guide in rival firms. In a vivid way, her life exposes the permeability of prescribed categories. Not only did she transcend western conceptions of gender difference, as well Native American and Euro-American conceptions of exchange (like the trade itself), her participation in fur trade and religious transactions became enmeshed into one elaborate tapestry of economic praxis. Kauxuma-nupika's activities at various marketplaces along the Columbia positioned her (as well as many of those around her) as a fluid actor whose direct and indirect involvement in religious and prophetic exchanges, and in the broader administrative and commercial operations of the trade, proved, in many cases, to be synonymous gestures.

Kootenae House: Kauxuma-nupika, David Thompson, and the Regulation of Bodies

By the fall of 1807, British cartographer David Thompson and his crew of Northwesters had trudged across the Continental Divide and ascended a small portion of the Upper Columbia. Upon reaching its source at Lake Windermere, the seasoned travelers found a suitable spot on the north shore to ride out the winter months. Construction soon began and before the first snow Kootenae House was complete.⁵⁵ Like many early trading posts in the region, it was a fort-like structure comprised of sleeping quarters, storage facilities, a commons area, and even a "palisade around the periphery of the grounds."⁵⁶ The purpose of the House was to open up trade with the local Kutenai who were eager to acquire firearms to protect themselves from their Piegan rivals

⁵⁵ Sometimes spelled "Kootenay."

⁵⁶ Jack Nisbet, *The Mapmaker's Eye: David Thompson on the Columbia Plateau* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 2005), 44.

to the east. Such an "arms-race" boded well for Thompson's profits; if the Kutenai needed European goods such as guns then they would be more than willing to trap and trade for them.⁵⁷ Due in large part to this demand, Kootenae House quickly became a busy site of exchange. During its first few months of operation, many local indigenes passed through the door of its main building but none left as indelible an impression on Thompson and his men as Kauxuma-nupika. She arrived at the post but did not stay long. Sometime during the winter months Thompson banished her for "disorderly" conduct and sent her back to her kin.

We know very little about Kauxuma-nupika's early life. According to Schaeffer's modern informants, she was born and raised in the lower Kutenai territory; some said near Bonners Ferry, Idaho while others said near modern-day Creston, British Columbia.⁵⁸ Her birth name was supposedly Ququnok-patke, which translates roughly as standing pole woman - a possible reflection of her physical size. She reportedly had an unusually large physique ("big-boned") during her post-adolescence years, which was one of the reasons why few men in her village wanted to marry her even though she may have been willing.⁵⁹

Kauxuma-nupika did eventually marry. Although the details of the arrangement are unclear, we do have some knowledge of the groom. His name was Augustus Boisverd and he was a French-Canadian voyager employed by the North West Company. The company partners

⁵⁷ Ethnohistorian Olga Weydmeyer Johnson comments that there were few native communities in the Pacific Northwest who were friendly toward early Euro-American traders. The only real exceptions being the Nez Perce, Flathead, and Kutenai. Olga Weydemeyer Johnson, *Flathead and Kootenay: The Rivers, the Tribes, and the Region's Traders* (Glendale, CA: Clark, 1969), 216.

⁵⁸ Schaeffer, "The Kutenai Female Berdache," 195.

⁵⁹ Ibid. Some suggest that the word "Kutenai" comes from a Blackfoot term meaning "'big stomach'" The supposedly leaner and aggressive Plains Indians may have viewed the Kutenai as overweight and "soft." Robert H. Ruby, John A. Brown, and Cary C. Collins, *A Guide to Indian Tribes of the Pacific Northwest* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010), 154. It also bears mentioning that Franklin's account of Kauxuma-nupika as told by his probable informant Jon Stuart, offers a different, contradictory description of her physical size. He commented that she was "young" and had a "delicate frame," leading her followers to believe that "her exploits" were the result of the "possession of supernatural power." Franklin, *Narrative*, 306.

commissioned the young man in the immediate service of Thompson during his pioneering trek across the Rocky Mountains and into Kutenai territory. It is even possible Boisverd was Thompson's personal attendant, although such a claim is difficult to make with any degree of certainty, considering there were many "Boisverds" or "Boisverts" in the Canadian trade at that time.⁶⁰

Distinguishing Kauxuma-nupika's husband from other similarly-named voyageurs becomes an equally thorny task. Thompson's journal and personal narrative provide the most help. The name Boisverd appears frequently throughout the texts in similar circumstances and in relationship with similar key members of Thompson's team, suggesting that the name is in reference to the same person. If this is the case, Thompson must have relied on Kauxuma-nupika's husband for important errands. In his journal entry on March 12, 1808, he recorded sending Boisverd with an interpreter to persuade the Kutenai to stop gambling and start hunting for beaver pelts so that trade could commence - trade that was necessary for the Thompson's expedition to prove profitable in the minds of his fellow partners back in Montreal.⁶¹ Boisverd's commitment to his employers was also noteworthy. In 1810 he fell violently from his horse near Kootenae House. The fall must have "ruptured" internal organs, for Thompson noted that the injury caused the poor fellow to vomit a significant amount of blood.⁶² Even with such a serious wound Boisverd only spent a few months in the east recuperating before he "returned to duty," showing up at Saleesh House in the winter of 1811 bearing fur trade correspondence.⁶³ Due in

⁶⁰ Ibid., 196.; Johnson, *Flathead and Kootenay*, 242.

⁶¹ Nisbet, *The Mapmaker's Eye*, 53. This would not be the only time Boisverd would serve in the capacity of chief motivator. At a later date, Thompson sent Boisverd ahead of his party to encourage the local Kutenai to begin trapping in preparation for their arrival. Ibid., 59-60.

⁶² Ibid., 83.

⁶³ Schaeffer, "The Kutenai Female Berdache," 196.

large part to Thompson's writings, Boisverd's dedication and contribution to the success of North West Company is well-documented.

His relationship with Kauxuma-nupika, on the hand, remains obscure. The writings of Thompson and other Euro-American traders offered very little detail about the status of their marriage. According to one of Schaeffer's Kutenai informants, Mary White Pete, soon after her nuptials Kauxuma-nupika became "dissatisfied" with the union and "wished to return home."⁶⁴ Although we cannot presume to know the inner constitutions of the married pair, we can suppose, based on the external condition of their relationship, Boisverd's and Kauxuma-nupika's union was based not on affection but on economic necessity. Such marriages were common in the North American fur trade. They not only satisfied the sexual desires of Euro-American traders but, more importantly, established a kinship network vital to both parties. Taking the economics of their marriage into consideration, Thompson's banishment of Kauxuma-nupika did not simply result in the annulment of a marriage contract, but contributed to the dismantlement of a desirable trade relationship. For him to do so at such an unstable moment in British/Kutenai relations underscores the sway of his moral convictions.⁶⁵

Thompson was born in Westminster on April 31, 1770 to Welsh parents. He was baptized at the church of St. John the Evangelist and at the age of seven began attending the Grey Coat School, an institution established for the purpose of educating the poor youths of central London. Early in his schooling, Thompson demonstrated a penchant for mathematics, as

⁶⁴ Ibid., 195.

⁶⁵ It also might underscore Thompson's high irritability. He, along with many under his charge, struggled with bouts of starvation and illness throughout the winter months and, to make matters worse, he injured his knee and was forced to hobble around until early Spring. Nisbet, *The Mapmaker's Eye*, 50.

well as a talent for navigation and seamanship.⁶⁶ In addition, the school's curriculum included the catechism of the Church of England, which the young man "absorbed" and retained "for the rest of his life, invoking 'good Providence' upon innumerable" occasions.⁶⁷ He also "retained pleasant memories of school holidays" in which he would spend "the greatest part" of his time strolling around Westminster Abbey, and sitting in his favorite place, "the Henry the Seventh chapel," adorned with its "marble tombs, royal effigies, and saints' statues."⁶⁸ Upon finishing school, Thompson was recruited by the Hudson's Bay Company as an apprentice and clerk in the North American fur trade.⁶⁹ In 1784, one month after his fourteenth birthday, he set sail for

⁶⁶ Ibid., 5.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 3. Throughout his narrative, Thompson makes frequent reference to "merciful Providence" guiding his path and keeping he, along with his family, safe. When we combine this pre-enlightenment language with his Enlightenment interests in science and mathematics (Thompson's foremost passion, other than religion, was cartography and astronomy), what emerges is a paradoxical figure, but one who demonstrates little or no anxiety about his "conflicting" worldviews. Of course, such compatibility between religion and science was in the post-enlightenment period nothing extraordinary. In a way, one could narrate much of the nineteenth century as a milieu in which people regularly negotiated and re-negotiated the relationship between religion and science, often coming to the conclusion that the two were not mutually exclusive, but complimentary epistemologies. J. B. Tyrrell, ed., *David Thompson's Narrative of his Explorations in Western America, 1784-1812* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1916), 511. On occasion, however, Thompson made clear his disdain for Enlightenment critiques of religion. For instance, while at Churchill Factory (a trading post on the Hudson Bay), Thompson "developed a lasting antipathy toward" the Chief Factor. This hatred "had something to do with the Chief Factor's attitude toward religion - he was irregular in conducting Sunday Services, and Thompson described a scene in which the Chief Factor brandished a copy of Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary* as his personal doctrine." Thompson went on to comment that he soon returned to England and "in two years was buried." Nisbet, *The Mapmaker's Eye*, 9.; David Thompson, *Travels in Western North America, 1784-1812*, ed. Victor G. Hopwood (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1971), 66. Moreover, Thompson's return trip to Montreal in 1812 reveals much about his long-standing Anglican commitments. Upon his arrival, he requested from William McGillivray (a North West Company partner) "1 Bible of good print" and a copy of "The Life of Our Beloved Lord and Savior Jesus Christ - the latest and most approved." Ibid., 132. He also formalized his marriage to his wife Charlotte (who was half English and half Cree) before an Anglican official, though they had been living as man and wife since 1799. Ibid., 135.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 3.; Thompson, *Travels*, 62. The reasons why Thompson found the Abbey so alluring are unclear, considering he goes no further in his recollection. We are only left with speculation. Young Thompson did have a penchant for mathematics and science which may have manifested itself in the love for architecture and design. If this were the case, he would have found Westminster Abbey to have a marvelous structure and elaborate interior. On the other hand, Thompson's desire to spend time at the Abbey and at least one of its specific chapels may be related to his deep Anglican commitments, which he held for the remainder of his life. He went on to note that his "strolls" took him to places such as "London Bridge, Chelsea,... Vauxhall, and St. James' Park." Ibid.

⁶⁹ Although beginning with the HBC, Thompson, in 1797, became a clerk and surveyor for the North West Company based out of Montreal. According to this journal, he had grown weary of the politics associated with the

Canada and would never return to his British homeland.⁷⁰

Thompson left on the *Prince Rupert*. Named after the HBC's first governor, the ship was an important work-horse in the late eighteenth-century Atlantic trade. The young man's maiden voyage was part of its regular supply route to Churchill Factory on the Southwest banks of the Hudson Bay - it was an annual route, run during the late summer months, which stocked the trading post with various necessities, as well as a few comforts (namely in the form of "spirits"), for the upcoming winter and spring. Making landfall, the crew, including Thompson, wasted very little time emptying the ship of its precious cargo. The Factory's dock was "piled high with bales of tobacco, barrels of port, brandy, and Jamaican rum, casks of salt and gunpowder, and cases of prunes and raisins."⁷¹ Among the freight were thirty-six copies of a popular theological and pedagogical text entitled, *A Country Clergyman's Advice to His Parishioners Explaining What They Are to Believe, and Do, in Order to be Saved, Addressed Chiefly to Those who are of the Younger Sort*. This book, however, was by no means the only religious "good" imported to continent on this particular supply round. Thompson, like many Europeans who made the trans-oceanic voyage, carried with him aboard the fur trade vessel a set of religious ideas or theologies that were just as material in their importation as the copies of *Clergyman's Advice* stacked in the compartments below.

London-based Company. By 1804, three years prior to his arrival in Kutenai territory, he was promoted to partner in the North West Company. Nisbet, *The Mapmaker's Eye*, 23, 33.

⁷⁰ After loading the year's fur harvest, the *Prince Rupert* departed and quickly vanished over the horizon. In his narrative, Thompson lamented that "when the ship remained at anchor, from my parents and friends [it] appeared only a few weeks' distance, but when the ship became immeasurable, and I bid a long and sad farewell to my noble, my sacred country, an exile forever." Ibid., 66. The ship functioned not simply as a vehicle used to supply the Factory, but also as an important, material medium that linked Thompson to a "sacred" place he was now leaving behind. His language, however, is a bit misleading. Thompson never really left anything behind except for the English landscape itself. He imported to Canada all the presuppositions that allowed him to retain his identity as British and Anglican.

⁷¹ Ibid., 8.

Human bodies are vectors. Since the introduction Alfred Crosby's concept of the "Columbian exchange" in the late 1960s, scholars of historical epidemiology have explored the transference of disease to a particular geographic space as pathogens lay dormant in the physiological systems of an unsuspecting host.⁷² Not surprising, the transporting of disease has been interpreted by historians as a deeply material process defined by bacteria, viruses, vomit, blood, feces, boils, sores, and generally, the body. Not only does disease attack the internal body and is often inscribed on the external body, it is within the very biological processes of the body that pathogens are able to travel geographically in the first place. Negotiating the importation of religious ideas using this same language of embodiment can be helpful in positioning theologies as one of many material items circulated within an economic system. The transmission of ideas (religious or otherwise) always occur in material form, whether it be print media sent from one place to another and then consumed through the act of reading, speech-acts consumed through the act of listening, or simply ideas housed in the synapses of a traveler's brain, who, like the earlier contagion, imports the idea into a different locality. If we can use the language of bacteria/viruses to talk about disease within the body, it is possible then to use the language of an equally material neurobiology to talk about ideas within the body's brain.⁷³ Returning to the *Prince Rupert*, we might observe that in terms of their materiality there was little if any difference between Thompson's theological presuppositions and the Jamaican rum from which

⁷² On this topic there are several works by Alfred Crosby worth pursuing: *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*, rev. ed. (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003).; *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).; "Virgin Soil Epidemics as a Factor in the Aboriginal Depopulation in America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (1976): 289-99. Also see Paul Kelton, *Epidemics & Enslavement: Biological Catastrophe in the Native Southeast, 1492-1715* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2007).; and T. Cue Young, *The Health of Native Americans: Towards a Biocultural Epidemiology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

⁷³ The distinction between ideas and materiality is related to the broader Cartesian dualism which posits a stark separation between mind and body. In recent years scholars have begun to challenge this dualism. For a good overview see Manuel Vazquez, *More than Belief: A Materialist Theory of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

he willingly abstained.⁷⁴

Other than the Anglican Catechism, we know of very few theological works Thompson actually read. We do know he had a fondness for literature, especially those works that offered tales of exotic locations and exciting adventures. "Books in those days were scarce and dear," he wrote. "Those which pleased us most were the *Tales of the Genii*, the *Persian*, and *Arabian Tales*, with *Robinson Crusoe* and *Gulliver's Travels*."⁷⁵ Work such these were more than simply entertainment for young Thompson; they often led to hypothetical "discussion" among his peers on "how each would behave on various occasions."⁷⁶ It was fiction that informed his behavior in the real world. Some of these works even had an theological angle. Although Thompson did not expound on the *Arabian Tales* he read, we can presume that they were similar to, if not the exact tales found in, the well-known anthology entitled, *One Thousand and One Arabian Nights*, which became a popular read in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century European, including both England and France. Its popularity was in large part due to its erotic content. Among the overarching themes of quick riches and heroism was the presence of sexual excess most vividly represented in the Middle Eastern harem. Its successes, however, extended well beyond its ability to simply arouse its readers. The symbol of the harem also offered these same readers a foil for visualizing normative sexual conduct. While Arabs were promiscuous with multiple partners (the primary implication of the harem), Europeans, specifically the British, were

⁷⁴ Thompson was never keen on alcohol consumption. In the record of his personal debts at Churchill, there was no mention of brandy or any other form of alcohol. It was one of the only debt record to not include this commodity. A few years later, Thompson observed the what he viewed as the disparaging effects of alcohol among native communities and vowed not to distribute "spirits" to tribes west of the Continental Divide. Nisbet, *The Mapmaker's Eye*, 10, 68. However, Thompson's stance against alcohol did little to stop his company from supplying it. From 1806-1810 about 9,700 gallons of liquor was dispensed by the North West Company to both employees and local native communities. Johnson, *Flathead and Kootenay*, 222.

⁷⁵ Thompson, *Travels*, 62-63.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

monogamous, devout, and exhibited restraint when faced with sexual temptation. Not only did the *Arabian Nights* provide readers with a juxtaposition between "orientalized" Arab qualities and romanticized European values, it also offered a similar, though subtle comparison between Muslim and Christian views of sexuality and gender.⁷⁷ While Muslims (the assumed religious identity of the text's Arab characters) engaged in wanton acts of eroticism that resulted in the female acquisition of power at the expense of manly virtue, European Christians maintained a biblical, patriarchal social structure by championing a masculine domination over the physical body.

If the theology of the *Arabian Nights* fired at all in the synapses of Thompson's brain during his wintering at Kootenae House, it surfaced in his critique of Kauxuma-nupika. In his narrative he commented that her conduct was "so loose" that he had Boisverd "send her away to her friends."⁷⁸ In the early nineteenth century the term "loose" (whether used literally or

⁷⁷ See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1994, 1978) and Timothy Marr, *The Cultural Roots of American Islamicism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁷⁸ Thompson, *Travels*, 303. Some historians suggest that this was not the first time Thompson had to banish Kauxuma-nupika from a trading house. Earlier in his *Narrative* Thompson commented on a native woman he referred to as the "Lady Conjureess," whom he encountered at Rainy Lake House in the summer of 1810. She about 25 years old, carried a "Medicine Bag," and "bore in her hands a conjuring stick about 4 1/2 feet in length 1 1/2 inch [wide] at the foot and three inches at the top, by one inch in thickness, one side was painted black, with rude carved figures of Birds Animals and Insects filled with vermillion; the other side was painted red with carved figures in black." He continued by noting that "she had set herself up for a prophetess, and gradually had gained, by her shrewdness, some influence among the Natives as a dreamer, and expounder of dreams. She recollected me, before I did her, and gave me a haughty look of defiance, as much as to say I am now out of your power." The word "recollected" is of particular importance in this passage. "Some six years before," remembered Thompson, "she was living with one of my men as his wife, but became so common that I had to send her to her relations." Tyrrell, *David Thompson's Narrative*, 437. Some historians remain convinced that the Lady Conjureess was Kauxuma-nupika in spite of the fact that she lived over a thousand miles to the east at Rainy Lake House (Great Lakes region). These historians argue that distance is inconsequential considering Kauxuma-nupika was not adverse to traveling as is demonstrated when she shows up at Astoria on the Pacific coast, hundreds of miles from her homeland. However, there is sufficient reason to suggest that the women are separate people. First, there is a significant difference between traveling a few hundred miles and traveling over a thousand miles. Furthermore, Kauxuma-nupika, a Kutenai, would not have traveled east across the Rocky Mountains into Piegan territory with only a female companion by her side. Although Kutenai would make this trip regularly to hunt bison they did so in large parties that were well-armed and even then hunters would lose their lives. For Kauxuma-nupika and her partner, such a maneuver would have been incredibly dangerous, bordering on suicidal. Second, the dates do not correspond. In 1810, Thompson mentioned he encountered the Lady Conjureess six years prior (1804), while he first met Kauxuma-nupika in 1807 at the Kootenae House and again at Astoria in 1811. If we consider these factors, it is problematic to

figuratively) carried an erotic connotation and was typically reserved for individuals whose sexual liaisons were both numerous and unrestrained by social or cultural conventions.⁷⁹ At the same time, her "loose" conduct could have been an indictment of her outspoken character. Both in trader writings and oral traditions, Kauxuma-nupika is often described as vociferous and emotionally expressive, if not volatile. It is quite possible that her forthright demeanor, especially when coupled with her perceived sexual unrestraint, collided with Thompson's imported theologies in such a way that yielded an adverse reaction, culminating in her banishment from the trading house. Still, beyond the widely known injunction found in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians - in which the Apostle argued that women should not speak in church (the public sphere) but should address their husbands in the privacy of the home (a passage used to support female subjugation in early modern Europe) - Kauxuma-nupika's "loose" conduct may have represented something broader and, in the mind of Thompson, much more insidious: an inversion of the "masculine ideal."⁸⁰

conclude, as some historians do, that the Lady Conjuress and Kauxuma-nupika were the same person.

⁷⁹ Schaeffer makes the claim that Thompson's description of Kauxuma-nupika (also known as "Madame Boisverd") as "loose" did not clash only with European conceptions of normative sexual practice but was also "uncharacteristic of Kutenai women in general." Schaeffer, "The Kutenai Female Berdache," 196. However, Kauxuma-nupika may not have been the only Kutenai woman participating frequent sexual activity. In his journal Thompson mentions two Kutenai women at his post who died from a disease in their genitals; it was likely some venereal disease. Nisbet, *The Mapmaker's Eye*, 69. There is also an interesting irony about any such accusation of sexual misconduct during the fur trade era. Historian Elizabeth Vibert notes that "propriety, modesty, and chastity were paramount virtues in Enlightenment and bourgeois discourses on womanhood. Yet...the same men who harbored these expectations viewed women principally as sexual objects. The tensions between the traders' expectations of propriety and their sexual desire speak to their social and sexual anxieties." Elizabeth Vibert, *Trader's Tales: Narratives of Encounter in the Columbia Plateau, 1807-1846* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 250. However, historian Thomas Laqueur notes that "in traditional church teaching fornication was thought far worse than onanism," but "in the post-eighteenth century world the 'crime of solitude' was thought to 'undermine the constitution and poison the mind ten times more than illicit commerce with a woman.'" This notion of sexual health may have informed the decision among many Christian - even pious - Euro-American traders to take a native woman as a wife. Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 228.

⁸⁰ In early modern Europe those qualities that earned a woman praise were those qualities that clearly distinguished her from a man and limited her participation in the public sphere. Michael C. Schoenfeldt, "Gender

Anxieties associated with such an inversion were abundant in Thompson's Europe. Historian Stuart Clark writes that in early modern period "women complemented men in inferiority and defined them by their difference." He goes on to suggest that "all the main images of the 'evil' woman...derived from her supposed aim to overturn the natural order of things and end up on top. Women who challenged patriarchal rule or were willful and domineering ('shrews,' 'Amazons');...women who sought sexual superiority or behaved like men ('whores,' seductresses, viragos) - these were the stereotypes of disorderly and criminal females."⁸¹ Not only was Thompson raised in this doxa, the image of the "inverted" female was present in books he actually read. If he was at all familiar with the concept of the harem in the *Arabian Nights* (which we have every reason to believe he was) than he would also have been familiar with how it served as a "hedonistic space where male desire put women in control" thus inverting the power differential between genders.⁸² Although not specifically referenced in his narrative, it also is possible Thompson was familiar with the theology of John Milton. His holiday strolls would have taken him past Milton's former home in a time when the poet's achievements were being celebrated by the larger public.⁸³ Moreover, as a voracious reader, Thompson may have accessed some of his works either for leisure or even as part the Grey Coat's curriculum.⁸⁴ If he did, he would have been familiar with Milton's famous Dalila in

and Conduct in *Paradise Lost*," in *Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Europe: Institutions, Texts, Images*, ed. James Grantham Turner (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 312.

⁸¹ Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 130-131.

⁸² Susan Nance, *How the Arabian Nights Inspired the American Dream, 1790-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 171.

⁸³ Nisbet, *The Mapmaker's Eye*, 3.

⁸⁴ To speculate that Thompson, or any Euro-American fur trader for that matter, read Milton is not outlandish. According to historian Bruce McIntyre Watson, Fort Babine in the early 1820s housed at least one copy of *Paradise Lost* in its library. Bruce McIntyre Watson, *Lives Lived West of the Divide: A Biographical Dictionary*

Samson Agonistes (1671), who is depicted as "not only a treacherous wife but also a 'pois'nous bosom snake' - an alluring source of fatal succor and, as such, a deadly...seductress who robs Samson of his manhood and his Nazarite election."⁸⁵

In the winter of 1807-1808, Thompson regulated Kauxuma-nupika's conduct (or more specifically her body) using many of these theological tropes. Images of witches, harems, seductresses, and Dalilas circulated in the neurological processes of his brain, providing a blueprint for her construction as equally "inverted" and therefore equally antithetical to his own Anglican convictions. This is to say that Thompson viewed Kauxuma-nupika's "loose" behavior as threatening insofar as it directly contradicted theologically-driven notions of European femininity, defined by biblical patterns of modesty, chastity, and submission to male authority - all signs of high moral repute. Such discursive maneuvering allowed Thompson to deny Kauxuma-nupika (who must have found little value in exhibiting such foreign traits) any semblance of moral "wealth" and did so in the same way he would deny native traders at Kootenae House the wealth produced by certain European goods if the pelts offered were not up to the standards of European fashion.⁸⁶ In other words, Thompson used imported theologies to

of Fur Traders Working West of the Rockies, 1793-1858 (Kelowna, B.C.: Centre for Social, Spatial and Economic Justice, 2010), 1155.

⁸⁵ Rachel Trubowitz, "'I was his Nursling Once': Nation, Lactation, and the Hebraic in *Samson Agonistes*," in *Milton and Gender*, ed. Catherine Gimelli Martin (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 175. Although some scholars have begun to challenge claims of the negative view of women, the general consensus among Miltonists is that the poet maintain many of the popular sentiments of early modern Europe. Literary scholar Catherine Gimelli Martin points to a recent edition of Milton's work that includes an illustration depicting the biblical character of Dalila "beneath Chrysostom's Latin motto, FOEMINA DIABOLO TRIBVS ASSIBUS EST MALA PEIOR, or, 'A bad woman is worse than the devil by a small coin.'" Catherine Gimelli Martin, "Dalila, Misogyny, and Milton's Christian Liberty of Divorce," in *Milton and Gender*, ed. Catherine Gimelli Martin (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 58.

⁸⁶ Thompson may have viewed Kauxuma-nupika as a threat to the moral fabric of the trading post at large. This was particularly disconcerting for the seasoned trader whose wife and children were visiting the House for the winter. It is also important to note that for Thompson it was not only the conduct of Kauxuma-nupika that threatened the morality of the post. He was not fond of Kutenai gambling, calling it a "cursed vice." In his journal he grumbled about it often during the winter months. Nisbet, *The Mapmaker's Eye*, 49.

critique the "quality" of her body just as he would use his knowledge of furs to critique the quality of an animal body before dispensing any commodified good.⁸⁷ Drawing this linkage, it makes sense that Thompson not only could collapse human and animal bodies into a single artifact, but to a large extent, succeed in collapsing the economies represented by these bodies into a single method of exchange. Religious and fur trade transactions became in his regulatory scheme indistinguishable socio-cultural processes.

Kauxuma-nupika's story does not end with her banishment from Kootenae House. Quite the opposite is true. Her removal from the post marked the beginning of another phase in her life - one much more illustrative than the first. In fact, her story as "Kauxuma-nupika" did not officially begin until her journey beyond Kootenae.

Beyond Kootenae: Fur Traders, Spiritual Empowerment, and the Commodification of the Masculine

Kauxuma-nupika's departure from Kootenae House must have been difficult. Although Thompson indicated in his journal that the weather was unusually mild that winter, the walk back to her home village would have been anything but pleasant. Besides the physical hardship, the thought of how she would be received by her kin may also have weighed heavily on her mind. After all, the last time she saw them (over a year prior) she was helping to forge an important

⁸⁷ To be clear, Thompson was not the first to make such a rhetorical move. Depicting and treating native bodies as "animal-like" has a long history in European discourse. For some insightful discussions on this topic see Karen Ordahl Kupperman, ed., *America in European Consciousness, 1493-1750* (Chapel Hill, NC: University North Carolina Press, 1995).; James Axtell, *Beyond 1492: Encounters in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).; Ramon Gutierrez, *When Jesus Came the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991). It is also important to mention that some traders in the region resisted the devaluing of native bodies. John Work was quoted as saying that "'God knows that I speak the conviction of my mind, and may he forgive me if I speak unadvisedly, when I state my belief, that the life of an Indian was never yet by a trapper put in competition with a beaver skin.'" Johnson, *Flathead and Kootenay*, 222.

trade relationship that had since become defunct.⁸⁸

Upon her arrival Kauxuma-nupika gave a startling announcement. According to oral tradition, she told her relatives that the white fur traders at Kootenae House changed her gender and with it came an endowment of spiritual power.⁸⁹ She also told them that the traders possessed a significant amount of spiritual power themselves, so much so that they were able to alter not only her gender but also her sex, going so far as to suggest she had been transformed anatomically into a male.⁹⁰ Among other things, the declaration marked the beginning of her life as "Kauxuma-nupika," for after her announcement she apparently changed from her birth-name, Ququnok-patke, to this more familiar moniker.⁹¹ A common translation of "Kauxuma-nupika" is "Gone to the Spirits." However, the term "nupika" or "nupeeka" carries a much broader meaning. It is similar to the Algonquin term "manitou" or the Pacific Islander concept of "mana," meaning a non-anthropomorphised notion of spiritual power that animates the physical environment.⁹² A more accurate translation of "Kauxuma-nupika" would be "Accessed the

⁸⁸ Schaeffer, "The Kutenai Female Berdache," 195.

⁸⁹ The oral tradition surrounding Kauxuma-nupika's gender transformation and spiritual empowerment is by no means definitive, nor can we simply discard it as entirely erroneous. We do know from the writings of Thompson that "she [Kauxuma-nupika] became a prophetess, declared her sex changed...and armed herself as such, and also took a young woman as Wife." Tyrrell, *David Thompson's Narrative*, 512-513. While the Kutenai oral record includes certain details not mentioned by Thompson, it does not depart from his general timeline. The timing of Kauxuma-nupika's announcement is also worth noting. It was typically during the winter months when many tribes, including the Kutenai, reconnected with the spirits/ancestors through ritual performances such as dances and other scripted ceremonies. Johnson, *Flathead and Kootenay*, 124.

⁹⁰ Schaeffer, "The Kutenai Female Berdache," 196-7.

⁹¹ Ibid., 197. Indeed, it was not uncommon for Kutenai to change names periodically throughout their life. As anthropologist Harry Turney-High comments, "A Shaman could suggest a new name should the person continue in misfortune or illness, or a person could change his [or her] name at any time should he [or she] feel it was unfortunate. He [or she] had to ask no one's permission. All he [or she] had to do was to announce his [or her] intentions." Harry Holbert Turney-High, "Ethnography of the Kutenai," in *Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association* 56 (Millwood, NY: Kraus Reprint, 1974), 116.

⁹² Paul E. Baker, *The Forgotten Kutenai: A Study of the Kutenai Indians, Bonners Ferry, Idaho, Creston, British Columbia, Canada, and Other Areas in British Columbia where the Kutenai are Located* (Boise: Mountain States Press, 1955), 11.

Sacred Power."

One way in which an individual could access "nupika" was through the spirits or guardians who played, and continue to play, a vital role in the Kutenai cosmology.⁹³ Even at an early age, boys and girls participated in spirit quests, in which they would voluntarily remove themselves from the larger community and, while in solitude, acquire a guardian spirit through a visionary experience.⁹⁴ Upon reaggregation, the youth was expected to keep the experience secret lest he or she offend the spirit and it renounce its guardianship, as well as any nupika it bestowed.⁹⁵ Attracting a spirit or guardian, at least initially, required the proper disposition. As with many Plateau tribes, the Kutenai believed that the "powerful were expected to help the powerless."⁹⁶ Not only did this dynamic form the core of reciprocal economics whereby the "the rich [in Kutenai society] were supposed to suffer in internal trade" as a "point of honor," but it also governed the relationship between humans and the spirits.⁹⁷ To some extent, a powerless disposition became a means through which Kutenai boys and girls, men and women, gained access to greater levels of nupika. Spirits were expected to take pity and award the downtrodden various amounts of nupika in the same way a wealthy member of the community was expected to take pity and redistribute their material wealth to those less fortunate. Drawing on these

⁹³ Ibid.; Turney-High, "Ethnography of the Kutenai," 170. According to anthropologist Carling Malouf, "The original spirits who created things, and who preceded men in the world, possessed this power and gave it to mankind." Baker, *The Forgotten Kutenai*, 11.

⁹⁴ In the words of Turney-High, "a child is sent to the hills to seek a guardian 'as soon as he [or in some cases she] can understand,' preferably at the age of seven, but occasionally not until adolescence." Turney-High, "Ethnography of the Kutenai," 170.

⁹⁵ Baker, *The Forgotten Kutenai*, 13.

⁹⁶ Larry Cebula, *Plateau Indians and the Quest for Spiritual Power, 1700-1850* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 13.

⁹⁷ Turney-High, "Ethnography of the Kutenai," 195.

parallels, the Kutenai vision quest served as an overt economic exercise patterned on the same processes of exchange and power differentials associated with the reallocation of material goods among members of the community.⁹⁸

Kauxuma-nupika validated her claim to spiritual empowerment, not through the economics of the vision quest, but through her gender transformation. Native American history is rife with examples of individuals transcending the boundary between male and female. While it is important to heed Jean-Guy Goulet's warning and not read too much into the ethnographic or ethnohistorical record when attempting to locate gender variability among female members of native communities, it does not mean they were merely a figment of the Euro-American imagination.⁹⁹ Indeed, female "berdaches" (known by certain anthropologists as the "fourth gender") were prevalent in certain societies, even found among various native communities in the Pacific Northwest.¹⁰⁰ Some speculate that female "berdaches" tended to emerge from families with an over abundance of daughters where the father would teach one to hunt and carry on the duties of a son.¹⁰¹ In this scenario, if a female was taught the duties typically assigned to a man, then once she reached marrying age (just after puberty) she would be unable to marry due to her lack of training in the duties typically assigned to a woman. However, to avoid being a

⁹⁸ According to Turney-High's modern informants, the Kutenai never participated in potlatch redistribution, although asymmetrical gift exchange (where the value of the gifts exchanged were not equivalent) was typical and even expected. Ibid.

⁹⁹ Jean-Guy A. Goulet, "The Northern Athapaskan "Berdache Reconsidered: On Reading More than there is in the Ethnographic Record," in *Two Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality*, eds. Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Wesley Thomas, and Sabine Lang (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 46-68.

¹⁰⁰ Female gender variability among certain native communities was just as common as male gender variability. However, scholars have only begun to discuss the former. Evelyn Blackwood, "Sexuality and Gender in Certain Native American Tribes: The Case of Cross-Gender Females," *Signs* 10, no. 11 (1984): 29.

¹⁰¹ Walter L. Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture* (Boston: Beacon, 1986), 235.

burden on her parents she could enter the marriage market as a male.¹⁰² In some situations, village leadership banned transgendering females from fully "crossing over" unless they could somehow demonstrate their "deficiencies" as a female, especially in the areas of menstruation and reproduction.¹⁰³ Moreover, female transgendering tended to occur in native societies that adhered to an "egalitarian mode of production in precolonial times," or those communities where "neither women nor men had an inferior role but rather had power in those spheres of activity specific to their sex."¹⁰⁴ In situations where this egalitarianism extended to the kinship system, "a daughter's marriage was not essential for maintenance of family rank; that is, a woman's family did not lose wealth if she abandoned her role as daughter."¹⁰⁵ Thus, it was feasible for a female in this type of setting to participate in gender variability without fear of economic reprisal.

In the Spring of 1808, Kauxuma-nupika exhibited her gender transformation in several ways. Like female "berdaches" in other locales, the young "Manlike Woman," soon after her announcement, began donning the customary attire of a male, which among the Kutenai included a shirt, a breach cloth, leggings, and moccasins.¹⁰⁶ She also pursued female companionship and even marriage. However, as Kutenai oral tradition suggests, all of the eligible maidens in her village rejected her proposals.¹⁰⁷ Her frustration reached a climax when she threatened to kill,

¹⁰² Blackwood, "Sexuality and Gender," 30.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 31-32. Little historical data exists to fully support this claim. However, in a number of oral traditions female "berdaches" are said to have never menstruated. Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh*, 234.

¹⁰⁴ Blackwood, "Sexuality and Gender," 28, 32.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 34.

¹⁰⁶ Schaeffer, "The Kutenai Female Berdache," 197.; Turney-High, "Ethnography of the Kutenai," 90.

¹⁰⁷ Schaeffer, "The Kutenai Female Berdache," 197. Schaeffer, relying on the stories of his modern Kutenai informants, recounts one particular marriage proposal gone awry. He writes, "News that the berdache wished to marry a certain young girl was spread about but the one selected refused to believe it. Following the

any unmarried Kutenai woman who refused her advances, using her newly acquired spiritual power.¹⁰⁸ In spite of these threats, Kauxuma-nupika finally found a divorcee who enjoyed her company and the two became inseparable, living together as husband and wife.¹⁰⁹ According to Schaeffer's informants, she wanted desperately to please her female companion, going so far as to fashion a leather phallus, which also may have been used to deceive her partner into thinking she had male genitalia. As tradition holds, this tactic was unsuccessful and the divorcee sought the company of a male in the community to satisfy her sexual needs.¹¹⁰ When Kauxuma-nupika discovered the betrayal she beat her severely, something she is said to have done with several lovers.¹¹¹ Nevertheless, what angered her partner the most was Kauxuma-nupika's gambling habit. According to most early Euro-American accounts, gambling was a common form of recreation for Kutenai males, who took it quite seriously to the extent that losses were sometimes significant.¹¹² Oral records suggest that Kauxuma-nupika's gambling losses infuriated her companion so much that she packed her belongings and returned to her own kin.¹¹³ In the end,

Kutenai custom, the berdache went into the girl's lodge and lay down beside her. The girl, now thoroughly frightened, found courage to run outdoors and hide in a relative's lodge. [Kauxuma-nupika] emerging sleepily next morning, walked too close to the edge of a nearby embankment, stumbled, and fell to the bottom. There she was seen rubbing her arm and attempting to conceal herself under a robe. Soon the entire camp became aware of the incident." Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ In most Native American communities where female gender variability was permissible, the female partner of the transgendered female was typically viewed as a female heterosexual who could, if the marriage ended in divorce, marry a heterosexual or non-transgendered male. Evelyn Blackwood, "Sexuality and Gender," 35.

¹¹¹ Schaeffer, "The Kutenai Female Berdache," 198. Indeed, Kauxuma-nupika was said to have had multiple female partners throughout her life. Sabine Lang, *Men as Women, Women as Men: Changing Gender in Native American Cultures* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 293. Also, According to Turney-High, if a Kutenai woman is caught in an extra-marital relationship, the offended party can punish the adulterer through abuse, short of death. Turney-High, "Ethnography of the Kutenai," 128-129.

¹¹² Baker, *The Forgotten Kutenai*, 52-53.

¹¹³ Schaeffer, "The Kutenai Female Berdache," 198.

navigating Kauxuma-nupika's gender variability while among her own people demands attention to her body. After all, she validated her "maleness" (and thus her spiritual empowerment) through what she did to her body and what she did with her body.

Regardless of what Kauxuma-nupika did to demonstrate her gender transformation, her Kutenai kin were said to have not believed her, nor did they approve.¹¹⁴ According to tradition, the "Manlike Woman" sought to verify her change in gender and subsequent acquisition of spiritual power by performing a dance for skeptics, although in most tribes there was no official ceremony used to mark the gender variability of a female-sexed person.¹¹⁵ In many cases, individuals appealed to the supernatural as a way of legitimating such a transformation.¹¹⁶

Visions or dreams in which a spiritual entity persuaded a person to alter their gender were a

¹¹⁴ Schaeffer cites an important story about Kauxuma-nupika found in Kutenai oral tradition: "Upon coming to a stream, the raiders would wade across together but the berdache always hung back so as to cross alone...Her brother, puzzled by this behavior,...decided to ford and then return to observe his sister. Pretending to use his knife to cut off a new thong for his moccasin, he dropped it as if by accident and started across the creek. Here the water was well below his waist. Crouching low, he turned and ran back, coming upon his sister in the middle of the stream. She was nude, and he verified his suspicion that her sex had not been changed. She, in turn, saw him and crouched down in the water, pretending that her foot was caught between two rocks. She realized that her brother was aware of her true condition. The brother picked up his knife and retraced his steps without comment. Soon his sister caught up, complaining of her twisted ankle." According to oral tradition, Kauxuma-nupika changed her name to qanqon-kamek-klaula, which roughly translates as "sitting-in-the-water-Grizzly. Ibid., 199-200. Grizzly Bear is an important spirit the Kutenai cosmology. According Turney-High, the "Bear...tells his people how find...food. He is an especially beloved spirit insofar as he tells his people how to keep out of trouble." Turney-High, "Ethnography of the Kutenai," 184. There is a story in Kutenai oral tradition that describes Grizzly Bear being pursued by Coyote (a trickster figure) and during the chase stumbles across a river in an embarrassing fashion. Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz, eds., *American Indian Trickster Tales* (New York: Viking, 1998), 27-8. It is possible that Kauxuma-nupika's name change following the embarrassing "river incident" (if the episode actually occurred) was intended to echo this story or vice versa.

¹¹⁵ Schaeffer, "The Kutenai Female Berdache," 197.; Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh*, 234. Ethnohistorian Sabine Lang substantiates these claims by noting that there was or are no institutionalized gender change from female to male among the Kutenai. Kauxuma-nupika was an aberration, not the norm. Lang, *Men as Women, Women as Men*, 265, 298. Blackwood goes so far as to suggest that "the Kutenai denied the existence of cross-gender females among them...and yet willingly claimed that such women lived among the Flathead and Blackfoot." Blackwood, "Sexuality and Gender," 38. The Kutenai, however, did use the ritual medium of dance to demonstrate spiritual power. The Upper Kutenai, for example, performed the Sun Dance, but without the self-mutilation that accompanied the Dance among Plains tribes. Ruby, Brown, and Collins, *A Guide*, 155.

¹¹⁶ Lang, *Men as Women, Women as Men*, 301.

common occurrence for both male and female "berdaches."¹¹⁷ However, this was unheard of among the Kutenai.¹¹⁸ Hence the reason why many of Kauxuma-nupika's kin assumed she was mad and ridiculed her incessantly.¹¹⁹ At the same time, the reasons for their disapproval may have been more pragmatic than cultural. As Plains and Northwest communities experienced depopulation as a result from colonial epidemics, maximizing female reproduction became critical. Whether or not the Kutenai were experiencing a bout of smallpox or yellow fever at the time of Kauxuma-nupika's announcement is uncertain. However, if they were, it would go a long way in explaining their censure.¹²⁰ Furthermore, it is possible that the Kutenai were displeased with Kauxuma-nupika, not over her gender variability or even claims of spiritual empowerment, but over her "loose" conduct at Kootenae House, considering such behavior resulted in the termination of a key kinship network meant to ensure healthy trade relations between themselves and the newly arrived Northwesters. Regardless of why her relatives disapproved, their displeasure must have been intense enough to cause Kauxuma-nupika to leave the security and safety of her local community and travel to more unpredictable and hostile territories.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Blackwood, "Sexuality and Gender," 30. At the same time, for many Plateau communities visions or dreams served as a useful economic tool. As Thompson writes, "Dreams are very useful for making bargains, exchanging, and buying horses, making marriages, and giving advice, which in any other manner would not be taken." Tyrrell, *David Thompson's Narrative*, 366.

¹¹⁸ According to Kutenai oral tradition, one could gain spiritual power in other ways - through dreams or other encounters with the spirit realm - but gender variability was or is not viewed as one of those ways. Baker, *The Forgotten Kutenai*, 13. Furthermore, the Kutenai did or do believe that spiritual power was not constant, but can increase and decrease throughout a person's life, including the life of a female. Turney-High, "Ethnography of the Kutenai," 170.

¹¹⁹ Kutenai leaders often used "precept and ridicule" to regulate behavior so as to preserve political power and social stability. *Ibid.*, 154.

¹²⁰ Blackwood, "Sexuality and Gender," 39-40.

¹²¹ Tyrrell, *David Thompson's Narrative*, 512.

Ironically, Euro-American traders may have been more "comfortable" with Kauxuma-nupika's gender variability than her fellow Kutenai.¹²² Changing one's biological sex from female to male was not entirely unheard of in early modern Europe. Occasionally, there would emerge accounts of pubescent girls engaging in movement excessive enough to "break the interior-exterior barrier and produce on a 'woman' the marks of a 'man.'"¹²³ In fact, "women playing , or becoming, men [was] a dominant trope" in many legal cases.¹²⁴ It also appeared in popular travel literature. In his famous *Travel Journal* French writer Michel de Montaigne recounted a woman in Vitry who dressed in men's clothing and assumed the role of a man, going so far as to marry a local woman and live with her without incident. Nevertheless, after several months had passed, a traveler happened to recognize the husband as a girl from back home and he/she was soon condemned to death.¹²⁵ A woman who "masquerades" as a man only to be discovered by an individual who knew her prior to her transformation had become by the eighteenth century at least a familiar theme in European literature. Thus, Kauxuma-nupika's claim of having experienced a similar change in gender would not have been entirely foreign to many Euro-American traders, especially one as well-read as Thompson.

Moreover, Euro-Americans in the region seem to have recognized the kind of masculinity she evoked. When she arrived in Astoria in 1811, traders such as Alexander Ross and Gabriel

¹²² It is interesting if we juxtapose this claim with much of the historiography on native "berdaches" that depict Euro-American colonials as shocked and appalled at their "deviant" lifestyle. See Ramon Gutierrez *When Jesus Came the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991).; and Richard Trexler's *Sex and Conquest: Gendered Violence, Political Order, and the European Conquest of the Americas* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).

¹²³ Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 127.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 137.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 139.

Franchere assumed Kauxuma-nupika was a man accompanied by his wife.¹²⁶ Thompson himself did not recognize the "Manlike Woman" even though he spent a considerable amount of time with her at Kootenae House and for almost an entire week within the close confines of the Astoria palisades. It was only after she revealed herself to him during their trip upriver that he became aware she was not male-sexed.¹²⁷ Most Euro-American traders who crossed her path just assumed, based on her performance of recognizable patterns of masculinity, she had the genitalia of a man. Although we cannot be too quick to "masculinize" Kauxuma-nupika's gender variability, the fact she convinced Euro-American traders she was a biological male, coupled with the lack of recognition from her fellow Kutenai, might suggest she patterned her behavior on European modes of masculinity.¹²⁸

This is not surprising considering the circumstances. Through her marriage to Boisverd, Kauxuma-nupika may have become detached from familiar cultural arrangements only to be introduced to new ideas of gender distinctiveness.¹²⁹ In the context of Kootenae House she

¹²⁶ And Ross even had a keen eye for the physical features of native women. In his description of Chinookan clothing, he commented that the women "wear a kind of fringed petticoat suspended from the waist down to the knees, made of the inner rind of the cedar bark, and twisted into threads which hang loose like a weaver's thrums and keep flapping and twisting about with every motion of the body... The garment might deserve praise for its simplicity, or rather its oddity, but does not screen nature from the prying eye... In a calm the sails lie close to the mast, metaphorically speaking, but when the wind blows the bare poles are seen." Alexander Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers on the Oregon or Columbia River: Being a Narrative of the Expedition Fitted out by John Jacob Astor to Establish the "Pacific Fur Company"; With an Account of some Indian Tribes on the Coast of the Pacific* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1849), 99.

¹²⁷ Tyrrell, *David Thompson's Narrative*, 512.

¹²⁸ Sue-Ellen Jacobs, "Is the 'North American Berdache' Merely a Phantom in the Imagination of Western Social Scientists?" in *Two Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality*, eds. Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Wesley Thomas, and Sabine Lang (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 31.

¹²⁹ Possible proof lies in Kauxuma-nupika's later identity as warrior and raider. Schaeffer writes that "The masculine ideal among the Kutenai, certainly the Lower Kutenai, was less the stealthy raider or the bold warrior than the skilled hunter, capable of providing game and fish for his family in a forested region of rather limited resources." Schaeffer, "The Kutenai Female Berdache," 198. It is quite possible, then, to interpret Kauxuma-nupika's decision to demonstrate her masculinity through warfare and raiding as evidence that the kind of masculinity to which she subscribed was more Euro-American than Kutenai. Also, it bears mentioning that nowhere in the written historical record does it refer to Kauxuma-nupika ever hunting or fishing.

would have encountered European conceptualizations of masculinity, and in light of the prejudices associated with these conceptualizations, such masculine performance would have retained at least a level of commodification. Moreover, common discourses on the masculine ideal linked it to a strong spiritual and moral constitution in contradistinction to the accusations of spiritual and moral weakness which so often accompanied popular European views of femininity.

It was within this discursive setting where Kauxuma-nupika emerged as a "masculinized" figure. It is possible that in response to her ill-treatment as a "constructed inversion" she consumed European modes of masculinity so as to acquire a persona deemed more "respectable" and, in so doing, reengage the power relationships in which she labored as a native female.¹³⁰ It is also possible that she tied her consumption of fur trade masculinity to the pursuit of spiritual empowerment. Kauxuma-nupika may have considered her "maleness" to be an asset which, based on her limited understanding of the European discourses circulating at the trading post, could be put to use in acquiring not only respectability within fur trade networks, but the commodity of spiritual fortitude in general. It seems possible that Kauxuma-nupika's masculinity represented the product of a *quid pro quo*. She provided traders such as Thompson with a foil constructed through European discourses on gender and sexuality and in turn may have consumed and ultimately performed these very same discourses for her own social and religious ends.

In addition, Kauxuma-nupika's narrative of gender variability forced a reconfiguration of her body. The spiritual empowerment she claimed to have received from the fur traders was

¹³⁰ Native females, through marriage, served an important role as cultural intermediaries and often facilitated exchanges between their white husbands and relatives. But it is also true that their white husbands often viewed them as subservient and treated them as such, at least to a point so as not to draw the ire of her kin.

made material through her gender transformation. In other words, Kauxuma-nupika's body, once again, becomes central to the conversation. However, instead of her body serving as the focal point for accusations of moral weakness, as in Thompson's account, her body in her own story became the centerpiece for legitimizing spiritual authority. However, it may not have been the only medium through which she attained legitimacy as a religious leader among her peers. She may have used another, equally material object to persuade those who remained skeptical.

The Letter: Correspondence, Trickery, and the Acquisition of Legitimacy

Following her departure from Kootenae House in late 1807 or early 1808, Kauxuma-nupika disappeared altogether from Euro-American accounts until her reappearance at Spokane House sometime in 1810. Aside from the various stories that have emerged from Kutenai oral tradition, we know very little of what happened to the "Manlike Woman" during the interim. What we do know is that upon her arrival at Spokane, she became an employee of the North West Company, charged with delivering a letter to an affiliated post in the far north.

Spokane House was built sometime in late 1810 (possibly the fall) as a central trading post for local indigenous groups such as the Salish, Sanpoil, and Spokane. In addition to its primary function as a place of profit, it also served as an important wintering residence for Northwesters along the Upper Columbia. Its position just southeast of the Columbia was a prime location for beaver and other game, but was not easily accessible due to the unnavigable quality of the Spokane River on which it sat. Despite such an inconvenience, Spokane House quickly developed into an important post for the North West Company and even survived as a trading house long after others either closed or transitioned into another type of settlement. The post remained in operation until the Spring of 1826 when the acting Governor of the HBC, George

Simpson, ordered its abandonment in favor of a new location to the north at a place called Kettle Falls; he renamed the post Fort Colville. Prior to its desertion, Spokane House had acquired a reputation as a pleasant establishment with many of the same comforts and luxuries found in the metropolitan centers of the East such as London or Montreal. For instance, trader Alexander Ross praised the post for its "handsome buildings,...ballroom,...[and] race-ground."¹³¹ He added that "no females in the land [were] so fair to look upon as the nymphs of Spokane. No damsels could dance so gracefully as they, none were so attractive."¹³²

Spokane House was established by a Scottish Northwester named Finan McDonald, whose accolades in the region have reached the status of Western lore. His physical stature was daunting. Trader Ross Cox observed his colleague to be "six foot four inches" and had "broad shoulders, large bushy whiskers, and red hair, which for some years had not felt the scissors, and which sometimes falling over his face and shoulders, gave a wild and uncouth appearance."¹³³ Reportedly, the red-bearded leviathan loved to fight. He often accompanied Salish and Flathead hunting parties east across the Divide into Piegan territory where he more than once took part in a skirmish. As Cox noted his "eminent bravery" in these battles "endeared him to the whole tribe, and in all matters relating to warfare his word was...law."¹³⁴ While he "escaped harmless" in many of these conflicts, McDonald was eventually brought down by the "enemy's balls" but

¹³¹ Alexander Ross, *The Fur Hunters of the Far West: A Narrative of Adventures in the Oregon and Rocky Mountains*, vol. 1 (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1855), 127.

¹³² Ibid. Despite his praises, Ross did criticize the post for being "the most unsuitable place for concentrating the different branches of the trade." Ibid., 125.

¹³³ J. A. Meyers, "Finan McDonald: Explorer, Fur Trader, and Legislator," *Washington Historical Quarterly* 13, no. 3 (1922): 196.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

was saved by his comrades leaving only the "traces of...violence on his bold and manly front."¹³⁵

Beyond his exploits in war, the good natured-Scotsman was one of David Thompson's most trusted employees. When the time came in 1810 to build another post safely out of reach of Piegan war parties, Thompson chose McDonald, along with another worker by the name of Jacques Raphael ("Jaco") Finlay, to oversee its construction and overall operations.¹³⁶ The two clerks gladly accepted the commission and Spokane House was born.¹³⁷

The post received numerous visitors. Despite its inaccessibility by river, the House's central location amid various eastern Plateau tribes quickly made it a key site for exchange. Among its many guests was Kauxuma-nupika who by this time was beginning to assume the duties of a prophetic figure throughout the Upper Columbia. We do not know for sure when she and her female companion first met McDonald. According to Thompson's journal a Kutenai man and his wife visited the Scotsman in the winter of 1809 when he was stationed near Kootenai Falls, but we have no way of verifying if this was the same couple.¹³⁸ Regardless of when the two first met, their encounter at Spokane House proved to be a pivotal moment in the life of Kauxuma-nupika. With the exchange of a single document, she became a courier in the fur trade and her nascent career as a prophetess gained further momentum.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ Ibid., 197.

¹³⁶ While at Salish House McDonald joined a Salish hunting party on the Plains who ran into hostile Piegans. A battle ensued that outraged the Piegans who then put up a blockade to prevent the trade of firearms west of the Divide. Thompson, fearful of Piegan aggression, had McDonald move the trading post further west (slightly Southwest) to where Jaco Finlay and his family were among the Spokane. Nisbet, *The Mapmaker's Eye*, 97.

¹³⁷ Even as late as 1822, McDonald was in charge of Spokane House (now under HBC control). In his final year of service he was promoted from clerk to partner.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 69. Kootenai Falls was a little northeast from where Spokane House would be a year and half later. Kauxuma-nupika and her female companion often surfaced in fur trade narratives through the description, "Kutenai man and wife."

¹³⁹ Such employment was actually quite common. Ross recalled that "they [natives] appreciated the confidence placed in them...A Columbia Indian was always ready to start in the capacity of courier for the boon of a

Specifically, she was tasked with delivering a letter from McDonald to a fellow Northwester named John Stuart (of no immediate relation to the partner David Stuart and his hot-tempered nephew Robert Stuart of the Pacific Fur Company) who operated Estekatadene House on the Fraser River in New Caledonia, what is now northern British Columbia.¹⁴⁰ Although the details of the assignment are uncertain, McDonald probably instructed her to descend the Spokane River to the Columbia and then ascend the Okanogan and Fraser Rivers northward to Stuart's post. If these were the orders, Kauxuma-nupika did not follow them. Instead of leaving the Columbia to ascend the Okanogan, she and her partner followed the Columbia to its end, the Pacific Ocean, where they encountered the newly-arrived Astorians and their budding settlement on the coast.

Kauxuma-nupika's "miscalculation" may have mattered little. Some historians such as David Lavender argue that the letter likely was bogus and that McDonald probably used the fabricated correspondence to relieve himself of Kauxuma-nupika's presence just as his boss did three years prior at Kootenae House.¹⁴¹ Although we do not have any written record of their relationship, it is possible McDonald recognized the "Manlike Woman" as the former wife of Boisverd, remembered the conditions of her previous dismissal, and wanted to avoid any such "scandal" at his own facility. He certainly had reason to minimize his stress. His first child, Eleanor, was born at Bonner's Ferry to him and his wife (part Pend d'Oreille and Spokane) in June of 1811. That places Kauxuma-nupika and her partner around McDonald during the third

few strings of beads, or a few shots of ammunition." Ross, *The Fur Hunters of the Far West*, 147.

¹⁴⁰ David Lavender, *The Fist in the Wilderness* (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 138. See also Gabriel Franchere, *Adventure at Astoria, 1810-1814*, ed. Hoyt C. Franchere (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), 53.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 143.

trimester of the pregnancy, an anxious time for any expecting father.¹⁴²

Although compelling, the idea that McDonald's letter was nothing more than a ruse does not necessarily correspond with other trader writings. When Kauxuma-nupika and her partner arrived at Astoria in the summer of 1811, Franchere had a close enough look at the letter to quote from it in his narrative. Surely, if the letter was fake he would have noticed and commented on such machinations in the text. Moreover, John Franklin, when traveling in what is now Upper British Columbia, was informed by a man named "Mr. Stewart" (likely John Stuart) that the revitalization movements among local indigenes was in large part due to the prophecies of a "Manlike Woman" who traveled throughout the region years prior.¹⁴³ He later noted that the Kutenai prophetess "undertook to convey a packet of importance from the Company's Post on the Columbia to that in New Caledonia, through a tract of country...infested by several hostile tribes."¹⁴⁴ Although the pair encountered some resistance - Kauxuma-nupika supposedly received a wound in her breast - Franklin verified that "she accomplished her object, and returned to the Columbia with answers to the letters."¹⁴⁵ One of two options is correct: either the letter was a ruse and Franklin had been misinformed or Franklin's account is accurate and the letter was genuine fur trade correspondence.

Ironically, the authenticity of the letter may have been entirely irrelevant to Kauxuma-nupika. In fact, it is quite possible, based on McDonald's body language and general tone

¹⁴² Johnson, *Flathead and Kootenay*, 202. David Thompson arrived at the Spokane House on his way to the mouth of the Columbia in the same month McDonald's daughter was born. This means that Thompson just missed Kauxuma-nupika. It is possible that McDonald sent her away intentionally, knowing it was the same woman Thompson had removed from the Kootenae house years prior. This way McDonald would avoid any needless confrontation, especially in such a time of celebration. *Ibid.*, 214.

¹⁴³ Franklin, *Narrative*, 305.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 306.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

(maybe one of irritation) that she knew the letter was a fake in the first place.¹⁴⁶ If Kauxuma-nupika did suspect trickery, then why did she agree to act as courier? The answer may lie in the letter itself. A piece of written script, such as fur trade correspondence, could have served as a way of augmenting her claims of prophetic authority, considering that the technology of writing remained for many indigenes of the interior Northwest a sign of spiritual power.¹⁴⁷ Ross observed that "a sheet of paper conveying [their] ideas to one another" could produce a confidence between natives and themselves, which "strength and weapons could scarcely bring about."¹⁴⁸ In his words, such written correspondence "imprinted on the superstitious minds of the savages a religious veneration for the superior endowments of the white man."¹⁴⁹ Kauxuma-nupika's possession of the artifact would have signaled that she had close ties to those who produced it and by proxy had a "superior endowment" herself. Indeed, Ross implied that she used the letter in this very capacity. He observed that "to effect their [Kauxuma-nupika and her partner] purpose [spreading their prophetic message] the better, [Kauxuma-nupika] showed the Indians an old letter, which they made a handle of."¹⁵⁰ Whether or not the letter was authentic mattered little in light of its ability to communicate the authenticity of its carrier.

Kauxuma-nupika's encounter with the Astorians further supports this use of the letter.

¹⁴⁶ While it is certainly possible that Kauxuma-nupika was unaware of such a plot - if there was one to begin with - such a claim runs the risk of reducing her to nothing more than a "naive savage" instead of the shrewd, confident, discerning actor that emerges from the historical record.

¹⁴⁷ Indigenous Plateau views of the sacred as permeating the natural world gave credence to the notion that material objects, including a written script, could be imbued with spiritual power. For more information see Albert Furtwangler, *Bringing Indians to the Book* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005).

¹⁴⁸ Ross, *The Fur Hunters of the Far West*, 147.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, 157. Unless, she had access to other pieces of fur trade correspondence, which is unlikely considering this was the only letter we know she physically handled, the correspondence she exhibited to native communities along the Columbia as a technology used to substantiate her spiritual authority was the McDonald letter.

Through their broken conversation, Franchere learned "they had been sent by a Mr. Finan McDonald, a clerk in the service of the North West Company, who had a post on a river they called Spokane."¹⁵¹ Evidently, the pair had lost their way and "followed the course of the Tacoutche-Tesse (the Indian name for the Columbia River), and when they arrived at the Falls the natives made them understand that there were white men at the river's mouth."¹⁵² Kauxuma-nupika "believed that the person to whom the letter was addressed would be found there, and had come to deliver it."¹⁵³ Whether or not the new prophetess and her companion had become disoriented is certainly worth pondering. We do not know how much prior knowledge she had of the lower Columbia and its surrounding territories, but we do know that two older Kutenai men provided a map for Thompson at the Kootenae House in 1807 of a route from the Kootenai River to the Columbia and onto the Pacific.¹⁵⁴ It is certainly possible that Kauxuma-nupika at least knew the Columbia was the main highway to the sea. If her "purpose," as Ross put it, was to disseminate her prophetic message to as many people as possible and as quickly as possible, then what better route of transportation to follow than to descend the Columbia to the coast. It might be that Kauxuma-nupika did not get lost on her way to deliver the letter but had from the beginning an alternative agenda.

It is also possible that Kauxuma-nupika's journey downriver may not have gone according to plan. Her prophecy of impending doom, coupled with her outsider status, produced a significant amount of resistance and even open hostility among those in her audience. However, her journey upriver, in the company of Astorians such as Ross, proved quite different.

¹⁵¹ Franchere, *Adventure at Astoria*, 53.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Schaeffer, "The Kutenai Female Berdache," 212.

She altered her message by prophesying future prosperity and had become, for some communities, a familiar face. It is not a coincidence that it also was during her ascension of the Columbia when Kauxuma-nupika had local natives "handle" the letter as a means of verifying her prophetic status.

Having procured a level of credibility in the minds her of patrons, she and her partner reaped the material benefits. They were given gifts of horses, robes, leather, and possibly even pelts, all of which were goods equally desired by the Euro-American traders accompanying them. With a tinge of envy, Ross commented on the "cordial reception" Kauxuma-nupika and her partner experienced from "the natives, who loaded them...with the most valuable articles they possessed."¹⁵⁵ Overall he counted "twenty-six horses, many of them loaded."¹⁵⁶

In the end, Kauxuma-nupika used the letter to operate on multiple economic levels. The social and religious capital it represented facilitated the production of prophetic legitimacy, while that same legitimacy, and the prophetic insight that was thought to accompany such legitimacy, served, through the reciprocal exchanges of Columbian natives, as a means of accessing some of the material goods coveted by Euro-Americans operating in the larger trade. In other words, through Kauxuma-nupika's use of the letter, indigenous religious exchange and the region's fur trade formed an tightly-woven bond that pivoted on the manufacturing and expenditure of spiritual authority.

The Spokane letter was noteworthy, but it was not the only way Kauxuma-nupika blended her religious and fur trade commitments. Her voyage down the Columbia landed her and her partner on the shores of the newly-established American post known as Astoria. Similar

¹⁵⁵ Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, 157-158.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

to Kootenae and Spokane Houses, it too became a site of shared economic activity in which Kauxuma-nupika played a central role.

**Astoria:
Prophetic Revision, Market Competition, and the Exchange of Knowledges**

John Jacob Astor was a wealthy man. He came to the United States in 1783 from his native Germany and began a "commercial career in the traffic of furs."¹⁵⁷ After experiencing considerable success, he formed the American Fur Company in 1809 and turned his sights to the "trade on the Pacific, or as Ross put it, "that new field lying west of the Rocky Mountains."¹⁵⁸ He established the Pacific Fur Company in 1810, a subsidiary of the American Fur Company, whose operations would focus exclusively on trade west of the Divide, which included not only the Pacific Slope but all of the markets of the Pacific World, the most profitable being China (or Canton). For the purpose of convenience and accessibility, Astor chose the mouth the Columbia as the headquarters for his new firm and employed several partners, as well as a number of clerks and voyageurs, to travel to the region by sea, construct the post, and initiate trade with local Indians.¹⁵⁹

On September 6, 1810 the newly-formed party, which included clerks Franchere and Ross, set sail for the Pacific Northwest aboard a 269-ton square-rigger named the *Tonquin*.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 4.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 5-6.

¹⁵⁹ Astor also sent a party by land that arrived in the Columbia much later.

¹⁶⁰ Historian James Ronda offers an excellent description of the vessel. He writes: "The first certificate of registration describes her as ninety four feet long, twenty-five feet wide, and twelve feet deep....The...hull was pierced for twenty-two guns, but she never carried more than ten, the remaining ports filled with dummy cannon. The *Tonquin's* speed was evident on her maiden voyage. After leaving New York on May 26, 1807, [the ship] headed for Canton. [It] made the entire China circuit in ten months, no record but surely some handy sailing." James P. Ronda, *Astoria and Empire* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 94-95.

They departed from New York harbor escorted (at least part of the way) by the American frigate, the *Constitution*, for fear that British naval vessels would attempt to commandeer the ship, its cargo, and crew. The captain of the *Tonquin* was a young American officer named Jonathan Thorn, a brave but brash man, who held much contempt for those aboard his ship who were not professional seamen, which included most, if not all, the Astorians.¹⁶¹ Conflict soon erupted between the captain and the partners, creating tension that would last the entire voyage.¹⁶² After stops in the Falkland and Sandwich Islands, the *Tonguin* finally reached the Columbia's estuary in March of 1811. After having lost several men attempting to cross the treacherous bar at the mouth of the river, the crew made landfall and without wasting much time set about building the Company's headquarters - a place dubbed Astoria in honor of its principal financier. Although the original plans for the settlement called for a stockade 360 feet long on each side, the lack of proper timber, coupled with routine sickness and injury, as well as the continual threat of native aggression, resulted in a significant reduction in the post's dimensions (roughly 1/6 as much area as the original blueprint had allowed).¹⁶³ By June the only building completed was a storehouse,

¹⁶¹ Ross referred to Thorn as "sullen" and "despotic." Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, 76. Franchere described him in a similar fashion: "He was precise and rigid in mind, with a quick and violent temper; he was accustomed to exact obedience, being obeyed at the smallest demand, and was concerned with duty only. He ignored the murmurs of his crew, taking counsel of no one." Franchere, *Adventure at Astoria*, 19.

¹⁶² The conflict was over sleeping arrangements and culminated in the captain threatening to "blow out the brains of the first man who dared disobey his orders on board his own ship," which included even the partners of the Pacific Fur Company. Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, 17-18.

¹⁶³ Lavender, *The Fist*, 138. Lavender details the hardships faced by Astorians in the early days of the settlement: "Slowly the Canadians and Sandwich Islanders cleared away the underbrush and planted a vegetable garden. They then attacked the enormous trees, some so big that four men could chop together at different parts of the same monster. The impact with which the giants fell killed two men. The gunpowder used to blast the stumps apart blew off another worker's hand. The curious, thievish Indians who lurked about dispatched three more. Men now and then deserted in the insane hope of reaching Spanish settlements to the South, but were apprehended by Indians and brought back for the sake of a small reward." Ibid. Although no definitive numbers exist, historians have speculated that about half of all Euro-American traders/trappers who journeyed in the Trans-Mississippi region disappeared. Johnson, *Flathead and Kootenay*, 221.

half of which the Astorians used as sleeping quarters.¹⁶⁴ Although crowded, the new structure still managed to host a number of native guests, most of whom were local Chinook led by a "friendly" yet "crafty" chief known as Comecomly (or Concomly).¹⁶⁵ In fact, he and "his people were the only Indians who...regularly traded with" the Astorians in the early days of the settlement. All the other neighboring communities were, in the words of Ross, "ill-disposed toward the whites."¹⁶⁶

On June 15th of that year, an incongruous pair - presumably a man and wife - interrupted the steady flow of Chinook visitors. Franchere was the first to mention them. In his journal he recorded that "some natives from up the river brought us two strange Indians, a man and a woman."¹⁶⁷ His use of the adjective "strange" was mostly a critique of their apparel - dress which the Astorians had not seen on any of the local natives.¹⁶⁸ He remarked that they "were not dressed like those in our neighborhood. They wore long robes of deerskin, trimmed in the fashion of the tribes to the east of the Rocky Mountains."¹⁶⁹ Based simply on their clothing, Franchere deduced that they were not from around the Pacific Coast, but from further inland, which proved propitious for the Astorian traders looking to compete with the North West Company by expanding their business up the Columbia. Duncan McDougall and the other Astorian leadership permitted the couple to stay at the post with hopes of obtaining information

¹⁶⁴ Franchere, *Adventure at Astoria*, 54.

¹⁶⁵ Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, 82.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁶⁷ Franchere, *Adventure at Astoria*, 53.

¹⁶⁸ Ross also used the adjective "strange" to refer to the pair. He wrote that "among the many visitors who every now and then presented themselves were two strange Indians, in the character of man and wife, from the vicinity of the Rocky Mountains." Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, 92.

¹⁶⁹ Franchere, *Adventure at Astoria*, 53.

about the landscape, resources, and tribes of the interior.¹⁷⁰ Such an offer suited the pair just fine.

Evidently the two needed protection from local Chinooks and Clatsops who wished them dead because of their prediction of impending disease and displacement.¹⁷¹ A month later, in late July, the couple's fear had yet to subside. As they were leaving the vicinity of Astoria the husband pleaded with David Thompson (whose party of Northwesters were escorting a party of Astorians upriver) for protection against local indigenes "some of [whom] threatened [the couple's] life."¹⁷² Like Franchere, Thompson mentioned that the "man" was "well-dressed in leather" and that the "young" wife was also in "good clothing."¹⁷³ In addition to their attire, Thompson noted that the "husband" was "carrying a Bow and Quiver of Arrows."¹⁷⁴ It was during their encounter with the Northwesters when the anonymous and mysterious couple were identified. Upon closer examination, Thompson recognized in the "husband" the former wife of Boisverd whom he had expelled from Kootenae House years prior for her "loose" conduct.¹⁷⁵ In other words, the "husband" was none other than Kauxuma-nupika and the wife, a female companion. After their departure from Spokane House, they had followed the course of the

¹⁷⁰ McDougall was the ranking partner and was slated to serve as Governor at the post even though there were other PFC partners accompanying him.

¹⁷¹ Nisbet, *The Mapmaker's Eye*, 117.

¹⁷² Tyrrell, *David Thompson's Narrative*, 513. In all likelihood, Kauxuma-nupika communicated with Thompson in Cree. In 1787-1788, Thompson wintered in a large Piegan camp on the western prairie, overlooking the Canadian Rockies. He was able to communicate with an elderly man in the community who, like himself, knew rudimentary Cree. Nisbet, *The Mapmaker's Eye*, 12-3.

¹⁷³ Tyrrell, *David Thompson's Narrative*, 512.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Thompson, *Travels*, 303. Ross records the event in his own narrative by writing that "Mr. Thompson at once recognized the two strange Indians and gave us to understand that they were both females." Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, 93.

Columbia to its mouth at the Pacific Ocean where they met the newly-arrived Astorians, busy and besieged.

Seeking solace with whites must have been somewhat comfortable for Kauxuma-nupika. After all, she had had extensive contact with Euro-American traders and settlers for much of her adult life.¹⁷⁶ In fact, it is entirely possible she had spent more time at Euro-American posts in the previous four years than among her fellow Kutenai. Even her downriver prophecy echoed such familiarity. Kauxuma-nupika informed native communities living along the Columbia that "white men...have brought with them the Small Pox to destroy [them]; and also two men of enormous size, who [were] on their way to [them], [were] overturning the Ground, and burying all the Villages and Lodges underneath it."¹⁷⁷ According to historian Gray Whaley, such a prediction reflected the "unmistakable patterns of North American colonization: epidemic disease followed by agrarian resettlement."¹⁷⁸ As he rightly suggested, it was likely that Kauxuma-nupika's "visions" were "clear, cohesive reflections of [her] historical knowledge of Western colonization, as expressed through the indigenous framework of prophecy."¹⁷⁹ If she did not acquire such "historical knowledge" from first-hand experience then she could have at least accessed it through the networks in which she operated. In addition to her white associates, she would have been acquainted with a variety of groups in the region, including Cree,

¹⁷⁶ Roscoe, *Changing Ones*, 171.

¹⁷⁷ *David Thompson's Narrative*, 513.

¹⁷⁸ Gray H. Whaley, *Oregon and the Collapse of the Illahee: U. S. Empire and the Transformation of an Indigenous World, 1792-1859* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 52. In opposition to Whaley, some historians suggest that the two large men are an allusion to the mythological characters of Coyote and Old Man who, according to a Nespelem story, would return at the end of time. Vibert, *Trader's Tales*, 81. Ultimately, Kauxuma-nupika's downriver prophecy was probably a hybrid product, comprised of both tradition and innovation; it incorporated "old" knowledge of Plateau apocalypses and included newly-acquired knowledge of Euro-American colonization.

¹⁷⁹ Whaley, *Oregon and the Collapse of the Illahee*, 53.

Canadians, and even Catholic Iroquois, many of whom migrated from the east to work in the fur trade and thus would have been conversant in the epidemiological and ecological implications of Euro-American expansion.¹⁸⁰ Whether the prophetess had direct or indirect knowledge of the colonial process, it would have come from her long-standing associations in the trade.

Being in the presence of traders was one thing, communicating with them another. Linguistic difference hampered Kauxuma-nupika's ability to uphold her end of the agreement and provide the Astorians with knowledge of the interior. The Kutenai language was (and remains) phonetically complex and very few traders, including Thompson who spent a considerable amount of time among the Kutenai, could speak it with any fluency.¹⁸¹ Franchere noted that the Astorian partners questioned the pair "in various Indian tongues, they did not understand."¹⁸² After a frustrating period of trial and error, another clerk, whom Franchere referred to as Mr. Pillet (full name Benjamin Pillet), found a way to communicate "in the Kristeneau language, and they answered, although they appeared not to understand it perfectly." Kristeneau or Kristeneax was the name of a small band of Cree who belonged to the Algonquin-speaking family. It is not unbelievable that Kauxuma-nupika knew the language considering the Cree presence extended as far west as modern-day British Columbia and as far South as modern-day Montana.¹⁸³ Ross' account was similar, though not as detailed. He wrote that "the husband, named Kocomenepeca, was a very shrewd and intelligent Indian who addressed us in the

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Turney-High, "Ethnography of the Kutenai," 189.

¹⁸² Franchere, *Adventure at Astoria*, 53.

¹⁸³ Schaeffer speculates that Kauxuma-nupika learned a small amount of Cree while a Kootenae House with her husband and Thompson in the winter of 1807-1808. If she was as intelligent as Ross described than learning another language such as Cree would have certainly been possible. Schaeffer, "The Kutenai Female Berdache," 196.

Algonquin language, and gave us much information respecting the interior of the country," or as Franchere put it, "*important* [italics added] information about the interior of the country."¹⁸⁴

Overall, she provided an encouraging report. Spending several days in conversation, Kauxuma-nupika, informed the Astorians that the interior, specifically the Upper Columbia, was teeming with beaver and other game.¹⁸⁵ Similarly, Washington Irving mentioned in his second-hand account that Kauxuma-nupika "promised to take [an expedition party] to a place not far from the Spokane [sic] River, and in a neighborhood abounding with beaver."¹⁸⁶ It was news the discouraged Astorians wanted and needed to hear.

Their excitement, however, was short-lived. Soon after the arrival of Kauxuma-nupika, came another canoe from upriver, piloted by none other than Thompson. In the words of Ross, he "came dashing down the Columbia in a light canoe [made from a wood plank design], manned by eight Iroquois and an interpreter, chiefly men from the vicinity of Montreal."¹⁸⁷ Franchere was a bit more descriptive. "The flag [the boat] bore was the British," he recorded. "A well-dressed man, who appeared to be the commander, was the first to leap ashore; and

¹⁸⁴ Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, 92.; Franchere, *Adventure at Astoria*, 54.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.; Nisbet, *The Mapmaker's Eye*, 117.

¹⁸⁶ Washington Irving, *Astoria: Or Anecdotes of an Enterprise Beyond the Rocky Mountains* (New York: C. P. Putnam's, 1895), 131. His narrative is a second-hand account unlike the first-hand accounts we see in the narratives and journals of Thompson, Ross, and Franchere. In this respect, it is fair to be a bit suspicious of the some of his claims. Of course, all of the authors, Thompson, Ross, and Franchere included, could be just as guilty of forgetting details and embellishing their tales for dramatic effect. The writings of Ross are a good example. Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, George Simpson, criticized his narrative when it was first published for being hyperbolic and over-romanticized in parts. Ross did his part to prevent such critiques by noting in the preface that his narrative was "not an armchair narrative, derived from hearsay tales," but instead confirmed that the content was the "result of practical experience on the spot." Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, xxv. Moreover, historian Elizabeth Vibert suggests that "Ross' preoccupation with heady adventure narrative and his allusion to other British colonial possessions place his work squarely in the tradition of the imperial adventure tales, a tradition just coming into full flower at the time his narratives were published." Ross' descriptions of buffalo hunts could be located easily within a genre of British Victorian literature that focused on the "cult" of big-game hunting in colonized territories by traders, military officers, and government administrators who typified the masculine ideal. Vibert, *Trader's Tales*, 256 - 257.

¹⁸⁷ Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, 93.

addressing us without ceremony, he said that his name was David Thompson, and that he was one of the partners of the North West Company."¹⁸⁸ The Astorian leadership quickly "invited" the weary traveler back to the post's quarters for rest and conversation.¹⁸⁹ Such hospitality bothered Ross in particular who viewed Thompson with suspicion. He wrote sarcastically that "McDougall received him like a brother. Nothing was too good for Mr. Thompson. He had access everywhere, saw and examined everything, and whatever he asked for he got, as if he had been one of ourselves."¹⁹⁰ Ross distrusted Thompson and for good reason. After all, he did belong to a rival firm.

During his stay at Astoria, Thompson offered his own description of the interior. As Ross recounted, "he took great pains to paint in their worst colors...the dangers and difficulties" of journeying further inland."¹⁹¹ Such a dire report only confirmed Ross' misgivings. In his mind, Thompson's visit had "no other object but to discourage" the Astorians from pursuing trapping and trading in the Upper Columbia, "a maneuver of the North-West policy to extend their own trade at the expense" of their competition.¹⁹² Moreover, Thompson's report, "which was not calculated to leave [his listeners with] a very favorable impression, did not perfectly accord with...[the] two Indian guests."¹⁹³ With little deliberation, the Astorians chose to believe Kauxuma-nupika, not because they viewed her as trustworthy, but because they viewed

¹⁸⁸ Franchere, *Adventure at Astoria*, 54.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, 93.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Franchere, *Adventure at Astoria*, 55.

Thompson as, in the words of Irving, "little better than a spy in the camp."¹⁹⁴

Ross' distrust and general antipathy toward Thompson would only increase as the two parties left Astoria and began their joint ascension of the Columbia. Early into the trip, Thompson and his men left the struggling Astorians at a portage in order to "turn the natives against them as [they] went along."¹⁹⁵ Such a move infuriated Ross even decades later when he wrote the following admonishment in his published narrative: "That he who had been received so kindly, treated so generously, and furnished so liberally by us, should have attempted to incite the Indians against us in our helpless and almost forlorn state, was conduct which the world must condemn."¹⁹⁶ Despite the appearance of foul play, the Astorians proceeded onward and instead of establishing a trading house on the Lower Columbia, they, led by partner David Stuart, decided to "push...forward, under guidance of the two Indians [Kauxuma-nupika and her partner]."¹⁹⁷ Irving noted that Stuart did not stop "until he had arrived within about one hundred and forty miles of the Spokane [sic] River, which he considered near enough to keep the rival establishment [Spokane House] in check."¹⁹⁸

It appears that prophecy also had a role to play in this economic rivalry. During the upriver trek Kauxuma-nupika altered her forecast from impending disease and displacement to

¹⁹⁴ Irving, *Astoria*, 131.

¹⁹⁵ Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, 139. Ross described the parting as follows: "On the thirty-first [of July], after breakfast, Mr. Thompson and party left us to prosecute their journey, and Mr. Stuart, in one of our canoes accompanied him as far as the Long Narrows, nor did he return till late in the afternoon." He also made sure to note that "the two strangers [Kauxuma-nupika and her companion] remained with us [the Astorians]." Ibid., 123.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 139.

¹⁹⁷ Irving, *Astoria*, 141-142.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. As Lavender points out, "The move was potentially dangerous. If, as the partners at Astoria supposed, the purchase by the Northwesters of a third of the Pacific Fur Company had come to nothing then competition would be the order of the future. It behooved them, therefore, to establish posts of their own on the upper river as soon as possible, even though this meant weakening half-formed Astoria still more." Lavender, *The Fist*, 139.

future material abundance.¹⁹⁹ She now informed local indigenes that her and her partner had been "sent by the great white chief, with a message to apprise the natives in general that gifts, consisting of goods and implements of all kinds, were forthwith to be poured in upon them."²⁰⁰ She expounded that "the great white chief knew their wants, and was just about to supply them with everything their hearts could desire," and went on to claim that "the whites had hitherto cheated the Indians, by selling goods, in place of making presents to them as directed by the great white chief."²⁰¹

If Kauxuma-nupika could have used the indigenous framework of prophecy to articulate the stages of Euro-American colonization, it is certainly possible she could have used the same prophetic medium to articulate the economic and even imperial competition she encountered during her time on the coast.²⁰² If this was the case then the "new" traders in her upriver prediction could have been the newly-arrived Astorians - Stuart's party serving as the first of many envoys who would carry up the Columbia an endless supply of precious material goods and trade generously with local tribes. After all, her relationship with the PFC partners seemed amicable as indicated by her willingness to serve as their guide into the interior and their

¹⁹⁹ Unlike Ross who argued that the sudden change in her prophecies (from dire to optimistic) demonstrated she was an "opportunistic spinner of tales," Vibert encourages us to consider that "in the nature of prophecies" there is no such idea as "fully formed orthodoxies." Vibert, *Trader's Tales*, 74.

²⁰⁰ Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, 157.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² The conventional understanding of Kauxuma-nupika's prophetic revisionism is rooted in a more pragmatic interpretation. When she prophesied death and disease on her journey to the Coast, several native communities threatened her life. Schaeffer writes that Kauxuma-nupika seemed to have deliberately "abandoned her calamitous predictions under native threat of injury or death on the journey upriver." Schaeffer, "The Kutenai Female Berdache," 211-2. However, when she prophesied material abundance she was welcomed, venerated, and given valuable gifts. Ross noted that "these stories [optimistic prophecies], so agreeable to the Indian ear, were circulated far and wide, and not only received as truths, but procured so much celebrity for the two cheats that they were the objects of attraction at every village and camp on the way." Kauxuma-nupika quickly discovered that offering natives good news brought she and her partner fame, not to mention horse loads of trade goods. Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, 157-158.

willingness to rely on her services and initial report. If the Astorians were the newcomers, than it is likely that the Northwesters were, in her prophetic paradigm, the previous traders responsible for much of the region's devastation.²⁰³ Indeed, Kauxuma-nupika certainly would have had reason to quarrel with the North West Company, considering her discordant past with Thompson and possibly McDonald.²⁰⁴

If the change in her prophecy reflected even a rudimentary knowledge of fur trade competition, then Kauxuma-nupika used religious discourse to become a subtle, though active contributor to the economic tensions of the Anglophile world on the eve of the War of 1812. It is feasible that through the indigenous framework of prophecy she limited the success of the British-affiliated North West Company by leading natives to believe that its employees were responsible for the spread of disease throughout the region, while facilitating the success of the American-affiliated Pacific Fur Company by implying that its members were emissaries of the beloved "great white chief," and thus would play a central role in inaugurating a period of health and prosperity.²⁰⁵ In short, Kauxuma-nupika and Euro-American empire may have shared a

²⁰³ Historian Elizabeth Vibert, hints at this interpretation of Kauxuma-nupika's prophecies when she suggests that the discrepancy in the prophetess' predictions (from dire to optimistic) has less to do with a change in her own spiritual insight and more to do with the choices of her Euro-American narrators. Thompson and Ross may have chosen to include different aspects of Kauxuma-nupika's prophecies that reflected their separate interests - Thompson concerned himself with accusations that he and his party were spreading disease while "Ross' fixation with the material expectations embodied in the prophecy" may have been linked to the Astorian's primary objective of "establishing a profitable trade post in the region," which could stand to benefit from such religious ideas. Vibert, *Trader's Tales*, 74. The only problem with Vibert's assessment is that it completely eliminates the subjectivity or agency of Kauxuma-nupika as a historical actor, a position my interpretation intends to uphold.

²⁰⁴ There is an important irony here. Ross accused Thompson of journeying ahead of the Stuart party in order to incite the natives against them, while Kauxuma-nupika may have been involved in the very same project but on behalf of the Astorians. The only real difference being the medium each chose to persuade their indigenous audience - Thompson using diplomacy and Kauxma-nupika prophecy. What is also interesting about this conversation is that the prophetess and Thompson appear, once again, to be in competition with one another - a competition that may go as far back as Kootenae House when Thompson first challenged Kauxuma-nupika's moral character.

²⁰⁵ Kauxuma-nupika's prophecy aside, the relationship between the two companies was much more complex, especially in 1811 when tensions between the U. S. and Great Britain were reaching a climax. In the early stages of Astoria's founding, Irving remarked that "the relations between the United States and Great Britain

dialectic relationship. It appears that the economic rivalries of western imperial powers shaped the content of her prophecies, while it is possible she used these very same prophecies to leave her own imprint on these same economic rivalries.

In the Summer of 1811, Astoria became an important site of exchange. Kauxuma-nupika arrived at the newly-established post as a prophetic figure and agent of the fur trade. She would leave Astoria as a different prophetic figure (change in her predictions) and a different agent of the fur trade (change from courier to guide). The shifting in her conflated identities was, in large part, contingent on an exchange of knowledges. Kauxuma-nupika's knowledge of the interior led to the Astorians' decision to launch an expedition to the East, with the prophetess as a guide, while the Astorians' knowledge of the competition between themselves and the North West Company, appeared to have an effect on Kauxuma-nupika's prophetic message during her upriver travels. If this was the case then knowledge itself became, at least in this particular instance, a common currency that gave both the Astorians and Kauxuma-nupika what they wanted. For the Astorians it was fur resources and a leg-up on their competition. For Kauxuma-nupika it was the material wealth that accompanied appealing prophecy and potentially the ability to regulate the wealth of other economic agents in the region. In the end, the exchange of

were...in a critical state; in fact, the two countries were on the eve of a war." He went on to note that "several of the partners [of the Pacific Fur Company] were British subjects, and might be ready to desert the flag under which they acted, should war take place." Irving, *Astoria*, 125. In fact, the majority of Astorians were either Canadian, Scots-Irish, or British. According to most historians, Astor's choice to employ non-American personnel - though a good idea at the time, considering their experience in the trade - eventually led to detrimental conflict within the PFC as British-American tensions mounted in the Atlantic. Even before signing on with the PFC, partner Alexander McKay "thought it wise to see the British minister...to inform him of the object of our expedition and to ask his advice about what [he] should do in the event of war between England and the United States." Franchere, *Adventure at Astoria*, 10. According to Franchere, the minister responded by saying that "he could promise...only that in case of war between our two countries [McKay and others] should be respected as British subjects and merchants." Ibid. This is not to say that these firms, especially the North West Company, did not uphold a national affiliation. For instance, in 1813 when the North West Company took over operations at Astoria (renaming it Fort George), the site was "symbolically 'seized' by a British Royal Navy captain." Jean Barman and Bruce McIntyre Watson, *Leaving Paradise: Indigenous Hawaiians in the Pacific Northwest, 1787-1898* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), 59.

knowledges at Astoria resulted in a PFC expedition to the east, led by a prophetess who disseminated her spiritual message of material prosperity to native villages as the rest of the party worked to open up trade networks with those very same communities.

Moreover, Kauxuma-nupika's role as an informant took on a multi-dimensional hue. During her time at Astoria and its vicinity, her scarce "knowledges" (ecological and religious) allowed her to craft a singular identity as a vital, yet complex economic player. Her prophetic insight granted her entry into a reciprocal exchange with local indigenes, most of whom were pleased to hear her revised message and rewarded her with valuable goods. At the same time, such insight also may have allowed her to intervene in a larger, market competition where she could use indigenous prophecy to augment her prior knowledge of the Upper Columbia and, through the combination, assist in the success of the Astorian enterprise.

The encounters, competitions, and exchanges at Astoria shaped the relationships of the parties involved as it did the religious dimensions of the trade itself. Moreover, what happened at the post in the summer of 1811 would have clear reverberations in the events that would soon transpire. Leaving Astoria, those who made the trek upriver (including Kauxuma-nupika, Ross, and Thompson) discovered that any line dividing secular from religious economies dissolved in the interplay between fur trade expansion, epidemic disease, and the regulation of religious authenticity.

The Ascent: Fur Trade Expansion, Epidemic Disease, and the Regulation of Religious Authenticity

On July 22, 1811, David Stuart and a select group of Astorians departed the fledgling post and accompanied Thompson and his crew up the Columbia River. Included in the twenty-

one personnel were the "two strangers," Kauxuma-nupika and her companion.²⁰⁶ The "strangers remained" with Stuart's party for the entire trip as guides and played, in the words of Whaley, "a crucial role in the nascent imperial competition by informing the Astorians of the Northwest Company's expansion west of the Rocky Mountains and by helping the Astorians to map the establishment of Fort Okanogan [initially known as Okanogan House] far upriver."²⁰⁷ However, her service to the Astorians did not mean Kauxuma-nupika was without her own objectives. According to Thompson, the prophetess' intention was to "return to her own country" in the Upper Columbia before winter weather enveloped the region.²⁰⁸

The pair's association with the Stuart party was actually quite loose. Ross observed how the "bold, adventurous Amazons" would "sometimes sho[o]t ahead and at other times loiter...behind, as suited their plans."²⁰⁹ Although Ross did not expound on these "plans," we can speculate they shared some connection to her prophetic ambitions. It is possible that Kauxuma-nupika's commitment to the success of the Astorians in the interior trade was matched only by her commitment to the success of her own prophetic visions in the same area and among the same native communities, who after waves of epidemics were willing to offer valuable material goods in exchange for good news.

As the parties proceeded upriver, Thompson and his fellow Northwesters came across a rapids where four native men were sitting waiting for their arrival. They gave the hungry travelers salmon to eat and shared with Thompson their concerns. In his narrative he mentioned that "the four men addressed me; saying, when you passed going down to the sea, we were all

²⁰⁶ Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, 111.

²⁰⁷ Whaley, *Oregon and the Collapse of the Illahee*, 51.

²⁰⁸ *David Thompson's Narrative*, 513.

²⁰⁹ Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, 123, 156.

strong in life, and your return to us finds us strong to live."²¹⁰ The four native men were commenting on a recent smallpox epidemic that had ravaged many indigenous communities throughout the area, leaving them severely depopulated. Moreover, the men blamed Kauxuma-nupika and her ominous downriver prophecy for the misfortune. Not only did they have a "stern" look on their faces as they recounted the recent, tragic events, Thompson noted that "if the man woman had not been sitting behind us they would have plunged a dagger in her."²¹¹

Thompson stood at a precipice. The ongoing success of the North West Company in the region rested on his ability to assuage the natives' umbrage.²¹² Instead of simply dismissing their concerns as unsubstantiated, he negotiated with the four men using a common Christian conception of the omnipotence of God as the framework for his proposal. "You ought to know," he remarked, "that the Great Spirit is the only Master of the ground [a reference to Kauxuma-nupika's earlier prophecy], and such as it was in the day of your grandfathers it is now, and will continue the same for your grandsons."²¹³ The men relaxed and tensions ceased.

This proved to be a multifaceted encounter. Thompson offered these men assurance

²¹⁰ *David Thompson's Narrative*, 513.

²¹¹ *Ibid.* Thompson's journal offers a slightly different rendition in which he wrote that "had not the Kootenaes [sic] been under our immediate care, she should have been killed for the lies she told on her way to the sea." The alterations in the last line - "should" instead of "would" and the use of the term "lies" - points to Thompson's antipathy toward Kauxuma-nupika and her prophecies. The line also suggests that she had prophesied on her way to Astoria. Thus, her prophecies did not necessarily precede her but they certainly became an excitable topic of conversation and remained so in a particular area long after she departed physically. T. C. Elliot, ed., "Journal of David Thompson," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 15, no. 2 (1914): 111. It also bears mentioning that there were at least some native communities along the Lower Columbia who had not heard of Kauxuma-nupika or her prophecies. In a paragraph marked August 2nd, Thompson noted that "they [natives] are all glad to smoke with us, and eager to learn the news; every trifle seemed to be of some importance to them, and the story of the Woman that carried a Bow and Arrows and had a Wife, was to them a romance to which they paid great attention and my Interpreter took pleasure in relating it." Tyrrell, *David Thompson's Narrative*, 520-521.

²¹² Vibert writes: "As white newcomers to the region, both men [Thompson and Ross] could be expected to be paranoid about a woman who travelled through the very country they hoped to establish trade relations, prophesying the imminent end of the world. . . The traders saw her activities as a threat to their own. That she had so receptive an audience would have only heightened their unease." Vibert, *Trader's Tales*, 75.

²¹³ Tyrrell, *David Thompson's Narrative*, 513.

through an imported European theology cloaked in a familiar vocabulary, while the men offered Thompson and his men fresh fish to satisfy their grumbling bellies. Simply stated, both parties exchanged "goods" meant for the relief of suffering bodies. Furthermore, the transaction facilitated the opening of a potentially productive trade relationship in the future. Indeed, the area of the Columbia in which Thompson spoke with these men in 1811 became the same area where, in 1824, the Hudson's Bay Company (which merged with the North West Company) would establish its regional headquarters at Fort Vancouver.

Having parted ways with Thompson's brigade at a prior portage, Stuart's party managed to continue upriver, arriving several weeks later at a place dubbed Priest's Rapids. Named by the Astorians after a "tall, meager, middle-aged Indian" shaman who "attached himself very closely" to the group during their stay in the area, it was a violent patch of whitewater along the north/south stretch of the Columbia in what is now south-central Washington state.²¹⁴ In addition to their encounter with the tenacious "priest," it was at this site where local natives requested the Astorians resurrect some of their recently deceased. Ross recalled "two dead children" being presented to them "by their parents, in order that [they] might restore [the children] to life again."²¹⁵ "A horse was offered...as a reward," but all the Astorians could do was sympathize with the parents.²¹⁶

There are at least three reasons why this native couple may have petitioned the trading party for such a miracle. The most basic explanation would be that the natives viewed the Euro-American traders, by virtue of their material possessions, technologies, and immunities, as being

²¹⁴ Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, 145.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 144. Although Ross does not directly mention the cause of death, there is a high probability that it was from some epidemic, most likely smallpox.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

endowed with spiritual power sufficient enough to perform wondrous acts. The other two reasons relate to Kauxuma-nupika. First, if this native couple was familiar with the prophetess' predictions of impending disease, then they may have deduced that their best chance for a cure was from the source of the affliction itself, the Euro-American traders. Second, and just as likely, the native couple may not have intended to bring their deceased children to Ross or his fellow Astorians, but instead were seeking the help of Kauxuma-nupika who guided their party. Due to her claims of spiritual empowerment as evinced in her gender variability and the letter she kept in her possession, many native communities along the Columbia, especially east of the Cascades, revered the prophetess and maybe even sought her counsel. It is possible the couple thought her spiritual powers may not be limited to predicting the future but could extend to the restoration of life.

Regardless of which explanation is most accurate, the episode is revealing. In the indigenous mindset, the Astorians and their guide Kauxuma-nupika were expected to take pity on those ravaged by disease and, in keeping with the conventions of native gift-giving, supply the suffering with corporeal health. What's more, such an overt religious exchange occurred within the larger context of the Astorian's own commercial expansion, measured by increased trade along those very same reciprocal relationships. Not only did the offering of dead children for miraculous healing and the offering of furs for material goods cut along the very same networks, the mechanics of the physical trade itself bore an uncanny resemblance. In those moments of exchange, a boneless and featureless pelt would have draped limply across the outstretched arms of a native trapper in the same way a discolored corpse would have hung lifelessly from the extended arms of a grieving parent.

With Kauxuma-nupika as their guide, the Stuart party journeyed further up the Columbia

to the Okanogan River where they made camp and prepared to build a trading house at the confluence. Upon their arrival, Ross made reference to a "holy man" known by the Astorians as "the priest" who stole Stuart's timepiece and "concealed [it] under the dry sand in the face of the bank."²¹⁷ The "circumstance greatly lessened the high opinion [the Astorians] had formed of him" and "taught [them] that however strong might be the friendly professions of the natives, it was still necessary to guard against their pilfering propensities."²¹⁸

This particular scene demonstrates the central role that European material goods played in the quest for spiritual empowerment among local indigenes. "The priest" was, in all likelihood, not "pilfering" when he took the timepiece, but was attempting to access the spiritual power Stuart was thought to have possessed based on the material goods he carried. In the mind of Stuart and his men, it was thievery; in the mind of "the priest," it was a form of religious consumption. The episode also immediately preceded Ross' most lengthy discussion on Kauxuma-nupika, in which he described her as a charlatan who cheated the natives into believing that, through her gender variability, she had been endowed with spiritual power and the ability to see into the future. In his mind, Kauxuma-nupika was nothing more than a swindler whose end goal was not spiritual satisfaction, but material gain (ironically much like his own). Furthermore, he believed she acquired her talent for religious deception within the context of the fur trade itself. "Brought as [she] had been, near the whites - who rove, trap, and trade in the wilderness," he wrote, "[she was] capable of practicing all the arts of well-instructed cheats."²¹⁹ Ross seemed to have juxtaposed "the priest" and the prophetess for the purpose of providing two

²¹⁷ Ibid., 156.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 157.

concrete examples of what he viewed as the counterfeit qualities of native religion in general.

Evidently, he had been critical for some time. While on the coast, Ross described the Chinook as performing "rude and absurd ceremonies," often consisting of "humming, howling, singing, and rattling of sticks, as if miracles were to be performed by mere noise."²²⁰ This characterization, especially when coupled with his discussion of the "Priest's" pursuit of the timepiece and Kauxuma-nupika's supposed interest in attaining valuable gifts, underscores Ross' Protestant skepticism of any religion in which the material played a central role. He held to the conviction that religion is and should remain entirely separate from economic or other material gain. Yet, for most Plateau communities such distinctions rarely existed. Many viewed the material in all its forms as playing a vital role in one's experience with the transcendent. In this respect, the exchange of material goods for prophetic insight (as in the case of Kauxuma-nupika) would have been seen as nothing unusual.

In the end, Ross' condescending remarks concerning native religion played a part in the region's religious economy. Among other capacities, they served as a rhetorical tool designed to demarcate "real" religion against what he interpreted to be idolatrous superstition. Such a calculated maneuver was not only contingent on his presupposition that natives were lesser beings; it also was a remnant of the Protestant anti-Catholic discourse that permeated early modern Europe and colonial America. As historian Carla Gardina Pastana wrote the "Reformation , especially in its more extreme forms, derided the older sacred practices [the veneration of saints, indulgences, and any other performance that involved the material] as gross superstition and idolatry....Radical Protestants desecrated shrines and smashed the religious art

²²⁰ Ibid., 104-105.

that adorned churches."²²¹ She went on to affirm that "this iconoclasm was especially frequent in Scotland [Ross' homeland]."²²² Although he never attacked Catholicism directly in his narrative, Ross did inform his readers that they "need scarcely be surprised" at native superstition "when even civilized men respect so many prejudices."²²³ He also relied on long-standing anti-Catholic tropes when describing the predominately Catholic Iroquois whom he worked alongside in the Northwest trade. Whether intentional or not, his use of adjectives such as "villainous," "treacherous," and "mischievous," echoed the kind of language that had been used by Protestants against their Catholic neighbors since the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 (a watershed moment in the history Protestant/Catholic relations).²²⁴ Just as Thompson did years prior at Kootenae House with his criticism of Kauxuma-nupika's supposed immorality, Ross restricted indigenous access to "legitimate religion" using an imported theological scheme, forged in the discursive processes of the Atlantic World, in the same way he restricted the indigenous consumption of Euro-American goods through an equally imported model of market regulation produced in roughly the same socio-cultural context. It seems that his success as a company fur trader and as a

²²¹ Carla Gardina Pastana, *Protestant Empire: Religion and the Making of the British Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 55.

²²² Ibid. Ross was born in Scotland and migrated to Canada as a young man in 1804 to make a fortune for himself in the burgeoning economy of the British colony. After several frustrating years of teaching school in Glengarry, Upper Canada, he joined the Pacific Fur Company on its maiden expedition to the Pacific Northwest. Years later, while stationed at Okanogan in 1813, Ross married a native woman from a nearby community and remained loyal to her until his death. He served in the North West Company and in the Hudson's Bay Company until his voluntary retirement in 1825. He then moved back to the East where he and his family settled in Red River, which is modern-day Winnipeg, Manitoba. While at the Red River, Ross devoted much of his time to writing, producing multiple works including *Adventures of the First Settlers on the Oregon or Columbia River* (1849) and *The Fur Hunters of the Far West* (1855). Furthermore, Ross became the first sheriff of the Red River settlement and helped establish the first Presbyterian congregation in the Valley. Milo M. Quaife, "Historical Introduction," in *Adventures of the First Settlers on the Oregon or Columbia River*, written by Alexander Ross, ed. Milo M. Quaife (Chicago: Lakeside, 1923), xviii-xix.; Watson, *Lives Lived West of the Divide*, 833.

²²³ Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, 104.

²²⁴ Ross, *The Fur Hunters of the Far West*, 150, 181, 190. At one point in his narrative, Ross referred to the Iroquois trappers as engaging in "their old trade of plotting mischief; but being less numerous and more cowardly than their associates, they did not avow their treacherous intentions publically." Ibid., 190.

champion of Protestant hegemony rested on similar modes of control.

After some time, the Stuart party left the post and explored north up the Okanogan River, while Ross was to remain alone until late March the following year (1812). "Only picture to yourself," wrote Ross, "how I must have felt, alone in this unhallowed wilderness, without friend or white man within hundreds of miles of me, and surrounded by savages who had never seen a white man before [probably untrue]."²²⁵ He continued: "I pined, I languished, my head turned gray, and in a brief space ten years were added to my age. Yet man is born to endure."²²⁶ Ross noted that his only "consolation" in this lonely and troubling time was his Bible.²²⁷ With "hundreds of Indians being encamped about the place" and knowing that Ross "mixed with them, traded with them, and at last began to talk with them," perhaps his Bible became a topic of conversation for more than one curious visitor, prompting the PFC clerk to engage in a religious transaction within the context of a fur trading post and within the context of a fur trading relationship.²²⁸

²²⁵ Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, 158.

²²⁶ Ibid. Ross' bleak description of his solitude may be a bit of an exaggeration. As Simpson noted, Ross was "self-sufficient," but he was also in the words of the HBC governor an "empty-headed man" whose published narrative was "'full of bombast and marvelous nonsense.'" Johnson, *Flathead and Kootenay*, 224.

²²⁷ Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, 158. Evidently this was not the only sacred text in his possession. Apparently, Ross carried a translation of the Qur'an, one of only two copies west of the Divide. Watson, *Lives Lived West of the Divide*, 1156.

²²⁸ Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, 161. Indeed, exchange abounded. During this lonesome winter he proved the post to be profitable by bartering "trade goods worth \$170 for furs that in Canton [China] would bring \$12,000." Lavender, *The Fist*, 144. According to historian Barry Gough, "Whenever possible [Nor'westers] cosign[ed] the first quality furs to China. Unfortunately, however, the company did not have enough of them for both the London and Canton markets: in consequence the former began to suffer, much to the regret of the London partners. Thus, the Montreal interests soon were at odds with their London counterparts; the 'Canadians' (McTavish, Frobisher) wanted to extend the new commerce, while the 'British' (McTavish, Fraser) warned that would weaken their position on the London market in relation to the Hudson's Bay Company, to say nothing of running afoul of East Indian Company regulations and French warships at large on the high seas. McTavish and Frobisher were...obliged to 'juggle the demands of the Far East with those of Europe and somehow...retain both.'" Barry M. Gough, *Distant Dominion: Britain and the Northwest Coast of North America, 1579-1809* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980), 140.

During her ascent of the Columbia, Kauxuma-nupika performed several roles. Within this particular marketplace, she served as a guide for the Astorians, a possible healer for local indigenes, and a foil against which Euro-American traders such as Ross could use an imported theological framework to negotiate and ultimately determine the parameters of "genuine" religion. Her multiple, but nonetheless simultaneous, identities (not to mention the compound identities of Thompson and Ross) offer a clear view of the conflation of economic performance as it manifested itself in the experiences of those who traveled the waters of the Columbia.

Conclusion: Reemergence, Death, and the Case of Kauxuma-nupika

The end of Kauxuma-nupika's life and her death remain obscure. According to Franklin, after her assistance in the establishment of Okanogan House, she traveled deep into New Caledonia (possibly up to Fort Fraser), where she "was last seen by traders" bound for a military campaign "in which she received a mortal wound."²²⁹ "The faith of the Indians was shaken by her death," concluded Franklin, "and soon afterwards the whole of the story she had invented fell into discredit."²³⁰ If his account is accurate than Kauxuma-nupika died sometime in the late 1810s or early 1820s, which according to some sources is a bit too soon. While stationed at an HBC post in 1825, Chief Trader John Work visited a "Kootany [sic]" village, where he commented on a local woman who "goes in men's clothes & is a leading character among

²²⁹ Franklin, *Narrative*, 306. Spier links Kauxuma-nupika to the expansion of the Prophet Dance complex in this northern region. He writes, "To sum up these fragments of evidence, we know then that a Kutenai woman of unusual personality inculcated some sort of doctrine among the Mackenzie Athapascans about 1812...It is quite possible that she was also responsible for the Athapaskan anticipation of the coming of the one who would revive the dead, as recorded by Franklin. Spier, *The Prophet Dance*, 27.

²³⁰ Franklin, *Narrative*, 306.

them."²³¹ The next day Work and his men traded with the same Kutenai, which included giving a "present" to the "Bundosh," whom he described as a "woman who assumes the masculine character and is of some note among them."²³² Work concluded his entry for "Tuesday 13" by noting that the Kutenai "Bundosh...acted as interpreter for us," noting that "she speaks F. Head [Flathead] well."²³³ ABCFM missionary William H. Gray, who traveled with HBC trader Francis Ermatinger, offered some further information on her possible death. In a journal entry dated June 3, 1837, he recounted that "the Blackfeet have killed the Kootenie woman, or Bowdash," who had been "permitted to go from all the camps, without molestation, to carry any message given her to either camp."²³⁴ Kutenai oral tradition suggests she died heroically during a Blackfoot ambush, in which she supposedly displayed her spiritual prowess a final time. According to one of Schaeffer's modern informants, "she was held in a seated position by several warriors, [while] others slashed her chest and abdomen with their knives. Immediately...the cuts...were said to have healed themselves....One of the warriors then opened up her chest to get at her heart and cut off the lower portion. This last wound she was unable to heal."²³⁵

In life, Kauxuma-nupika played many roles in many marketplaces. At Kootenae House she served as an ambiguous foil against which Thompson used his imported theologies on gender

²³¹ T. C. Elliot, ed., "Journal of John Work, Sept. 7th-Dec. 14th, 1825 (Continued)," *The Washington Historical Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (1914): 190.

²³² Ibid. It is likely that Work's use of the term "Bundosh" is a perversion of the French term "berdache."

²³³ Ibid. Historian Elizabeth Vibert suggest that Work's "Bundosh" and Ross' "Kocomenepeca" are not the same person, while O. B. Sperlin argues that the "'Bundosh' [of Works' account] appears at about the time the Astoria character fades away, and her age and position in the tribe correspond to that of the earlier Kootenay woman." Vibert, *Trader's Tales*, 241.; O. B. Sperlin, "Two Kootenay Women Masquerading as Men? Or Were They One?" *The Washington Historical Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (1930): 128. If Sperlin's assessment is accurate than this is the last time we see Kauxuma-nupika participating as an actor in the region's fur trade.

²³⁴ Schaeffer, "The Kutenai Female Berdache," 215. The reference to the term "Bowdash" bears a striking resemblance to Work's use of the term "Bundosh." This coupled with the fact that both were noted as being a Kutenai woman within the same decade, leads us to believe that Work's and Gray's subject is the same person.

²³⁵ Ibid., 216.

and sexuality to define and regulate moral conduct. In the wake of her dismissal, she served as a consumer of European modes of masculinity, but filtered such consumption through Kutenai modes of spiritual empowerment. At Spokane House Kauxuma-nupika changed roles yet again and served as a courier for the North West Company, whose payment for such employment was the social and spiritual capital represented in the correspondence itself and in the prophetic legitimacy that such correspondence would have produced. At Astoria she served as both a purveyor and consumer of knowledges, in which she offered the Astorians valuable information about the interior and natives important information about the future, while obtaining for herself possible insight into the economic rivalries of Western imperialism and altering her prophetic message accordingly. Lastly, during her ascent of the Columbia in 1811, she functioned as not only a fur trade guide and prophetic voice, but also may have played the role of a healer for ailing indigenes and even a foil (as before) for traders such as Ross to define and ultimately regulate "authentic" religion.

The life and times of Kauxuma-nupika offer valuable insight into the relationship between religion and the fur trade in the colonial Northwest. Above all else, the variety and simultaneity of the roles Kauxuma-nupika (and those around her) played represent the collapsing of multiple identities and multiple performances into a single economy where religious exchange and fur trade exchange became indistinguishable *modus operandi*. Among its many functions, the fur trade served as a religious economy. To say otherwise is to risk undercutting the dynamic ways in which figures such as Kauxuma-nupika, David Thompson, Alexander Ross and others, interpreted and negotiated their own senses of self and purpose amid the backdrop of colonial encounter. It would be misleading for the historian to detach religion from economics (or vice versa) because few, if any, historical actors actually made such distinctions themselves. While

some Euro-Americans such as Ross may have questioned the relationship between religion and materiality, it does not mean that such rhetoric was indicative of his actions on the ground, nor does it mean that he viewed his roles as a businessmen and Presbyterian as mutually exclusive. If nothing else, the case of Kauxuma-nupika offers evidence that the lines dividing religion from commerce and indigenous from Euro-American exchange were anything but clear.

Such was also the case with its regional borders. When Canadian and American traders traveled by ship to the Pacific Northwest they used the Sandwich or Hawaiian Islands as a waypoint to resupply for the last leg of the journey. There they acquired important goods such as water, livestock, and fruit. They also took the opportunity to employ young Hawaiian men, whom they brought with them to the Columbia as engages in the fur trade. Like Thompson and Ross, these Kanakas (as they were often called) imported, through the resources of the trade, their own religious cosmologies and ritual performances. Once in the country, they encountered, through the networks of the trade, indigenous and other imported beliefs and practices, which some consumed, leading to the restructuring of their prior traditions. In the process, these Islanders became the linchpin connecting the Northwest to a larger Pacific world exchange, in which religion and commerce regularly collided.

CHAPTER THREE

KAPU AND COMMERCE: HAWAIIANS IN THE NORTHWEST FUR TRADE AND THE MATERIALIZATION OF A PACIFIC WORLD RELIGIOUS EXCHANGE

John Mataturay was distraught. Only a year before he was living in luxury as the son of a chief on the island of Ni'ihau. He now found himself a prisoner. In 1788 he joined the crew of the English trading vessel, the *Argonaut*, and sailed to the Pacific Northwest coast. A year later, a Spanish brig patrolling the area commandeered the ship under suspicion of piracy and sent its crew, including Mataturay, south to San Blas, where they were detained until the captain of the *Argonaut*, James Colnett, could convince Spanish authorities he was indeed sailing in those waters with "his Majesty's permission."²³⁶ The Spaniards took a special interest in Mataturay. When he could not produce a contract for his employment, they assumed he had been taken illegally by Colnett and, ironically, sought to free him from his captor. They also attempted to free him from his "heathenish" ways. Colnett wrote in protest that the "Sandwich Isle Indian," had been "deliver'd over to the Padres of the Finandoes [Franciscans in] order to convert to Christianity," which caused Mataturay to weep "bitterly."²³⁷ Evidently, the clerics used familiar theological terms and concepts to convince the Islander that "his own Countrymen, as well as the English, when they died went to the wicked gods to be burnt." In order to avoid such a fate himself, he needed to "not have a wife" and, in the words of Colnett, "starve two or three days in a week."²³⁸ Not sold of the idea, Mataturay remained defiant, choosing instead to stand firm

²³⁶ F. W. Howay, ed., *The Journal of Captain James Colnett, Aboard the Argonaut from April 26, 1789 to Nov. 3, 1791* (Toronto, The Champlain Society, 1940), 59.

²³⁷ Ibid., 103.

²³⁸ Ibid. Like many eighteenth-century English Protestants, Colnett viewed Catholicism as fraudulent and superstitious. While held in Mexico, he commented that a cross had been erected to mark the spot where "the Spaniards encamp...which an Indian is said to have cut down and piss'd in the hole; for which piece of sacrilege it's

with his Countrymen and his English comrades in whatever hell that may be.

In many ways, the exchange between Mataturay and the Franciscans marked the beginning of a religious economy that would develop and thrive within the commercial operations of the fur trade throughout the Pacific during the first half of the nineteenth century. It was a time characterized by continuing exploration, expanding trade networks, and growing intercourse between Euro-Americans, Islanders, and Asians. It was the opening of a Pacific World, defined by and articulated through the experiences of individuals such as Mataturay.

Within this trans-oceanic framework, the Hawaiian islands proved pivotal. Their prime location in the central Pacific made them an ideal place for European and American trading vessels to stop, resupply, and continue their journey to either Asia (namely China) or to the west coast of North America. Even the assassination of Captain James Cook in 1779 could not dissuade Euro-American ships, such as Colnett's *Argonaut*, from anchoring in the Islands' warm waters and engaging in trade with its local denizens.

The political and economic rise of Kamehameha I only heightened Hawai'i's commercial significance. As a skilled tactician with a well-equipped army, the aspiring king succeeded in wresting control of the islands from rival chiefs, culminating in their unification under a single sovereign. Having been the benefactor of imported goods (namely guns and ships for his military campaigns), Kamehameha, once in power, looked to Euro-American traders and the empires they represented as allies, going so far as to include some in his royal court as political and economic advisors.

said the man was struck blind, and no person whatever suffer'd to walk over the ground, which at present is surrounded by a wall twenty fee high. . . I followed a party of Gentlemen and Ladies there per invitation, at that time not knowing anything of this miracle. When I joined them they were on top of the wall and looking down at the hole. I did not know, nor did they inform me, what was taking up their attention. The reason it's given out; no heretic can look down at it without falling. In order that their impious prophecies should not lose ground, it was declared I was a boon Christian." Ibid., 81.

When dealing with traders, Kamehameha retained his characteristic shrewdness. As a businessman he was well aware of the valuable resources the islands had to offer and used this as considerable leverage. However, his skills as a negotiator did not necessarily translate into improved economic conditions for his subjects. In the words of historian Gavan Daws, Kamehameha was "a persistent, even selfish accumulator, a king whose feeling for royal largesse was stunted, a great consumer only of other people's goods, food, and liquor."²³⁹ He goes on to note that the king's main weakness was "to buy and build foreign vessels far beyond normal needs," and remained throughout the rest of his life, "fascinated by the idea of a fleet of Western ships."²⁴⁰ He had, after all, dreams of sitting at the same table as the imperial powers of the West.

When Euro-American traders bartered with Kamehameha, it was not only for goods such as hogs, salt, and fresh water, it was also for hired-hands. It was not uncommon for trading vessels to add to their crew young Hawaiian men, who would be taken to locales far from their island homeland and sometimes never return. According to Russian trader Fedor Shemelin, Islanders could be found anywhere from Canton to Boston during the first half of the nineteenth century.²⁴¹ This included the Pacific Northwest, where Hawaiians had worked in hunting and trading sea otter pelts since the late eighteenth century. With the launching of the interior trade along the Columbia and Fraser Rivers, pioneered by companies such as the NWC, PFC, and later dominated by the HBC, the demand for Hawaiian labor increased. Traders viewed them as not only good swimmers, but also as strong paddlers and expert navigators - two traits sure to

²³⁹ Gavan Daws, *Shoal of Time: A History of the Hawaiian Islands* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 45.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Glynn Barratt, *The Russian Discovery of Hawai'i: The Ethnographic and Historic Record* (Honolulu: Editions Limited, 1987), 165.

improve the efficiency of an industry that relied heavily on canoe transport. By the second decade of the nineteenth century, the presence of Hawaiians in the region's beaver trade had become normative.

In addition to their unique abilities, they brought with them certain cultural/religious concepts, cosmologies, and performances, which mingled with other cultural/religious imports - as well as with longstanding indigenous traditions - allowing the Pacific Northwest to transcend, once again, conventional regional boundaries and serve as the site for a multi-dimensional and trans-regional marketplace. Accordingly, Hawaiians, and many of those who encountered them (traders, missionaries, Native Americans, and so on), lived and worked in the Pacific Northwest while playing either a direct or indirect role in a vibrant Pacific World economy, in which religious pageantry and fur trade operations became entangled in a web of shared networks, common resources, and indistinguishable motivations.

In the words of historians Jean Barman and Bruce McIntyre Watson, "Hawaiians leaving paradise are not easy to track down."²⁴² They appear only sporadically in Euro-American accounts and often without much description. With this in mind, the incidents on which this chapter is built carry significant weight when it comes to our ability to dissect the types of exchanges that occurred between Euro-Americans, Native Americans, and Hawaiians in the Pacific Northwest. They are, in other words, meaningful encounters.

²⁴² Jean Barman and Bruce McIntyre Watson, *Leaving Paradise: Indigenous Hawaiians in the Pacific Northwest, 1787-1898* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), vii.

**Astoria Revisited:
Funeral Rites, Fur Trade Goods, and the Economics of Transition**

As Kauxuma-nupika and her partner paddled down the Columbia, Alexander Ross, Gabriel Franchere, and the rest of the Astorian party were arriving at the River's mouth following a tempestuous month at sea. On February 28th, they weighed anchor in Kealahakua Bay in the Hawaiian Islands, where they had stopped to resupply for the last leg of their journey. Later, in his published narrative, Franchere would describe the trip as relatively uneventful that is "until the sixteenth [of March] when...the wind shifted suddenly to SSW and blew so violently that we had to haul in topgallant and topsails and run before the gale with our foresail....The rolling of the ship was far greater than in all the preceding storms."²⁴³

Upon arrival at the Northwest Coast, the men of the *Tonquin* encountered waters just as ferocious. In the words of Franchere, it was a "confused and agitated sea" - a particular stretch at the opening of the Columbia known appropriately as Cape Disappointment.²⁴⁴ Its shallow bar, strong currents, and large breakers made it a prime location for capsizing small watercraft and drowning even the strongest of swimmers. Taking the necessary precautions, Captain Thorn ordered several crew members, including Mr. Aitken, John Coles, Stephen Weeks, and a pair of "Sandwich Islanders" (Harry and Peter who were recent additions) to embark in the ship's "pinnace" (a small sailboat) and proceed to take soundings.²⁴⁵

Weeks, one of only two survivors, recounted their misfortune. "The breakers caused by the meeting of the wind-roll and ebb-tide became a great deal heavier than when we entered the

²⁴³ Gabriel Franchere, *Adventure at Astoria, 1810-1814*, translated and edited by Hoyt C. Franchere (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), 37.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 38.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 39. Sandwich Islanders was a common name used among Euro-Americans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to describe the inhabitants of the Hawaiian Islands. The famous explorer James Cook was the first to use it.

river," he told Franchere. "We let her drift at the mercy of the tide until, after we had escaped several surges, one wave struck midship and capsized us."²⁴⁶ He went on to recall,

'I lost sight of Mr. Aitken and John Coles, but the two islanders were close by me. I saw them stripping off their clothes. I did the same, and seeing the pinnacle within my reach, keel upward, I seized her. The two natives came to my assistance, we righted her, and by pushing her from behind we threw out so much of the water that she would hold a man.'²⁴⁷

He would never see Aitken or Coles again.

Ross also recorded Weeks' testimony. After the "heavy sea" had swamped their small boat, he remembered seeing the "two Sandwich Islanders struggling through the surf to get hold of the boat," and added that the men "succeeded" due to their expertise in swimming.²⁴⁸ Still in the water, he attempted to get their attention but the "Owhyhees were so much occupied about the boat that they seemed to take no notice of anything else."²⁴⁹ Finally, Harry and Peter spotted their fatigued comrade struggling to stay afloat on an oar and hauled him in.

Back in the boat, the men succumb to the "rigors of air."²⁵⁰ Wet and without clothing or immediate rescue, hypothermia set in and the "Owhyhees...began to lose hope,...so that they lay down despairingly in the boat," drifting into a "drowsy stupor."²⁵¹ Peter died around midnight. Harry "threw himself upon the body" of his friend and Weeks could do nothing to "persuade

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 40.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Alexander Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers on the Oregon or Columbia River: Being a Narrative of the Expedition Fitted out by John Jacob Astor to Establish the "Pacific Fur Company"; With an Account of some Indian Tribes on the Coast of the Pacific* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1849), 70. According to the writings of William Ellis, a Protestant missionary stationed in the Hawaiian Islands in the early part of the nineteenth century, it was a popular pastime among the Islanders to swim "sportively" in the "rolling wave[s]." William Ellis, *A Journal of a Tour Around Hawaii, The Largest of the Sandwich Islands* (Boston: Crocker & Brewster, 1825), 137.

²⁴⁹ Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, 70.

²⁵⁰ Franchere, *Adventure at Astoria*, 41.

²⁵¹ Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, 70.

him to abandon it."²⁵² The grieving Islander himself "'seemed to court death, for he lost all heart, and would not utter a single word."²⁵³ At daybreak, Weeks resolved to "'reach land or die in the attempt."²⁵⁴ "'Providence favored [his] resolution,'" for the battered men made landfall and as Weeks followed a "'beaten path'" through the woods to locate the ship, he "'left [Harry] to his bad fortune,'" or in Ross' narrative, "'left him to die."²⁵⁵ Franchere later recalled that those "who went ashore with the captain divided themselves into three parties to search for Harry whom Weeks had left at the entrance of the forest."²⁵⁶ Regrettably, they "came on board in the evening without having found him."²⁵⁷ But, all was not lost. The same party resumed their search the following day and discovered Harry under some rocks with "his legs swollen and his feet bleeding," having in all likelihood broken both his legs.²⁵⁸ The rescuers warmed the man on the beach and then brought him aboard where they "succeeded in restoring him to life."²⁵⁹

Following the unfortunate incident, chief partner Duncan McDougall ordered clerks Franchere and (Benjamin) Pillet to accompany "six sandwich Islanders" who were on their way

²⁵² Franchere, *Adventure at Astoria*, 41.

²⁵³ Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, 71.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁵ Franchere, *Adventure at Astoria*, 41.; Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, 71.

²⁵⁶ Franchere, *Adventure at Astoria*, 41.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 43.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.* Although alive, Harry remained crippled for some time; the overall extent of his recovery remains uncertain. Duncan McDougall, *Annals of Astoria: The Headquarters Log of the Pacific Fur Company on the Columbia, 1811-1813*, ed. Robert F. Jones (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), 10. According to the journal of trader Alexander Henry Jr., Harry remained on the record books during the NWC takeover of Astoria in 1813 and its subsequent renaming to Fort George. *The Journal of Alexander Henry the Younger, 1799-1814*, vol. 2 (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1992), 711. To serve out the remainder of three year contract, he must not have been entirely incapacitated.

to "inter the remains of their Country Man Peter."²⁶⁰ Ross, who stayed on board, recounted that the "Sandwich Islander who died in the boat [Peter] was interred on the beach where the boat came ashore," but not before conducting the proper funeral rites.²⁶¹ "Provided with the necessary implements and offerings," Franchere, Pillet, and six Hawaiians "went ashore to pay last homage to their compatriot."²⁶² The Islanders took with them from the *Tonquin* a sampling of biscuit, pork fat, and tobacco, and after removing the body from a nearby tree, positioned the emblems at key locations on the corpse. Franchere recalled that they "put the biscuit under one of the arms, the [pork fat] under the chin, and the tobacco under the genitals. The body," he concluded, "thus prepared for the journey to another world."²⁶³ Having "laid" the body "in the grave and covered it with sand and stones," the men proceeded to kneel "in a double row" with their "faces turned to the east."²⁶⁴ One of the six led the performance which incorporated the sprinkling of water on the heads of those participating as they "recited a kind of a prayer."²⁶⁵ When the ritual was complete, the Islanders stood up and "returned to the ship without once looking back."²⁶⁶

The extent to which the burial rites witnessed by Franchere and Pillet compared to styles of interment in the Hawaiian context is unclear. This is due in part to the wide range of funeral

²⁶⁰ McDougall, *Annals of Astoria*, 6. In his narrative, Franchere indicated that he, along with many on the crew of the *Tonquin*, shared some camaraderie. For months they had been "busy with the same duties and facing the same dangers," which forced a "connection that could not be broken." Franchere, *Adventure at Astoria*, 42. Of those on board were several "Sandwich Islanders." It is possible they experienced at least a vestige of this bond. If this was the case then the death of the Islander would have had an emotional impact on more than simply his Hawaiian cohort. Franchere and Mr. Pillet may have attended the funeral not simply because they were ordered to or were curious about what they would witness but because they desired to pay their respects to a fallen "brother."

²⁶¹ Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, 72.

²⁶² McDougall, *Annals of Astoria*, 6.; Franchere, *Adventure at Astoria*, 43.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 43-44.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 44.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

practices present during the pre-contact and early colonial periods. Burying the dead was a standard practice but the type of burial differed greatly depending on the socio-economic status of the deceased. For example, an individual of high social standing living in the mountainous terrain of Oahu may have been entombed in a cave (and whose bones would sometimes become a source of veneration), whereas a commoner from the same region may have been interred in a shallow grave on the beach.²⁶⁷

Another common mortuary practice, especially during the late prehistoric period, involved burying a corpse under the family's home as a way of keeping the ancestors at a close proximity and prolonging their status as members of household. However, as the archaeological record indicates, the popularity of this practice waned in the prelude to European contact. According to anthropologists Patrick Vinton Kirch and Marshall Sahlins, it eventually was abandoned in favor of "large, communal ossuaries [in] primarily coastal sand dunes," a practice that extended into the colonial period.²⁶⁸ Indeed, by the time the *Tonquin* anchored off the Hawaiian coast, the most widespread burial method on the Islands (especially Oahu where most fur trade laborers came from) was a simple grave in either sand dunes or the ground.²⁶⁹

Also, it was not uncommon for these subterranean crypts to have some kind of surface marking. Although most sand/ground graves were reserved for members of the lower classes, those that were marked often indicated the burial of a priest, lesser chief, or another respected

²⁶⁷ Patrick Vinton Kirch, *Feathered Gods and Fishhooks: An Introduction to Hawaiian Archaeology and Prehistory* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), 237.; J. Gilbert McAllister, *Archaeology of Oahu*, Bulletin 104 (Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum, 1933), 33. The only members of the Hawaiian society who were denied a burial were those who violated a chief's *kapu* (that which is taboo). Following their execution a chief typically had the body cremated to ensure that their punishment extended beyond the physical world. Kirch, *Feathered Gods and Fishhooks*, 238.

²⁶⁸ Patrick Vinton Kirch and Marshall Sahlins, *Anahulu: The Anthropology of History in the Kingdom of Hawaii* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 177.

²⁶⁹ Kirch, *Feathered Gods and Fishhooks*, 240.

individual in the community.²⁷⁰ For instance, during a tour around the island of Hawai'i in the early 1820s, Protestant missionary William Ellis came across "a pile of stones" on the ground that "marked the spot where a rival chief, and his affectionate and heroic wife, expired."²⁷¹ Continuing further, he came across another pile of stones, which his informants told him "were the graves" of the chief's *kaku*, "(particular friends and companions), who stood by him to the last" during a heated battle.²⁷² He also happened upon the "*buoa* (tomb) of a celebrated priest," and went on to describe it in great detail: "It was composed of loose stones, neatly laid up, about eight feet square, and five feet high. In the centre was a small mound of earth, higher than the walls."²⁷³ The walls were comprised of "tall sticks" meant to signify a person "of consequence" or to prevent the deceased man's "spirit from coming out."²⁷⁴ Although he was not a revered political or religious leader like the ones Ellis encountered, it is certainly possible that the *Tonquin's* Islanders marked their comrade's grave with stones as a symbolic gesture meant to honor the heroics that led to his demise.

Their reverence for the East is equally important. According to anthropologist J. Gilbert McAllister, there was no regard for spatial orientation in early Hawaiian rituals associated with death, even though some excavated remains suggest an East/West orientation with regards to a

²⁷⁰ McAllister, *Archaeology of Oahu*, 33.

²⁷¹ Ellis, *A Journal of a Tour*, 71.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 71-72.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 73. Ellis' nineteenth-century description is corroborated by twentieth-century archaeological excavations throughout the Islands, such as the Anahulu Valley on the island of Oahu where researchers discovered several subterranean crypts marked by piles of stones on the surface. Kirch and Sahlins, *Anahulu*, 104-105.

²⁷⁴ Ellis, *A Journal of a Tour*, 73. Apparently, this was a fear among many Hawaiians during the early colonial period. During this same tour, Ellis visited the roadside house of some commoners in Kahalu. "While resting there," he wrote, "the voice of wailing reached our ears" and he "inquired whence it came." The residents told him that the sound was coming from a neighbor whose sick relative had just died. Ellis then "asked where the soul had gone." Although they admitted to being unsure of the soul's whereabouts, they did firmly claim that "it would never return." *Ibid.*, 67.

body's placement; it was not uncommon for the heads of corpses to face the East.²⁷⁵ McAllister's dismissal of spatial orientation lacks potency, especially when juxtaposed with evidence to the contrary. Writing ten years prior to McAllister, anthropologists Laura C. Green and Martha Warren Beckwith argued that in the early colonial period it was a popular belief that "in every district [was] a prominent point of land jutting out into the sea which [was] called the '*leina a ka uhane*,' that is, 'leaping-place of the soul,' where the soul takes its final steps on its way to the regions of the dead [volcano, water, or plains]."²⁷⁶ "Of these 'leaping places,'" writes Green and Beckwith, "the point of Kumukahi in the district of Puna, Hawaii, is particularly associated with the old tradition."²⁷⁷ They went on to describe it as "the extreme easternmost point of the group, a long rocky but level thrust of land washed on either side by the Pacific."²⁷⁸ It is possible that the cardinal direction, East, is important in early forms of Hawaiian mortuary practices for this very reason.

Although not directly related to burial rites, Kirch's more recent study on the positioning of early Hawaiian *heiau* (temples) is also helpful. Challenging the prevailing notion that topography determined the orientation of a *heiau*, he argues that astronomical phenomenon also mattered, specifically the cardinal directions. Working from the assumption that pre-contact Hawaiians had a sophisticated spatial understanding, he concludes that the direction East played an important role in the construction of a number of temples throughout the islands. Not surprising, most of the temples that had an eastward orientation were linked to Kane, the

²⁷⁵ McAllister, *Archaeology of Oahu*, 32.; Kirch, *Feathered Gods and Fishhooks*, 241.

²⁷⁶ Laura C. Green and Martha Warren Beckwith, "Hawaiian Customs and Beliefs Relating to Sickness and Death," *American Anthropologist* 28, no. 1 (1926): 187.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

"Hawaiian deity strongly associated with the sun and the E."²⁷⁹ Anthropologist Valerio Valeri adds to this discussion by linking the god Kane to not only the East and the dawn, but also to animals such as the pig, and concepts such as the "male power of procreation."²⁸⁰ If the Islanders in Franchère's account performed their funeral rites in devotion to Kane (even though the god Kanaloa was typically associated with death), then it might explain not only their eastward orientation but also why the mourners used pork fat and placed tobacco under the genitals of their deceased comrade.

In general, burying a body with specific objects was a standard practice. Excavations of cave burials throughout the islands have unearthed artifacts ranging from *tapa* cloth (bark cloth) and *pandanus* mats to food bowls and wooden canoes (with both whole and partial hulls).²⁸¹ Such investigations also have turned up carved wooden relics such as sculptural images of various deities.²⁸² Ellis himself encountered such objects in the 1820s when he came across another *buoa* (tomb), where upon entering, "found part of a canoe, several calabashes, some mats, *tapa*, &c. and three small idols about eighteen inches long, carefully wrapped up in cloth."²⁸³ Such artifacts have been found less frequently in sand burials, which is not entirely surprising considering that most beach interments marked the final resting place of a commoner who would have owned very few material goods valuable or important enough to require in the

²⁷⁹ Patrick Vinton Kirch, "Temple Sites in Kahikinui, Maui, Hawaiian Islands: Their Orientations Decoded," *Antiquity* 78, no. 299 (March 2004): 102-114.

²⁸⁰ Valerio Valeri, *Kingship and Sacrifice: Ritual and Society in Ancient Hawaii*, trans. Paula Wissing (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 15.

²⁸¹ Kirch, *Feathered Gods and Fishhooks*, 238.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 239-240.

²⁸³ Ellis, *A Journal of a Tour*, 77.

afterlife.²⁸⁴ The wealthier the deceased, the more and better material goods they brought with them. Yet, there may be other reasons for the lack of objects aside from class distinction. Even as early as the 1920s, when McAllister was conducting his field research, there were no burial sites entirely undisturbed on the island of Oahu. He encountered few that had not already been visited by plunderers or pilfering tourists.²⁸⁵ Also, if sand burials incorporated organic items such as the objects mentioned in Franchere's account it is understandable that such artifacts were not recovered; they would have been unable to withstand a century or more of decomposition.

This is not to say that material goods were entirely absent from sand burials. From the grave of an adult male interred in a dune, archaeologists excavated "a large cache of fishing gear, including hooks, stone sinkers, and tools used for fishhook manufacture."²⁸⁶ Researchers also have exhumed rock oyster shells from similar style burials, and in the case of one female, mourners even placed (intentionally perhaps) the shells on the woman's chest region.²⁸⁷ This particular act of placing an object directly on the body of the deceased does not seem to be an aberration. At a burial site in the Anahulu Valley, archaeologists discovered a corpse that had been bound in a tight fetal position (another common practice) while mourners placed a piece of *tapa* also over the individual's chest.²⁸⁸ Furthermore, it was customary for mourners to place salt on the body of the deceased, but mainly for pragmatic reasons. Early Hawaiians used salt as a cleansing agent "sometimes in the navel" of a corpse "to keep the body dry and act as a

²⁸⁴ Kirch, *Feathered Gods and Fishhooks*, 240.

²⁸⁵ McAllister, *Archaeology of Oahu*, 32.

²⁸⁶ Kirch, *Feathered Gods and Fishhooks*, 240.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Kirch and Sahlins, *Anahulu*, 112.

preservative."²⁸⁹

There were also other materials used. Regarding the ritual performances associated with "traditional" funerals, nineteenth-century Hawaiian historian David Malo noted that typically a *kahuna* (priest) "brought with him a dish filled with sea water...and standing before the people who sat in a row" would offer a scripted prayer.²⁹⁰ Having recited the prayer the priest proceeded to sprinkle the water "on the people" thus completing the process of purification, which was, according to the regulations associated with *kapu*, necessary after having contact with a corpse.²⁹¹ "After this," Malo added, "each one departed and returned to his own house."²⁹² Early Hawaiians also used hog's flesh on occasion. Relying on the ethnographic data found in the *Fornander Collection of Hawaiian Antiquities and Folk-Lore* (1916), Green and Beckwith recount one story where a grieving mother "'cut off the tips of the ears of [a] pig, and the end of its nose, a bit of each hoof, and the tip of the tail, and...carried all to the grave of her daughter nearby."²⁹³

Broadly speaking, pork was a valuable commodity in early colonial Hawai'i. Soon after

²⁸⁹ Green and Beckwith, "Hawaiian Customs and Beliefs," 176-177.

²⁹⁰ David Malo, *Hawaiian Antiquities (Moolelo Hawaii)*, trans. Nathaniel B. Emerson (Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum, 1898), 97. It is important to note that Christianity may have influenced Malo's reading of Hawaiian history, especially when it came to his depictions of "traditional" ritual performances such as burial rites. In his brief biographical sketch of Malo, Nathaniel Emerson described Malo's "first contact with the new light and knowledge of Christian civilization" as spurring his intellectual development. "His mental activity under the influence of his new environment," Emerson wrote, "seemed...to be brought to a white heat." Soon Malo became "an eager reader of books" and was later "ordained to the Christian ministry," taking on the "pastorate of a little church" in the "seaside village of Kalepolepo" on the east side of Maui. *Ibid.*, x-xi.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 98. Generally speaking, *kapu* refers to the traditional Hawaiian method for regulating conduct across a wide swath of social distinctions - including class, gender, kinship, and so on. More specifically, anthropologist Valeri Valeri defines *kapu* as "'marked' and indexes the need to pay attention" so as not to pollute that which is pure. Valeri, *Kingship and Sacrifice*, 90. For example, the divine is *kapu* for the non-divine and those of higher social status are *kapu* for those of lower social status.

²⁹² Malo, *Hawaiian Antiquities*, 98.

²⁹³ Green and Beckwith, "Hawaiian Customs and Beliefs," 179.

their arrival in the islands, the passengers and crew of the *Tonquin* commenced trading with local natives whom Ross referred as "shrew dealers" but nonetheless eager to exchange.²⁹⁴ The weary sailors acquired many of the islands' "principal productions" such as "plantains, bananas, yams, taro, breadfruit, sweet potatoes, sugar canes, coconuts, and some pork."²⁹⁵ However, large amounts of pork were hard to come by, which aggravated the temperamental Captain Thorn, who, along with several PFC partners, went ashore in search of a more sufficient supply. The Governor of the island - a Euro-American named John Young who had been a boatswain on a trading vessel but through a series of unfortunate events had been left on the island only to gain the favor of Kamehameha - informed the visitors that the "sale of pork had been prohibited by royal proclamation, and that without the permission of the king...no subject could dispose of any."²⁹⁶ In the words of Franchere, "His Majesty wished to reserve to himself the monopoly of that branch of commerce in order to have the total profits."²⁹⁷ Negotiations with Kamehameha ensued and according to Ross "the King well knew how to turn it to his advantage" and only "after several conferences" and "hard bargain[ing]" the "royal contract was concluded," which supplied the *Tonquin* with "a hundred pigs, some goats, two sheep, a quantity of poultry, two boat-loads of sugar cane as food for the pigs, two boat-loads of yams, taro, and other

²⁹⁴ Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, 36. According to Washington Irving the Hawaiian's "shrewdness" had much to do with prior experience. He wrote that "at the time of the visit of the *Tonquin*, the islanders had profited, in many respects, by occasional intercourse with white men; and had shown a quickness to observe and cultivate those arts important to their mode of living." Washington Irving, *Astoria: Or Anecdotes of an Enterprise Beyond the Rocky Mountains* (London: Richard Bentley, 1836), 93.

²⁹⁵ Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, 36. Similar to Ross' account, Franchere noted that during their initial anchorage in the islands (specifically the "Bay of Kealakekua"), local natives came out to the *Tonquin* on several occasions to trade "cabbages, yams, bananas, taro, watermelons, poultry...[and] some pigs, in exchange for...glass beads, iron rings, needles, [and] cotton cloth." Franchere, *Adventure at Astoria*, 23.

²⁹⁶ Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, 37.

²⁹⁷ Franchere, *Adventure at Astoria*, 25.

vegetables," all in exchange for a "stipulated quantity of merchandise."²⁹⁸

Such tight market regulation had much to do with the importance of the pig in ritual transactions between humans and the gods, namely in the form of sacrifice. Some native Hawaiians sacrificed a pig in moments of crisis such as the disappearance of a child in which the pig would serve "as a ransom...in order to propitiate the favor of the deity for the little one."²⁹⁹ Detailing the ritual, Malo wrote that "when the pig had been consecrated, its head was cut off and set apart for the deity,...being placed on the altar or *kua-ahu*,...where always stood images in the likeness of the gods."³⁰⁰ He went on: "the ear of the pig was...cut off and placed in the gourd that hung from the neck of the image, and at the same time a prayer was recited."³⁰¹ The sacrifice of a pig also played, according to Malo, an important role in various rites of passage such as male circumcision as well as for the purpose of healing the physical body. In these latter

²⁹⁸ Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, 40.; Franchere, *Adventure at Astoria*, 35. According to Irving, the negotiations involved some coaxing. Upon their visit to Kamehameha's residence on the island of Oahu, the PFC partners informed the chief that "they were [also] eris, or chiefs, of a great company about to be established on the north-west coast." Irving wrote that they "talked" to the chief about the "probability of opening a trade with his islands, and of sending ships there occasionally." The proposal both gratified and interested Kamehameha who "was aware of the advantages of trade, and desirous of promoting frequent intercourse with white men." Irving, *Astoria*, 109. Kamehameha was also a "shrewd pork merchant" with other, earlier visitors to the Islands. *Ibid.*, 111. Russian traders in 1804 fell victim to the great chief's monopoly on the hog trade. Based on his vantage point on the *Neva* moored in Kealakekua Bay the ship's captain, Yuri Lisianskii, observed that pigs were plentiful on the nearby island but could not be accessed due to the "royal fiat." Barratt, *The Russian Discovery of Hawai'i*, 141. Lastly, it bears mentioning that pork was not the only lucrative market. Around the same time Hawaiian men were joining Astor's Pacific Fur Company, an oligarchy of great chiefs seized power from Kamehameha and ushered the islands into the sandalwood trade. Kirch and Sahlins note that "political and economic competition among the chiefs centered on control of the emerging sandalwood trade, carried by American ships to China." They go on to mention that the chiefs, "supported by a major influx of wealth from this lucrative trade,...engaged in spectacular bouts of conspicuous consumption, running up massive debts and ultimately exhausting not only the supply of sandalwood from the mountain forests but the working people themselves." The sandalwood trade lasted roughly from 1812 - 1830 and served, alongside the fur trade, as a Pacific World economy in which Hawaiians played an integral role. Kirch and Sahlins, *Anahulu*, 2.

²⁹⁹ Malo, *Hawaiian Antiquities*, 87. Using hog's flesh to "propitiate the favor" of a deity was mistaken by missionaries such as Ellis as an attempt to placate the wrath of a deity whom one was believed to have offended. Ellis, *A Journal of a Tour*, 139.

³⁰⁰ Malo, *Hawaiian Antiquities*, 87.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 88. In translation the scripted prayer included phrases such as "sacrificial feast" and "provide, O Kea, swine and dogs in abundance." *Ibid.*, 89.

ceremonies one pig "was sacrificed and exposed as an offering," while "another pig... was oven-baked and its head offered in sacrifice, but the body... was eaten" by the participants of the ritual.³⁰² The pig's dual function as a ritual object and an important food source made it a prized commodity for Hawaiians throughout the socio-economic spectrum.³⁰³

For Euro-American traders on their way to the Columbia, the Hawaiian Islands were the only stop where one could conceivably find pork. Therefore, in spite of any "royal proclamation," the PFC partners were determined to take as many hogs as the ship would carry. Departing the islands, Franchere observed that the deck of the *Tonquin* "was as much encumbered as when [it] left New York."³⁰⁴ Having very little room, they placed the "live animals at the gangways," forcing the men to circumvent them "in order to maneuver the ship."³⁰⁵ The partners also added to their party, employing a dozen or so Hawaiian laborers "for the service of... [the] trading post" for a period of three years, and in exchange would receive "a hundred dollars in merchandise."³⁰⁶ Franchere added that they "could have taken on a much greater number" but the captain only allowed them to enlist twelve for fear of overcrowding the vessel.³⁰⁷

There was a demand for Hawaiians in the PFC because of their reputation for being "bold

³⁰² Ibid., 96.

³⁰³ Malo writes that that pigs in particular were a source of great wealth. Along with dogs and certain types of fowl, pigs "were in great demand as food both for chiefs and common people, and those who raised them made a good profit." Ibid., 78. Evidently, pork also played an important role in *kapu* regulations concerning gender. During his stay on the islands Ross observed that "women always eat apart from the men, and are forbidden the use of pork." Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, 51.

³⁰⁴ Franchere, *Adventure at Astoria*, 37.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid; Irving, *Astoria*, 112.

swimmers and expert navigators."³⁰⁸ Echoing a widespread stereotype, Ross described them metaphorically as "ducks in the water." He went on:

As soon as we had cast anchor in Karakakooa Bay, the natives, men and women indiscriminately flocked about the ship in great numbers: some swimming, others in canoes, but all naked, although the *Tonquin* lay a mile from the shore...[Most] waited very contently, floating on the surface of the water alongside [the ship], amusing themselves now and then by plunging and playing round the ship. After passing several hours in this way, they would then make a simultaneous start for the land, diving and plunging, sporting and playing, like so many seals or fish.³⁰⁹

Ross also recalled a scene where two Hawaiian man attempted to retrieve the *Tonquin's* block which had fallen overboard due to a careless carpenter. He wrote that "one of the natives was asked to dive in thirty-six feet of water; but after remaining three minutes and fifty seconds under water he came up unsuccessful."³¹⁰ Another made the attempt and "after being under water four minutes and twelve seconds" was successful but "blood...burst from his nose and ears immediately after [reaching the surface]."³¹¹

When it comes to the reasons why Hawaiians such as Harry and Peter joined the PFC, we are left with only speculation. By the time the *Tonquin* anchored off the coast of Oahu, Hawaiians had been contracted by European sailing vessels for decades - some leaving and returning with tales of adventures sufficient enough to excite those of the younger generations. It

³⁰⁸ Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers*, 48.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 48-49. Striking a similar tone, Irving wrote that the Hawaiians were "watermen equal to...the voyageurs of the north-west." They were "remarkable for their skill in managing their light craft, and [could] swim and dive like waterfowl." Irving, *Astoria*, 112.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid. Franchere described the scene in more detail: "On the morning of the fourteenth [February, 1811], while the ship's carpenter was engaged in replacing one of the catheads, two large composition sheaves fell into the sea. As we had not others to replace them, the captain proposed to the islanders, who are excellent swimmers, to dive for them. He promised a reward if they found them. Immediately two offered themselves to try. They plunged several times, and each time brought up shells to prove that they had been to the bottom. We had the curiosity to hold our watches while they dived and were astonished to find that they remained four minutes under water. This exertion appeared to me, however, to fatigue them a great deal - to such an extent that the blood streamed from their noses and ears. At last one of them brought up the two sheaves and received the promised recompense, which consisted of four yards of cotton." Franchere, *Adventure at Astoria*, 24.

is possible the Hawaiians aboard the *Tonquin* had been influenced by the experiences of these prior sojourners and sought to have an adventure of their own, all the while accumulating some valuable goods for themselves and their families. In late March of 1811 a dozen or so Hawaiians arrived in the cool, damp world of the Pacific Northwest, many of whom would never return to tell their own tales.

Peter was not the only Hawaiian laborer to perish during his tenure with the PFC. But, the detailed description of his burial makes his death unique. While Islanders maintained a visible presence in the Pacific Northwest, few accounts have survived that offer insight into their mortuary practices, especially in the early days of the interior trade. Franchere's willingness to record his observations were due, in large part, to his belief that what he was witnessing was something authentic. He suggested that "as each of them [the Islanders] appeared, in fact, in a role that he played, it is very likely that they observed, so far as circumstances permitted, the ceremonies practiced in their own country on such occasions."³¹²

Imbedded in this statement was an important caveat. According to Franchere the Hawaiians "observed, *so far as circumstances permitted* [italics added], the ceremonies practiced in their own country."³¹³ Because of their "circumstances" the Islanders had to make do with the material items available on the *Tonquin*, even though such objects may not have been used in typical burials back home. We do not have any record of Hawaiians in the pre-contact or early colonial periods using specifically biscuit, pork, or tobacco in rituals associated with interment. But, based on the writings of Ross, Franchere, and others, it is evident that pork was a valued (and regulated) good that held both socio-economic and religious significance. Although tobacco had slightly less value, it was still a prized import that had been by at least the second

³¹² Ibid., 44.

³¹³ Ibid.

decade of the nineteenth century transplanted in the islands and was being consumed by Hawaiians who were, in the words of Franchere, "fond of smoking."³¹⁴ Pork and tobacco especially had cultural currency and thus were, in the minds of the newly-minted Astorians, suitable to serve as symbolic elements in a scripted, ritual performance taking place in a foreign ecological context where *tapa* cloth and calabashes were nowhere to be found.

At the same time, pork and tobacco were essential goods for the success of fur traders in the Pacific Northwest, hence the reason they were aboard the *Tonquin* in the first place. Loading down the ship with swine was crucial for ensuring a reliable source of meat for those stationed at Astoria, while packing the cargo hold with as much tobacco as possible was necessary for opening and maintaining lucrative trade networks with local indigenes who would often trade furs for twists. Biscuit was even important. It, along with minimal fruits and vegetables, functioned as a necessary supplement to the protein-rich diet of most traders and trappers. Especially in the nascent stages of settlement, prior to the cultivation of wheat, the "hardtack" served as the only source of bread and despite frequent complaints, most understood its value.

In the spring of 1811, the staple goods of the trade such as biscuit, pork, and tobacco enabled the PFC to complete a healthy transition to, and ultimately thrive in, the new environment of the Lower Columbia. Even the reallocation of these fur trade resources in Peter's burial left their broader function largely intact. Although their meanings shifted somewhat from literal to figurative, in the ritual witnessed by Franchere, the biscuit, pork, and tobacco served as symbolic or religious goods used to ease Peter's transition from the physical world to an otherworldly afterlife.

³¹⁴ Peter Corney, *Voyages in the Northern Pacific: Narrative of Several Trading Voyages from 1813 to 1818, between the Northwest Coast of America, the Hawaiian Islands and China, with a Description of the Russian Establishments on the Northwest Coast*, Honolulu: Thos. G. Thrum, 1896), 109.; Franchere, *Adventure at Astoria*, 31.

Furthermore, the mechanics of this ritual transaction should not overshadow its more obvious identity as a religious import, shipped to the region by means of maritime and corporeal vessels contracted by the PFC. Similar to David Thompson's theological conceptions of gender and sexuality, the performances linked to Peter's interment traveled to the Pacific Northwest (along with the material goods used in the performances) aboard the *Tonquin* and in the cognitive processes of the Hawaiian employees recently hired in Oahu. Unlike Thompson, however, these imported rituals represented a vibrant Pacific World exchange that would have a profound impact on the overall character of the Northwest fur trade for decades to come.³¹⁵

A little more than twenty years after the death and burial of Peter, a spectacular event occurred in the night-time sky that captured the attention of many throughout North America. It was an extraordinary display of the annual Leonid, in which meteors exploded in the earth's atmosphere with such magnificence and frequency it appeared as if the stars were falling out of the heavens. Like the material goods aboard the *Tonquin*, this unusual weather as experienced by fur trapping parties along the Pacific Slope, provided yet another spark for igniting a trans-regional exchange that blended religious and commercial aspirations.

³¹⁵ Also unlike Thompson, Franchère (a French-Canadian from Montreal) used his imported knowledge of Catholic liturgy to positively communicate to his Euro-American audience the style of ritual performance he witnessed. He suggested that the way in which the Hawaiians "responded" to the prayer of the ceremonial leader was "somewhat" similar to the way "we respond in the litanies in our churches at home. Ibid., 44. Whether Franchère actually had these thoughts during the event or were simply a product of later reflection is uncertain. What is clear, however, is that Franchère used an inclusive analogy, which set this portion of his narrative apart from the writings of many of his contemporaries, who, like Thompson and Ross, often described the religion of non-Europeans as being incompatible with, or sometimes as the antithesis of, western Christianity. Furthermore, at one point in his description of Hawaiians, Franchère devoted an entire paragraph to commenting on the island's indigenous religion. Although he did not use any Western analogies he did maintain a relative sense of neutrality. Franchère began by offering a basic map of a typical cosmology, including a "Supreme Being...and a number of subordinate divinities." He also mentioned that "each village has one or more morais," which, as he explained, were "enclosures that serve[d] for cemeteries." Each of these morais included some kind of temple where "idols or statues of wood" were housed, often with "the offerings of the people...left to putrefy" at their feet. According to Franchère, these oblations included "dogs, pigs, fowls, vegetables, and so forth. Ibid., 33.

The Leonid of 1833: Religious Cosmology, Protestant Stratagem, and the Quest for Productivity

Financed by none other than John Jacob Astor, trader and military officer Benjamin Bonneville led an overland expedition to the Pacific Northwest in 1832. The sizable party (comprised of over one hundred members) followed the Missouri River to the Kansas, and then onto the Platte which they traveled alongside until reaching the Divide. After crossing the mountains they came to the Green River, and established a trading post in the area. Then, in the Spring of 1833, Bonneville began exploring portions of the Snake River in modern-day Idaho. That summer he sent a third of his party to survey parts of the Great Basin region and charged them with locating both beaver resources and an overland passage through the Mexican-held land of "Californias" to the Pacific Ocean.

The group was led by one of Bonneville's officers named Joseph Reddeford Walker, who was "well calculated to undertake a business of this kind."³¹⁶ Although later criticized by Bonneville for overstepping his authority, Walker was well-respected by his men, especially his clerk, Zenas Leonard, who referred to him as "kind and affable...but at the same time at liberty to command without giving offence."³¹⁷ Leonard himself was a "loyal" and "fair" man.³¹⁸ Historian John C. Ewers describes him as a "plausible human being" who openly "admitted to his longing for the comforts of home" and his fear of committing some "act of cowardice." And

³¹⁶ John C. Ewers, ed., *Adventures of Zenas Leonard, Fur Trader* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959), 64.

³¹⁷ Ibid. Bonneville argued that he only gave Walker permission to explore the Great Basin and not further west. He also "berated" Walker for supposedly "attacking and murdering inoffensive Digger Indians...and for prodigally wasting the company's resources in unprofitable and unnecessary amusements in distant California." John C. Ewers, "Editors Introduction," in *Adventures of Zenas Leonard, Fur Trader* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959), xxiii. For a more detail on this controversy see Washington Irving, *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville U. S. A. in the Rocky Mountains and the Far West, Digested from his Journals and Illustrated from Various other Sources* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1868).

³¹⁸ Ewers, "Editors Introduction," xxii.

although some claimed he was "a man of little humor," Ewers argues "he certainly was not a griper either."³¹⁹

By the fall of 1833, the Walker party had "marched...over the Sierra Nevada, skirting Yosemite Valley's northern rim," and descended the Merced River to the San Joaquin where they "reached tidewater in the Delta."³²⁰ After making camp in the evening of November 2nd, a "loud distant noise similar to that of thunder" interrupted the men's rest.³²¹ Leonard recorded in his journal that some of the men "were much alarmed, as they readily supposed it was occasioned by an earthquake, and they began to fear that we would all be swallowed up in the bowels of the earth."³²² Captain Walker was quick to allay their fears. He persuaded his men that they were not in danger and that the loud noise they heard in the distance was the "Pacific rolling and dashing her boisterous waves against the rocky shore."³²³

A mere ten days later, the party suffered through yet another disconcerting event.

Leonard recorded the scene in full:

On the night of the 12th our men were again thrown into great consternation by the singular appearance of the heavens. Soon after dark the air appeared to be completely thickened with meteors falling towards the earth, some which would explode in the air and others would be dashed to pieces on the ground, frightening our horses so much that is required the most active vigilance of the whole company to keep them together. This was altogether a mystery to some of the men who probably had never before seen or heard of anything of the kind.³²⁴

³¹⁹ Ibid., xxi-xxii.

³²⁰ Richard Dillon, *Siskiyou Trail: The Hudson's Bay Company Route to California* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975), 226.

³²¹ Ewers, *Adventures of Zenas Leonard*, 89.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ Ibid., 90. Leonard's account is one of the only records of the meteor shower that talk about the meteors actually striking the earth's surface.

At least one of the men in the camp dragged Captain Walker "from his blankets...and demanded the leader protect them from the 'damndest shooting-match that ever was seen.'"³²⁵ In an effort to temper once again his men's anxiety, Walker offered a rational explanation for the astronomical phenomenon and according to Leonard "they were satisfied."³²⁶

Not far to the south, Ewing Young had a similar experience. Born in Tennessee in late eighteenth century, he became an independent trapper and trader in Nuevo Mexico. Despite efforts to curb American commerce by Mexican authorities, Young was successful as a businessman in part due to his baptism into the Roman Catholic Church on May 11, 1831 at the age of thirty-five.³²⁷ Father Antonio Jose Martinez filed the appropriate paperwork. According to historian Kenneth L. Holmes, the priest was "a man of vast energy and few scruples who got along well with the American trappers, Catholic and Protestant alike."³²⁸ He goes on to note that "if they needed a Roman Catholic baptismal record in order to obtain a trapping license from the Mexican authorities, he baptized them for a small fee."³²⁹ Whether or not Young's newly found Catholicism flooded his thoughts on the night of November 12th is uncertain. What we do know is that he was in awe of the celestial event to the chagrin of some of his men who at first were

³²⁵ Bill Gilbert, *Westering Man: The Life of Joseph Walker* (New York: Atheneum, 1983), 137.

³²⁶ Ewers, *Adventures of Zenas Leonard*, 90.

³²⁷ Kenneth L. Holmes, *Ewing Young, Master Trapper* (Portland, OR: Binfords & Mort, 1967), 3.

³²⁸ This was actually quite common. Even the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, George Simpson, commented on California traders who "profess the Catholic religion" in order to "skak[e] off legal incapacities." George Simpson, *Narrative of a Journey Round the World During the Years 1841 and 1842*, vol. 1 (London: Henry Colburn, 1847), 293.

³²⁹ Holmes, *Ewing Young*, 18. According to Holmes, "Father Antonio Martinez, dutifully entered the following information in the church records: 'Joaquin Yon, 35 years old and a native of Tennessee, the son of Carlos Yon and Maria Rebecca Uilquines, was baptized at Toas, May 11, 1831.'" Holmes goes on to clarify that the "trapper's parents were Charles Young and Mary Rebecca Wilkins. In case of the mother's name it was difficult to find an equivalent for 'W' and 'K,' for which there are no letters in the Spanish Alphabet." *Ibid.*, 3.

convinced the show was nothing more than "lightning bugs or fireflies."³³⁰ Yet, after witnessing the "magnitude, direction, and brilliance" of the display, the skeptics rescinded their prior theory.³³¹

Trader J. J. Warner also vividly recalled the splendor of the Leonid. Warner originally came to the region in 1831 under the employ of trapper and businessman Jedidiah Smith, whose simultaneous commitments to the fur trade and his Methodist faith are legendary. Although retiring from the trade the year before, Smith agreed to accompany his younger brothers along the Santa Fe Trail and needed some additional hands. Warner gladly accepted the invitation and within a month departed St. Louis for Nuevo Mexico. Along the way, Smith was killed by a band of Comanche hunters while scouting for water, and upon reaching Santa Fe, Warner "took service as a hired man" in another party, which included Ewing Young.³³² In fact, as the stars fell that November night, he was alongside Young on a trapping expedition through California to what is now southwest Oregon. He certainly shared Young's awe of the event. Although suffering from illness, Warner still managed to remember that "'during the early part of the night, our attention was called by the camp guard to the display of shooting stars. The whole company was aroused, to look upon this unusual phenomenon....All the celestial orbs had been cast adrift, and were flying promiscuously...in every direction.'"³³³

Many along the Eastern Seaboard also experienced the shower's brilliance. A correspondent for *The Baltimore Gazette and Daily Advertiser* recorded that the "heaven's became illuminated by thousands of shooting stars" and "lasted without intermission for nearly

³³⁰ Dillon, *Siskiyou Trail*, 225.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² J. J. Warner, *Reminiscences of Early California, 1831-1846*, vol. 7 (Los Angeles: Historical Society of Southern California, 1908), 178.

³³³ Holmes, *Ewing Young*, 90.

thirty minutes."³³⁴ The writer went on to comment that some of the onlookers "predicted the end of the world," while other more "stern souls were sure that it at least prognosticated some dreadful war, whilst the Philosopher, smiling at their simplicity, calmly viewed the Phenomenon, wonderful as it was."³³⁵ Other periodicals attempted a more accurate assessment of the event. Quoting from the *Boston Centinel* three days later, the *Eastern Argus Tri Weekly* noted that the stars "were falling about half as thick as the flakes of snow in one of our common snow falls, with intervals of a few seconds."³³⁶ From 5:45 to 6:00 am the correspondent counted as many meteors as possible. Even in just a 15-minute span at a time when the frequency had slowed, he counted roughly 650. Based on his calculations, over 8,000 meteors fell in those early morning hours.³³⁷ Further west, a reporter for the *Arkansas Gazette* commented on the brightness of the meteors. "'More than a dozen'" shooting stars fell at once from the sky, the correspondent wrote, "'many of them brilliant globes of fire [that] produc[ed] sufficient light to admit of reading the smallest print.'"³³⁸

³³⁴ "A Shower of Fire," *Baltimore Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, November 13, 1833.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

³³⁶ "From the Boston Centinel. Remarkable Atmospherical Phenomenon," *Eastern Argus Tri Weekly*, November 18, 1833.

³³⁷ *Ibid.* The *Philadelphia National Gazette* offered very different calculations. Quoted in the *Connecticut Curreant* several days later, the correspondent counted eighty "shooting stars" in a five minute window. The entire spectacle lasted roughly "two and half hours," allowing the gentlemen to conclude that "upwards of two thousand" meteors fell from the sky that night." "From the (Philadelphia) National Gazette: Brilliant Meteoric Phenomena," *Connecticut Curreant*, November 18, 1833. The precision in recounting the event actually signaled a major turning point in scientific journalism. Media and technology scholar Mark Littmann argues that "what is significant is that American newspaper editors of that era, usually consumed with politics and caustic attacks on one another with little concern for fact and fairness, did their best to bring their readers an explanation of the awesome but terrifying sight they had seen or heard about." Mark Littmann, "American Newspapers and the Great Meteor Storm of 1833: A Case Study in Science Journalism," *Journalism Communication Monographs* 10, no. 3 (2008): 263. As a way of repudiating some of the "superstition" that surrounded the event, editors "consulted scientific texts, called for readers familiar with science to contribute, and printed the explanations of scientists from other cities." *Ibid.*, 251.

³³⁸ Mary L. Kwas, "The Spectacular 1833 Leonid Meteor Storm: The View from Arkansas," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 58, no. 3 (1999): 316. Even further west, several indigenous communities along the Great Plains made reference to the famous Leonid in their "winter counts," the primary way in which many tribes in the

Returning to the Pacific Slope, roughly seventy miles to the north of Young and Warner, trader George C. Yount's experience with the Leonid was, to some extent, unique. After departing Monterrey, where he "built another boat for otter hunting," he and a small party descended the San Joaquin "to its mouth for furs."³³⁹ Although the party met with "indifferent success," it was during this expedition when the "brilliant phenomenon" occurred.³⁴⁰ Yount, however, had little time to marvel. The Hawaiian workers in his party "were alarmed above measure....They trembled and even became frantic [with] fear."³⁴¹ The "Kanaka" trappers assumed "some mighty *kapu* had been broken for the gods to carry on so" and they "prayed to Pele and other deities."³⁴² Yount had his "hands full" and "it was not without long & persevering effort, that he quieted them and allayed their apprehensions."³⁴³

The central role that celestial bodies played in "classical" Hawaiian cosmologies seems to

region recorded the passing of time on an annual basis. According to ethnohistorian James H. Howard, "a typical winter count consisted of a tanned bison hide on the flesh side of which a pictograph of a single important or unusual event was drawn or painted to record each passing year" and which "served as mnemonic aids." James H. Howard, "Butterfly's Mandan Winter Count: 1833-1876," *Ethnohistory* 7, no. 3 (1960): 28. A winter count associated with the Mandan in what is now North Dakota apparently references the meteor shower. In a transcribed text found in the unpublished manuscripts of anthropologist Gilbert L. Wilson - evidently he received a copy from a Hidasta interpreter named Edward Goodbird, who "had written down the text as it was dictated to him by Butterfly, a Mandan Indian [and] the keeper of the winter count" - it states that "many years ago, many stars fell down to the ground." Ibid., 28-29. Howard makes the claim that the Mandan reference to this particular celestial event is by no means unique. The Leonid "is noted on virtually all Plains Indian winter counts [and]...provides an excellent 'index year' for the comparison of various counts." Ibid., 29. For instance, most of the surviving Lakota winter counts (housed in the Smithsonian) include pictographs for the year 1833-1834 that clearly resemble either stationary stars or moving stars in the night sky (some of the hides not only depict stars but also a crescent moon). Like the Mandan, the sky played an important role in Lakota mythology and "celestial events such as eclipses and meteors were regularly chosen as markers for the years in which there were notable occurrences." Candace S. Green and Russell Thornton, eds., *The Year the Stars Fell: Lakota Winter Counts at the Smithsonian* (Washington D. C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2007), vii-viii.

³³⁹ Charles L. Camp, ed., *George C. Yount and his Chronicles of the West, Comprising Extracts from his "Memoirs" and from the Orange Clark "Narrative"* (Denver: Old West, 1966), 118-119.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 119.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Dillon, *Siskiyou Trail*, 226.

³⁴³ Ibid.; Camp, *George C. Yount*, 119.

have been a key factor in spurring the fear experienced by these Islanders. David Malo noted that "traditional" Hawaiian religion included the worship of the stars, which, according to anthropologist Valerio Valeri, were interpreted commonly as divine eyes peering down on terrestrial existence.³⁴⁴ In fact, it was, among other attributes, the roundness of celestial bodies that prompted their veneration in the first place. Many pre-contact and even early colonial Hawaiians believed that spherical objects in the night sky represented sites of divine purity, insofar as "the circle evoke[d] a being closed in on itself because it is complete and self-sufficient."³⁴⁵ Regardless of the context, Valeri attests that "circular things and things capable of circular movement are often considered divine, especially if they are powerful and distant, such as the stars or the moon."³⁴⁶ Due to its shape, it was not uncommon for ancient Hawaiians to refer to a full moon using the term *akua*, which translates roughly as "divine" or "deity."³⁴⁷

The deification of celestial bodies made them important bellwethers. In a journal entry dated January 16, 1824, a Protestant missionary in Hawai'i named Charles Samuel Stewart commented on an "almost total eclipse of the moon," which left he and his missionary companions "awestruck at the beauty of God's creation."³⁴⁸ Soon after they retired for the evening, "loud and lamentable wailings were heard in various directions" throughout the neighborhood in which the missionaries were staying.³⁴⁹ Upon exiting his dwelling, Stewart questioned one of the mourners who was weeping in his yard. The person informed the

³⁴⁴ Malo, *Hawaiian Antiquities*, 83.; Valeri, *Kingship and Sacrifice*, 324.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 88.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 89.

³⁴⁸ Charles Samuel Stewart, *Private Journal of a Voyage to the Pacific Ocean and Residence at the Sandwich Islands in the years 1822, 1823, 1824, and 1825* (New York: John P. Haven, 1828), 253.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

missionary that the darkening of the moon signified the death of the king. By this time "considerable numbers had gathered round [Stewart's] fence" and "in tones of deep anxiety and distress" exclaimed, "'*mahina mai, mai nui*' - the moon is sick, very sick - '*mahina pupuka - pupuka no!*' - the gods are eating up the moon."³⁵⁰ The next morning, "a young Englishman," whom Stewart described as having "considerable intelligence," offered the chiefs a rational explanation for the celestial event but they "seemed rather skeptical."³⁵¹ Evidently, the chiefs' doubt drew the ire of Stewart who chastised the "Hawaiian race" for being ignorant and superstitious or, in his words, a "dark hearted party," who foolishly ascribed religious significance to every natural occurrence.³⁵²

Discerning the meanings of the stars and other astronomical phenomena was an important pastime for the leadership of many Hawaiian communities in the pre-contact and early colonial periods. According to Malo, it was not uncommon for chiefs to have a *kilolani* in their service, whose primary responsibility was to observe and interpret "the auguries of the heavens" with the hope that such omens would yield advantages in politics, economics, or warfare.³⁵³ Appeals to the heavens also included formal, scripted performances such as the *kuapola*, during which priests, on behalf of a chief or king, would sing, chant, and "'feed' the stars and moon" through ritual sacrifice intended to consult or petition celestial bodies for the purpose of royal oracles.³⁵⁴

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Ibid., 254.

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Malo, *Hawaiia n Antiquities*, 59. Similarly, another nineteenth-century Hawaiian historian named Kepelino discussed in his writings the role of what he called the *kilo* in the ancient Hawaiian society. He wrote, "The *Kilo* or interpreter of signs read the signs on the body, the signs in the heavens and so forth, and explained them to the chief. He did what he was directed to. If he made an error he was put to death by the executioner. His office was hereditary." Martha Warren Beckwith, ed., "Kepelino's Traditions of Hawaii," *Bernice P. Bishop Museum Bulletin* 95 (1932): 130.

³⁵⁴ Valeri, *Kingship and Sacrifice*, 202.

Typically these performances included the use of *anu'u* towers. In his *Polynesian Researches*, William Ellis provided a detailed description of one such structure located in a *heiau*:

In the centre of this inner court was the place where the *anu* was erected, which was a lofty frame of wicker-work, in shape something like an obelisk, hallow, and four or five feet square at the bottom. Within this the priest stood, as the organ of communication from the god, whenever the king came to inquire his will; for his principal god was also his oracle, and when it was to be consulted, the king, accompanied by two or three attendants, proceeded to the door of the inner temple, and, standing immediately before the obelisk, inquired respecting the declaration of war, the conclusion of peace, or any other affair of importance. The answer was given by the priest in a distinct and audible voice.³⁵⁵

At very least, the construction of an *anu'u* tower served as a symbolic gesture that in a literal way reduced the distance between the earth and sky and ultimately fostered a sense of intimacy with the panoptic powers that lie above, and gaze down upon, the terra firma.

The cultural context in which the Hawaiian workers in Yount's party came of age included a deep respect for the spiritual power attributed to the stars and moon. Thus, the anxiety experienced by the men as they witnessed the stars falling from the heavens on the evening of November 12, 1833 goes a long way in confirming, like Peter's burial over two decades prior, that Hawaiian laborers in the fur trade imported to the Pacific Slope, alongside other material goods, certain religious concepts in the synapses of their minds. Their anxiety also offers an important contrast. The "Kanakas" dire conclusions were juxtaposed with Yount's own interpretation of the event - an interpretation informed by an entirely different epistemology.

George C. Yount was born in Burke Country, North Carolina on May 4, 1794. When he was ten years old, his large family (eleven siblings) moved to Cape Girardeau, Missouri with the hopes of finding more land and a better life. Yount spent his teen years in an environment where

³⁵⁵ William Ellis, *Polynesian Researches, During the Residence of Nearly Eight Years in the Society and Sandwich Islands*, vol. 4 (London: Fisher, Son, & Jackson, 1842), 97.

"guards had to be posted at the corners of the fields while the land was being cleared and crops planted or harvested" to stave off an attack from nearby Indians.³⁵⁶ His older brothers married quickly leaving Yount to "help with the farm and stand guard in the fields."³⁵⁷ Saddled with responsibility, he had very little time for education and probably "never learned to read or write."³⁵⁸ He did, however, "become an expert with guns, pistols, the tomahawk, the axe, and the plow."³⁵⁹ Young Yount also acquired construction skills and could build anything from a log cabin to a mill. In fact, his ability at carpentry and the splitting of shingles "gained him the gratitude of...missionaries" who relied on such skilled craftsmen (often whose primary vocation was a trapper and/or trader as in the case of Yount) to build their mission stations.³⁶⁰ After starting a family of his own and experiencing some financial losses, Yount, in 1826, traveled to Nuevo Mexico for a brief period to "recoup his fortune."³⁶¹ He ended up staying in the region for the rest of his life, settling down in the late 1830s in the Napa Valley of Northern California and sending for his daughters back east (his wife, having assumed Yount was dead, had remarried).

Yount's exploits throughout the American West have become legendary and his name synonymous with the fur trade in that region. In the span of little more than a decade, he trapped and traded as far north as modern-day Idaho and as far south as modern-day Baja California. His

³⁵⁶ Charles L. Camp, "Introduction," in *George C. Yount and his Chronicles of the West, Comprising Extracts from his "Memoirs" and from the Orange Clark "Narrative,"* ed. Charles L. Camp (Denver: Old West, 1966), vii.

³⁵⁷ Camp, *George C. Yount*, 14.

³⁵⁸ Camp, "Introduction," vii. Evidently, he dictated his personal narrative to a friend, Orange Clark, who also happened to be a Protestant minister.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, viii.

work also took him through the current states of Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. Yount mostly trapped beaver, but in the early 1830s he expanded his business to include the hunting of sea otters along the California coast. The reason why Yount had "Kanakas" in his party on the night of November 12th was because of their longstanding reputation for being excellent swimmers and boatman - two important skills for successfully and safely obtaining otter pelts in coastal waters.³⁶² He would "shoot the otters from his boat" and "one of the Kanakas would plunge into the water, & swim for [the] game and bring it into the boat."³⁶³ Yount certainly needed the help. As one who was raised in the landlocked territory of Missouri, he was "extremely ignorant of everything about the ocean," to the extent that "many of his inquiries became a subject of amusement to those with whom he had become associated."³⁶⁴

While hunting otter, Yount and the Hawaiians in his party had a distressing experience that would, to some extent, foreshadow their later interaction during the Leonid. After losing a boat in a brief but powerful squall, they made camp for the evening on a small island just off the Southern California coast. For supper Yount was "so unfortunate as to eat of some herb which proved poisonous."³⁶⁵ He took ill and spent the night vomiting. Their leader's sickness, coupled with the prior loss of a vessel, "alarmed" the Hawaiians whom Yount referred to as "superstitious

³⁶² Yount wrote that according to certain indigenous traditions in the area, "the early Indians... were amphibious, hence the natives suppose that the Kanaka is the purest species of mankind because they pass so large a portion of their life in the water." *George C. Yount*, 163.

³⁶³ Camp, "Introduction, xii.; Camp, *George C. Yount*, 102. When and where Yount acquired these Hawaiian laborers is uncertain. They may have come to the mainland initially on an HBC vessel to the Pacific Northwest but, for a variety of reasons (working conditions, general climate, and so on) deserted and fled south to Spanish California. Indeed, for much of the early nineteenth century, California was the only viable option for such "fugitive islanders." Barman and Watson, *Leaving Paradise*, 92-93. It is certainly possible that some of the "Kanakas" in his party may have been originally under contract with the HBC to the north.

³⁶⁴ Camp, *George C. Yount*, 101. It is possible that among those amused by Yount's ignorance were Hawaiians who, in all likelihood, had much more maritime experience.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 103-104.

creatures."³⁶⁶ The men "insisted that the Devil was on that side of the Island" and were thus "obliged to remove the camp."³⁶⁷ Eventually they were "quieted" but not without "much difficulty."³⁶⁸

The general foreignness of the Hawaiians' "character" underscores the disparity between their religion and the religion of Yount. Unfortunately, when it comes to Yount's religious identity we know very little (especially in comparison to other traders such as David Thompson or Jedidiah Smith). Although his narrative is speckled with references to God and biblical tales, this tells us less about Yount and more about Yount's narrator, Orange Clark, an ordained minister in the Episcopal Church who did not seem to shy away from expounding on Yount's stories with his own pithy sermons. Thus, separating the religious commitments of Yount from the religiously-inclined voice of Clark is no small task.

A good place to begin is with Yount's middle name. According to his early biographers, he was born George Calvert Yount, which would suggest he grew up in a Catholic home, considering his parents named him after the famous Catholic aristocrat George Calvert, who acquired a land charter from Charles I to establish the Catholic colony of Maryland. Historian Charles L. Camp agrees that Yount's middle name is proof of his Catholic identity, only "Calvert" was not actually his middle name; it was "Conception."³⁶⁹ In the months following the meteor storm, Yount stayed in the general area and in 1834 was placed temporarily in charge of

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 104.

³⁶⁷ Ibid. It is likely that the Hawaiians were not afraid of the "Devil" but were concerned with the violation of some *kapu* which had brought on their misfortune and was only misconstrued by Yount or Clark as fear of an evil spiritual entity.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ Charles L. Camp, "Notes," in *George C. Yount and his Chronicles of the West, Comprising Extracts from his "Memoirs" and from the Orange Clark "Narrative,"* ed. Charles L. Camp (Denver: Old West, 1966), 249.

the Spanish Catholic mission in Sonoma. Evidently, it "became necessary for the priest to absent himself" and it was "Yount's good fortune to be entrusted with charge of the mission in his absence."³⁷⁰ However, before the trapper could take the religious post, he had to be baptized, which he apparently did and was named by the priest, "'Jorge de la Concepcion Yount.'"³⁷¹ It seems that Yount accepted the position and converted to Catholicism as a means to acquire real estate in the area. He made it "known to the generous superior...he now abandoned his wandering life, and endeavored to render himself useful to the community in which he lived at Sonoma."³⁷² This calculated maneuver paved the way for Yount to procure a land grant for Rancho Caymus in the Napa Valley, where he would spend the remainder of his days.³⁷³

According to Camp, the Reverend Clark "failed to mention [Yount's] Catholic baptism, and never recorded his middle name."³⁷⁴ Although silent in this regard, Clark did manage to comment on Yount's piety or lack thereof. He praised the trapper for his "uprightness" and "honesty" but admonished him for not observing the Sabbath "during all his long wanderings in the wilderness."³⁷⁵ To be fair, Yount did alter his commitments to the day of rest when after surviving a furious squall in coastal waters, during which his "Kanakas even turned pale [with] fear," he "spoke out and resolved never more to violate the Fourth Commandment of the

³⁷⁰ Camp, *George C. Yount*, 126.

³⁷¹ Camp, "Notes," 249.

³⁷² Camp, *George C. Yount*, 127.

³⁷³ One could say that the fur trader used his religious capital, acquired through the ritual of conversion, as a means of improving his current financial situation and ensuring his socio-economic (and even political) prestige following his retirement from the trade.

³⁷⁴ Camp, "Notes," 249.

³⁷⁵ Camp, *George C. Yount*, 113.

Decalogue."³⁷⁶ Clark mentioned that every Sunday morning thereafter he tended not to his traps but to his Bible and "none of his laborers and dependents [were] expected to desecrate the day in any way."³⁷⁷

Such supernatural occurrences were not lost on Yount, even in his later years. In *Nature and the Supernatural* (1858), the Reverend Horace Bushnell recorded how the retired trapper was "convinced that it was his dream that gave [a] relief party their guidance" to save a starving group of overland travelers. "I saw a body of water, a caravan with women and children all just as thin as they could be," he exclaimed. "I have ordered my men to drive in young steers and sheep and to make flour; 600 pounds of meat and 400 of flour is now ready. I'm carrying out my dream."³⁷⁸ Camp notes that everyone in the party was "rescued from the mountains and were taken to Yount's Ranch where they were given quarters for some time and treated in a most generous manner."³⁷⁹

At least religiously, Yount emerges from the literature as an ambiguous figure. Besides the uncertainty surrounding his Catholic and/or Protestant identity, on several occasions he attempted to ease the concern of the "superstitious Kanakas" in his employ presumably by informing them that their penchant to ascribe supernatural significance to natural phenomenon was misguided, even though he was guilty of making a similar move from time to time. If

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 114. Insinuated in this passage is a linkage Yount created between the violent sea and the wrath of God for his unwillingness to observe the Sabbath. This bears a striking resemblance to his Hawaiian employees who argued that other unfortunate events during their expedition were caused by the wrath of the gods for the breaking a *kapu*.

³⁷⁷ Ibid. Tending to his Bible on the Sabbath was, in the nineteenth century, more of a Protestant exercise. Either Clark attempted to describe Yount as being more Protestant than he really was or Yount did hold Protestant convictions prior to, and maybe even after, his official conversion to Catholicism.

³⁷⁸ Charles L. Camp, "The Chronicles of George C. Yount: California Pioneer of 1826," *California Historical Society Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (1923): 64.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

Yount's efforts to calm his disconcerted Hawaiians did not spring from the mind of a stalwart champion for scientific empiricism, then what other factors were at play?

The conversion strategies of Protestant missionaries among indigenous peoples may have had an impact. Whether in the context of the Hawaiian Islands or the American West, colonial constructions of natives featured familiar tropes: primitive, savage, barbarous, naked, dark-skinned, pagan, and so on. Accompanying these characterizations was the prevailing idea that they were naive or simply willfully ignorant. Viewing themselves as educators in not only the Christian faith but in all "civilized" programs of study, Protestant missionaries were particularly fond of this rhetoric. For example, after an attempt by missionary Hiram Bingham to describe the "globular figure and diurnal motions of the earth," the king (probably Liholiho) "laughed at [Bingham's] astronomy, and...turned away from study for Saturnalian revelry."³⁸⁰ Striking a tone similar to that of Charles Samuel Stewart, Bingham retorted that "a nation so stupid and ignorant" and whose "spiritual wants...demand more attention than the missionaries could give" are unable to acquire a "knowledge of the arts and sciences."³⁸¹

As in the case of Stewart, it was not uncommon for the adjectives "ignorant" and "superstitious" to fall within the same sentence. For many missionaries, knowledge - whether theological, historical, agricultural, or scientific - had the transformative capability to lift the "savage" from their current state of moral, cultural, and spiritual degradation, bringing them

³⁸⁰ Hiram Bingham, *A Residence of Twenty-Two Years in the Sandwich Islands* (Hartford, CT: Hezekiah Huntington, 1847), 171.

³⁸¹ Ibid. Chief Trader Peter Ogden also articulated this style of Christianization in his small treatise entitled, *Traits of American Indian Life and Character*: "It is, I fear, but a hopeless task to inculcate those pure precepts of morality when are co-existent with, and dependent on, a state of civilization....The influence of Christianity can never really be felt except commensurably with the advancement of knowledge, as indeed, knowledge is of little avail without Christian virtue; each reciprocally promoting the strength of the other, in an ever-increasing ration of progress." Peter Skene Ogden, *Traits of American Indian Life and Character* (New York: Dover, 1995), 83-84.

closer to the civilized order and ultimately genuine religion.³⁸² As one who helped build mission stations, it is certainly possible that by the 1830s Yount had spent enough time with Protestant missionaries throughout the Trans-Mississippi region to have been at least familiar with their basic conversion strategies and even may have heard about the successes of their fellow missionaries in converting native Hawaiians. Although it is unclear how Yount calmed his Hawaiian associates in times of excitement, we can assume that it involved convincing them that their supernatural interpretation of the event was incorrect and educating them on its natural causes (as best as his limited education would allow). It is possible that Yount viewed his efforts as a way of not only diffusing an uncomfortable situation but, through knowledge, improving the overall character of the Hawaiians whom he relied on heavily during his coastal expeditions.

It would seem that "improving" the character of his Hawaiian employees was actually beneficial to Yount's business operations. Even though the Islanders "regarded [their leader] with [so much] affection and veneration" that he gained "an unlimited influence over them," persuading them to modify their longstanding cosmology in moments of crisis still took time and energy that could be invested in accumulating more pelts.³⁸³ On one expedition along the coast of California in the early 1830s, eruptions of Hawaiian "superstition" were common enough that it effected the overall success of the enterprise. Yount completed the season with "seventy five skins which brought the snug little sum of Two Thousand, Two Hundred and Fifty Dollars."³⁸⁴

³⁸² In the early nineteenth century, popular conceptions of "genuine religion" consisted of a recognizable institutional structure with a clerical hierarchy and prescribed set of liturgical practices all centered on an ancient and sacred text.

³⁸³ Camp, *George C. Yount*, 106-107.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 105.

He could have had more if "he had [not] been subjected to [so] many inconveniences."³⁸⁵ Yount (or Clark) admitted that the "character of his Kanakas was new to him" and predicted that "after some experience [for him and his Hawaiian laborers], and such improved circumstances as seemed manifestly practicable, he might render the business largely remunerative."³⁸⁶ It is possible that for Yount, quieting the Hawaiians by supplying them with a greater awareness of natural occurring phenomenon enhanced their status as "civilized" personnel, which would reduce the amount of episodes that required intervention in the first place, culminating in increased fur production and ultimately increased profits.

Returning to the meteor storm, the events that transpired on that November evening featured a series of transactions. As the night sky began to light up, the Hawaiians in Yount's trapping party interpreted the situation through the lenses of their own imported cosmology, which included the concept that celestial bodies were imbued with divine power and often associated with various deities in the "classical" Hawaiian pantheon. If roused by the violation of a *kāpu* the gods were known to wreak havoc on the physical world, which could manifest itself in a variety of ways. The sight of the stars apparently losing their important circular shape and dropping from the sky as if bombarding the earth served as an obvious sign that the gods were displeased. These Hawaiians quickly responded, as they likely would have done in the context of the Islands had a similar event occurred, by seeking restitution through fervent prayer and petitioning (and possible even sacrifice if time and resources had permitted). It seems that the Hawaiians hoped that by supplying enough supplication the wrath of the gods could be

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Ibid. Based on the ways in which Hawaiians are portrayed throughout his narrative, the term "character" is, in all likelihood, a reflection on their supposed "superstitious" beliefs and behaviors. In other words, it would be fair, at least in this particular situation, to read the term "character" and "religion" synonymously.

placated and the distressing situation diffused.³⁸⁷

As the evening wore on, the transaction between humans and deities transitioned into another transaction between the Hawaiians and Yount. According to his narrative, after considerable effort, he succeeded in "allay[ing] the apprehensions" of his "Kanaka" workers. In all likelihood he persuaded them enough, as he seems to have done in situations past, that the extraordinary sight they were beholding had nothing to do with the supernatural and was simply a natural occurrence, as terrifying and profound as it was. It is in this moment when the Hawaiians shifted from the role of supplier to consumer. After what appears like significant internal wrangling, they finally accepted Yount's proposal and relaxed. Of course, the reasons behind their consumption are uncertain. While Yount's influence and respectability among the Hawaiians may have encouraged them to simply trust his commentary, it is equally probable they weighed the options themselves and found this particular transaction more expedient in alleviating their fear compared to the alternative.

Regardless, the Hawaiians' consumption placed Yount in an ideal position. With the sunrise came further validation that his explanation was indeed accurate; by the early light the

³⁸⁷ It is important to note that Hawaiians were not the only ones to respond to the Leonid with religious sentiment. We see similar reactions from folks in the East, namely African Americans, whom newspapers referred to using many of the same tropes we see in the writings of missionaries such as Stewart and Bingham. For example, a correspondent for the *Arkansas Gazette* wrote that "among the ignorant and superstitious, particularly the blacks, it [the meteor storm] created considerable alarm. We have heard of one old negro woman, who said she was awakened by the blowing of a trumpet, and, on discovering the illumination occasioned by brilliant meteors which were flying in every direction in the upper regions, imagined that it was the 'last trump' that she heard, and that the Day of Judgment had arrived." Kwas, "The Spectacular 1833 Leonid," 319. This is not say that Euro-Americans were somehow immune such these reactions. A Yellville resident by the name of John Tabor describe his response to the Leonid as follows: "Like my brother, I...thought it the last of earth, and we all concluded that I was too late to pray and submitted ourselves to await the approach of our destruction. I fully believed that we would have to give an account of our sins to God at once and we s[a]t down and waited for the awful moment to appear. The suspense of waiting was dreadful. If I was condemned to be hung and were standing on the trap door with the noose around my neck waiting an hour for the trap to be sprung, I could feel no worse than I did that night. We waited and went on waiting for the coming of our doom. The grand display continued and our terror did not grow less. The night seemed a month long, and the end of the world had not come yet. At last, to our surprise, we noticed that day was breaking in the east and it looked as natural as it ever did." Ibid., 321.

stars ceased falling and all remained unharmed, as Yount would have predicted only hours before. His precision would have bolstered not only the credibility of his word, but also his authority and influence over the behavior of his Hawaiian associates, who would look to him for answers in the future. What's more, preserving and even increasing his status among the Islanders would have been particularly beneficial for the trapper, considering the high likelihood that some of them arrived on the California coast after defecting from their employment with the HBC in the Pacific Northwest. By convincing the "Kanakas" to disassociate from their own imported cosmology and adhere to his equally imported epistemology, he was able, through the transaction, to produce loyal sentiments among the crew. Such loyalty would have minimized the possibility of desertion, which was certainly in Yount's best interest. After all, his technique for hunting otter demanded the aquatic skills of the Islanders. Though at times their supposed hysteria could be bad for business, without their services he risked complete failure.

However, it may not have been strictly about monetary profits. Based on his past experiences and his underlying affection for the Hawaiians in his employ, it is reasonable to suggest that Yount also viewed his efforts as fulfilling a sense of Christian mission. Using scientific knowledge of the "civilized" world, he informed the "Kanakas" of the errors associated with their "primitive" and "pagan" beliefs and, in so doing, aided in lifting them from their "lowly state of ignorance and superstition." It seems that in a single gesture Yount contributed not only to the success of his own commercial operation but also to the success of a larger, evangelical enterprise whose ultimate objective was the Christianization of the indigenous populations of the Pacific Rim. In other words, it was a gesture triggered by an age-old colonial mindset that considered economic gain and religious expansionism to be interdependent exercises.

While it is true that many Hawaiians defected from the HBC in the Pacific Northwest, making their way south to California, most stayed and worked until the completion of their contracts. For Islanders stationed at these posts, the labor was physically demanding, the climate harsh, and the pay meager. These hardships made it imperative for those who did not abscond to find ways to cope; some used religiously-inspired pageantry and, in the process, found solace as "legitimate" members of the fur trade community.

Dance and Identity: Religio-Entertainment, Fur Trade Merriment, and the Manufacturing of Solidarity

On a warm day in early July, 1855, a tall, slender man with long, jet-black hair galloped into Fort Nisqually and dismounted. His name was Angus MacDonald and he was the officer in charge of Fort Colville located on the Upper Columbia. He, along with a brigade of twenty-five men, had spent much of the late Spring and early Summer trapping and trading up and down the great river and had arrived at Nisqually with "upwards of 200 horses, most of them packed with furs."³⁸⁸ After unloading the beasts, the "valuable lot of furs" were turned over to Edward Huggins, the principal clerk of the post, for inventory and cleaning.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁸ "The story of the coming, via the Nachess Pass, of the Hudson Bay Co brigade with the furs, returns of 1855 (outfit) from the various posts in the Oregon department, and the return of same packed with goods," Edward Huggins Papers 1850-1905, University of Washington Library.

³⁸⁹ Huggins was born in London in 1832. At the age of seventeen he joined the Hudson's Bay Company and traveled to the Pacific Northwest. On April 13th, 1850, Huggins arrived at Fort Nisqually from England to "act as clerk and shopman for one year." Victor J. Farrar, ed., "The Nisqually Journal (Continued)," *The Washington Historical Quarterly* 11, no. 2 (1920): 149. He ended up staying much longer, rising through the ranks to become one of William Fraser Tolmie's most trusted employees. After Tolmie's departure, Huggins became the general manager of Fort Nisqually and played an instrumental role in the success of the Puget's Sound Agricultural Company before retiring in 1870 when the post finally closed. Huggins married the daughter of Chief Factor John Work. Victor J. Farrar, ed., "The Nisqually Journal (Continued)," *The Washington Historical Quarterly* 15, no. 3 (1924): 219. On that day in July, Huggins received from MacDonald's brigade "1,200 Bear skins (250) of the Grizzlies; 200 Badgers; 2,500 Beaver; 350 Fisher (a beautiful fur scarce and hard to catch. It is something like the Marten, only very much larger, and a first class skin was worth here from \$5 to \$8 and in the London market would fetch probably \$20 to \$30); 12 Silver, 80 Cross Silver and 334 Red Foxes; 185 Lynx (prime fur); 1,500 Marten; 575

To celebrate the arrival of the trapping party and their successes, William Fraser Tolmie, the Chief Trader at Fort Nisqually, held a dance. According to Huggins, "one of the large stores was emptied of goods and it became a fine dancing hall," while a couple of the Canadians in MacDonald's party, who were "fair fiddlers," provided the music.³⁹⁰ Whiskey was supplied, as well. There were many "Halfbreed women and girls" in attendance who were "passionately fond of dancing."³⁹¹ As Huggins records, "'Jigs' were their favourite dances and they would stand facing their partners and keep time to music by simply bobbing and jumping with both feet from the ground at the same time."³⁹² For Huggins, it was "very comical."³⁹³

These "Halfbreed" females were not the only ones at Fort Nisqually who enjoyed dancing. "We had in our employ at that time about ten Kanakas," Huggins wrote. "And to vary the entertainment I would persuade these men to dance some of their native dances."³⁹⁴ More often than not, "they would cheerfully comply, and standing in a row would begin a wild and monotonous chant, keeping time by moving their bodies with great exactitude and twisting about."³⁹⁵ In the eyes of Huggins these corporeal movements did not represent dancing "but merely posturing and sometimes it seemed...to be an unseemly performance in the presence of ladies."³⁹⁶ There is no record that the audience, most of whom having succumb to the evening's

Mink; 8,000 Musquash; 412 Land Otter; 580 Wolves (prime fur) and 45 Wolverine." Edward Huggins Papers.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

revelry, ever took offense. Given the hardships of daily life at the fort, it is not surprising that Huggins himself decided not to raise any objection, but instead let the frivolity continue uninterrupted.

Fort Nisqually began as a fur depot for the HBC, strategically located at the southern tip of Puget Sound. Its primary function was to export furs and import supplies, as well as to "take advantage of agriculture and timber potentials and to possibly replace the awkwardly situated Fort Vancouver" on the Lower Columbia.³⁹⁷ The HBC also hoped the fort would serve as a link between its regional headquarters (Fort Vancouver) and Fort Langley situated at the mouth of the Fraser River further to the north.³⁹⁸

Whatever its initial intentions, the post became a forerunner in HBC efforts to diversify production. Although during the first few years of its establishment it functioned almost exclusively as a site to fur collection and exchange with local natives, its focus soon became "crop raising and livestock management."³⁹⁹ Increasing demands for food supplies prompted the HBC to expand its enterprise beyond furs to agriculture.⁴⁰⁰ Due to the supposed fecundity of the soil and the post's accessibility in terms of shipping, Fort Nisqually became an ideal location to launch such a venture. In 1838 the Puget Sound Agricultural Company, a subsidiary of the HBC, was established, turning Nisqually (at least for a time) into the region's foremost

³⁹⁷ Bruce McIntyre Watson, *Lives Lived West of the Divide: A Biographical Dictionary of Fur Traders Working West of the Rockies, 1793-1858* (Kelowna, B.C.: Centre for Social, Spatial and Economic Justice, University of British Columbia, 2010), 1071.

³⁹⁸ Clarence B. Bagley, ed., "Journal of Occurrences at Nisqually House, 1833," *The Washington Historical Quarterly* 6, no. 3 (1915): 179.

³⁹⁹ Watson, *Lives Lived West of the Divide*, 1071.

⁴⁰⁰ By the late 1830s the HBC was responsible for not only supplying their own posts, but also those of a rival trading company to the north. In 1839 the HBC signed an agreement with the Russian American Company to supply their posts with food.

agricultural center.⁴⁰¹

Its farming operations grew exponentially throughout the 1840s. In 1841 "Nisqually possessed...200 acres of land under cultivation, with 3,000 sheep and 1,500 cattle; and in 1851, 1,500 acres of land under cultivation with 10,000 sheep and 6,000 cattle."⁴⁰² Historian John Galbraith writes that "at the height of its prosperity, [Fort Nisqually] supplied the posts of the Hudson's Bay Company on the Pacific Coast and the Russian establishments in Alaska with grain, butter, and cheese." He goes on to note that it also "forwarded shipments from the fur-trading posts at Forts Colville and Nez Perces (Walla Walla) to the dept at Fort Victoria, and supplied them from its pastoral establishments with beef, mutton, wool, and hides."⁴⁰³

The PSAC was a success despite preliminary surveys of the land surrounding Fort Nisqually (originally called Nisqually House). An early entry in the post's journal described the resources of the area, including fish and game, as "very scanty." Some were even forced to eat "dog's flesh" for protein.⁴⁰⁴ George Simpson, Governor of the the HBC's North American operations, was a little more optimistic about the site when he informed the Governor and Committee back in London eight years later that the "soil,...being light and shingly is not so well

⁴⁰¹ Bagley, "Journal of Occurrences," 179. Fort Nisqually's transition from a fur-trading post to an agricultural post is reflected clearly in the change in its business operations. In the first few years of the post's opening Euro-American/Native American trades were normative. However, by the late 1840s trades between the post's leadership and nearby Euro-American farmers had become, by far, the most common transaction at the fort. John S. Galbraith, "The British and Americans at Fort Nisqually, 1846-1859," *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (1950): 112. The post journal for Fort Nisqually depicted this shift in its daily records. Discussion of fur trading, native visitors, and hostilities with local indigenous communities were replaced by entries discussing farming, land claims, and other business arrangements.

⁴⁰² Victor J. Farrar, ed., "The Nisqually Journal," *The Washington Historical Quarterly* 10, no. 3 (1919): 205-206.

⁴⁰³ Galbraith, "The British and Americans," 110.

⁴⁰⁴ Bagley, "Journal of Occurrences," 182 - 183.

adapted for tillage, but by proper system of cultivation it may be greatly improved."⁴⁰⁵ Simpson certainly had reason to encourage the success of the PSAC. Not only did it serve an important economic function, it was also political. For the HBC, laying claim to the land through its cultivation served as an important strategy for curbing American settlement and ultimately minimizing commercial competition in the disputed territory.

Like most HBC posts, Fort Nisqually was a hard place to live. Dysentery was recurrent, constant rumors and threats of Indian attacks created widespread anxiety, and at least during the summer months, the mosquitoes were intolerable.⁴⁰⁶ Physical injury was also commonplace. During its initial construction in the summer of 1833, the post's journal recorded that a worker "cut his foot very much with the axe, & is fainting....The Indians say that it is a dreadful cut."⁴⁰⁷ Evidently the wound ran from the "upper part of the left foot from the instep and nearly half of the edge passed thro [sic] the [middle part]."⁴⁰⁸ To make matters worse it constantly hemorrhaged, making it difficult for the post physician (William Fraser Tolmie) to examine it.⁴⁰⁹ In the words of Tolmie himself, "the patient and attendants were greatly alarmed & I returned a heartfelt thanks to the Almighty when after two vessels were secured by torsion the bleeding

⁴⁰⁵ Glyndwr Williams, ed., *London Correspondence Inward from Sir George Simpson, 1841-1842* (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1973), 95. Whether or not Simpson was accurate in his assessment is certainly debatable. Historian E. E. Rich suggests that the Governor was prone to optimism in his reports to the Company's headquarters in London. E. E. Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, vol. 2 (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1959), 460.

⁴⁰⁶ Tolmie commented more than once in his journal that he was "horribly pestered" with the insect and that "their annoying effects had not been exaggerated." *The Journals of William Fraser Tolmie, Physician and Fur Trader* (Vancouver: Mitchell, 1963), 217.

⁴⁰⁷ Bagley, "Journal of Occurrences," 184.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 185.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.* William Fraser Tolmie arrived at Fort Nisqually in 1833 and became the post's surgeon as well as a clerk. In 1847 he became the post's Chief Trader and remained in that position until 1855. He was successful despite the fact that his "serious, scientifically minded, priggish and religious character was seemingly out of step with the business of trading pelts." Watson, *Lives Lived West of the Divide*, 932. Galbraith argues that "Tolmie administered the affairs of Fort Nisqually with a quiet efficiency which won him the respect of his associates and of his superior officers." Galbraith, "The British and Americans," 110.

quickly diminished."⁴¹⁰ He went on to comment that "I as well as the poor fellow was placed in a very critical situation. He lost [a significant amount] of blood, trembled violently & repeat[ed] his prayers."⁴¹¹

The monotony of the work, especially for the lower-level laborers, did not help matters.

Entries in the post journal in 1833 successfully documented the tedium:

Monday 2nd - The men resumed work as last week...Wednesday 4th - Duties of the place as yesterday. Thursday 5th - The men employed much the same as yesterday...Saturday 14 - Men employed in same manner as yesterday...Wednesday 18 - Men employed as yesterday...Saturday 21 - Before breakfast men occupied as yesterday...Wednesday 25 - Work going on as yesterday...Monday 30 - Work resumed as on Saturday...⁴¹²

It was not uncommon for such monotony, combined with the "gloomy" weather of the winter months, to spur bouts of depression. Even those in leadership positions were not immune. On more than one occasion, Tolmie remarked how he felt a certain "dullness" and "indolence" that seemed at all times to hang heavy over the post. In the spring of 1835 he wrote that he was "deplorably indolent....The dull monotony of the place has a strong influence."⁴¹³ Such an unpleasant mental and emotional state would sometimes inhibit him from engaging in activities which he typically enjoyed. "Although several events worthy of notice have occurred," he wrote on December 23rd, 1835. "Indolence has prevented me from journalizing."⁴¹⁴ On days that were particularly difficult, he thought seriously of retiring from the service at the end of his

⁴¹⁰ *The Journals of William Fraser Tolmie*, 203.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.* Even smaller wounds could spell trouble as employee Adam Beiston discovered in the fall of 1849. After lacerating his thumb from "the bursting of a gun," he contracted a severe case of tetanus, which left him very weak. Farrar, "The Nisqually Journal," 136-137. He would survive his wound.

⁴¹² Bagley, "Journal of Occurrences," 194-197.

⁴¹³ *The Journals of William Fraser Tolmie*, 304.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 317.

contract.⁴¹⁵ Others could not wait. On September 9, 1849, several men "came in from their stations to have an understanding about getting higher wages & bills for their balance up to last June, and if they failed to get them they would leave the service at once."⁴¹⁶ Tolmie was unable to acquiesce to their demands and the men gave notice of their departure, but not before the Chief Trader chastised them for their "dishonorable conduct."⁴¹⁷

Those who defected without notice were normally captured by local natives looking to trade them at the fort for alcohol, clothing, ammunition, or other commodities. If the post leadership caught up to the absconder, which sometimes occurred during a search party, Tolmie in particular would "try by reasoning to persuade them to return to their duty."⁴¹⁸ Depending on the employees work ethic, sometimes he would not even bother. In the fall of 1850 the post's journal recorded that an "Englishman" named "Hore" was "very dissatisfied and [had] gone very unwilling about his work."⁴¹⁹ On the morning of October 15th, he "was nowhere to be found."⁴²⁰ The entry concluded that "he is of not much loss to the Company, being a worthless lazy fellow."⁴²¹

Hawaiian laborers at Fort Nisqually also quit their posts from time to time. Most were

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., 309. To help improve his mental and emotional state, Tolmie often indulged in the writings of fellow Scotsman John Abercrombie, who spoke of the cultivation of the self through reason, confidence, and empirical truth, or as Tolmie put it, "the characters constituting a well regulated mind." Ibid., 68, 91.

⁴¹⁶ Victor J. Farrar, ed., "The Nisqually Journal (Continued)," *The Washington Historical Quarterly* 11, no. 1 (1920): 59.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Farrar, "The Nisqually Journal," 228.

⁴¹⁹ Victor J. Farrar, ed., "The Nisqually Journal (Continued)," *The Washington Historical Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (1921): 142.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Ibid., 142-143.

from the island of Oahu and worked at the fort as either a general laborer or as a shepherd, which was one of the more difficult and mundane jobs associated with the PSAC. This combined with the cool, rainy climate and tight regulations prompted some to leave. In February of 1850 the post's journal recorded that "Cowie, [a] Sandwich Islander, declined taking rations today, saying that he meant to leave the service."⁴²² Two days later, "three Sandwich Islanders did not go to duty."⁴²³ However, after experiencing the hardships that lie beyond affiliation with the HBC/PSAC (starvation, poverty, hostile Indians, and so on), Cowie, along with his two associates, Kalama and Keave'haccow, returned and "begg[ed]...to be taken in the employ of the Company" once again.⁴²⁴

For those who chose to stay, dealing with the hardships and hazards of the job required certain coping mechanisms. Alcohol consumption was by far the most popular. Following the 1821 merger between the NWC and the HBC, Simpson, after witnessing the dire effects of unrestrained trade in liquors, sought to halt the trafficking of alcohol to local natives altogether and even prevent its use at Company posts, overruling "in advance any plea that the moist climate of the coast might make a moderate use of spirits necessary."⁴²⁵ Despite of the official position of the Governor, "commissioned officers [even ones as high-ranking as Dr. John McLoughlin]...were reluctant to concede everything and the way was left open to continue the

⁴²² Farrar, "The Nisqually Journal," 146.

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ Ibid., 138. It was not just Hawaiians who reconsidered their decision to defect. On December 18th, 1850, the post's journal noted that "Montgomery, one of the deserters of last spring, this day has made an agreement with Dr. Tolmie that he will come back and remain the full time of his original agreement in his old situation." Ibid., 221.

⁴²⁵ Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 479.

regales."⁴²⁶ Moreover, in exchanges with local chiefs the post leadership continued to trade rum for furs and other commodities such as buffalo meat, while low-level employees such as voyageurs, "mix-bloods," and Hawaiians continued to turn to spirits, as many had done in the past, for a brief respite from the mental, emotional, and physical strain of their demanding labor.⁴²⁷ In the end, the tight management of alcohol at HBC posts encouraged many of these subordinates to "develop a 'feast-famine' attitude toward drinking."⁴²⁸ Thus, it should come as no surprise that whenever workers were able to acquire liquor (whether through a holiday ration or from illegal trafficking), bingeing soon followed, often leading to some precarious situations.

Violent outbursts were routine. The post journal of Fort Nisqually is rife with episodes involving alcohol and pugnaciousness. In an entry marked April 7th, 1835, the journal recorded that a "party of Chickayelitz arrived and traded a dozen of skins most them for rum."⁴²⁹ They,

⁴²⁶ Douglas Mackay, *The Honourable Company: A History of the Hudson's Bay Company* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1936), 225.

⁴²⁷ Unlike the French brandy traded by the earlier Northwesters, the English brandy traded by the HBC "appears to have been a raw sort of gin, and was not popular" among Indians. E. E. Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, vol. 1 (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1958), 545. The imitation liquor was made with "raw gin plus a few drops of iodine [or sometimes chewing tobacco] to simulate the ochre shade" of better, more authentic brandy. Peter Newman, *Caesars of the Wilderness: Company of Adventurers*, vol. 2 (New York: Viking, 1987), 112.

⁴²⁸ Carolyn Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World: Travelers and Traders in the North American Fur Trade* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 182. The strict control of alcohol at HBC posts also created an underground market, where low-level employees could supplement their paltry incomes through the trafficking of rum. Hawaiians were among those who sold alcohol to local natives to improve their financial situation, which as employees of the HBC was strictly prohibited. For instance, former employee of Nisqually, Nahoua was, along with his Indian wife, fined 2 pounds for "supplying liquor to Indians" while stationed in the vicinity of Fort Victoria in 1859. Barman and Watson, *Leaving Paradise*, 357. Similarly, in late November of 1849, the post's journal read: "Sandwich Islanders occasionally drunk, and often trafficking in one way or another...to the neglect of their work" Farrar, "The Nisqually Journal," 137. To be clear, Hawaiians were not the only ones to sell alcohol to natives and get caught doing so. On Friday, August, 24, 1849, the post's journal noted that "Captain Morice of the *Harpooner* accompanied Mr. Thornton, he being accused of having smuggled goods and sold liquor to Indians, while in the Columbia River." Farrar, "The Nisqually Journal," 227.

⁴²⁹ Clarence B. Bagley, ed., "Journal of Occurrences at Nisqually House, 1833-1835 (Continued)," *The Washington Historical Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (1916): 165-166.

then, proceeded to get drunk and fight one another on the beach.⁴³⁰ On May 29th, 1851, one of the employees of the post, a man named Young, reported "a drunken brawl having taken place on board 'Orbit' [an American trading vessel involved in shipping goods to and from Fort Nisqually] in which a man was stabbed."⁴³¹

Bingeing also had an obvious effect on production. On Christmas Day, 1834, workers at Fort Nisqually were able to break from their daily chores and enjoy the most appetizing meat the fort had to offer, including duck and venison. In addition, each received his own "half pint of rum."⁴³² The next day, the post's journal confirmed that the men did not work. Five days later, on New Year's Day, the workers once again received the "best rations" and each received his own "full pint of rum." Evidently, they "behaved well" and were not ordered to work until the following Monday.⁴³³ Similarly on Christmas Day in 1850, a number of workers, including several Hawaiians, were "not at their duties in consequence of having overexerted themselves at the ball on the previous night."⁴³⁴ On the 22nd of January, 1851, the post celebrated with another ball in honor of a marriage involving one of its employees. The next day, the post's journal read: "Rather a poor day for work. Most of the men being unfit for work in consequence

⁴³⁰ Ibid., 166.

⁴³¹ Farrar, "The Nisqually Journal," 137. Not only did injuries from "drunken brawls," they sometimes occurred from a lack of judgment while inebriated. In the fall of 1851 a servant at the post was "off duty having very much injured his arm by the bursting of a powder horn last Wednesday night he being intoxicated at the time." Victor J. Farrar, ed., "The Nisqually Journal (Continued)," *The Washington Historical Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (1922): 293. Another employee of the HBC "[blew] his brains out" during a "fit of intoxication." Farrar, "The Nisqually Journal," 222.

⁴³² Bagley, "Journal of Occurrences," 153.

⁴³³ Ibid., 154. Behaving well while intoxicated was cause for reward mainly because the opposite was more common. For example, in an entry marked March 19th, 1852 the post's journal recorded that one of the field hands "has been drunk for the last two or three days & has behaved very unruly." Farrar, "The Nisqually Journal," 64.

⁴³⁴ Farrar, "The Nisqually Journal," 222.

of last night's revels."⁴³⁵

There were also those men at Fort Nisqually who "reveled" and missed work without official consent and during odd times of the year. On a random Thursday in February, 1851, the post's journal commented that "the Englishman Edwards [was] off duty drinking and carousing with the deserter Hore & part of the 'Orbits' crew who have been paid off."⁴³⁶ Surprisingly, there seemed to be very few punitive consequences for such derelict of duty. After four days of missing, Edwards was back on Monday, "picking out suitable sheep [to send to] Victoria."⁴³⁷ Hawaiians were also guilty on occasion. On March 26, 1852, the post's journal mentioned that Joe Tapou, a Hawaiian laborer and shepherd at the fort, was "out all day...getting drunk."⁴³⁸ Two days later he was "drunk again."⁴³⁹ Eventually, he was "discharged...in 1855 and again the next year for being drunk but returned in October of 1858 to work for four more years."⁴⁴⁰ Given the history of labor shortages within the HBC, the post's leadership may have simply been glad individuals like Edwards and Tapou returned to work at all.

In addition to alcohol, employees at HBC posts occupied themselves with other forms of merriment. Friendly competitions meant to showcase one's strength, aggression, and skill were also popular. On January 3, 1835, after receiving a pint of rum each to ring in the New Year, the men stationed at Fort Simpson (Northwest of Fort Nisqually) held a boxing match between an Iroquois and a Hawaiian. According to Tolmie, who had been reassigned to Fort Simpson for a

⁴³⁵ Ibid., 227.

⁴³⁶ Victor J. Farrar, ed., "The Nisqually Journal (Continued)," *The Washington Historical Quarterly* 12, no. 4 (1921): 300.

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 301.

⁴³⁸ Farrar, "The Nisqually Journal," 65.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., 66.

⁴⁴⁰ Barman and Watson, *Leaving Paradise*, 411.

brief period, the "Islander...floored his opponent neatly & came off victor."⁴⁴¹ Foot races were also prevalent. One of the more memorable ones took place at Fort Nisqually in the summer of 1855. The men in MacDonald's trapping brigade were, in the words of Huggins, a "cosmopolitan crowd," comprised of "Scotchmen, French Canadians, Halfbreeds, and Iroquois Indians."⁴⁴² Evidently, they were also braggarts, "taunting" the employees at Fort Nisqually and "claiming their superiority," especially when it came to sprinting.⁴⁴³ They introduced them to the "fastest runner in the Colville, Nez Perce country," an Iroquois man named Edourd Pichette, who claimed to be able to outrun anyone in a 100-yard dash.⁴⁴⁴ A spry, young Englishman at the fort accepted the Iroquois' challenge and both parties scheduled a race for that very evening. MacDonald volunteered to act as starter while Tolmie and another gentlemen agreed to serve as judges. At the appointed time, the men gathered and placed their bets (which mostly included twists of tobacco). What happened next surprised everyone:

At an agreed upon signal from MacDonald a fair start was made. The young Englishman jumping ahead at the start and, to our astonishment, he increased his

⁴⁴¹ *The Journals of William Fraser Tolmie*, 300. It is quite possible this was not the first boxing match in which the Hawaiian had participated. Even prior to European contact, an activity similar to Euro-American boxing was practiced throughout the Hawaiian Islands. Like many Hawaiian ritual performances boxing served a dual function: it was meant to reenact certain mythological narratives, while at the same time functioned as a form of entertainment for members of the upper classes, including royalty, during celebratory seasons (e.g. Makahiki). In ancient Hawai'i it was not uncommon for a chief to hold a boxing match, where "men as well as women [would wear] holiday garments and...fight." Valeri, *Kingship and Sacrifice*, 207. Malo described one such match in the post-contact era: "The multitude being seated in a circle, the backers of one champion stood forth and vaunted the merits of their favorite, who thereupon came forward and made a display of himself, swaggering, boasting and doubling up his fists. Then the other side followed suit, made their boasts, had their man stand forth and show himself; and when the champions came together they commenced to beat and pummel each other with their fists. If one of the boxers knocked down his opponent a shout of exultation went up from those who championed him, and they grossly reviled the other side, tell them perhaps to 'go and eat chicken-dung.' The one who fell was often badly maimed, having an arm broken, an eye put out, or teeth knocked out." Malo, *Hawaiian Antiquities*, 304. Valeri adds that in these types of boxing matches could lapse into widespread violence where "veritable battles [were] fought with stones; people [were] injured and even killed." Valeri, *Kingship and Sacrifice*, 209.

⁴⁴² Edward Huggins Papers.

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

lead until the end of the first 50 yards when Pichette, the Iroquois, shortened the distance between them to about three yards. From then on to the winning sprint the handsome young Iroquois shortened the distance, but to the intense disgust of MacDonald and his company the Englishman won the race by a distance of about four or five feet.

Following the victory the "young man's reputation as a great runner, who had defeated the Rocky Mountain champion, spread over the Indian country between Colville and the base of the Rockies."⁴⁴⁵

There were few better ways to alleviate stress at HBC posts, especially in the dark and dreary winter, than through corporate dancing and singing during Christmas and New Year's.⁴⁴⁶ Apparently, the Chief Trader at Fort Nisqually was "very fond of music and...could sing a great variety of Gaelic songs."⁴⁴⁷ Tolmie also was known to throw his share of holiday balls.⁴⁴⁸ On December 23, 1852, the post's journal recorded that two employees were responsible for "clearing the goods out of the one of the stores to make a dancing room for the men on Christmas day."⁴⁴⁹ Two days later the "men enjoy[ed] themselves dancing & and singing."⁴⁵⁰ Tolmie's experiences at Fort Simpson were similar, if not more lively. During his brief tenure at the northern post, he witnessed a New Year's Day celebration that included dancing "with great

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ In addition to Christmas and New Year's, many posts celebrated All Saints Day. The Nisqually post journal remarked that it was a "day of much holiness amongst Canadians [Catholics]." Farrar, "The Nisqually Journal," 144. On November 1st, 1851, an entry in the journal lamented: "There is only one Canadian here. All Saints Day was not observed as a holiday - an unprecedented departure from custom." Farrar, "The Nisqually Journal," 298.

⁴⁴⁷ Edward Huggins Papers.

⁴⁴⁸ Although not a holiday ball, the dance held at Fort Nisqually in the summer of 1855 did mark an important occasion. Celebrations at arrivals and departures were an important tradition in the trade, insofar as they helped company personnel, especially voyageurs, "cope with the centrifugal forces caused by the mobility of the job and transience of individuals." Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, 14. It also may have served as a chance to celebrate the success and end of MacDonald's trapping season.

⁴⁴⁹ Farrar, "The Nisqually Journal," 296.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., 297. The entry went on to note that one of the Hawaiians workers, a man by the name of Tawai, was "drunk and disorderly." Ibid.

vivacity...to vocal music"⁴⁵¹ Adding to the night's festivities, two Iroquois "danced the war dance with great spirit," while several Hawaiians "sung Rule Britannia," and did so, in the opinion of Tolmie, "tolerably well."⁴⁵²

Dancing was popular at most HBC posts, even those further East. Artist and traveler Paul Kane recalled a Christmas celebration at Fort Edmonton in 1847 where the "dancing was picturesque, and almost all joined in it."⁴⁵³ Kane himself spent much of the evening dancing with native women, only to become enamored with the beauty of one in particular, a "half-breed" Cree girl whom he referred to as "Cun-ne-wa-bum."⁴⁵⁴ Those in attendance were "Indians, whose chief ornament consisted in the paint on their faces, voyageurs with bright sashes and neatly ornamented moccasins, half-breeds glittering in every ornament they could lay their hands on; whether civilized or savage, all were laughing, and jabbering in as many different languages as there were styles of dress."⁴⁵⁵

Such diversity was by no means an aberration. Dances at HBC posts were almost always multicultural, which is not surprising given the multicultural identity of the posts' day-to-day personnel. Dances tended to be inclusive and thus prone to both passive and active forms of cultural exchange. In fact, dancing, and even singing, became, in the words of historian Carolyn

⁴⁵¹ *The Journals of William Fraser Tolmie*, 300.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

⁴⁵³ Paul Kane, *Wanderings of an Artist among the Indians of North America, from Canada to Vancouver's Island and Oregon through the Hudson's Bay Company's Territory and Back Again* (Toronto: Radisson Society, 1925), 263. According to historian Peter Newman, "Off the second-storey gallery [at Fort Edmonton] was a gentlemen's mess on one side and...[a] ballroom on the other. Under the high-pitched roof were the bedrooms and on the ground floor the armoury, kitchen and stewards' quarters. [John] Rowand [Chief Factor at Edmonton] used the ballroom mainly to hold court and impress visiting Indian chiefs, but at Christmas he could entertain 150 at a single sitting for dinner and dancing." Newman, *Caesars of the Wilderness*, 238.

⁴⁵⁴ Kane, *Wanderings of an Artist*, 264-265.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., 263.

Podruchny, "sites" were participants (including Native Americans, French-Canadian voyageurs, Hawaiians, Brits, Scots, Irishmen, Americans, and so on) could swap various customs in a lax and jovial setting.⁴⁵⁶ In such an atmosphere, hybridity was normative. It was not uncommon for a Scots-Irish or French-Canadian fiddler to play alongside an Indian drummer while the dancers on the floor performed movements with which they were most familiar, without regard to uniformity. Kane experienced one such cacophony at Edmonton, when "having led [a Cree woman] into the centre of the room, [he] danced round her with all the agility [he] was capable of exhibiting," while she "with grave face kept jumping up and down, both feet off the ground at once."⁴⁵⁷

Beyond these visible exchanges, holiday balls also helped voyageurs, as they did most of the isolated personnel at HBC posts, "create a sense of home away from home," which was welcomed especially during the winter months when cold days, long nights, and shortages of food tended to breed severe cases of homesickness.⁴⁵⁸ The winter celebrations were held mostly

⁴⁵⁶ Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, 14.

⁴⁵⁷ Kane, *Wanderings of an Artist*, 264. Striking a similar tone, *Harper's Magazine*, in their October 1860 issue, vividly described the rustic, unscripted, and energetic quality of these "borderland" balls: "The scene was a wild one, though within four walls. A huge mud chimney, with an open fire-place at the right, a four-posted bed, with blankets only, in the further left-hand corner; one or two chairs, which were politely handed to the strangers; and all around the room, sitting upon the floor as Indians and tailors sit, were half-breed men and women, boys and girls - twenty or thirty in all; one mother, with bare breast, suckling her babe; another busy in keeping her little one's toddling feet out of the pan of melted grease low on the mud hearth, with a cotton rage hanging over the edge alight, which made such dark shadows in among the groups in strange places, shadow and light alternating against the rafters and the roof as the figures of the dance changed. Jigs, reels, and quadrilles were danced in rapid succession to the sound of that 'dem'd horrid grind,' fresh dancers taking the place those on the floor every two or three moments. The men were stripped to shirt, trowsers [sic], belt, and moccasins; and the women wore gowns which had no hoops. A vigorous shuffle from some thick-lipped young dancer, with his legs in flour-sacks, or a lively movement of some wrinkled hag, trying to renew the pleasures and activity of her youth, would call out a loud chorus of admiring 'Ho! ho! ho!' and, fired by contagious enthusiasm, a black-eyed beauty in blue calico, and strapping *bois brule*, would jump up from the floor and outdo their predecessors in vigor and velocity - the lights and shadows chasing each other faster and faster over the rafters; the flame, too, swaying wildly hither and thither; and above the thumps of the dancers' heels, and the frequent ho's! and the loud laughter of the ring of squatter sovereigns, rose the monomaniac fiddle-shrieks, forced out of the trembling strings as if the devil was at the bow." Manton Marble, "To Red River and Beyond (Second Paper)," *Harper's Magazine* (October, 1860): 584-585.

⁴⁵⁸ Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, 74.

at forts, mainly because they were a centralized location and had the facilities required for hosting such a large gathering. This meant that travel was necessary for some. Yet, the mental, emotional, and social benefits of participating in these festivities were enough to persuade even the most remote voyageurs working in outlying stations to risk the "dangers and discomforts of winter travel, even a week of walking with snowshoes."⁴⁵⁹

Hawaiian employees at HBC posts such as Fort Nisqually also seemed fond of these celebrations, especially when they included dancing, a familiar exercise for many of them. Ethnohistorian Adrienne Kaeppler argues that in pre-contact Hawai'i, there existed "two main contexts or activities that involved human movements codified into structured systems: (1) worship of the gods in sacred situations [such as in the context of a *heiau*], and (2) honor of the gods as an element of formal entertainments [typically in the presence of high-ranking chiefs]."⁴⁶⁰ Hawaiian historians writing during the nineteenth century often used the term *ha'a* to refer to the former and *hula* to refer to the latter.⁴⁶¹ Kaeppler perpetuates this distinction by suggesting that *ha'a* is best defined as "structured movements done by gods and nature, as well as by humans in sacred contexts" whereas *hula* represents "structured movements done by humans in nonsacred and joyous contexts" and are more concerned with evoking certain "social metaphors" than they are with retaining a certain sacramental quality.⁴⁶² Given the celebratory

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁰ Adrienne Kaeppler, *Hula Pahu, Hawaiian Drum Dances: Volume 1 Ha'a and Hula Pahu: Sacred Movements* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1993), 6.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

⁴⁶² Ibid., 18. Malo touches on the socio-economic dimension of *hula* when he described it as "a very popular amusement among the Hawaiian people. It was used as a means of conferring distinction upon...the people of wealth....It was a the custom of hula dancers to perform before the rich in order to obtain gifts from them." Malo, *Hawaiian Antiquities*, 303. Another nineteenth-century Hawaiian historian named John Papa Ii makes a similar claim when notes that "dancers received many gifts," and even a "gift was laid at the opening of the head

atmosphere in which the Hawaiian workers danced at Fort Nisqually, not to mention their row formation and chanting (both of which were widespread in formal entertainment dances), it would make sense that they were performing some variation of *hula*.⁴⁶³ If this was the case, then it is possible that the meanings behind their movements were more social and only implicitly religious (given the intimacy between social structure and religious cosmology in "old" Hawai'i [e.g. high ranking chiefs were thought to be descendents of the gods]).

Yet, Huggins' further description of the dance challenges this initial identification. In addition to the participants "standing in a row" and vocalizing a "wild and monotonous chant," he observed that they "kept time by moving their bodies with great exactitude and twisting about, in which [he] could see no dancing but merely posturing."⁴⁶⁴ His choice of the word "posturing" is particularly telling. Throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, Western writers often used this verb to illustrate a particular style of corporeal movement popular in early-contact Hawai'i known as the bent-knee stance.⁴⁶⁵ According to Kaeppler, this "lower-body movement" was one of the "motifs of *ha'a*" and thus would have been associated with the more overtly-religious performances of the *heiau*, which like the formal entertainment dances also tended to include a row formation, as well as the "recitation of prayers" in the form of chanting or song.⁴⁶⁶ "The position," she writes, "emphasize[d] a straight back, with the weight quite far back" and

drummer's instrument." John Papa Ii, *Fragments of Hawaiian History*, trans. Mary Kawena Pukui, ed. Dorothy B. Barrere (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1959), 137.

⁴⁶³ Kaeppler, *Hula Pahu*, 9, 13.

⁴⁶⁴ Edward Huggins Papers.

⁴⁶⁵ For example, in his 1919 article entitled "Hawaiian Heiau," Bishop Museum anthropologist John Stokes referred to the bent-knee stance as "'posturing.'" Kaeppler, *Hula Pahu*, 18.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

could include a "circular hip movement."⁴⁶⁷

The archeological record also provides some clues as to its appearance. In their study on early Hawaiian sculpture, anthropologists J. Halley Cox and William H. Davenport describe a similar stance referred to as the "wrestler posture" in which the elbows of the sculptural form are positioned "out and back," the "knees flexed," and "muscles tensed," signifying aggression or at least "potential action."⁴⁶⁸ In some cases, even the figure's penis was erect.⁴⁶⁹ Valerio Valeri adds to this point by noting that many of "these dances [especially those during the Makahiki or New Year's festival] [had] an erotic character, especially since it [was] permitted, and even prescribed, to go on from words to deeds: the dancers, whatever their sex, [could not] refuse the sexual advances of the spectators they...aroused."⁴⁷⁰ Apparently, the sexual connotations of the bent-knee stance were equally present at Fort Nisqually, prompting Huggins to comment that the "Kanakas'" movements appeared at times to be a tad "unseemly."⁴⁷¹

Based on this additional information, the Hawaiians' dance, though "unseemly" for Huggins, was likely a rendition of an older ritual dance that was once performed only in the sacred context of the *heiau*. Whether or not the spectators or even the "Kanaka" participants themselves recognized it as such is unclear. Huggins described the dance as authentically "native" - and it makes sense to assume that many of the non-Hawaiian onlookers thought the same - while Jean Barman and Bruce McIntyre Watson include this story in their *tour de force*

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., 18.

⁴⁶⁸ J. Halley Cox and William H. Davenport, *Hawaiian Sculpture* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988), 45.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁰ Valeri, *Kingship and Sacrifice*, 217.

⁴⁷¹ Edward Huggins Papers. Huggins' critique echoed those of missionary Hiram Bingham, who argued in an earlier memoir that the "old *hulas* were designed to promote lasciviousness, and of course the practice of them could not flourish in modest communities." Bingham, *A Residence of Twenty-Two Years*, 123, 125.

on Hawaiians in Pacific Northwest history to demonstrate that "crossing the ocean did not equate with...losing contact with traditional practices."⁴⁷² But, Kaeppler makes the point that Hawaiian movement systems either shifted from "worship" to a non-religious "identity marker" during the post-contact era or simply dropped out of practice altogether, as was the case with many of the secretive ritual dances associated with the *heiau* following the Christianization of the Islands. This, coupled with the fact that most of the men involved in the performance were probably at least one full generation removed from the collapse of the pre-contact *kapu* system and thus would have grown up in an environment where such movements had been emptied (or were in the process of being emptied) of their religious significance.⁴⁷³ Given the uncertainty surrounding the intentions, interpretations, and meanings of the Fort Nisqually dance it would be safe to suggest that it drifted somewhere within the ambiguous territory flanked by tradition and innovation, religion and entertainment.

The dance also seemed to drift somewhere between the poles of exclusion and inclusion, playing an important role in the identity politics (or economics) of both the Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian workers at the post. The apparent willingness of the Hawaiians to dance when solicited may have indicated an eagerness to invest in the preservation of a what they believed to be a distinct cultural or religious identity through the presentation of ritualized movement that sharply contrasted with the cultural idiosyncrasies of their English, French, Canadian, Native American, and Metis coworkers.⁴⁷⁴ At the same time, spectators, namely Huggins, appeared to have used the same imported ritual (or at least his interpretation of it) to invest in the

⁴⁷² Edward Huggins Papers.; Barman and Watson, *Leaving Paradise*, 91.

⁴⁷³ Kaeppler, *Hula Pahu*, 2, 6.

⁴⁷⁴ The motivation certainly was there. At Fort Nisqually, it was common for Hawaiians to work similar jobs, marry native women from similar tribes, and drink and carouse in ways similar to many non-Hawaiians, thus creating a lack of clear distinction, often leading to a crisis of identity - a problem that could rectified through cultural preservation.

preservation of his own identity as "morally-refined" in contradistinction to the supposed debauchery displayed by the Hawaiians under his employ.⁴⁷⁵

The dance may also have constituted to another type of investment. Although he is mute on this point, Huggins' depiction of the dance as entertainment, coupled with the lighthearted atmosphere of the evening, presumes that laughter or at least a general sense of levity was present among the onlookers during the performance. If this was the case (and there is no indication to suggest otherwise), such laughter would have fostered a degree of camaraderie between the Hawaiian dancers and their predominately non-Hawaiian audience. As Valeri writes, "it has always been recognized that laughter reproduces sociability by creating a bond among those who laugh at the expense of the object of their laughter."⁴⁷⁶ He goes on to note that "to laugh at someone is to identify with [him or her], for laughter is not possible without empathy....Laughter presupposes a recognition of common humanity."⁴⁷⁷ In the context of ancient Hawai'i, dances could serve a similar function. According to Valeri,

Coordinated dances provide[d] the experience of a social action which seem[ed] to exist effortlessly and pleurably at the junction between musical and corporeal rhythms. It [was] by realizing a perfect fellowship among men, by making them capable of giving each other pleasure, that the dance reconstitute[d] sociability, a necessary condition for the reproduction of society.⁴⁷⁸

Taking into account the social utility of laughter and dance, not to mention the multicultural character of the event, it is possible then that the Hawaiians' scripted display of religio-entertainment served, whether intentionally or not, as an opportunity to further invest in their identity as legitimate members of the trade, as opposed to nothing more than second-class

⁴⁷⁶ Valeri, *Kingship and Sacrifice*, 218.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

laborers as their pay grade suggested. In other words, the apparent willingness of the ten "Kanakas" to engage in an "authentic" ritual dance may have led to an increase in their "authenticity" as company men, at least in the minds of their non-Hawaiian colleagues who likely chuckled at their "absurd" posturing. For at least a brief period, the dance manufactured a sense of community in which the Hawaiians were able to share.⁴⁷⁹

Whether or not this solidarity persisted after the effects of the rum had worn off is uncertain. What is clear, however, is that camaraderie among employees was encouraged by the leadership of the HBC for its positive impact on production. Similar to Yount's situation, less discord typically meant less disruptions which, more often than not, translated into higher profits or at least greater efficiency, all of which a Chief Trader such as Tolmie would have gladly welcomed.

Solidarity was nice, but Hawaiian labor was necessary. The overall operations of the HBC in the Pacific Northwest rested heavily on the shoulders of Islanders whose skills and accessibility sustained the Company through difficult periods (labor shortages, conflicts with local natives, and so forth). However, it was not only the HBC who reaped the benefits of Hawaiian help. Christian missionaries, who began settling in the region in the mid-1830s, found the work of Islanders to be equally valuable for their own undertaking.

⁴⁷⁹ In some ways, it is this type of community construction that serves as the hallmark of all the religious exchanges throughout this narrative.

**Valuable Work:
Fur Trade Companies, Christian Missionaries, and the
Commodification of Hawaiian Labor**

In the Spring of 1841, HBC leadership saw fit to place the son of Chief Factor John McLoughlin, John McLoughlin Jr., in charge of Fort Stikine in the Russian Territory. Apparently he was "exceedingly violent and irregular," causing many of the men under his command to swell with contempt.⁴⁸⁰ Upon his arrival the following Spring, Governor Simpson learned that the young McLoughlin had been shot dead by one of his subordinates, likely a Canadian named Urbain Heroux. Simpson's initial report determined it was "'justifiable homicide,'" which infuriated the elder McLoughlin who believed the killing of his son to be "deliberate murder" and called for justice against the perpetrator(s).⁴⁸¹ As the reconstruction of the event unfolded, it soon became clear that there were a number of Hawaiians stationed at the post who did not participate in the killing and even may have attempted to protect young McLoughlin from his attacker(s). According to later correspondence, "all the men of the fort except Pouhow, a Sandwich Islander, had signed an agreement" to kill their ill-tempered leader, while another letter confirmed that all or most of the "Owhyhees...on duty [that evening]...did not join [in] with the murderous Canadians and Iroquois."⁴⁸² Following the incident, McLoughlin attempted to retrieve the Hawaiians' testimonies but "there was no person there who

⁴⁸⁰ John McLoughlin to George Simpson, Fort Vancouver, 1 February 1844, in *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver to the Governor and Committee, 1839-1844*, ed. E. E. Rich (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1943), 376.

⁴⁸¹ John McLoughlin to the Governor and Committee, Fort Vancouver, 24 June 1842, in *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver to the Governor and Committee, 1839-1844*, ed. E. E. Rich (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1943), 47.

⁴⁸² John McLoughlin to the Governor and Committee, Fort Vancouver, 7 July 1842, in *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver to the Governor and Committee, 1839-1844*, edited by E. E. Rich (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1943), 47.; John McLoughlin to the Governor and Committee, Fort Vancouver, 15 November 1843, in *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver to the Governor and Committee, 1839-1844*, ed. E. E. Rich (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1943), 138.

could speak their language sufficiently well to get a detailed statement."⁴⁸³ Still, one was able to communicate that "he heard a shot fired from the corner of the house and immediately saw Mr. McLoughlin fall and almost at the same moment Urbain Heroux came on from the corner of the house and placed his foot on the neck of Mr. McLoughlin...saying the master is dead do not say it was me."⁴⁸⁴ After speaking with some of the Hawaiian witnesses, a translator aboard the *Cowlitz* later corroborated their prior story.⁴⁸⁵ This was all the evidence the senior McLoughlin needed to support his allegations and pursue his prosecution.

By the time of McLoughlin's investigation, Hawaiians had served as a valuable asset in the interior fur trade for well-over three decades. Nineteenth-century Hawaiian historian John Papa Ii recalled that in "about the year 1811 a certain English ship said to belong to a company in Oregon, berthed in the harbor of Honolulu."⁴⁸⁶ Although the ship remains nameless in his account (it was likely Astor's *Tonquin*), he did mention that aboard were "some Scotch people," who met with Kamehameha to "discuss with him their need for men to work in the great river region of Oregon."⁴⁸⁷ According to his estimate, "100 men were sent back to the ship," and that "this was the first time Hawaiians went to Oregon to kill animals for their fur."⁴⁸⁸

A year after the arrival of the *Tonquin*, another PFC vessel named the *Beaver* made port in Oahu, bound for the Pacific Northwest. Aboard was a young clerk named Ross Cox whose

⁴⁸³ McLoughlin to the Governor and Committee, June 24, 1842, 47.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁵ George Simpson to the Governor and Committee, London, 5 January 1843, in *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver to the Governor and Committee, 1839-1844*, ed. E. E. Rich (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1943), 349.

⁴⁸⁶ Ii, *Fragments*, 87.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid. Barman and Watson caution that Ii's large numbers are probably not in reference to a single trading vessel but "may relate to the departure of other Hawaiians for other parts of the North American West Coast at about the same point in time. Barman and Watson, *Leaving Paradise*, 60.

initial impression of the Islands and its local inhabitants was quite favorable.⁴⁸⁹ He praised the Hawaiians for being "brave, active, hospitable, true to their word, confiding, cleanly in their domestic economy, easily satisfied at their meals, obedient to proper authority, excellent agriculturalists, quick in learning" - all traits coveted by the recruiters of fur trading companies.⁴⁹⁰ As a bonus, Ross added that the "character" of the Hawaiians "presents a fairer field for success to the exertions of the moral cultivator [missionary] than that of any untutored people whom I ever met."⁴⁹¹ Like the *Tonquin*, the *Beaver* added to its departing cargo of hogs, sugar-cane, and local fruits "twenty-six of the most able-bodied...volunteers," the company agreeing in advance "to pay each man ten dollars a month, and a suit of clothes annually."⁴⁹² The only exception went to an experienced seaman by the name of Boatswain Tom, who was compensated fifteen dollars a month and given "sole control of his countrymen."⁴⁹³

Even after the NWC took over the operations of the PFC following the War of 1812, the demand for Hawaiian workers remained consistent. In the summer of 1817, Alexander Ross (by this time serving as a trader and clerk with the NWC) commented that the "spirit of rivalry"

⁴⁸⁹ Indeed, by the time Ross Cox published his narrative in 1831, the "Sandwich Islands" had been placed, in his words, "in a much more important situation on the political map of the world, than they occupied fifteen or twenty years ago." Ross Cox, *The Columbia River: Or Scenes and Adventures during a Residence of Six Years on the Western Side of the Rocky Mountains among Various Tribes of Indians hitherto Unknown; Together with "A Journey across the American Continent,"* ed. Edgar I. Stewart and Jane R. Stewart (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957), 42. While "seldom visited but by fur traders, for the purpose of refitting, or obtaining fresh provisions," the Islands were poised to become "an important acquisition to a maritime power." Ibid., 42-43. Cox speculated that either Great Britain, Russian, or the United States would claim ownership of the territory and, in so doing, "control the commerce of the Pacific." Ibid., 43. Similarly, in an 1821 publication, sailor and trader Peter Corney argued that the "Sandwich Islands" play and will continue to play a vital role in the Pacific trade. Corney, *Voyages in the Northern Pacific*, 1. He warned his English readers that the Russians and Americans are "by no means ignorant of [its] importance," and at least in the case of the Russians have "attempted to obtain the possession [of the Islands]" for the purpose of exploiting its rich resources and using it as a key warm-weather port. Ibid., 2.

⁴⁹⁰ Cox, *The Columbia River*, 42.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

⁴⁹² Ibid., 45.

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

between themselves and the encroaching HBC led to the interception of "reinforcements" who "had been dispatched to the Columbian quarter."⁴⁹⁴ Having no other option Ross was forced, "to send for a *supply* [italics added] of Sandwich Islanders as substitutes."⁴⁹⁵ However, the prospect of hiring Hawaiians was not all bad for Ross. In addition to praising their aquatic abilities, he also praised the Islanders for being "submissive,...honest, trustworthy,...willingly to perform as much duty as lies in their power,...[and] are not wanting in courage, particularly against the Indians, for whom they entertain a very cordial contempt."⁴⁹⁶

Likewise, in his 1821 publication, sailor and trader Peter Corney recalled traveling to the Sandwich Islands under the flag of the NWC in order to "refit the brig and cure pork." The partners also instructed him to "bring as many of the Sandwich Islanders to the Columbia river as [he] could conveniently accommodate."⁴⁹⁷ Similar to Cox and Ross, he made positive remarks about the character of Hawaiians. During one of his many trips to the Islands in the late 1810s, he observed that Hawaiian men were experts in "tilling the ground."⁴⁹⁸ For an Englishman such as Corney, dominating and ordering the feral landscape through its cultivation was an indication of high moral repute.⁴⁹⁹

The value of Hawaiian labor within the NWC was regulated by occasional criticisms. Although abounding in praise, Ross also used some less than flattering words to describe his

⁴⁹⁴ Alexander Ross, *Fur Hunters of the Far West: A Narrative of Adventures in the Oregon and Rocky Mountains*, vol. 1 (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1855), 106.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid., 284.

⁴⁹⁷ Corney, *Voyages in the Northern Pacific*, 69.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., 105.

⁴⁹⁹ See Patricia Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).; Amy DeRogatis, *Moral Geography: Maps, Missionaries, and the American Frontier* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

"Kanaka" colleagues. He noted that they are "exceedingly awkward in everything they attempt" and are "only useful to stand as sentinels, to the eyes of the natives, or go through the drudgery of an establishment."⁵⁰⁰ Along these same lines, Ross also observed that the vigor and energies of Hawaiians seemed to "decay" in the cool climate of the Northwest and "snows and cold of the Rocky Mountains."⁵⁰¹

Despite such accusations from members of the NWC, Hawaiian labor retained its value in the region's fur trade following the monopolization of the HBC. Like the companies before them, the "Honourable Company" relied heavily on Hawaiian workers, especially in the area of security, mainly because "Kanakas" tended to be well-built (or large in comparison to most local Indians) and normally did not shy away from hand-to-hand combat. Simpson was certainly sold on the idea. In order to prevent coastal natives from taking over a trading ship and killing the crew (such as the fate of the *Tonquin*), he commented to the London Committee that ships have been "provided with boarding netting and other means of defence," including "about 30 hands each, of whom about half are Sandwich Islanders hired for the season."⁵⁰² In his published narrative, he argued more directly that Hawaiians could be "usefully employed...as guards and for common drudgery about the establishments," and are indeed helpful "in establishing new countries as they can be depended on in cases of danger from the natives."⁵⁰³

For all his praise, Simpson, like Ross, did criticize Hawaiians for being "unfit for the

⁵⁰⁰ Ross, *Fur Hunters of the Far West*, 284.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid.

⁵⁰² George Simpson to the Governor and Committee, Fort Vancouver, 1 March 1829, in *Part of Dispatch from George Simpson, esq., Governor of Rupert's Land to the Governor & Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company, London*, ed. E. E. Rich (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1947), 79.

⁵⁰³ Frederick Merk, ed., *Fur Trade and Empire: George Simpson's Journal* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931), 91.

laborious duties of the voyage."⁵⁰⁴ Yet, such a slight could not dissuade his immediate subordinate, John McLoughlin, from using Hawaiians aboard coastal vessels. In an 1829 letter he commented that in order to replace the wrecked *William and Ann*, the HBC "will have...to provide [a brig] with officers and men, the compliment for a crew of a vessel for the coast of the size recommended is twenty-five men and officers to which [this] number might be made up with Sandwich Islanders."⁵⁰⁵

On several occasions, Hawaiian labor surfaces in HBC correspondence as just one of many "goods" circulating in the Pacific Rim economy. Hawai'i served as the primary market for salmon exports, which HBC agents would sell for around \$20 a barrel.⁵⁰⁶ The Islands were also home to an important timber market where "inch plank" could fetch roughly \$60 per 1,000 feet or \$300 per 1,000 square feet.⁵⁰⁷ Shipments of salmon and timber were brought to Hawai'i typically from October to March in order to increase profits during the "dead season of the year," when trading with local Indians came to a relative stand-still.⁵⁰⁸ It was also common for HBC agents in Oahu to exchange salmon and timber (as well as some farm produce exported from posts such as Fort Nisqually) for "Island Produce," such as "salt, molasses, tobacco, and rice," all which were in high demand among Pacific Slope natives.⁵⁰⁹ Yet, as historian Richard Mackie

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁵ John McLoughlin to the Governor and Committee, Fort Vancouver, 5 August 1829, in *The Letters of Dr. John McLoughlin Written at Fort Vancouver, 1839-1832*, ed. Burt Brown Barker (Portland, OR: Binford & Mort, 1948), 36.

⁵⁰⁶ According to historian Peter Newman, "the HBC had maintained an agency on the islands since the early 1830s, manned by George Pelly, the British Governor's cousin, mainly as an outlet for the sale of salted salmon and timber from the Pacific Northwest." Newman, *Caesars of the Wilderness*, 257.

⁵⁰⁷ Simpson to the Governor and Committee, March 1, 1829, 75.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid., 84.

⁵⁰⁹ Richard Somerset Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains: The British Fur Trade on the Pacific, 1793-1843* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997), 163.

argues, "the Sandwich Islands' most lasting 'export' to the west coast were its young men, the 'Kanakas.'"⁵¹⁰ Simpson or McLoughlin regularly sent vessels such as the *Cadboro* to Hawai'i during the winter months to not only deliver timber and salmon but also to recruit "some hands...required for the service" of the upcoming season.⁵¹¹

The Company's labor shortage during the 1820s and 1830s only expanded this market. When Simpson first took command of the HBC's operations in Rupert's Land, he reduced the amount of personnel in the region to its lowest operating capacity. But, instead of boosting profits as anticipated, the reduction simply led to inefficiency and Hawai'i became the closest and most cost effective place to add hands, especially in comparison to Lower Canada or Scotland (specifically the northern islands of Orkney).⁵¹² By the time the HBC-funded Anglican minister, Herbert Beaver, arrived at Fort Vancouver in the mid 1830s, there were "a considerable number of them [Sandwich Islanders] in the service scattered all over the continent, from 12 to 20 being imported about every other year from their native country."⁵¹³

On occasion the demand was so high that officers such as McLoughlin were willing to circumvent standing protocol to acquire Hawaiian labor, something the scrupulous HBC was not known to do. The Chief Factor wrote a letter to the London committee in 1825 from his

⁵¹⁰ Ibid., 162.

⁵¹¹ Simpson to the Governor and Committee, March 1, 1829, in *Part of Dispatch*, 86. While aboard the *Cadboro* in the fall of 1828, Simpson wrote a letter to Captain Aemelius Simpson requesting "two good stout active Sandwich Islanders who have been to Sea, for 1, 2, or 3 years as they can be got." George Simpson to Captain Aemelius Simpson, October 1828, in *Fur Trade and Empire: George Simpson's Journal*, ed. Frederick Merk (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931), 298. In June of the previous year, McLoughlin recorded that the *Cadboro* "sailed with an addition to her crew of...six Owhyhees." John McLoughlin to the Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company, Fort Vancouver, 6 July 1827, in *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver to the Governor and Committee, 1825-38*, ed. E. E. Rich (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1941), 43.

⁵¹² Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains*, 162.

⁵¹³ Nellie B. Pipes, ed., "Herbert Beaver to the Aborigines' Protection Society of London, 1842, in 'Indian Conditions in 1836-1838,'" *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (1931): 339.

headquarters at Fort Vancouver describing a situation where the *William and Ann* "was detained...longer in receiving her cargo than...expected." Evidently the captain of the vessel "detained half the Owhyhees on board and...he did not expect to come higher up the [Columbia] River than Fort George [on the coast]." McLoughlin responded by requesting that the captain send all the Hawaiians to the fort by canoe, while the remainder of the supplies could wait.⁵¹⁴

At times, McLoughlin even had to defy the wishes of his immediate superior. In the Spring of 1842, Simpson wrote to McLoughlin from Honolulu, informing him that "we have already too many [Sandwich Islanders] in the service" and requested that "no more of those people be engaged for the present."⁵¹⁵ He also commanded that "no new expedition, trading post, or another branch of business...be entered into" to prevent needing additional personnel.⁵¹⁶ Upon his visit to the Islands, Simpson observed that the population was "dwindling away very fast," estimating a decrease of about five percent annually.⁵¹⁷ In his mind, further removal of Hawaiians from their homeland, for the purposes of employment in the trade, would only exacerbate the current decline and threaten the "Kanaka" with extinction.⁵¹⁸ However, even

⁵¹⁴ John McLoughlin to the Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company, Fort Vancouver, 6 October 1825, in *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver to the Governor and Committee, 1825-38*, ed. E. E. Rich (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1941), 21.

⁵¹⁵ George Simpson to John McLoughlin, Honolulu, Oahu, 1 March 1842, in *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver to the Governor and Committee, 1839-1844*, ed. E. E. Rich (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1943), 271.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 271-272.

⁵¹⁷ Williams *London Correspondence Inward*, 130.

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.* This was common rhetoric when it came to aboriginal peoples in the nineteenth century, including Native Americans. In the same letter Simpson noted that the "population of the islands, like every other barbarous population with whom whites have come in contact, is dwindling away very vast, indeed the decrease is as extraordinary as it is lamentable." *Ibid.* It is also worth mentioning that Simpson became quite the advocate for Hawaiian independence, but only out of fear of non-British occupation of the Islands - from either the Russians, French, or Americans - which would be a bane for business. Newman, *Caesars of the Wilderness*, 257. While not mentioning his name directly, John Papa Ii noted that "some of the people of the Hudson's Bay Company...helped King Kamehameha III in 1842." Ii, *Fragments*, 127. Indeed, Simpson accompanied a Hawaiian delegation as they toured western Europe encouraging governments to recognize the Islands' independence. Newman, *Caesars of the*

without an expansion of business operations, deaths, retirements, and desertions had created yet another labor shortage in the HBC's Columbia District, forcing McLoughlin to acquire some more Hawaiian workers. In an 1843 letter, he justified his insubordination to London citing that although Simpson did not authorize him to "order any men from the Sandwich Islands, it is evident that business cannot go on without the necessary number of men, I will therefore order the men we require from the Sandwich Islands, and will act as I have hitherto done."⁵¹⁹

As McLoughlin and others discovered, Hawaiian labor came with a price tag. In the early days of the HBC's commercial activity in the Pacific Northwest, they acquired "Kanakas" by bartering with merely food and clothing. However, as hard currency became more prevalent on the Islands during the 1820s (a consequence of Euro-American colonialism), workers, as well as the king himself (Liholiho or Kamehameha II), demanded money. The general fee paid to the king for the use of his subjects remains unknown and, like the price of pork, probably fluctuated depending on the particular negotiation.⁵²⁰ The HBC, on the other hand, was a little more regimented. Simpson initially set the standard pay for Hawaiians at 17 £ a year, the same amount received by both Canadian and European servants. Evidently, this caused quite a stir.

Wilderness, 259. Ii referred to this delegation romantically as "the messengers who sailed for freedom." Ii, *Fragments*, 127.

⁵¹⁹ John McLoughlin to the Governor and Committee, Fort Vancouver, 18 November 1843, in *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver to the Governor and Committee, 1839-1844*, ed. E. E. Rich (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1943), 170. In lieu of acquiring new fresh and inexperienced workers from the Islands, McLoughlin would usually attempt to persuade more seasoned employees, whose contracts were set to expire, to re-enlist with the company for another set period of time (typically three years). In a letter to the British consul stationed in Honolulu, McLoughlin wrote that "inclosed is the amount of balances due several individuals who are to be landed a Wahoo [Oahu] which I request you will pay on a/c of the Hudson's Bay Company, and when you engage any Owhyhees for this place we would prefer if you could that you sent us as many as possible of them we now send." John McLoughlin to Richard Charlton, Fort Vancouver, 19 October 1831, in *The Letters of Dr. John McLoughlin Written at Fort Vancouver, 1839-1832*, ed. Burt Brown Barker (Portland: Binfords & Mort, 1948), 229.

⁵²⁰ According to Ii, in the early 1820s a ship belonging to the HBC "arrived in port," and "a hundred Hawaiian men were taken to labor in the Northwest, . . . but the payment received by the king for graciously giving these men away is not known." Ii, *Fragments*, 127. As before the numbers might be in reference to multiple voyages over certain period of time (possibly a decade or more). The fact remains, there was no HBC vessel that could physically carry 100 Hawaiians with other cargo and its regular crew.

White employees fervently protested, forcing Simpson to reduce the Hawaiians' annual compensation by 7 £, which still managed, in his words, to "satisfy all parties."⁵²¹ At the time of this wage dispute, the HBC employed 35 Hawaiians at various posts throughout the Columbia District and Simpson remarked that he would gladly "employ 15 more to advantage the trade."⁵²²

By the 1830s, Hawaiians had become a prominent fixture in both the coastal and interior trade in the Pacific Northwest. For newcomers to the region (mainly Americans), their presence was somewhat of a marvel, considering that most who made the overland trek had never before seen an Islander in the flesh. For example, John Ball, a member of Nathaniel Wyeth's 1832 expedition recalled visiting Fort Vancouver and noticing "two strange looking men, saw at once they could be neither Caucasian, Indian or African. And so it proved, they were Kanakas, Sandwich Islanders, in the employ of the traders."⁵²³ Once the feelings of unfamiliarity dissipated, newcomers, like the trading companies who preceded them, soon discovered for themselves the value of Hawaiian labor.

American Protestant missionaries were particularly fond of Hawaiians. Beginning in the early 1830s, missionaries affiliated with Methodist Episcopal Church began to settle in the region and it was not uncommon for them to use Hawaiian workers for an assortment of tasks necessary for the upkeep and even growth of their mission stations. For instance, in 1838,

⁵²¹ Merk, *George Simpson's Journal*, 91. Following his brief tenure at Fort Vancouver, Reverend Herbert Beaver, claimed that Hawaiian workers received a higher wage than "other servants in the same class [roughly 13£ more annually]," and concluded that it is by such a "tempting offer this amicable people are induced to enter the service." Beaver to the Aborigines' Protection Society, 340. However, Beaver clarified that the higher wages received by Hawaiians did not equate to more money. He wrote that "for all their necessities [Hawaiians] are charged at the rate of 100 per cent, upon the invoice price, . . . whereas only 50 per cent, addition to the prime cost is charged to the other servants of the Company." Ibid. Apparently, the leadership of the HBC's Columbia District was exploiting the Islanders' "ignorance of the value of money." Ibid.

⁵²² Merk, *George Simpson's Journal*, 91. For an example of an HBC contract for Hawaiian laborers see George Verne Blue, ed., "A Hudson's Bay Company Contract for Hawaiian Labor," *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society*, 25, no. 1 (1924): 72-75.

⁵²³ *Autobiography of John Ball, 1794-1884* (Glendale, CA: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1925), 90.

missionary Henry Perkins wrote to his wife Elvira that a Hawaiian, whom he referred to as "George," was an excellent cook. Apparently, he also was "very useful" as a builder.⁵²⁴ Indeed, at the time of the correspondence, George had been laboring to construct his own dwelling "in the Sandwich Island fashion," while he gathered "timber to build a 'hotel' for the entertainment of guests" during their stay at the mission.⁵²⁵ Even with his other responsibilities (cooking and constructing his own home) George predicted that he could complete the hostel "in a week or two."⁵²⁶ Their strength as paddlers, as well as their navigation skills were also beneficial to the Methodists who frequently traveled by boat. For one such journey, missionary Daniel Lee (nephew of the famed Jason Lee) acquired "two Indian canoes, and one white man, three Indians, and a Hawaiian to navigate them." He and his fellow travelers opted to place the Hawaiian, along with two of the Indians, "in the largest canoe, which contained most of the goods."⁵²⁷

For the Methodists especially Hawaiian labor was not cheap. At least early on, they had few connections in the Islands and could really only acquire Islanders by leasing, at a premium, one already contracted with the HBC. If not careful, a missionary could saddle his or her station with significant debt. Methodist Charles Henry Carey lamented in his diary that "I learned a few days ago that we are owing the Sandwich Islands [Islanders (?)], borrowed by Rev. J. Lee of Doct. McLaughlin [sic], more than a thousand dollars....There are ten or eleven to be settled

⁵²⁴ Henry Perkins to Elvira Perkins, Wascopam Mission, 25 March 1838, in *People of the Dalles: The Indians of the Wascopam Mission, a Historical Ethnography Based on the Papers of the Methodist Missionaries*, by Robert Boyd (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 227-228.

⁵²⁵ Ibid.

⁵²⁶ Ibid.

⁵²⁷ Daniel Lee and Joseph H. Frost, *Ten Years in Oregon* (New York: The Authors, 1844), 280.

with."⁵²⁸ Not only did Lee owe the Hawaiians some back pay at \$10 a month, Carey later received a letter from McLoughlin informing him that they must also "pay for their service from the time they left Oahu and also the expense of passage back which will make more than three hundred dollars to be added to their expense to the mission."⁵²⁹ "The most impolitic employment of laborers," he added. Not able to come up with the money, Carey wrote in a later entry that a payment of "more than fifteen hundred dollars...has been made by the Hudson [sic] Bay Company and charged to the mission as cash."⁵³⁰

Such fiscal troubles signaled to a second wave of Methodist missionaries that the benefit of Hawaiian labor was simply not worth the cost. When Gustavus Hines, Jason Lee's replacement, arrived in the Willamette Valley in 1840, he was quick to rid the mission of its "gang of 'Kanakas' whose labor does not pay their board, but who are paid ten dollars per month whether sick or well."⁵³¹ Yet, not all of Hines' fellow Methodists shared his criticism. Ironically, the departure of the Hawaiian workers from the Willamette mission was most difficult for his wife who claimed defiantly that "nothing would induce her to let him [an anonymous Hawaiian] go except to save life."⁵³²

It seems that the Presbyterian and Congregationalist missionaries sponsored by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) had better luck when it came to Hawaiian employment. They arrived in the Columbia a few years after the

⁵²⁸ Charles Henry Carey, ed., "Diary of Rev. George Gary," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 24, no. 1 (1923): 174.

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*, 176, 179.

⁵³⁰ Charles Henry Carey, ed., "Diary of Rev. George Gary," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (1923): 272.

⁵³¹ Robert Mouton Gatke, ed., "A Document of Mission History, 1833-43," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (1935): 175.

⁵³² Carey, "Diary of Rev. George Gary," 180.

establishment of the first Methodist missions but tended to have better connections when it came to the Islands. Responding to reports from early Euro-American travelers praising the character of Hawaiians (interpreted by missionary organizations as a fertile mission field), the ABCFM began to establish a presence on the Islands as early as 1820. Therefore, by the time ABCFM missionaries arrived in the Pacific Northwest, their brethren had been working in Hawai'i for almost two decades. "Under the fostering influence of commerce," as George Simpson put it, missionaries such as Hiram Bingham and John Emerson built sizable congregations of neophytes, some of whom were willing to heed the call themselves and travel to the Columbia to assist in the nascent missions.⁵³³

This, however, does not mean that the ABCFM refused the assistance of the HBC in procuring Hawaiian help. Shortly after their long and arduous overland passage to the region in 1836, McLoughlin kindly suggested to missionaries Marcus Whitman, Henry Spalding, and William Gray that they use both the HBC's and their own Board's networks to acquire Hawaiian labor in order to compensate for the supposed dearth of decent help among local indigenes. Taking his advice, they collectively wrote their "brother" Bingham and were quite specific in their order:

We find it difficult to obtain laborers here, and Doct[or] McLoughlin advises us to send for the Natives of the Sandwich Islands. We contemplate two stations and on that account would like 6 men with their families. We want you to do us the favors to procure that number of good faithful men and send them by the first of [the] year...Doct[or] McLoughlin will write their agent [in] Oahu to favour us with any thing their ships can contain. We would like them to bring families if possible that is their wives. Let them come here and Doc[tor] McLoughlin will

⁵³³ Simpson, *Narrative of a Journey*, 116. Although the numbers may be exaggerated, Daniel Lee, during a visit to the Hawaiian Islands, observed "two native churches" led ABCFM missionaries Hiram Bingham and Lowell Smith. There was also another congregation on the other side of Oahu from Honolulu led by a Mr. Emerson, whose congregation "consisted of twelve hundred members, all natives." Lee and Frost, *Ten Years*, 221.

forward them to us.⁵³⁴

Included in their request were other material goods. They were also "anxious to obtain sheep," and McLoughlin recommended that they "obtain as many as can be sent from the Islands."⁵³⁵

Not able to wait for Bingham's reply, they, like the Methodists, relied on the HBC to supply their immediate needs. Upon her arrival in the region, Narcissa Whitman (Marcus Whitman's new wife) commented on the hospitality of the Chief Factor, writing that "no person could have received a more hearty welcome, or be treated with greater kindness than we have been since our arrival."⁵³⁶ McLoughlin's "kindness" included an agreement to "loan" the new missionaries "enough to make a beginning" and asked for no standard repayment.⁵³⁷ In addition to food, clothing, equipment, and building materials, Fort Vancouver also supplied the Whitmans with two "Owyhyees" who worked alongside Marcus and William Gray to construct the first building of their mission station, a "comfortable residence" for the remaining winter months.⁵³⁸

⁵³⁴ Marcus Whitman, Henry Spalding, and William Gray to Hiram Bingham, Vancouver, 19 September 1836, Oregon Mission Files, Hawaiian Mission Children's Society Library Archive.

⁵³⁵ Ibid. In addition to livestock, the Whitman's also received a printing press from the Hawaiian Islands. Archer Butler Hulbert and Dorothy Printup Hulbert, *Marcus Whitman, Crusader, 1839-1843* (Denver: The Stewart Commission of Colorado College, 1938), 48. Furthermore, it bears mentioning that, like the HBC, missionaries also were guilty of objectifying Hawaiians, even missionaries stationed on the Islands such as Bingham. In his published narrative he metaphorically linked Hawaiians to raw materials found in the earth that are then transformed into valuable objects: "What a task was still to be accomplished for the nation! But one thing after another, 'line upon line,' stroke after stroke - the fire, the hammer, the file, the burnisher, will in time succeed. The rude iron, copper and zinc ores, gypsum, quartz sand, and porcelain clay, are capable of being wrought by skill and persevering labor, into timepieces of beautiful forms and exquisite machinery, which gratify the eye and the ear; and by those uniform and exact motions, under divinely established laws, the business of communities may be regulated, the flight of great ships clime and clime be measured, and the admiration of the beholder attracted to the wisdom and agency of Him who made and directs all things. So, from the rudest materials of a destitute and degraded heathen nation, He can mould, reform, polish, and put in motion, for a long eternity, instruments of his exquisite workmanship, to show forth to the inhabitants of heaven and earth, the high praises of Divine wisdom and grace. What a privilege, then, to have a part in bring forward the ore for the Founder and the 'Finisher'; in preparing thousands of instruments for God's everlasting praise." Bingham, *A Residence of Twenty-Two Years*, 171.

⁵³⁶ *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1847* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon, 1996), 38.

⁵³⁷ Ibid.

⁵³⁸ Ibid., 46.

McLoughlin's generosity continued. In the Spring of 1837, Narcissa found herself alone at the mission, while her husband itinerated back East. As a new mother desperate for help around the house, she requested "an orphan girl" and McLoughlin responded by sending one "by express."⁵³⁹ She also had the help of two "Kanakas" by the name of Green and Jack, for whom Narcissa had a "particular tender feeling in [her] heart."⁵⁴⁰ Beyond her clear emotional attachment, she also praised them for being the "best for labor of any people this side of the mountains," unlike local natives whom she, like her husband, viewed as lazy.⁵⁴¹ In addition to their work ethic, Narcissa commented that "they make excellent cooks and house servants," which in her current condition were welcomed skills.⁵⁴² It was, in many ways, the Hawaiian workers who kept the Wailatpu mission in business that Spring.

The Whitmans, however, were not always this fortunate with their Hawaiian employees. In 1838, Marcus wrote that McLoughlin "furnished" the missionary couple with "two Sandwich Islanders" but ended up having some "trouble with them on account of the Indian women, having left their wivs [sic] at home."⁵⁴³ As a consequence, he was forced to write, once more, to his brethren in Hawai'i, requesting "two more from the Islands" but this time accompanied by their wives to avoid a similar situation.⁵⁴⁴ In reply, Bingham sent the Whitmans "two laborers...from

⁵³⁹ Ibid., 48.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid.

⁵⁴² Ibid.

⁵⁴³ Archer Butler Hulbert and Dorothy Printup Hulbert, *Marcus Whitman, Crusader, 1802-1839* (Denver: The Stewart Commission of Colorado College, 1938), 298.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid. The Whitman's dissatisfaction with some of the HBC's Hawaiians moral character did not stop them from still using them in various capacities. That same year Marcus had a Hawaiian laborer "pack some things" and "accompany" the missionaries on their journey to the Spalding's mission toward the east. Ibid., 292. During their absence, they left "our Hawaiian & a half breed boy" in charge of the mission. Ibid., 294.

the Sandwich Islands - Joseph Mahi and wife."⁵⁴⁵ In an 1840 letter, Marcus informed the American Board that "Mahi & wife, natives of the Sand[wich] Isl[ands] - & members of Mr. Bingham's native church, have been with us for the year past."⁵⁴⁶ He had nothing but compliments for the couple, calling them "emenently [sic] Christian, amiable & devoted to the good of the Indians & the cause of missions."⁵⁴⁷ The couple's brief tenure with the Whitmans ended in tragedy when Joseph became ill with an "inflammation of the bowels, which proved rapid & incurable."⁵⁴⁸ He died soon after on August 8th and his wife returned to the Islands the very next year.

The Whitman's were not the only ABCFM missionaries to benefit from Hawaiian labor. Having a Hawaiian worker of considerable size may have saved the life of Henry Spalding when he, through "his own rashness," got into a "scuffle" with an Indian in which "neither gained the mastery."⁵⁴⁹ The fight ended abruptly when a "Hawaiian hired man came & seized the Indian by the hair & handled him roughly," allowing Spalding to make his escape. Evidently, using Hawaiians as protection against "wily" natives was not restricted to fur trading companies.

Missionary William Gray also acquired Hawaiian help. Writing to a fellow missionary stationed in the Islands, Levi Chamberlain, he mentioned that "the two Hawaiians [who] came to

⁵⁴⁵ *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman*, 70.

⁵⁴⁶ Hulbert and Hulbert, *Marcus Whitman*, 178.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid. ABCFM missionaries preferred Christian Hawaiian laborers from the Islands' missions, but gladly accepted any Hawaiian help they could receive. Seeking the conversions of those non-Christian Islanders was not normally a priority but missionaries were overjoyed nonetheless when it took place. In the Fall of 1838, the Whitman's rejoiced when a trusted Hawaiian laborer named Jack "surrender[ed] [his] heart to God." Hulbert and Hulbert, *Marcus Whitman*, 323. A similar situation occurred among the Methodists. Daniel Lee recorded in his published narrative that in the fall of 1842 "a blessed revival took place in the mission school, and a goodly number powerfully converted, or reclaimed." Among those present were "several Owyhees" who participated alongside whites in a "very happy state of religious enjoyment" throughout much of the winter. Lee and Frost, *Ten Years*, 256.

⁵⁴⁸ Hulbert and Hulbert, *Marcus Whitman*, 190.

⁵⁴⁹ Clifford Merrell Drury, ed., *The Diaries and Letters of Henry H. Spalding and Asa Bowen Smith Relating to the Nez Perce Mission, 1838-1842* (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1958), 173.

this country to assist us...[who] have live[d] upon wages at ten dollars per month...agreed to remain with us for three years at \$10 per month, this price usually fair for Hawaiians in the country."⁵⁵⁰ The relationship between the missionary and these "Kanakas" certainly had its share of tension. Gray complained to Chamberlain that "they have had several stubborn fits and [it has been] two days since they told me they were going home."⁵⁵¹ He finally resolved that if "they will go,...I shall not detain them, although we need some domestics in our family."⁵⁵²

Another ABCFM missionary by the name of Asa Smith (who would later transfer with his wife to a mission station in the Islands) also intended to acquire Hawaiian workers for themselves. He wrote to the Prudential Committee of the ABCFM in the Spring of 1839 informing them that "in [the] future shall have in my employment one Owyhee who received seventeen pounds per annum."⁵⁵³ In a tone reminiscent of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman, he went on to claim that "it is necessary to have some assistance & Indians are not to be depended upon. At a time when most needed they will often leave."⁵⁵⁴ Smith further justified his need for a Hawaiian laborer by arguing that "unless we have some assistance we must necessarily spend very much of our time in laboring for our own support" instead of focusing on the Christian instruction of local native communities.⁵⁵⁵

Similar to Gray, Smith's use of Hawaiian labor ended in disappointment. He wrote in 1840 that his only Hawaiian worker abandoned his post "principally on account of his being

⁵⁵⁰ William Gray to Levi Chamberlain, Willamette, 31 July 1843, Oregon Mission Files, Hawaiian Mission Children's Society Library Archive.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵⁵² Ibid.

⁵⁵³ Drury, *The Diaries and Letters of Henry H. Spalding and Asa Bowen Smith*, 97-98.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid., 98.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid.

alone, having none of his countrymen with him to converse with."⁵⁵⁶ Apparently, Smith harbored some bitterness toward his former employee, leading him to comment that "Hawaiians are poor help compared with what can be had in the States."⁵⁵⁷ Echoing the words of trader Alexander Ross, he argued that "they are slow & awkward & at the best we have a great deal to do ourselves."⁵⁵⁸ Despite his criticisms Smith did maintain that a Hawaiian worker is still worth four Indians.⁵⁵⁹

With all of these ABCFM missionaries in the market for Hawaiian labor, quelling the demand was for Bingham and others stationed on the Islands a tall task. Sometimes they were simply unable to fill all the orders. In an 1840 letter, McLoughlin received news that "Mr. Bingham...failed in obtaining the Sandwich Islanders applied for by the missions in the Columbia."⁵⁶⁰ Such notices were not uncommon and it was often the HBC who stepped in to compensate for the lack of supply.

Both fur trade companies and missionary organizations operating in the Columbia during the first half of the nineteenth century depended on Hawaiian labor for the success of their respective enterprises. Due to the Islanders' skills and accessibility, companies such as the PFC, NWC, and HBC employed them frequently, setting a precedent for later Protestant missionaries, who, soon after their arrival in the region, also sought to acquire Hawaiian help. Those they employed (or were given to them on loan from the HBC) served in the initial construction of

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., 151.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., 152.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁰ Alexander Simpson to John McLoughlin, aboard the *Columbia* at sea, 1 October 1840, in *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver to the Governor and Committee, 1839-1844*, ed. E. E. Rich (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1943), 239.

mission stations, helped with routine domestic chores, and even added protection - all of which freed missionaries to focus more intently on their proselytizing. As they had done in the fur trade, Hawaiians played a vital role in the multi-dimensional economy of the mission station. Through their willingness to labor in the "worldly" affairs of the mission, they made possible the "otherworldly" labor of the missionary, whose task it was to sell a particular brand of Christianity to potential indigenous consumers.

Conclusion: From Pacific to Hemispheric

By the mid nineteenth century, the shipping lanes connecting the Hawaiian Islands to the West Coast of North America had been well worn. On an almost endless basis, companies transported cargo from one destination to the other in hopes of yielding a sizable return. In addition to Euro-American firms, Hawaiians played an equally important role in this Pacific World marketplace, contributing in significant ways to the economies of both geographic contexts. Not only did they assist in the production and trade of Island manufactures, they also participated (in a variety of capacities) in the fur trade of the coastal and interior Northwest (or Pacific Slope at large). Both markets brought them into contact with non-Hawaiians, but it was in the shadow of the Columbia where such encounters opened what theorist Homi Bhabha refers to as those spaces "in-between...conceptual and organizational categories," which as he argues, "provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood - singular and communal - that initiate new signs of identity and innovative sites of collaboration."⁵⁶¹

Several examples emerge. In 1811, the Hawaiians hired by the PFC performed a series of rituals for their fallen comrade that incorporated certain goods (biscuit, pork, and tobacco)

⁵⁶¹ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 2.

they conceived of as being both valuable and accessible in order to ensure the deceased experienced a successful transition to the afterlife, just as the PFC used these very same provisions to ensure their own successful transition to a new ecological setting. Similarly, as the stars fell in 1833, a trapper and trader on the Pacific slope, George Yount, had his hands full attempting to calm his petrified "Kanaka" employees who interpreted the event as a sign of their gods' anger. The transactions that followed yielded for Yount greater control, more potential productivity, and possibly a sense of Christian mission, as they placed the Hawaiians under his employ in the difficult position of having to adjust their imported cosmologies to make room for non-supernatural explanations for at least some celestial events. Over twenty years later, a comparable exchange occurred in the context of Fort Nisqually, where during a celebratory dance a group of Hawaiian employees performed a set of corporeal movements that carried both religious and sexual undertones. Overall, the dance served as currency for the Hawaiian participants to reinforce a sense of self, while sharing in the camaraderie of a fur trade community. Lastly, throughout the 1830s and 1840s Hawaiian labor became a commodity for newly-arrived Protestant missionaries just as it was and had been with fur trade companies in the region. In general, Hawaiians played a key role in the economics of the missionary enterprise as they continued to serve in the fur trade and its subsidiaries, which, in some cases, included the missions themselves.

This religious economy represented by the interactions between Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians in the Northwest fur trade extended beyond the trans-regionalism of the Pacific Rim. It was, to a large extent, a hemispheric affair. Similar to the Hawaiian transplants they encountered, Euro-Americans such as Franchere, Yount, Huggins, McLoughlin, the Whitmans, and others, brought with them to the region their own preconceptions, cosmologies, and ritual

performances forged in the milieu of an eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Atlantic World. The Columbia became a site of convergence, connecting Europe to the South Pacific by way of North America.

To speak of a hemispheric community is to speak of empire, and to speak of empire is to speak of the commercial forces that sustain it. In the colonial Northwest, this was the Hudson's Bay Company, which served as the foremost representative of British imperialism in the region. Its governing body was headquartered in London and was comprised of aristocracy who were just as concerned with the overall success of the Empire as they were with the price of furs. In the early 1820s, the Company (as it was known) acquired a monopoly over all commercial operations in the Columbia and devoted much of its energies to preventing competition that threatened to subvert their authority and by proxy the authority of the British Crown. Under the scope of this larger imperial project, HBC policy shaped religious participation in ways that demonstrated a strong continuity between the Company's business and religious interests.

CHAPTER FOUR

REVENUE, REGULATION, AND RELIGION: THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY ON THE PACIFIC SLOPE

It was finally over. Years of bitter and costly rivalry between the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company had reached its end in 1821 with the absorption of the former into the operations and hierarchy of the latter. What became known as the "Great Monopoly," gave the HBC unprecedented sway over the Canadian trade from Rupert's Land to the Pacific. In July of that year, Parliament made it official with the signing of the "Act for Regulating the Fur Trade," and with the legal backing of the Crown, the Company marched confidently into a new period of growth and expansion. It was, in the words of historian John Galbraith, a "halcyon era," when, despite declining demands for furs in European and other markets, the HBC experienced considerable prosperity.⁵⁶²

For the first time in its 150-year history, the Pacific Northwest fell within the Company's purview. Prior to the amalgamation, it did not manage a single trading post west of the Divide, but as historian Richard Mackie writes, "control of the Columbia river fur trade was passed from the Montreal-based branch of the British fur trade to the powerful London-based branch, which would reap the benefit of the Northwesters' audacious beginnings."⁵⁶³ Despite early concerns

⁵⁶² John S. Galbraith, "Introduction," in *London Correspondence Inward from Sir George Simpson, 1841-42*, ed. Glyndwr Williams (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1973), xi.

⁵⁶³ Prior to the 1820s, the HBC's interest in the Pacific Northwest was minimal. In the early 1770s, the Company worked with the British Admiralty and Royal Society to locate the fabled Northwest Passage. Two decades later, British explorer Charles Duncan (who traveled for a period with James Colnett) was convinced he had found the opening of the Passage at the Strait of Juan de Fuca and "commanded a Hudson's Bay Company expedition to sail for the west coast of the Hudson Bay," with order to "find the passage, proceed through it to the entrance [Strait of Juan de Fuca], and either return home or go to China." Barry M. Gough, *Distant Dominion: Britain and the Northwest Coast of North America, 1579-1809* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980), 70. Evidently, the failure of the venture was too much for Duncan, who "made several unsuccessful attempts to commit suicide" on his journey back to Britain. Ibid.; Richard Somerset Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains: The British Fur Trade on the Pacific, 1793-1843* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997), 30. The NWC, on the other hand, had avoided the coasts and thus following the merger the coastal trade "remained firmly in

that it would not be able to efficiently transport furs from the region - as it could in locations east of the Rockies - the Columbia District became as historian E. E. Rich states, all that was "best in the Company" and "upon [it] were concentrated the hopes of the London Committee."⁵⁶⁴

George Simpson, the newly-minted Governor of the HBC's North American operations, shared in the excitement. With the establishment of Fort Vancouver in 1825 and the hiring of former Northwester, John McLoughlin, as its Chief Factor, the Columbia trade began to stimulate the imagination of Simpson who would devote considerable attention to the District. According to Rich, "He saw [it] as a valuable means of keeping up the returns in furs while the over-wrought eastern districts recuperated and he anticipated handsome returns if the department were extended and [even further] reorganised."⁵⁶⁵ To increase their presence in the region, the Company shifted much of its personnel from the east to the Columbia and sent all "new hands from Canada" to the area.⁵⁶⁶ Many of the officers hired (like McLoughlin) had been, before the amalgamation, leaders in the NWC. Such a move was entirely calculated. Not only were they seasoned veterans, but the HBC had to make a deliberate effort to clear away the residual acrimony left over from the intense competition of the previous decade. By appointing certain ex-NWC wintering partners in positions of authority, the Company was able to quell much of the

the hands of American and Russian fur traders." Ibid., 36. The NWC did manage to open up direct trade relations with Canton, in which they partnered with the Boston firm, Perkins and Company, in order to circumvent the monopoly of the East India Company. Following the merger, the HBC dismantled both the trade with China and the American partnership.

⁵⁶⁴ E. E. Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, vol. 2 (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1959), 574. From the Columbia it was easier to ship the furs to China than to London but unfortunately for the HBC the "combination of the poor quality of the Columbia beaver and the trickiness of the Canton market had produced a series of bad sales at Canton." Ibid., 568.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid., 583.

⁵⁶⁶ Harold A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), 318.

animosity these gentlemen retained toward their new employer.⁵⁶⁷

Indeed, the HBC was crafty in a number of ways. According to Galbraith, it "achieved primacy in the fur trade by an effective combination of capital, experience, business acumen, unceasing vigilance and vigorous response to competition."⁵⁶⁸ Historian Harold Innis adds,

The personnel was efficiently organized. Expenses were eliminated in every possible direction and control of the supply of furs was adjusted to price levels. The supply of provisions and supplies were developed with reference to the lowest possible cost in the self-sufficiency of each post, of the departments, and of the organization as a whole. Goods were imported, distributed, and handled with the greatest possible economy.⁵⁶⁹

He concluded that "seldom has there existed an instance in which monopoly control was exercised over a wide area through such a long period of history in a single industry."⁵⁷⁰

During the height of its power, the Company served as the only representative of the British Empire west of the Rockies.⁵⁷¹ And with its exclusive trading rights came the expectation it would not only oversee commerce, but also devote some energy to strengthening England's imperial claims. As historian Keith Murray reminds us, "the Company served as government...[and] obtained much information about the geography and aboriginal inhabitants of the region...[and] develop[ed its]...natural resources."⁵⁷²

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid., 289.

⁵⁶⁸ Galbraith, "Introduction," xi.

⁵⁶⁹ Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, 288-289. Innis provides some concrete examples of such efficiency. For instance, emptied rum kegs were filled with grease and reshipped and old ironworks were rarely discarded but instead sent to the blacksmith for reworking. He goes on: "Old tacking line or bale cords were used for buoy lines, for trout lines, and for mending nets. Sugar kegs were made into water buckets. Old boats were burned for the nails." Ibid., 309.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid., 288-298. At its height the Company controlled over 3,000,000 square miles of territory, which equaled roughly a fourth of the entire North American continent. Galbraith, *The Hudson's Bay Company*, 3.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid., 8.

⁵⁷² Keith Murray, "The Role of the Hudson's Bay Company in Pacific Northwest History," *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (1961): 24.

Among these activities, the HBC took on the responsibility of regulating religious interaction and moral conduct. Trained to minimize competition at every turn, officers actively barred missionaries whose presence was deemed disruptive to the religious stability of the region and thus detrimental to the trade at large. Preventing such a "clash of creeds" allowed the HBC to retain a level of control over the behavior of local Indian trappers, not to mention its own employees and their families. Along these same lines, the London Committee introduced policies and encouraged cooperation with the Church Missionary Society (Church of England), all for the purpose of fostering a sense of industry and Christian virtue among those under its charge. In their minds, such an investment would eventually lead to greater profits for its shareholders. The Company also made deliberate attempts at meeting the religious demands of its personnel. In the late 1830s, Governor Simpson appointed a fulltime, Anglican Chaplain responsible for administering the sacraments and overseeing all religious instruction at Fort Vancouver. Inadvertently, the minister's recalcitrance forced open a momentary religious marketplace at the largely Catholic post, in which a heated competition for souls ensued between himself and the "Popish" Chief Factor. Lastly, records show that many Company officers throughout the Columbia engaged in religious transactions alongside their official duties in the trade. Those who did often provided nearby Indians with knowledge of basic Christian doctrines, who responded by crafting a hybridized religion that strategically blended elements of these imported theologies with indigenous ritual performances. In the end, the Company's religious and moral engagement was not a peripheral project or afterthought as is so often suggested in the historiography. Instead, such activities were deeply intertwined with its commercial operations and fiscal goals.

**"Union is Strength - Discord, Ruin":
George Simpson, Religious Rivalry, and the Ethos of the Hudson's Bay Company**

In his *Narrative* (1847), Governor Simpson argued that "rivalry in trade often lurks at the root of...evil."⁵⁷³ Many of his contemporaries agreed. Following the fiery contestation between the NWC and the HBC in the 1810s, few wanted to relive the physical and financial trauma caused by years of intense market competition.⁵⁷⁴ In addition, the amalgamation and the parliamentary act that accompanied it had granted the HBC absolute control over the Canadian trade, and with the demands for fur in the European market waning, the desire to resist the encroachment of other business operations had never been stronger. The Company took an entrenched position in which it sought to preserve its fragile monopoly by aggressively challenging any would-be competitors before they became more than a mere nuisance. In fact, almost every action taken by the HBC from the 1820s to the 1860s, whether it be expansion, over-hunting, or regulating prices, was intended to hold its regional grip without the direct assistance of the British government, who, for a multitude of reasons, was reluctant to guard the Company's territorial claims. Given the circumstances, HBC leadership had to be creative, proactive, and diligent about protecting its interests, especially in heavily disputed areas such as the Pacific Northwest. By the mid 1820s, minimizing the threat of competition had become a company ethos.

There were few better people to oversee such a project than George Simpson. He rose to

⁵⁷³ George Simpson, *Narrative of a Journey Round the World During the Years 1841 and 1842*, vol. 2 (London: Henry Colburn, 1847), 157.

⁵⁷⁴ In 1837, Simpson sent a letter to Governor Pelly in London claiming, among other things, that if "the trade were again thrown open to competition, all the horrors of the late contest [between themselves and NWC] would break out afresh; drunkenness and demoralization would have their former sway, not only among the natives but among the whites, whom we are now enabled to keep under proper subordination, which was never the case during the excitement occasioned by the rivalry in trade." George Simpson to Governor Pelly, London, 1 February 1837, in *Fur Trade and Empire: George Simpson's Journal*, ed. Frederick Merk (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), 337.

prominence during the amalgamation after the partners of the NWC, such as Simon McGillivray, voiced their strong dislike for the current HBC Governor of the Northern Department, William Williams. To placate their formal rivals, London reassigned Williams to the Southern Department and appointed Simpson in his stead.⁵⁷⁵ The temperament of the new Governor certainly fit the rigors of the assignment. According to Galbraith, he displayed a "cold, ruthless efficiency" and was "a keen but cynical analyst of human character."⁵⁷⁶ Historians have gone so far as to label him a "'Little Emperor'" whose "autocracy" received "the unfailing support of the Governor and Committee."⁵⁷⁷ Some of his associates were less flattering. Chief Trader John McLean described Simpson as "callous,...incapable of sympathising with the woes and pains of his fellow-men."⁵⁷⁸ He also claimed that the Governor's summer Councils at York Factory were little more than a "sham," where "decisions already made in London" were presented by Simpson, even to the point of writing the minutes "in advance."⁵⁷⁹ Although brash and despotic at times, Simpson's assertive personality was exactly what London wanted in the aftermath of the merger.

Maintaining the Company's monopoly was a hardnosed enterprise that required an

⁵⁷⁵ Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 414.

⁵⁷⁶ Galbraith, *The Hudson's Bay Company*, 19. It is possible that such cynicism was the result of his birth as a bastard. His early years remained throughout Simpson's life a sensitive subject. According to Galbraith, the biography Simpson "contributed to a volume on the aristocracy after his elevation to knighthood in 1841 must be among the shortest recorded." Ibid., 20.

⁵⁷⁷ Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 467. According to Galbraith, the moniker, "Little Emperor, is not entirely accurate. He claims that "Simpson was always subject not only to the theoretical but to the actual control of the governor and committee." Galbraith, *The Hudson's Bay Company*, 18. The title "viceroy" might be more precise.

⁵⁷⁸ John McLean, *Notes of a Twenty-Five Years' Service in the Hudson's Bay Territory* (London: Richard Bentley, 1849), 383.

⁵⁷⁹ Glyndwr Williams, ed., *Hudson's Bay Miscellany, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1975), 154.

aggressive instigator.⁵⁸⁰ As Galbraith reminds us, control over the Canadian trade (including the fur trade in the Pacific Northwest) had come about by "an ever vigilant, sometimes ruthless prosecution of its interests, and Simpson carried on his management of its affairs in that tradition."⁵⁸¹ Using the tools at his disposal, the Governor sought to summarily dismantle any opposition, even if it meant a temporary decline in profits.⁵⁸² As Rich puts it, Simpson was more than willing to "legislate his opponents out of the trade [or] to drive them out" by force.⁵⁸³

The HBC's success in minimizing or removing competition owed as much to its strategies as it did to Simpson's personality. For example, officers in the Columbia were instructed to secure every fur available by offering native trappers a good enough price so as to deter them from saving their furs in hopes of fetching a more attractive bargain from American or Russian

⁵⁸⁰ As American migrants began to settle in areas south of the Columbia (such as in the Willamette Valley) at the end of the 1820s, Simpson wrote to McLoughlin revealing his aggressive tendencies: "The opposition with which we are at present assailed all along the South side of the Columbia and at its entrance, renders our utmost exertions necessary for the protection of our own interests, and to prevent our rivals in trade from profiting by their encroachments. It is highly satisfactory to find that hitherto these important objects have been attained and if we do not relax there is little doubt that we shall soon be left Masters of the Field, as those people we know to be needy adventur[r]s existing on a bad credit who cannot afford to follow up a losing business. Let us therefore lay ourselves out for active, well-regulated & animated opposition, and while we meet them fairly and openly as competitors in trade, let us studiously avoid any violent or discreditable proceeding which might tarnish the reputation of the Hon[orable] Co[mpany] and of ourselves, in the estimation of the public, and from which no permanent benefit would be derived." George Simpson to John McLoughlin, Fort Vancouver, 15 March 1829, in *Fur Trade and Empire: George Simpson's Journal*, ed. Frederick Merk (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), 308.

⁵⁸¹ Galbraith, "Introduction," xiii.

⁵⁸² As Galbraith writes, Simpson governed the North American operations in "strict accordance with the general frontier policies of the Company - to create conditions which would not only discourage existing opposition but deter others from entering the field." *Ibid.*, xix. Simpson did so by setting prices to where "petty traders" would be unable to compete. *Ibid.*, xx. Simpson frequently engage in politics to minimize the financial sting of competitors. He was "a skilled lobbyist" who was "on friendly terms with politicians of various hues." *Ibid.*, xvi. Buying out the competition was not an option for Simpson. In an 1830 letter to McLoughlin, the Governor made it clear that he was of the "opinion that it is bad policy to buy out opposition, as in most cases in which this has been done we found it was merely getting rid of an evil for the moment, and had the effect of encouraging fresh competitors." George Simpson to John McLoughlin, 10 July 1830, in *Fur Trade and Empire: George Simpson's Journal*, ed. Frederick Merk (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), 326.

⁵⁸³ Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 525.

traders once they arrived.⁵⁸⁴ By preemptively undercutting their competitors, the Company was able to retain market control without appearing tyrannical in its dealings. The tactic proved successful insofar as the HBC had enough capital to absorb the losses from such low prices, while their potential competitors, who were much smaller outfits, would be forced look elsewhere or declare bankruptcy and return East. Indeed, "spoil[ing] the Indians," as Simpson put it, was so successful in restricting opposition, American missionaries and settlers were "convinced that the HBC kept a special fund at Fort Vancouver to defeat competition by land or sea."⁵⁸⁵

The Company also deliberately overhunted in buffer zones to prevent American traders from infringing on the desirable resources of the Columbia.⁵⁸⁶ Expeditions led by Chief Trader Peter Skene Ogden succeeded in stripping the Snake River of all of its beaver reserves, which allowed the HBC to create a barrier between themselves and the Americans (namely those employed by William Ashley's Rocky Mountain Fur Company founded in St. Louis in 1822) trapping in the Rocky Mountain and Great Basin regions.⁵⁸⁷

Another buffer zone was the Pacific shoreline. Writing to Simpson in the Spring of 1827, McLoughlin recommended that in order to "secure our inland trade we must endeavor to destroy competition on the coast, as these coasters trade with Indians who in their turn trade with the

⁵⁸⁴ Galbraith, *The Hudson's Bay Company*, 138. In a letter to Chief Factor John McLoughlin, the Governor and Committee approved an increase in the price of beaver and recommended that tariffs should remain "moderate to induce natives...to bring in furs instead of holding them for opposition." Governor and Committee to John McLoughlin, London, 28 October 28 1829, in *Fur Trade and Empire: George Simpson's Journal*, ed. Frederick Merk (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), 318.

⁵⁸⁵ Frederick Merk, ed., *Fur Trade and Empire: George Simpson's Journal* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), 281.; Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains*, 32.

⁵⁸⁶ Protecting the Columbia was particularly important for the HBC, considering that its beaver sold at "the highest prices and commanded [five times] more per skin than that of New Caledonia" to the north. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, 339.

⁵⁸⁷ Galbraith, "Introduction," xxvii. Ironically, the Snake River proved quite profitable. It also demonstrated how competitive the trade had become in the region. Many of the men defected from the HBC party, along with their furs, to join the American party under the leadership of the famed Jedediah Smith who was also trapping and trading in the vicinity. Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 573.).

natives of the interior."⁵⁸⁸ He advised that "our object ought to be if there is a strong opposition on the coast...to allow them to exhaust themselves," reminding his superiors that these coastal traders (namely Americans) "have only one market for their goods,...[and] having an extensive inland trade we would be certain of disposing of ours and would be always ready to take every advantage in the market."⁵⁸⁹ To achieve these ends, the Company patterned its coastal operations on American and Russian models of maritime fur trading and even integrated certain technologies such as the steamship to improve efficiency.⁵⁹⁰

The coast was a more difficult place to contend. This had much to do with the guile of coastal natives who had, by the time of the amalgamation, over forty years experience trading with Europeans and thus "knew, and could benefit from, the advantages of rivalry between fur traders."⁵⁹¹ Coastal Indians viewed competition as a boon to their own interests and continued to refine their mastery of "manipulating competing traders" for their own benefit.⁵⁹² Such exploitation is in stark contrast to those natives of the interior who were, even in the 1820s, still novices in the industry or at least lacked the kind of "trading acumen" of those groups further

⁵⁸⁸ McLoughlin to George Simpson, Fort Vancouver, 1827, in *Fur Trade and Empire: George Simpson's Journal*, ed. Frederick Merk (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), 288-289.

⁵⁸⁹ John McLoughlin to the Governor and Committee, Fort Vancouver, 1825, in *Fur Trade and Empire: George Simpson's Journal*, ed. Frederick Merk (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), 255.

⁵⁹⁰ Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains*, 261.

⁵⁹¹ Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1977), 25-27. It also bears mentioning that many of the furs traded on the coast were hunted in the interior. This suggests that native communities participated in their own trading networks beyond the purview of the HBC. *Ibid.*, 31. These Indians "were not eager to relinquish these old trading connections and the profits that they brought." *Ibid.* In fact, the establishment of Stikine House by the HBC at the mouth of the Stikine River was meant to intervene in one of these indigenous trading networks, in which the Thlinket to the north traded with other natives on Stikine River for furs hunted in the HBC controlled New Caledonia. They would then take these furs to the coast where they would trade with the Russians. *Ibid.*, 32. Provided these trade networks remained opened, the "Indians of the interior [particularly New Caledonia] could maintain a degree of independence from the HBC forts in their territory." *Ibid.*, 33.

⁵⁹² *Ibid.*, 25-27.

west.⁵⁹³ Although a monopoly, or something akin to it (the forging of an Alliance with the Russian American Company), eventually developed on the coast, it came not without significant financial losses to the Company. This was in large part due to the commercial tenacity of indigenes who sought to preserve a competitive atmosphere by demanding higher prices than even the HBC was willing or able to pay. Even during the "Great Monopoly," natives living along the Northwest shore retained at least some leverage in the local economy.⁵⁹⁴ As historian Robin Fisher reminds us, they became "dependent on the company for European goods, but no more than the company was dependent on [them] for furs."⁵⁹⁵

Seizing command of the maritime trade from American and Russian firms required the diversification of the HBC's commercial activities throughout the Pacific. Controlling coastal waters made it easier to export commodities such as salmon and timber to lucrative markets in Hawaii and in the process drive out any invasive company, whether they trafficked in furs or not.⁵⁹⁶ According to Mackie, there was nothing preventing the HBC from exporting whatever it wanted due to its 1670 Royal Charter, which granted the Company proprietary rights to develop the resources in the area of the Hudson Bay and beyond. This included not only furs, salmon,

⁵⁹³ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁴ According to anthropologist George Quimby, native communities along the Pacific Northwest coast had access to ironworks well into the prehistoric period. He argues that it was not uncommon for the Japanese vessels containing such metal goods to wreck and the Pacific currents would take the remnants of the ship to the Northwest Coast. George I. Quimby, "Japanese Wrecks, Iron Tools, and Prehistoric Indians of the Northwest Coast," *Arctic Anthropology* 22, no. 2 (1985): 7. Not only did native communities along the Northwest coast have considerable experience trading with Euro-Americans by the time the interior trade in the region commenced, they may have had knowledge and understanding of certain Euro-American goods that other, more inland communities did not.

⁵⁹⁵ Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 34.

⁵⁹⁶ Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains*, 261. Simpson preserved the company's dominance in the region by protecting its resources and actively crushing would-be competitors, even if they were involved in industries other than the fur trade. Galbraith notes that the HBC engaged in the timber and fish trade, not only to diversify their business operations as the demand for furs declined, but also compete against rival companies participating in those markets. Although the timber and fish trades may have signaled a loss in revenue, the HBC was large enough to "absorb the deficits" while "its petty opponents could not." Galbraith, "Introduction," xiv.

and timber, but other goods such as "walrus teeth, minerals, whale oil, turpentine, potash, and maple sugar."⁵⁹⁷ The HBC on the Pacific Slope was also active in the cattle industry. As Murray writes, "Ewing Young's hazardous and difficult drive from California would have been impossible without the support of McLoughlin, who contributed over \$800 to help promote the project."⁵⁹⁸ For a brief period the HBC even engaged in mining. When "coal was discovered at Nanaimo" the Company "did not hesitate to add this commodity to its growing list of subsidiary activities."⁵⁹⁹

Religion was yet another market in which the HBC participated as a means of preserving its hegemony over the regional economy. By the late 1830s, Company personnel, including Governor Simpson himself, had grown weary of American Methodist missionaries living in the Willamette Valley who were, as it seemed, beginning to chip away at the very foundation of their authority and commercial success. Paranoia was widespread. In an 1838 letter to the Governor and Committee, Chief Trader James Douglas expressed his "deep anxiety" that the missionaries "nourish secret views, at variance with our interests."⁶⁰⁰ Apparently, the leader of the Methodist missions in Oregon, the Reverend Jason Lee, had made "arrangements for importing goods" to the region, which did not sit well with Douglas who viewed the vessel, "freighted by the Missionary Society," as directly undermining the Company's control over the importation and

⁵⁹⁷ Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains*, 32. This is, to a large extent, the focal point of Mackie's text - to address the diverse range of markets in which the HBC operated, especially in the Columbia department where "the resources were abundant, the climate was conducive to agricultural undertakings, year-round ocean-borne transport was feasible, distant markets were accessible, and a large Native population was available for trade and work." *Ibid.*, 42.

⁵⁹⁸ Murray, "The Role of the Hudson's Bay Company," 28.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁰ James Douglas to the Governor and Committee, Fort Vancouver, 18 October 1838, in *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver to the Governor and Committee, 1825-38*, ed. E. E. Rich (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1941), 242-243.

exportation of all merchandise.⁶⁰¹

In response to Douglas' notice, the Governor and Committee wrote to McLoughlin the following year in bitter disappointment. Despite the missionaries' kind rhetoric directed toward the Company for its hospitality and support when they first arrived in the region, the London officers acknowledged "it is quite evident they have promoted the present mania for emigration to the Columbia, which is likely to prove so troublesome and injurious to us, that they are influenced by other objects...besides the moral and religious instruction of the natives."⁶⁰² The Committee went on to accuse the Methodists of being little more than "pioneers for the overflowing population of the New England states, who have it in view to repay us for our good offices, by possessing themselves of the fruits of our labors, as soon as they may be in a condition to wrest them from us by main strength."⁶⁰³

Simpson's distaste for the Methodists was equally palpable. In 1841, he complained to the Governor and Committee that they paid more attention to the development of their farms and settlements than to the "ostensible object of their residence in [the] country."⁶⁰⁴ Or as he rephrased elsewhere in the letter, they "direct their attention more to temporal than spiritual

⁶⁰¹ Ibid., 242. According to Douglas, the situation was one where the Company could "derive neither honour nor advantage." Ibid., 243. If the HBC did not intervene they ran the risk of losing regulatory power over the commercial operations of the region, but if they did intervene they ran the risk of becoming further demonized in the America press, which would in all likelihood garner sympathy for the Methodist missionaries and more importantly draw the ire of the U. S. government. It is also important to mention that Douglas made it clear to London that his concerns "apply solely to the Methodists, and have no reference whatever to the Calvinist missionaries [those sponsored by the ABCFM], who voluntarily came forward and pledged themselves not to trade furs." Ibid.

⁶⁰² The Governor and Committee to John McLoughlin, London, 31 December 1839, in *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver to the Governor and Committee, 1839-44*, ed. E. E. Rich (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1943), 18n.

⁶⁰³ The Governor and Committee to McLoughlin, 31 December 1839, 18n.

⁶⁰⁴ George Simpson to the Governor and Committee, Fort Vancouver, 25 November 1841 in *London Correspondence Inward from George Simpson, 1841-1842*, ed. Glyndwr Williams (London: Hudson's Bay Company Record Society, 1973), 79.

affairs."⁶⁰⁵ As Galbraith reminds us, Lee and his fellow Methodists were "keenly aware of the economic potentialities of the Willamette Valley" and exploited those resources to the chagrin of the HBC who saw in the American missionary presence a clear challenge to its power.⁶⁰⁶ Thwarting the Methodist's commercial activity in the region would prove vital to the Company's bottom line.

Disrupting the missionaries' "spiritual affairs" may have been equally as important. The central project of Protestant missionaries was to civilize and domesticate Indians through instruction in Christianity and the promotion of a sedentary lifestyle. According to some sources, such an endeavor worried Simpson who argued that a "civilized Indian was useless" to a fur trade that relied heavily on native transiency.⁶⁰⁷ Evidently, the Governor and other Company officers had become disillusioned with Protestant missionaries following their

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid., 91. In his *Narrative* he challenged missionaries such as Methodists by claiming that they could "bring their dogma to an easy test. Let them place themselves as mere preachers of Divine truth, where nobody else can find secular motives for either preceding or following them, and then candidly enable the world to judge of the tree by its fruits." Simpson, *Narrative of a Journey*, 159.

⁶⁰⁶ Galbraith, *The Hudson's Bay Company*, 203. Apparently, the American missionary presence in the Hawaiian Islands was just as troubling to Simpson. In an 1842 letter to the governing body in London, he criticized the missionaries affiliated with the ABCFM for swaying the national allegiance of indigenous Hawaiian leadership. He wrote with some frustration that the "King and Chiefs...are evidently most anxious to do what is right in their commercial and other relations with foreign countries, but are too much under the influence of the Calvinist Missionary Society in the United States." Apparently, the King appointed, in the words of Simpson, a "narrow-minded, illiterate American named Richards [Reverend William Richards]" who served a "tool" for the missionary society, which the Governor frankly described as a "political engine" in its own right. George Simpson to the Governor and Committee, Honolulu, Woahoo, 1 March 1842, in *London Correspondence Inward from George Simpson, 1841-1842*, ed. Glyndwr Williams (London: Hudson's Bay Company Record Society, 1973), 129. In his *Narrative* he further castigated them by writing that "in almost utter absence of native literature, the missionaries have operated the national mind only through the medium of laborious and expensive translations, a system which has, doubtless, had this recommendation in their eyes, that it enabled them to exercise censorship, such as neither pope nor emperor ever exercised, over the studies of their neophytes...Its mere existence assimilates the Protestantism of the Sandwich Islands, at least in kind if not in degree, to that very Catholicism of California, which the missionaries of the group are so ready to decry - the proselytes, in either case, being subject to a tutelage, which does not even profess to train them to think for themselves." Simpson, *Narrative of a Journey*, 30. According to Simpson, these same missionaries attempted to use their political connections to persuade the King and lesser chiefs to outlaw Catholic proselytizing in the Islands and were successful at least for a time period. The persecutions and sectarian conflict that followed seems to have left Simpson in disgust. He was critical of everyone involved, especially the Protestant instigators. Ibid., 109-115.

⁶⁰⁷ Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 682.

experiences in Rupert's Land where ministers of the Gospel encouraged natives to "turn from the chase to agricultural pursuits." ⁶⁰⁸ Simpson argued that "they are already too much enlightened...and more of it would in [his] opinion do harm instead of good to the fur trade," for an "enlightened Indian is good for nothing." ⁶⁰⁹

However, what aggravated Simpson most about these missionaries were the accusations leveled against the HBC by the religious organizations (in both Britain and America) who sponsored them. They claimed that the "honorable company" was responsible for abusing native communities for fiscal gain and deliberately frustrated the efforts of missionaries out of fear that "settled Indians would be unproductive as fur-hunters." ⁶¹⁰ The Governor was adamant in his repudiation of these allegations, reminding his critics of "the help and encouragement which were given to missionaries and even...the contributions which [the Company] made towards their salaries." ⁶¹¹

Despite Simpson's defense, the Company did, from time to time, interfere with the enterprise of missionaries (namely Methodists). ⁶¹² In the winter of 1839, the Governor and

⁶⁰⁸ Galbraith, *The Hudson's Bay Company*, 213.

⁶⁰⁹ George Simpson to A. Colville, Fort Garry, 20 May 1822, in *Fur Trade and Empire: George Simpson's Journal*, ed. Frederick Merk, ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), 181.

⁶¹⁰ Galbraith, *The Hudson's Bay Company*, 213-214.; Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 560. Other Americans made similar accusations against the Company. The government agent William Slacum reported to Congress that the HBC refused to "end Indian slavery [and] was detrimental to the welfare of the Americans in Oregon." Murray, "The Role of the Hudson's Bay Company," 30. Moreover, for many Americans, the HBC was "not only...a foreign monopoly but also...a ruthless opponent which ill-treated and exploited settlers, maltreated Indians, slaughtered them without compunction, and then engaged the survivors to massacre American traders, settlers and missionaries." Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 703.

⁶¹¹ *Ibid.*, 560.

⁶¹² The HBC had "agreed on a policy of discouraging American settlers and especially American missionaries." Galbraith, "Introduction," xxxv. McLoughlin, however, viewed such a policy as impractical. As one with a high aptitude for business, he suggested that the company welcome American missionaries and treat them with hospitality, considering that they were going to migrate to the region regardless of the HBC's policies. By happily supplying their needs, the HBC would preserve their dominance over trade in the region. Otherwise, missionaries would be forced to acquire necessities through their "own supply system in opposition to the

Committee instructed McLoughlin that neither he nor any other personnel in the Columbia District were to sell these missionaries "goods for the purpose of dealing with Indians or our retired servants, [or] to promote or facilitate the settlement of emigrants from the United States."⁶¹³ Eleven months later, McLoughlin responded to London, making it clear that "we will regulate our intercourse with them in the manner you direct."⁶¹⁴ By the early 1840s Company policy demanded that any missionary (or any free-standing merchant) who attempted to traffic in either furs or fish was to be "vigorously" and "energetically" opposed so as to "saddle...[them] with a loss, instead of entering into any arrangements with them, by which they may make a profit, however small."⁶¹⁵ The desperate need to stem the tide of market competition represented by missionaries (and the settlers who soon followed) even led Simpson to request of McLoughlin that he commandeer the *Flora* - a Boston ship chartered by the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church for resupplying their missionaries - once it reached its destination at the mouth of the Columbia.⁶¹⁶ By the late 1840s the relationship between the HBC and American Protestant missionaries (both Methodists and Calvinists) had become one of mutual

Company." Ibid., xxxvi. By the end of the 1830s, the Governor and Committee were willing to supply the missions (Catholic, Methodist, and Calvinist) with fair pricing, but were only interested in preventing the missionary organizations from hiring their own supply ships. As Rich writes, the "rites of hospitality were to be observed, but there must be no encouragement for the missionaries to visit the posts." Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 684.

⁶¹³ The Governor and Committee to McLoughlin, 31 December 1839, 18n.

⁶¹⁴ John McLoughlin to the Governor and Committee, Fort Vancouver, 20 November 1840, in *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver to the Governor and Committee, 1839-44*, ed. E. E. Rich (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1943), 18-19.

⁶¹⁵ George Simpson to John McLoughlin, Honolulu, Woahoo, 1 March 1842, in *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver to the Governor and Committee, 1839-44*, ed. E. E. Rich (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1943), 265-266. In addition to issuing a Company policy, Simpson was obviously reprimanding McLoughlin for his "arrangement" years prior with the Bostonian merchant Nathaniel Wyeth who was permitted to start his own independent salmon fishery on the Columbia not far from Fort Vancouver. This was particularly disconcerting to Simpson who was writing from Oahu, where the HBC's salmon trade had been quite profitable and provided an important fiscal crutch for the company during the winter months when fur trading waned.

⁶¹⁶ Galbraith, "Introduction," xxx-xxxii.

suspicion and, to some extent, disdain. While the Company accused missionaries of weakening their monopoly, clergy such as the Calvinist Henry Spalding accused the HBC of plotting with Catholics to "destroy American Protestantism."⁶¹⁷

Catholics also were suspicious of the Company's leanings. In a letter sent to the Governor and Committee, Simpson commented that priests in the area had charged the HBC with pandering to the Protestant cause at the expense of their own. He wrote, "The jealousy that exists on the part of the Roman Catholic clergy of Canada, on the greater support afforded to the Protestant missionaries than to those of their own persuasion, is very great, and I have reason to believe has excited their displeasure in a very considerable degree against the Honourable Company."⁶¹⁸ Catholic anger was somewhat warranted. Although the Company resisted helping American Protestant missionaries in the Pacific Northwest, it had for quite some time sponsored Protestant activity east of the Divide (at places such as the Red River Settlement in what is now southern Manitoba) and even in the Columbia District itself with the appointment of a Company Chaplain.⁶¹⁹

For Simpson, the intrusion of the Papacy in Company territories was "unfavourable."⁶²⁰ He advised his superiors that "as a measure of policy every endeavor should be used to check the Roman Catholic influence," and reasoned that a strong Catholic presence in the region would be

⁶¹⁷ Murray, "The Role of the Hudson's Bay Company," 30.

⁶¹⁸ George Simpson to the Governor and Committee, Red River Settlement, 20 June 1841, in *London Correspondence Inward from George Simpson, 1841-1842*, ed. Glyndwr Williams (London: Hudson's Bay Company Record Society, 1973), 24.

⁶¹⁹ Indeed, Company sponsorship of religious activity at Red River was commonplace. Roman Catholic priests in the colony received "an allowance from the Hudson's Bay Company," in addition to various tithes, while the costs of Anglican clergy in the area, were "defrayed partly by the Hudson's Bay Company, and partly by the Church Missionary Society." Simpson, *Narrative of a Journey*, 54. The HBC also funded the transportation of both Protestant and Catholic clergy to and from the colony, which in the words of Rich represented "a substantial contribution from the fur trade to the missionary effort." Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 527-528.

⁶²⁰ Simpson to the Governor and Committee, 20 June 1841, 41.

"exceedingly injurious to the Company's interests and the peace of the country."⁶²¹ Similarly, in an 1822 letter, he complained that Catholics created unnecessary competition that has made increasing visible their "narrow-minded bigotry."⁶²² He wrote begrudgingly that the "great bulk of the population are Catholics, and the priests seem to make it more their study to fetter them with superstitious ideas and thereby gain an influence over them than improve their morals or enlighten their minds."⁶²³ Even worse, Simpson accused these Catholic clergy of undercutting the Company's trading monopoly:

[They] give their best support to the petty traders,...encouraged freemen, half-breeds and Indians to take their produce of the hunts to those people, who openly started in competition with the Company, escorted them to the Indian encampments and stored their merchandise and furs in their houses in order to avoid the risk of seizure by the Company's representatives.⁶²⁴

In his estimation, excluding Catholics served a dual function: it prevented an intensification in both religious and commercial rivalry.⁶²⁵

For many HBC officers, including Simpson, the two were thought to be interrelated. The

⁶²¹ Ibid., 24.

⁶²² George Simpson to the Governor and Committee, York Factory, 5 August 1822, in *Minutes of the Council Northern Department of Rupert Land, 1821-31*, ed. R. Harvey Flemming, (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1940), 360.

⁶²³ Ibid.

⁶²⁴ Ibid.

⁶²⁵ Whether or not Simpson was suspicious of Catholics for theological or doctrinal reasons is doubtful, given he was, on more than one occasion, willing to attend mass when there were no other Protestant options available. But, at the same time, he may have been pandering to the anti-Catholic commitments of his superiors on the board of directors in London. According to Rich, "There was no ecclesiastical rancour" in resistance to Catholicism, but was a "purely secular" decision. Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 682. A Catholic mission in the Willamette would "merely complicate the picture," considering that there were at the time of the request (issued by the Bishop of Juliopolis) two American missions already in the valley. Ibid. Nevertheless, Simpson was quite critical of the Spanish Catholics immediately to the South. In his *Narrative*, he mentioned that "the priests were contented with merely external observances; and even this semblance of Christianity they systematically purchased and rewarded with the good things of this life, their very first step in the formation of a mission having been to barter maize-pottage, by a kind of regular tariff, for an unconscious attendance at church, and the repetition of unintelligible catechisms." Simpson, *Narrative of a Journey*, 317.

only thing worse than a "domesticated" Indian was a confused one, and those in charge were convinced that a "'collision of creeds'" would risk disrupting the fragile power relationship between whites and natives on which the fur trade rested.⁶²⁶ For example, McLean recounted a rather spirited conversation with a "shrewd old fellow" who dismissed the spiritual power of baptism, citing the contradictions born out of Catholic and Protestant competition.⁶²⁷ He informed McLean that he,

met a French priest, who earnestly besought me to be converted. I hear him attentively, and his words had a great effect upon me; but I had been told there was another priest there, who had different thoughts about religion, and I thought I would go to him too. He was very kind to me, and spoke nearly the same words as the French priest; so that I thought there was no difference in their religions. He asked me if I would be baptized? and I told him that I would; but I wanted to learn the French prayer. 'Ah! my son,' he said, 'that must not be: if you adopt that bad religion, you will be burned for certain.' And he spoke so strong, that I almost thought he was right. But before I could do anything, I went to the French priest again, and told him what the English priest said to me; and then said I would learn the English prayer. 'Ah! my son,' said he, 'if you do so, it will lead you to perdition: all that prayer after the English manner go to the fire.' And he said much more, and his words were very strong too; so I saw that I could be no better by forsaking the belief of my fathers, and I have not gone to French or English priest since.⁶²⁸

McLean regretfully mentioned that the mentality of the "shrewd old fellow" was "by no means a solitary case; and it is one of the sore evils which arise from...the divisions of Christians."⁶²⁹ Besides, it was not merely the loss of native souls that bothered the Chief Trader. The loss of credibility between whites and Indians was equally troubling. He lamented that "the poor ignorant natives, hearing such conflicting doctrines, are at a loss what to think or what to believe;

⁶²⁶ Ibid., 682.

⁶²⁷ McLean, *Notes of a Twenty-Five Years' Service*, 127.

⁶²⁸ Ibid., 128.

⁶²⁹ Ibid. As a remedy, he urged missionaries of both the Catholic and Protestant persuasions to follow the "noble maxim of the great of the Apostles" and "never...enter upon the sphere of another man's labours." Ibid., 129.

and, naturally enough, conclude that both are alike imposters."⁶³⁰ Any competition (religious or otherwise) that resulted in distancing natives from whites had the potential of upsetting the steady exchange of commodities between these parties, thus crippling the Company's earnings.

As one who always considered the welfare of the HBC to be his highest priority, Simpson sought to minimize religious competition at every turn. For instance, in 1841 he informed London that it would be ill-advised to send a Wesleyan as Company Chaplain to the Red River Settlement, which in his view, "would be productive of much jealousy on the part of the gentlemen connected to the Church Missionary Society, and might lead to very serious dissensions."⁶³¹ He had similar advice for McLoughlin who was to "avoid all kinds of jealousy or religious disputation or controversy."⁶³² Simpson feared that such theological discord eventually would interfere with productivity in the region, whether through a breakdown in local trade relationships or simply as an needless distraction from normal business. In fact, any religious competition disturbed the Governor, whether it directly affected the Company or not. In his *Narrative*, he wrote, "My prayer is, that the residents of all...denominations may strive to heal all their petty divisions, remembering that...great cause of civilization and Christianity

⁶³⁰ Ibid., 318. Sympathy toward indigenes facing centuries old religious discord was typical in the language of HBC officers. For instance, Chief Trader John Rowand wrote in the winter of 1840 that the "Methodist ministers & priests [are] all preaching for themselves [and] the poor Indians get bewildered and...do not know what religion is the best." John Rowand to James Hargrave, Fort Edmonton, 29 December 1840, in *The Hargrave Correspondence, 1821-1843*, ed. T. Glazebrook (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1938), 332. Similarly, in a letter to the Governor and Committee, Chief Trader James Douglas informed them of the arrival of a new breed of missionaries who he referred to as "Self-Supporters," or missionaries not affiliated with a particular missionary organization. In his words, they have arrived in the Columbia district "to bewilder our poor Indians, already perplexed beyond measure, by the number and variety of their instructors." James Douglas to the Governor and Committee, Fort Vancouver, 14 October 1839, in *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver to the Governor and Committee, 1839-44*, ed. E. E. Rich (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1943), 227. Even Simpson, himself, noted that the poor Indians of the Columbia were "perplexed and bewildered by the variety of doctrines circulated in [the region]." Simpson to the Governor and Committee, 25 November 1841, 79.

⁶³¹ Simpson to the Governor and Committee, 20 June 1841, 40.

⁶³² John McLoughlin to the Governor and Committee, Fort Vancouver, 16 November 1836, in *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver to the Governor and Committee, 1825-38*, ed. E. E. Rich (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1941), 175.

which Providence has committed to their charge."⁶³³ For Simpson and the HBC at large, the mantra was simple regardless of who or what was involved: "'Union is strength - discord, ruin.'"⁶³⁴

The Company made additional investments in the region's religious economy beyond the mere reduction of competition. Akin to other fur trade operations, such as the Russian American Company to the immediate North, the HBC crafted certain policies pertaining to Company-sponsored religious and moral engagement. These policies dictated that the Company would regularly provide its personnel and their "country" families with religious instruction, while seeking to cultivate and maintain a sense of moral stability throughout the territories in which they retained at least a vestige of political and economic authority. The "Honourable Company" would serve as an engine of both commerce and civilization.

"For the Moral and Religious Improvement of the Servants": Policies, Pelts, and Production

Published in 1835, the *Standing Rules and Regulations* of the Company included a section entitled "Regulations for Promoting Moral and Religious Improvement." It stated:

Resolved 1st: That for the moral and religious improvement of the servants, and more effectual civilization and instruction of the families attached to the different Establishments, and of the Indians, that every Sunday divine service be publically read, with becoming solemnity, once or twice a day, to be regulated by the number of people and other circumstances, at which every man, woman, and child resident, will be required to attend, together with any of the Indians who may be at hand, and whom it may be proper to invite. And for which purpose appropriate religious books will be furnished by, and on account of the Company.

Resolved 2nd: That in course of the week due attention be bestowed to furnish the women and children such regular and useful occupation as is suited to their age and capacities, and best calculated to suppress vicious and promote virtuous

⁶³³ Simpson, *Narrative of a Journey*, 159.

⁶³⁴ Ibid.

habits.

Resolved 3rd: As a preparative to education, that the mother and children be always addressed and habituated to converse in the vernacular dialect (whether English or French) of the Father, and that he be encouraged to devote part of his leisure hours to teach the children their A. B. C., Catechism, together with such further elementary instruction as time and circumstances may permit.⁶³⁵

The primary concern of the HBC were the Metis children and Indian wives (by "country marriage") of former employees who had returned East once their contracts expired. The Company felt obligated to provide (especially the children) with linguistic, educational, and vocational instruction, all meant to instill a sense of industry in the young pupils, grooming many for future service in the Company as general laborers or even officers. Religious instruction was equally important. The HBC saw fit to supply these children and their mothers with a suitable Christian atmosphere (including mandatory attendance at Sunday services and the availability of religious literature), in which to inculcate a sense of moral respectability. Although costly, the failure to do otherwise was thought to be damaging to the Company. In a letter to Simpson, the Governor and Committee lamented that "these people form a burden which cannot be got rid of without expence; and if allowed to remaine in their present condition, they will become dangerous to the peace of the country and the safety of our trading posts."⁶³⁶ They determined it would be both "prudent and economical to incur some expence, in placing these people, where

⁶³⁵ Douglas MacKay, *The Honourable Company: A History of the Hudson's Bay Company* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1936), 371-372.; R. Harvey Flemming, ed., *Minutes of the Council Northern Department of Rupert Land, 1821-31* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1940), 230. These kinds of regulations were under discussion earlier in the 1820s. The following is a brief excerpt from the minutes of a Council meeting at Norway House in 1825: "Minute 108: Indians - Industry to be encouraged, vice repressed and morality inculcated...[Minute] 138: Divine Service to be read Sundays...[Minute] 139: Religious books to be furnished...[Minute] 140: Immoral habits to be checked. Opposites to be encouraged." Archibald McDonald and Malcolm McLeod, *Peace River: A Canoe Voyage from Hudson's Bay to the Pacific, by the Late Sir George Simpson in 1828* (Ottawa: J. Durie & Son, 1872), 63. Similarly in 1824, the Council decided it was prudent to treat the Indians "with lenity and forbearance and every mild and conciliatory means...to encourage industry, repress vice and inculcate morality." Flemming, *Minutes*, 90.

⁶³⁶ The Governor and Committee to George Simpson, London, 27 February 1822, in R. Harvey Flemming, ed., *Minutes of the Council Northern Department of Rupert Land, 1821-31*, ed. R. Harvey Flemming (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1940), 311.

they may maintain themselves and be civilized and instructed in religion."⁶³⁷

In the British colonial tradition, the HBC established formal schools for Indian and "half-breed" children. The most notable was in the Red River Settlement. According to one report, Governor Simpson praised the successes of the school, which in his estimation was educating children "belonging to many of the distant tribes," including some from those communities along the Columbia.⁶³⁸ Once they reached "the age of manhood," and having concluded their studies, they were "allowed the option of returning to their homes, becoming agriculturalists at the settlement, or entering into the Company's service."⁶³⁹ Among Columbia natives in particular there was a high demand to send their children to Red River in order to learn more about Euro-American spirituality. In the words of John McLean, "[they] applied to us for instruction, and our worthy chief spared no pains to give it."⁶⁴⁰

In fact, as Simpson observed during his visit to the region, indigenes throughout the Northwest were curious about Christianity. At one point in his journal, he recalled questioning some more "intelligent Indians" concerning their religious commitments.⁶⁴¹ He concluded that they do not have any conception of a "supreme being," but do "believe that rewards and

⁶³⁷ Ibid.

⁶³⁸ Simpson to Pelly, 1 February 1837, 335-336.

⁶³⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁰ McLean, *Notes of a Twenty-Five Years' Service*, 159. Instruction came in the other forms. In the 1820s and 1830s, HBC personnel took great pains to instruct local indigenes how to properly prepare and pack skins so as to maximize their value. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, 301. Quality mattered to individuals such as Simpson who was known to stiffly monitor the condition of the trade-goods offered in exchange for furs. According to Rich, the Governor "learned the simple but important checks which were necessary - the quality and thickness of roll tobacco, the fineness and dryness of gunpowder, the quality of twine needed for net-making, and the temper of iron-work required - and himself checked the goods offered for supplies." Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 491.

⁶⁴¹ Merk, *George Simpson's Journal*, 102.

punishments await them according to their deserts in another world."⁶⁴² The Governor also commented that they "listen with great attention to our remarks on these subjects and since we have commenced reading prayers in public on Sundays at the establishment[s] they attend regularly and conduct themselves with great decorum."⁶⁴³ In the words of one Chief Trader, the "anxiety" of natives "for instruction was so great" that "at the time the Government expresses were expected to pass,...they would send messengers to inquire if any 'new doctrines had arrived.'"⁶⁴⁴

Faced with such an overwhelming demand, the HBC was happy to subcontract the duties of religious instruction to other British agents.⁶⁴⁵ Although they were more than willing to fulfill those responsibilities when needed, officers such as Simpson preferred they be consigned to the professionals.⁶⁴⁶ Advertising for the spiritual fecundity of the region, he proposed in his journal that "the praise worthy zeal of the [London] Missionary Society in the cause of religion I think would here be soon crowned with success."⁶⁴⁷ To certify his claim, Simpson disclosed that he

⁶⁴² Ibid.

⁶⁴³ Ibid. In the same passage, Simpson argued that there are no natives in North America as primed for instruction in morality and religion than those communities along the Columbia, given their more sedentary lifestyle in comparison to tribes occupying lands east of the Rockies where greater transiency was normative. Ibid.

⁶⁴⁴ Sarah Tucker, *The Rainbow in the North: A Short Account of the First Establishment of Christianity in Rupert's Land* (London: James Nisbet and Company, 1851), 72.

⁶⁴⁵ This type of subcontracting was common on both sides of the Continental Divide. Speaking of an indigenous community on the shores of Lake Superior, Simpson noted that "occasionally, the[ir] fisheries fail...and in such cases the miserable natives are maintained, for weeks and months at a time, at our posts, on potatoes and salted fish. But it is not in this way alone that the poor savages are indebted to the fur-traders. To give them the benefit of moral and religious instruction, the Company has established a missionary of the Wesleyan persuasion [in the area]." Simpson, *Narrative of a Journey*, 31-32.

⁶⁴⁶ The Company was often pleased with the results of their decision. For example, in an 1837 letter sent to Governor Pelly in London, Simpson celebrated how "gratifying [it is] to be enabled to say that the zealous endeavours of *our* [italics added] missionaries have been most successful," insofar as they were able to demonstrate some kind of "moral and religious improvement" on the part of local natives and "half-breeds." Simpson to Pelly, London, 1 February 1837, 335.

⁶⁴⁷ Merk, *George Simpson's Journal*, 106.

had already "sold" the leaders of multiple indigenous communities on the idea of supplying them with quality religious education. He wrote that he had "spoken to several of the Chiefs & principal men on the subject of forming establishments on their lands for religious purposes and they have assured me that nothing could afford them so much delight has having spiritual instructors among them."⁶⁴⁸ He went so far as to actually enumerate some of the specific locations where such "establishments" could and should be constructed: "in the neighborhood of the Cascade Portage on the Columbia, Spokan House, and the Forks of the Thompson and Frazer Rivers."⁶⁴⁹ In all three locations, the conditions were ideal, including the richness of the soil, the proximity of fishing grounds, and the real possibility of low-cost, subsistence living.⁶⁵⁰

What is most noteworthy about this passage is that Simpson used the same qualification and general tone to describe the conditions for a successful mission as he would in describing the conditions for a successful trading post. Simpson even provided a breakdown of the costs required to establish an Anglican mission in the region, which included, among other expenses, the salary of the clergy, necessary goods, luxuries, books, and the cost of freight from the coast. He calculated that one could establish a moderately self-sustaining mission in the Columbia for little more than £680. It seems that for HBC leaders such as Simpson, there was very little, if any, difference between fur trade and religious settlement, provided both were staffed by those affiliated with the British Empire and would not openly conflict with the Company's aspirations.

By and large, Simpson envisioned the two settlements as sharing an intimate bond. Clergyman of the London Missionary Society could rely on the Company for "support and

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid.

assistance in almost everything," provided they remain in the region for a minimum of five years, for no other reason but to gain a mastery of indigenous languages in order to convey complicated theological concepts in a productive fashion.⁶⁵¹ After all, the Governor warned that the Company "could not undertake to provide interpreters as we are so ignorant of the languages that most of our negotiations are carried on in dumb show."⁶⁵² It is possible Simpson thought that British missionaries, once conversant in native dialects, could act as interpreters in commercial trade, allowing the Company to also engage in productive exchanges.

Simpson may have disliked Protestant missionaries, especially Americans, who promoted the habits of agriculture among native trappers, but this does not mean he was against native conversion altogether. In fact, he at one point stated that Indian conversions would be "highly beneficial" to the Company's operations. Simpson suggested that neophytes would strive to "imbibe our manners and customs and imitate us in dress." In turn, such mimicry would breed dependence, which ultimately would, in his words, "increase the consumption of European produce & manufactures and in like measure increase & benefit our trade as they would find it requisite to become more industrious and to turn their attention more seriously to the chase in order to be enabled to provide themselves with such supplies."⁶⁵³ The Governor was quick to admonish members of the Council at York Factory who considered the conversion of Indians to be "wild & visionary and ruinous to the fur trade."⁶⁵⁴ He chastised them for being narrow-minded and not "thinking seriously...or looking at the question in all its bearings and important

⁶⁵¹ Ibid., 108.

⁶⁵² Ibid., 106.

⁶⁵³ Ibid., 108.

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid., 109.

consequences."⁶⁵⁵

Still, many of Simpson's contemporaries saw that he was hardly concerned with the spiritual state of Indians. He cared far more about the harvest of furs than the harvest of souls and only encouraged native conversion when it served to benefit the Company's revenue. In one instance, a group of Wesleyan missionaries in Red River were diligently providing natives with moral and religious instruction and teaching them to be industrious in terms of cultivating the land, but when it was "discovered that the time devoted to religious exercises, and other duties arising out of the altered circumstances of the converts, was so much time lost to the fur-hunt...no further encouragement [from the Company] was given to the innovators."⁶⁵⁶

The leadership of the HBC was prepared to make certain moral or religious compromises for the sake of shoring up commercial control in the Pacific Northwest. American traders were the Company's primary competition on the coast, and although the Russians were present, Simpson noted that they "do not interfere so much with us as their furs are principally sea otters

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid. The consequences of encounter between Company personnel and local native communities were great in areas other than religion. As historian David Chance does well to remind us, "Significant changes occurred [among indigenous Plateau communities] between 1821 and 1871 in the material culture inventory, in ideology, and in social relations," and that these changes had everything to do with the operations of the Hudson's Bay Company in the region. David H. Chance, *Influences of the Hudson's Bay Company on Native Culture of the Colville District* (Moscow: Idaho State University Press, 1973), i. The commercial operations of the HBC had a profound effect on reshaping indigenous economies. Not only did they introduce a new set of commodities, the company also contributed to the shifting of currencies away from traditional mediums of exchange such as *haiqua* (prized shells) and even slaves. From the 1820s to the 1840s, blankets became a common currency throughout the region while company personnel regulated exchange using the designation "Made Beaver." This unit of measurement constituted "prime beaver skin weighing one pound." Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains*, 284. "Made Beaver" coins were made of brass and came in denominations of one, one half, and one quarter. MacKay, *The Honourable Company*, 82. Other scholars have offered a different opinion on the effect the HBC had on indigenous life. One of Robin Fisher's primary arguments is that the fur trade in New Caledonia affected native cultures very little. Instead, he suggests that fur traders, both on the coast and in the interior had little reason to alter the life-ways of indigenous communities. If anything, traders feared that the tides of civilization, clearly marked by agrarian settlement, would influence natives to start cultivating the land in lieu of hunting fur bearing animals. Historian Jonathan Dean corroborates this claim by noting that the Company's attempts to "defend [its] business interests," did not always translate into a reduction in native sovereignty, but instead "native peoples enjoyed considerable freedom of action." Jonathan R. Dean, "The Hudson's Bay Company and Its Use of Force, 1828-1829," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 98, no. 3 (1997): 265, 268.

⁶⁵⁶ McLean, *Notes of a Twenty-Five Years' Service*, 317.

and fur seals which find their way to the northern parts of China through Siberia."⁶⁵⁷ By the late 1820s the HBC had decided it would be beneficial to "form a commercial connexion with the Russian fur Company."⁶⁵⁸ The reason for such an agreement was to deprive the American traders of their "present monopoly of the coasting fur trade," which according to one Company servant, "they retain by a system of trade quite opposed to the terms and Treaty existing between our respective governments in the sale of arms, ammunition and spirituous liquors, and these being the articles held in the greatest estimation by the savage population of the coast."⁶⁵⁹ If left unchecked, local officers believed that American traders would preserve a "superiority over [any] trader who abstain[ed] from the sale of these articles" and would further deteriorate the already "demoralized and barbarous state" of coastal natives.⁶⁶⁰ Despite their official moral position, the Company resolved to traffic in commodities such as guns, ammunition, and alcohol. Unfortunately, Simpson found no alternative and justified his orders to the Governor and Committee by arguing that such duplicitous measures were unavoidable if the Americans were to be squeezed out of the trade.⁶⁶¹

According to Rich, the HBC and the Russian American Company (RAC) shared a

⁶⁵⁷ Merk, *George Simpson's Journal*, 78.

⁶⁵⁸ Captain Simpson to A. Gorman, British Consul at Mexico, aboard the *Cadboro*, 16 September 1829, in *Fur Trade and Empire: George Simpson's Journal*, ed. Frederick Merk (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), 312-313. In agreeing to the Anglo-Russian treaty, the HBC's objectives were threefold: 1) to ensure their unimpeded access to trading along the Fraser River, 2) to ensure unimpeded access to waterways that connected the interior to the Pacific coast, and 3) to ensure the company retained its monopoly over the Mackenzie River system, which was one of them most abundant trapping grounds in all of North America.

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁶¹ Galbraith, *The Hudson's Bay Company*, 140. In the words of Rich, Simpson succeeded in giving "the Company an economic advantage over the Americans on the coast, and...the stability which went far to maintain it in the forefront as the ambitions of American traders were co-ordinated into a national American policy." Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 655.

common interest in keeping the Indians "unarmed and industrious."⁶⁶² The two partnering companies also shared a commitment to the religious and moral improvement of local indigenes. Upon his arrival in Sitka, Simpson observed that "religion [did not] seem to be neglected...any more than education. The Greek church had its bishop, with fifteen priests, deacons, and followers."⁶⁶³ Protestants also were providing natives with instruction. During his visit to New Archangel, the Governor commented on a group of Lutheran missionaries at the post, which in his words, "show[ed] that a spirit of toleration [could be] combined with [a] zeal for the established religion [Russian Orthodoxy]," something Simpson saw little of in his territories to the South.⁶⁶⁴ Adding to his jealousy, he observed that in Sitka "the ecclesiastics were all maintained by the Imperial Government without any expense, or at least without any direct expense, to the Russian American Company."⁶⁶⁵

Whether in the HBC or the RAC, preserving moral order went hand-in-hand with the promotion of the Christian religion. Following the amalgamation, the British crown charged the Company with regulating not only commerce but also social interaction within its jurisdiction. As Murray writes, they were expected to "maintain order, to prevent foreigners from trespassing on British soil, and to keep the Indians quiet."⁶⁶⁶ For the Company's leadership, keeping the peace in a colonial setting entailed a series of regulatory maneuvers that included minimizing

⁶⁶² Ibid., 624.

⁶⁶³ Simpson, *Narrative of a Journey*, 220-221.

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid., 193.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid., 220-221. While the HBC was only informally linked to British imperial politics, the Russian American Company served as a formal extension of Russian imperial authority. Leaders in the company also had to be leaders in the military, specifically the Imperial Navy. In this respect, there was less room for flexibility and innovation on the part of company leaders than what we see in the HBC with individuals such as Simpson and McLoughlin.

⁶⁶⁶ Murray, "The Role of the Hudson's Bay Company," 25.

alcohol consumption and ensuring that crimes did not go unpunished. The "Honourable Company" did not hesitate to retaliate for violence committed against its employees (or against any Euro-American settler living in the area) by members of the indigenous population. Once the suspected perpetrators were brought into custody (which usually happened), justice was often swift and sometimes contrary to what London found morally acceptable. Despite Company policies that required trial by jury and calculated sentencing, HBC personnel often subscribed to a more truncated, blood-for-blood policy when it came to native offenders. As historian John Phillip Reid suggests such a policy "was not limited to homicide alone," but could extend to other offenses such as horse thievery where the perpetrator, once caught, would typically face the noose or the firing squad.⁶⁶⁷ Furthermore, it was not always the perpetrator that was punished, but was sometimes a relative or another member of the offender's tribe. This would also "satisfy the precepts of retaliation-in-kind."⁶⁶⁸ Such severe punitive measures were meant to instill a preventative fear in natives, which ironically ran counter to the Company's commercial aspirations. Historian Jonathan Dean reminds us that in such instances regional Company leadership found themselves in the precarious situation of disciplining or intimidating "those whom [they] also wished to court as trading partners and customers."⁶⁶⁹ As a way of remedying this ambiguity, the HBC attempted to "establish [without success] a consistent, coherent practice, and thereby...minimize the *need for* armed force."⁶⁷⁰

In the Fall of 1829, the Governor and Committee wrote to McLoughlin instructing him

⁶⁶⁷ John Phillip Reid, "Certainty of Vengeance: The Hudson's Bay Company and Retaliation in Kind against Indian Offenders in New Caledonia," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 43, no. 1 (1993): 8.

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid., 10.

⁶⁶⁹ Dean, "The Hudson's Bay Company," 265.

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid., 268.

on how he should punish natives for murder and other crimes. They ordered that any disciplinary actions be carried out "as mercifully as possible" and that "clemency and forbearance should [also] be exercised."⁶⁷¹ However, they also included an important caveat: "But when punishment is undertaken there must be no chance of defeat, as that would endanger all establishments."⁶⁷² This stipulation led to oversized search parties and ultimately to excessive death and destruction - a penalty that rarely fit the crime. The proviso also led to HBC officers soliciting the help of non-Company personnel, including clergy. For example, in August of 1840, an employee of the HBC, Kenneth McKay, was killed at one of the Company's fisheries and in order to track down the killers, McLoughlin circulated a letter to American missionaries and settlers in the Willamette asking for their help in locating the perpetrators - help they willingly provided.⁶⁷³

The motivation behind the Company's policies involving religion was the same motivation behind their policies in other markets. Those in leadership sought to acquire and maintain control over activity in the region for the purpose of manufacturing an atmosphere of stability that would, in turn, foster commercial growth and ultimately increase earnings. It was a tactic that demanded commitment and that was a virtue the HBC had in abundance. When it came to religion, the Company not only promoted religious instruction and moral conduct, but for a brief time period, supplied its own clergyman in the Columbia charged with that very task.

⁶⁷¹ The Governor and Committee to McLoughlin, 28 October 1829, 318.

⁶⁷² Ibid.

⁶⁷³ Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains*, 195.

**"Reformation Must be Commenced and Advanced with These":
Power, Competition, and the Emergence of a Religious Marketplace at Fort Vancouver,
1836-1838**

Following the amalgamation, it did not take long for the HBC to post a Chaplain at its headquarters in the Columbia. By 1830, the Governor and Committee had decided to hire a clergyman at an annual salary of £100 and made it clear that such "measures may be concerted to carry this object into effect with the least possible delay, as we consider it a duty both owing to ourselves and the natives."⁶⁷⁴ As expected they cosigned the task to none other than George Simpson, who after over a decade of managing and regulating clergy east of the Divide, had developed a precise image of who should fill the position:

[The Chaplain] ought to be cool and temperate in his habits and of a mild conciliatory disposition, even tempered and not too much disposed to find fault severely with any little laxity of morals [otherwise]...he would find his situation uncomfortable and it might even interfere with the objects of his mission; he ought to understand in the outset that nearly all the gentlemen & servants have families altho' marriage ceremonies are unknown in the country and that it would be all in vain to attempt breaking through this uncivilised custom. On no other score would he have serious grounds of complaint as the conduct of our people in general is perfectly decorous & proper when well managed.⁶⁷⁵

A few paragraphs later Simpson warned that if the wrong person was to be placed in the position, "disappointment, vexation, and even more serious evils might be the result."⁶⁷⁶ James Douglas offered the Governor and Committee a similar characterization of a successful Chaplain:

A clergyman in this country must quit the closet & live a life of beneficent activity, devoted to the support of principles, rather than of forms: he must shun discord, avoid uncharitable feelings, temper zeal with discretion, illustrate precept

⁶⁷⁴ The Governor and Committee to George Simpson, London, 5 March 1830, in *Fur Trade and Empire: George Simpson's Journal*, ed. Frederick Merk (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), 322.

⁶⁷⁵ Merk, *George Simpson's Journal*, 108. In the early 1840s, Simpson wrote to the Governor and Committee stating that "should your Honours determine on sending out a clergyman of the Established Church, to act specially in the capacity of Company's Chaplain, he should be a single man" and will receive "a salary of £100 per annum." Simpson to the Governor and Committee, 20 June 1841, 40.

⁶⁷⁶ Merk, *George Simpson's Journal*, 109.

by example, and the obdurate rock upon which we have been so long hammering in vain will soon be broken into fragments.⁶⁷⁷

Unfortunately for the Company, this was not the type of clergyman they hired.

Simpson handpicked an Anglican named Herbert Beaver. Why he chose Beaver remains an enigma, for he and his wife proved, despite the irony of their surname, incapable of adapting to the idiosyncrasies of life in the fur trade and, generally speaking, displayed very few of the requirements Simpson and Douglas preferred. According to William Gray, a missionary sponsored by the ABCFM,

Mr. Beaver was a man below the medium height, light brown hair, gray eyes, light complexion, a feminine voice, with large pretensions to oratory, a poor delivery, and no energy. His ideas of clerical dignity were such, that he felt himself defiled and polluted in descending to the 'common herd of savages' he found on arriving at Vancouver...He was fond of hunting and fishing; much more so than of preaching to the 'ignorant savages in the fort,' as he called the gentlemen and servants of the company...[As he himself informed Gray] he did not come to this wilderness to be ordered and dictated to by a set of half-savages, who did not know the difference between a prayer-book and an otter skin, and yet they presumed to teach him morals and religion.⁶⁷⁸

Beaver was a highbrow, aristocratic minister, well-suited for the streets of London, but ill-matched in the muddled conditions at the periphery of empire. In the words of historian Thomas Jessett, Simpson, for all his business acumen, demonstrated a clear "lack of discernment in choosing for the position of Chaplain...a clergyman so unsuited for the position."⁶⁷⁹

In the of Summer of 1836, Beaver and wife arrived at Fort Vancouver to very little fanfare. The ranking officer of the post, Chief Factor John McLoughlin, was far from pleased

⁶⁷⁷ James Douglas to the Governor and Committee, Fort Vancouver, 5 1838, in *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver, 1836-2838: Chaplain to the Hudson's Bay Company and Missionary to the Indians at Fort Vancouver*, ed. Thomas E. Jessett (Portland, OR: Champoege, 1959), 148.

⁶⁷⁸ William Henry Gray, *A History of Oregon, 1792-1849: Drawn from Personal Observation and Authentic Information* (Portland, OR: Harris & Holman, 1870), 162-163.

⁶⁷⁹ Thomas E. Jessett, ed., *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver, 1836-2838: Chaplain to the Hudson's Bay Company and Missionary to the Indians at Fort Vancouver* (Portland, OR: Champoege, 1959), xxiii.

with the appointment and did little to welcome the new Chaplain. Above all else, he was disappointed Simpson did not send a Roman Catholic priest instead, especially since such a religious official was in high demand among both Company personnel and local natives. The Governor even had the opportunity to do so, which angered McLoughlin all the more. Earlier in the year, the Bishop of Juliopolis sent a formal request asking the Company to assist in the passage of two priests who intended to settle in the Columbia District not far from the fort - a request Simpson denied. As a rebuttal, McLoughlin argued that the priests would do "no injury" to the HBC "but the reverse, they would prevent the American missionaries acquiring influence over the Canadians," who remained loyal to the Company.⁶⁸⁰ Despite his attempt at persuasion, it would be only after Beaver's official appointment when Simpson would finally relent and open the Columbia to Catholic clergy.⁶⁸¹

McLoughlin's sponsorship of Catholicism in the Columbia was indicative of his own religious leanings. According to one fellow Chief Factor, he was "'a proud man, rather vain of his own capacity and a rank Republican in principle,'" and is a "'lukewarm Protestant'" who "has

⁶⁸⁰ John McLoughlin to the Governor and Committee, Fort Vancouver, 31 October 1837, in *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver to the Governor and Committee, 1825-38*, ed. E. E. Rich (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1941), 202. Galbraith writes, "Like so many men on the spot in an era of slow communication, McLoughlin thought of himself as far better qualified than his superiors [Simpson, as well as the Governor and Committee in London]...to understand the problems within his jurisdiction and was disposed to act to the limit of his authority, and sometimes beyond." Galbraith, "Introduction," xxviii. Throughout the 1830s, McLoughlin, on several occasions, had been admonished by the London committee for "major deviations from Company policy," which he felt were justifiable given the circumstances. Ibid., xxx. For example, McLoughlin remained hospitable to American visitors to the region, including Nathaniel Wyeth and Methodist missionaries such as Jason and Daniel Lee, against the orders of the Governor and Committee. Although the London authorities commended McLoughlin for his care of Jedediah Smith following the massacre of his men, they were not pleased with the Chief Factor's continual disregard for company policy when it came to non-HBC personnel. While some historians argue that McLoughlin had ulterior motives as a republican sympathetic to the American cause, Galbraith adamantly notes that such a claim "has no foundation in fact." Instead he suggests that McLoughlin was "devoted to the enlargement of profits for his Company and himself, and his actions in Oregon were dominated by a mercantile motivation." Galbraith, *The Hudson's Bay Company*, 190.

⁶⁸¹ In fact, once he observed success of Catholic missionaries among Plateau indigenes, Simpson went so far as to suggested that the Bishop "increase their numbers, for...the ornaments of the altar and the imposing ceremonies of the Catholic worship were indeed suitable for captivating the attention of the natives [more so] than the cold and meaningless ceremony of the [Protestants]." Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 683.

lately become a bigotted Catholic."⁶⁸² Indeed, by the mid-1830s he had become increasingly interested in the Catholic faith and began to hold mass for the French Canadians under his employ well before Beaver's arrival.⁶⁸³ Catholicism was the religion of his mother and, although there were Protestant influences in his life, he was christened in the Catholic Church. His sister, Madame St. Honore, was the superior of a convent in Quebec, who apparently exhorted her brother "to do all that lay in his power to preserve the integrity of the Roman Catholic faith throughout his command."⁶⁸⁴ There is some indication he fulfilled her request, for soon after the start of Beaver's brief tenure, the Chaplain discovered that he was, in his words, in "the very strong-hold of Popery, defended and sustained by the head of the establishment himself," who is found "occasionally reading the prayers of that church to the members of it, compelling them to attend him every Sunday...by the infliction or threat of punishment."⁶⁸⁵ The Chaplain had it in his mind that from the very beginning it was the Chief Factor's "determination...to drive [him] away...in order that a congregation might be kept together, [for] the arrival of...priests."⁶⁸⁶

⁶⁸² Donald Ross to George Simpson, 15 August 1842, in *London Correspondence Inward from Sir George Simpson, 1841-42*, ed. Glyndwr Williams (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1973), xxxiv.

⁶⁸³ Jessett, *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver*, xviii.

⁶⁸⁴ Herbert Beaver and R. C. Clark, "Experiences of a Chaplain at Fort Vancouver, 1836-1838," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (1938): 24. McLoughlin's support of Catholicism was widespread. He assisted priests throughout region, mostly by offering transportation through the company's coastal vessels, as much as he could without drawing the ire of his superiors who had ordered him to provide no excessive assistance to missionaries regardless of creed. Even if they were not a threat to the trade like American Protestant missionaries, Catholic missionaries in the mind of Simpson were by no means an asset. Galbraith, *The Hudson's Bay Company*, 214. As Galbraith writes, McLoughlin's "cordiality to the priests was a personal matter." Ibid.

⁶⁸⁵ Beaver and Clark, "Experiences of a Chaplain," 23-24. In his first post-service letter, written to the editor of the *Church of England Protestant Magazine*, he began with the statement, "If an exposure of the ramification of Popery, in a far distant and little known part of the world, will aid the purposes of your Magazine, I beg your acceptance of the following plain statement of circumstance, *quorum pars magna fui*." Ibid., 22. Jessett argues that Beaver's anti-Catholic sentiments were rooted in his upbringing during the Roman Catholic emancipation in England and Ireland, which left many Anglican Protestants deeply bitter. Jessett, *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver*, xvi.

⁶⁸⁶ Beaver and Clark, "Experiences of a Chaplain," 28. Beaver later discovered that the "Bishop of Juliopolis had failed in sending [priests]. It is to be devoutly wished for, that the failure may continue 'saecula

The flagrant tension between Beaver and McLoughlin gave way to an aggressive religious competition that subsumed most everyone at the post. The Company's school became one of the more visible sites of this contestation. Upon his arrival, McLoughlin assigned Beaver the task of overseeing the religious instruction of children whose parents worked for the HBC, but did so only with the expectation that it would remain "an institution calculated for the promotion of moral and religious knowledge without reference to sectarian tenets, intended to benefit all denominations of Christians by guarding with scrupulous attention against the introduction of subjects having a tendency to produce discussion or exasperate prejudice."⁶⁸⁷ Beaver wanted nothing to do with such a compromise and instead "insisted upon the necessity of teaching exclusively the doctrines of the Church of England [or] would in no other manner take any interest" in overseeing the operations of the school.⁶⁸⁸ McLoughlin abruptly "released him from the charge," and the Chaplain confiscated several of his own books which he had donated to the school.⁶⁸⁹ The Chief Factor justified his actions to London by arguing that the fragile

saeculorum'!" he added. Herbert Beaver to Benjamin Harrison, Fort Vancouver, 19 March 1838, in *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver, 1836-2838: Chaplain to the Hudson's Bay Company and Missionary to the Indian at Fort Vancouver*, ed. Thomas E. Jessett (Portland, OR: Champoege, 1959), 77.

⁶⁸⁷ Rich, *The Letters of John McLoughlin*, 161-162. In fact, upon his arrival at Fort Vancouver, the schoolmaster gave Beaver a list of pupils, "showing all but a few to be from Roman Catholic families, and therefore not to be educated according to the tenets of the Church of England." *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver*, xxvi. It greatly irritated the Chaplain that the "names the Catholic mark had been effixed, were to be brought up in that faith for the most frivolous reasons," even though their Indians mothers or they themselves "had any bias in favor of either." Beaver and Clark, "Experiences of a Chaplain," 23.

⁶⁸⁸ Rich, *The Letters of John McLoughlin*, 162. In a brief letter addressed to George Simpson, Beaver declared that "I shall receive rebuke from no one unentitled [sic] to give it." This was in response to advice from the Governor that Beaver recognize McLoughlin's authority. Beaver to Simpson, 19 March 1838, 63. Mostly, Beaver took issue with what he perceived to be McLoughlin's despotic leadership and found it inconceivable that any theological or doctrinal concessions be made to a "secular" entity such as the HBC. Jessett, *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver*, xvii. In his last report, he remarked that "a non interference in my duties, and a complete separation of them from all the other, have been all I have ever desired." Herbert Beaver to the Governor and Committee, Fort Vancouver, 2 October 1838, in *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver, 1836-2838: Chaplain to the Hudson's Bay Company and Missionary to the Indians at Fort Vancouver*, ed. Thomas E. Jessett (Portland, OR: Champoege, 1959), 113.

⁶⁸⁹ Rich, *The Letters of John McLoughlin*, 162.

relationship between the Anglican sympathies of the Company and the Catholic identity of most of its employees needed to be protected for fear of open sectarian conflict, which would surely result in a decline in production. In his words, Beaver's reckless request was "at variance with every principle of justice and sound policy."⁶⁹⁰

Even with Beaver's dismissal from the school, a battle for the minds and souls of the post's youth raged on. In the spirit of avoiding any "alteration in the system of education, which has been hitherto so successfully pursued," McLoughlin insisted that the Chaplain "not...interfere with the religious instruction of the Roman Catholic children," which took place "every day, after four o'clock."⁶⁹¹ Beaver complained to London that McLoughlin even ordered several orphaned or deserted children in the Fort's vicinity to attend "Roman Catholic prayers and catechism," which were "read and taught by the illiterate and immoral carpenter, David Dompier."⁶⁹² He went on to suggest that "these children have signified their preference for Protestant services and instructions; and they are sufficiently advanced in age and learning to comprehend the difference between the two religions, adequately for the purpose of making up their minds, as to which they prefer."⁶⁹³ Even younger children at the post whose fathers "privately, not daring publically to do so, expressed their desire, that [Beaver] should educate

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁹¹ John McLoughlin to Herbert Beaver, Fort Vancouver, 30 September 1836, in *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver, 1836-2838: Chaplain to the Hudson's Bay Company and Missionary to the Indians at Fort Vancouver*, ed. Thomas E. Jessett (Portland, OR: Champoege, 1959), 8.; Beaver and Clark, "Experiences of a Chaplain," 23.; Herbert Beaver to Benjamin Harrison, Fort Vancouver, 15 November 1836, in *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver, 1836-2838: Chaplain to the Hudson's Bay Company and Missionary to the Indians at Fort Vancouver*, ed. Thomas E. Jessett (Portland, OR: Champoege, 1959), 23.

⁶⁹² Report from Herbert Beaver to the Governor and Committee, Fort Vancouver, 19 March 1838, in *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver, 1836-2838: Chaplain to the Hudson's Bay Company and Missionary to the Indians at Fort Vancouver*, ed. Thomas E. Jessett (Portland, OR: Champoege, 1959), 51.

⁶⁹³ Ibid.

[their children] in the principles of [his] own faith."⁶⁹⁴ He even went so far as to say that "all these children voluntarily attend my morning service on the Sabbath, being able to do so from the carpenter's, on which their attendance is compulsory."⁶⁹⁵

The lure of Protestantism among Company personnel was a common theme in many of Beaver's writings. In his words, many (including Catholics) expressed "a preference for the English Prayers" and in an attempt to quell the demand, Beaver "immediately commenced a course in religious instruction [beyond the purview of the school], supplying each child... with a Bible and Prayer-book."⁶⁹⁶ Due to funding from the HBC, Beaver was able to "supply all persons, who want[ed] them, with Bibles, Prayer Books, and testaments."⁶⁹⁷ Apparently the need for Protestant texts was so great Beaver requested that his friend Benjamin Harrison place an order for him with the "Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge."⁶⁹⁸ It was for the following: 12 English Bibles, 12 French Bibles, 24 English Prayer Books, 24 French Prayer Books, 50 Catechisms, and 25 Cropman's Instruction.⁶⁹⁹

Despite efforts by McLoughlin and other Catholic sympathizers to "decry the value of

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid., 51-52.

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid., 52.

⁶⁹⁶ Beaver and Clark, "Experiences of a Chaplain," 24. Beaver's Sunday School had "twenty eight boys and eighteen girls." What's more, Beaver observed that there was not "on the part of the Roman Catholic parents the slightest indisposition to send their children to me, or to their being taught whatever I please to teach them." Beaver to the Governor and Committee, 2 October 1838, 114-115.

⁶⁹⁷ Herbert Beaver to the Governor and Committee, Fort Vancouver, 10 November 1836, in *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver, 1836-2838: Chaplain to the Hudson's Bay Company and Missionary to the Indians at Fort Vancouver*, ed. Thomas E. Jessett (Portland, OR: Champoege, 1959), 4.

⁶⁹⁸ Benjamin Harrison, an "influential" member the London committee, was also a member of the Clapham Sect, which was a "group of prominent Evangelicals in the Church of England, strongly humanitarian in outlook, and active in forwarding the work of the Church Missionary Society." Jessett, *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver*, 16. He was one of those responsible for Beaver's appointment.

⁶⁹⁹ Beaver to Harrison, 15 November 1836, 25.

these new books," they remained quite the commodity.⁷⁰⁰ According to Beaver, it was not uncommon for Catholic employees to request "clandestinely" a Bible, "expressing great alarm lest Chief Factor McLoughlin should gain a knowledge of the sinful application."⁷⁰¹ Similarly, Beaver wrote in his first letter to Harrison that Dompier, who was "*obliged* by Dr. McLoughlin to teach and read to the others on the Sabbath day, and also to catechise the children,...dislikes the office, and would give it up, if he dared" and "attend my English service."⁷⁰² In spite of the supposed monopolizing tendencies of McLoughlin's religious policies, Beaver admitted there were moments when "a way appeared open to the hearts of the Roman Catholics" and a market began to take shape.⁷⁰³

Catholic demand for Beaver's texts and services may not have been solely based an attraction to Protestant doctrine. In addition to his work with the children, the Chaplain also claimed that about twelve people met in his private quarters every evening for a prayer service that lasted roughly an hour.⁷⁰⁴ Reading the biblical text during these meetings was of the utmost importance. He wrote, "My plan upon these occasions is to read a chapter in the New Testament, through which we are regularly proceeding, each on taking a verse in turn, whereby the imperfect readers are improved, and at the conclusion I familiarly expound it."⁷⁰⁵ Literacy played a very important role in Beaver's theology, which may have been appealing to some illiterate or French-Canadian laborers who took the opportunity to learn how to read and write

⁷⁰⁰ Beaver and Clark, "Experiences of a Chaplain," 27.

⁷⁰¹ Ibid.

⁷⁰² Beaver to Harrison, 15 November 1836, 23.

⁷⁰³ Beaver and Clark, "Experiences of a Chaplain," 27.

⁷⁰⁴ Beaver to the Governor and Committee, 10 November 1836, 2.

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid., 2-3.

English. Although his attendance record was promising, the Chaplain lamented that more would attend these meetings if not for certain "avocations."⁷⁰⁶ He would on occasion complain about the men's work in the fur trade interfering with their spiritual development.

The support that Beaver felt for his cause became all the more vivid in a petition designed to retain him as the Company Chaplain. The document, which accompanied his first report to the Governor and Committee, was "signed by *all* the poor Protestants [at the fort], and about two thirds of the Roman Catholics."⁷⁰⁷ Evidently more would have signed the document were it not "from a dread that the act might be indirectly visited by the vengeance of superior authority."⁷⁰⁸ According to Beaver, McLoughlin sought to heavily regulate religious behavior at the fort. This was particularly distressing to the Chaplain, who was convinced that if such regulatory schemes were relaxed "there can be no reason why we should not be one fold under one shepherd."⁷⁰⁹ After all, Beaver was under the impression that the vast majority of workers, regardless of their religious persuasion, preferred the reformed message and that McLoughlin's "forceful" imposition of Catholicism was all he could do to stall the inevitable Protestantizing of those under his command.

Regardless, such wholesale conversion would have been improbable. Many of the servants at Fort Vancouver during this time were or had been French-Canadian voyageurs, and according to historian Carolyn Podruchny, they closely aligned themselves with the ritual

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid., 3. All in all, Beaver estimated that about 80-100 people frequented his Sunday morning services and about 40-50 attended his Sunday afternoon meeting. Ibid., 2.

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid., 5. According to the actual petition Beaver's presence was instrumental to growth and vitality of the Protestant community at the fort and his departure would be "fatal to the late revival of religion." The document was signed by 34 anonymous Protestants and 24 Roman Catholics, including David Dompier, the lay-priest "who officiates for them." Ibid., 13.

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid., 5.

⁷⁰⁹ Ibid.

performances of the Catholic Church. For example, it was common practice for voyageurs to stop by the parish of St. Anne (the patron saint of New France) on their way to the *pays d'en haut* from Montreal - St. Anne being the last Catholic parish they would encounter at least on "consecrated" ground. During their visit, they would leave behind a few coins as petition for a safe journey, timely return, and prosperous expedition. It was a "ritual prayer and donation [that] might have been seen by some voyageurs as a marker of the edge of the Catholic world and their entrance into new worlds governed by other spiritual forces" in which they would require "both special assistance from their patron saints and good will from these foreign spiritual powers to survive."⁷¹⁰ As Podruchny suggests, blending Catholicism with other traditions became an integral part of the voyageurs identity while on the periphery of Euro-American society.⁷¹¹ Incorporating elements of Beaver's Anglicanism into their longstanding Catholic ethos without abandoning it altogether, would have been a familiar exercise to many laborers at the post.

Obviously such syncretism was not what Beaver had envisioned for his ministry. After witnessing what he viewed as their deplorable Catholic state, the Chaplain wrote to Harrison in March of 1837 adamant about his intent to sway these "Popish" employees toward the light of Protestantism. He wrote that "it is lamentable to see such a number of Christians living in so unchristian a manner....Reformation must be commenced and advanced with these."⁷¹² Beaver

⁷¹⁰ Carolyn Podruchny, *Making of the Voyageur World: Travelers and Traders in the North American Fur Trade* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 53.

⁷¹¹ She writes that they "grew in a community dominated by the Roman Catholic Church," but were also highly influenced by "old ideas and practices (often labeled as magic, superstition, or paganism) Rituals practiced by French Canadian Catholics easily intertwined beliefs and practices from everyday activities and from metaphysical questions concerning the nature of the cosmos." *Ibid.*, 57.

⁷¹² Herbert Beaver to Benjamin Harrison, Fort Vancouver, 10 March 1837, in *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver, 1836-2838: Chaplain to the Hudson's Bay Company and Missionary to the Indians at Fort Vancouver*, ed. Thomas E. Jessett (Portland, OR: Champoege, 1959), 38. Similarly, he wrote to the Governor and Committee in March of 1828 noting that "religion and the care of the soul" at Fort Vancouver "is almost totally neglected. Beaver to the Governor and Committee, 19 March 1838, 53.

certainly had his chance when, in McLoughlin's absence, he was given the opportunity to preach a public sermon to all the Catholics at the fort on Good Friday, uncensored and unhampered by the Chief Factor. At one point in the speech he stated, "I believe that some of you have entertained praiseworthy and conscientious scruples about attending me," while elsewhere he noted that the type of conversion he wanted to "promote" was a "conversion from sin into holiness."⁷¹³ He also talked about the desire to "persuade his people to purge their conscience from dead works to serve the living God," and that "it is the bounden duty of all...to search the Scriptures, for they teach the way of eternal life, and bear witness of Jesus Christ."⁷¹⁴ He concluded by inviting those who understood English to attend his prayer meetings and Sabbath services. Beaver's Good Friday sermon was little more than a proposition for the Protestant faith in a market that seemed as unregulated as ever. Indeed, this was exactly what Beaver wanted, for at least according to his own testimony he promised to favor quite well where choice was given.

Opening the door to competition was an exercise leaders in the HBC, such as McLoughlin, had been conditioned to avoid, regardless of the commodity being exchanged. Beaver wished that such "strong opposition to the Established Church...did not exist to such a formidable extent" and that those "who had been withdrawn from [his] evening service to attend that of the carpenter...[would] return...that [his] young flock would be allowed to follow again their true shepherd."⁷¹⁵ But, without any action taken by London on the matter, he came to the

⁷¹³ Herbert Beaver's address delivered to the French Roman Catholics at Fort Vancouver on Good Friday, 1838, in *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver, 1836-2838: Chaplain to the Hudson's Bay Company and Missionary to the Indians at Fort Vancouver*, ed. Thomas E. Jessett (Portland, OR: Champoege, 1959), 149.

⁷¹⁴ Ibid.

⁷¹⁵ Beaver to the Governor and Committee, 10 November 1836, 2.; Beaver to Harrison, 19 March 1838, 75.

disappointing conclusion that "under such a system of compulsion, which I am unable to resist, I have latterly, in pity to the young mind, which would be distracted by imbibing two distinct creeds at the same time, forlorn to improve the few opportunities allowed me of inculcating the purer."⁷¹⁶

With McLoughlin gone these "few opportunities" became more numerous. James Douglas was placed in charge of Fort Vancouver in the interim and, in the words of Beaver, "removed" many of the obstacles to his ministry, going so far as to discontinue the "French prayers" altogether.⁷¹⁷ The Chief Trader even assisted the Chaplain in "correcting [his] translation of part of [the] liturgy into French."⁷¹⁸ Such steps had the effect of bolstering some of Beaver's numbers at the end of his tenure with the Company. In his last report to the Governor and Committee, he happily announced that he had performed 118 baptisms, which was "all persons" linked to the post "to whom it would be proper to administer that sacrament," and went on to include that he was "much gratified" seeing the "spiritual condition of [children] has at length become an object of solicitude."⁷¹⁹

⁷¹⁶ Ibid., 52.

⁷¹⁷ Beaver to the Governor and Committee, 2 October, 112. Beaver rejoiced in the discontinuation of Roman Catholic catechism since the departure of McLoughlin, insinuating that it was the Chief Factor all along who represented Beaver's primary religious competition at the post and stood in the way of the Anglican monopoly Beaver so feverishly desired. Ibid., 113. For the first time since his arrival at Fort Vancouver, he experience little competition from those in power. Chief Trader James Douglas praised the efforts of Beaver, noting that his "attention...to the duties of his office have been exemplary." Douglas to the Governor and Committee, 18 October 1838, 239. He even went so far as to say that the minister had been responsible for "awakening a more general desire for religious knowledge among the persons of his communion." Ibid.

⁷¹⁸ Beaver to the Governor and Committee, 2 October 1838, 112. Beaver's brief ministry to the French Canadian workers of Fort Vancouver was limited due, not only to his pedestrian knowledge of the French language, but also the lack of French prayer books, which he had yet to receive from London. Ibid., 113.

⁷¹⁹ Ibid., 133. Beaver did make brief mention of two girls "under the care of [a] woman, who once lived with Chief Factor McLoughlin." He regretted to inform that Governor and Committee that this caretaker did not permit the two girls from attending Beaver's Sunday School. Apparently Douglas had informed the Chaplain via private correspondence that "Mrs. McLoughlin had ordered her not to attend." Beaver to the Governor and Committee, 2 October 1838, 115.

Despite these perceived successes, Beaver's appointment as Chaplain for the HBC proved in his mind to be a grave disappointment. In his last letter to Harrison, he admitted that he and his wife "most heartily wish we had never accepted" the position.⁷²⁰ Upon leaving his post, he felt as if he had made very little progress in the way of religious and moral improvement. In his eyes, HBC employees continued to live in fraudulent marriages, work on the Sabbath, and engage in abuses of all kinds. Lamenting to Harrison once more, Beaver wrote that "since my sojourn among this iniquitous and stiff-necked people...all remains the same, unaltered and unamended."⁷²¹

The persistence and range of Beaver's opposition had much to do with his frustrations.⁷²² This included forms of Catholic competition that came from men other than the Chief Factor. Beaver made reference to two "opponents, in the persons of Chief Factor McLoughlin's eldest son, John, that scape-grace from Paris, and the would-be hero of California, and of a low Canadian, both of whom came with the last express, and catechise the children"⁷²³ He added that the "latter reads prayers, by order, in the absence of the regular Catholic Catechist in his vocation at the saw-mill which is miles distant."⁷²⁴ In addition to the competition posed by Catholic catechists, further contestation came in the form of two ABCFM missionaries who volunteered their time to instruct children at the fort. In the fall of 1836, the Chaplain sent a letter informing

⁷²⁰ Beaver to Harrison, 19 March 1838, 71.

⁷²¹ Ibid., 69.

⁷²² In his third report to the Governor and Committee, Beaver claimed that his "mission to the Columbia" has been marked by a "strenuous opposition to error in religion and to viciousness of life, under whatever form, or in whatever person, either the one, or the other, may appear." Ibid., 47. Striking a similar tone in a private letter to his friend Benjamin Harrison, Beaver commented that "every white man, who in this country acts an unchristian part, proves an inconceivable hindrance to the spreading of the Gospel." Beaver to Harrison, 19 March 1838, 85.

⁷²³ Ibid., 77.

⁷²⁴ Ibid.

them that it is "unusual in England for any person to take part, without his permission and request, in the parochial duties of the minister," and requested that they should "refrain from teaching, in any respect, the children at the school."⁷²⁵ Not only were they women, Narcissa Whitman and her associate Eliza Spalding were also Presbyterians, which did not pair well with the brand of Anglicanism Beaver sought to promote among the Company's youth.⁷²⁶ McLoughlin was not at all pleased with Beaver's admonishment. Being "most anxious to avoid every cause of collision" at his post, he demanded a private interview with the Reverend in order to ascertain an explanation for the perceived insult.⁷²⁷ He, however, turned down the request, which only served to inflamed McLoughlin's anger.

The Chief Factor struck back at Beaver in a number of ways. For instance, the Chaplain preferred to partake of the Lord's Supper in the privacy of his own quarters where, in his words, "every preparation, that circumstances would admit for the decent celebration of the Eucharist, have been previously made."⁷²⁸ Yet, even in this moment of solitude he could not escape the distractions of his rival. In his third report to the Governor and Committee, Beaver relayed the following story:

⁷²⁵ Herbert Beaver to Mesdames Whitman and Spalding, 1 October 1836, in *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver, 1836-2838: Chaplain to the Hudson's Bay Company and Missionary to the Indians at Fort Vancouver*, ed., Thomas E. Jessett (Portland, OR: Champoege, 1959), 11.

⁷²⁶ Elsewhere, Beaver argued that especially adolescent minds should not be "distracted by... various systems of instruction" and that it was "totally unusual for clergymen of the Church of England to admit unauthorized instruction in schools committed to their charge." Herbert Beaver to John McLoughlin, Fort Vancouver, September 30, 1836, in *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver, 1836-2838: Chaplain to the Hudson's Bay Company and Missionary to the Indians at Fort Vancouver*, ed. Thomas E. Jessett (Portland, OR: Champoege, 1959), 7.

⁷²⁷ John McLoughlin to Herbert Beaver, Fort Vancouver, 3 October 1836, in *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver, 1836-2838: Chaplain to the Hudson's Bay Company and Missionary to the Indians at Fort Vancouver*, ed. Thomas E. Jessett (Portland, OR: Champoege, 1959), 12.

⁷²⁸ Beaver to the Governor and Committee, 19 March 1838, 54-55.

Unfortunately, at this very time, a large bell, distant twenty-five yards from my quarters, is rung for the reading of Roman Catholic prayers by Chief Factor McLoughlin, who, nevertheless, with the most glaring inconsistency, is a constant attendant on the Protestant form of worship. The noise of the bell, jingled most indecorously by a parcel of boys, added to the association of ideas, connected with it, which we could not wholly, even in the awful [sic] presence of the Majesty of Heaven, banish from our minds, has caused me to adopt the nearly unavoidable resolution of never again subjecting myself, or my congregation, to such an intolerable nuisance, which might, with but a slight deviation from propriety, be also styled a premeditated insult.⁷²⁹

McLoughlin challenged the Chaplain in more direct ways. In the same report, Beaver noted that the Chief Factor had invited some nearby Methodist missionaries to attend one of the evening lectures for no other purpose but to rouse inter-Protestant debate, with the ultimate goal of discrediting Beaver's theology in the eyes of the post's servants. Beaver, however, declined to lecture that evening, claiming that he was "unwilling to enter the lists at a hopeless disadvantage, incompetent to stem the torrents of counteraction."⁷³⁰

Undercutting Beaver's spiritual authority was a tactic McLoughlin used frequently. In the first year of his contract, the Chaplain reported to London that the Chief Factor, along with Chief Traders James Douglas and William Tolmie were "absenting themselves...in a very marked manner, from my Church."⁷³¹ To make matters worse, these gentlemen were "holding a Conventicle in the [post's] office" during the time of his own meeting.⁷³² Two years later, McLoughlin was still engaged in discrediting Beaver. In his final report, Beaver informed London of "another species of opposition to [his] ministry." Apparently, prior to his departure, McLoughlin had attempted to "persuade the Roman Catholics, as has since been affirmed by one

⁷²⁹ Ibid., 55.

⁷³⁰ Ibid., 53.

⁷³¹ Beaver to the Governor and Committee, 10 November 1836, 4.

⁷³² Ibid.

of them, that baptism in the hands of a Protestant clergyman was invalid and unsaving."⁷³³

According to Beaver, when the Chief Factor's efforts at persuasion failed, he sometimes resorted to more forceful means. For example, there was a boy named Baptiste Jeaudoins who, in Beaver's words, was "in defiance of chastisement by [McLoughlin's] own hand, in refusing to attend...the French Prayers."⁷³⁴ The Chaplain soon "catechised" the young man and McLoughlin responded by assigning him "as a servant to a couple of priests," where Beaver could only "hope against hope, and pray that he may persevere in his steadfastness, and stand fast in the true faith" and may not be persuaded to return to the religion of his upbringing.⁷³⁵

Overall, McLoughlin showed Beaver little support. He insulted the Chaplain by commissioning the construction of a Catholic parish in the Willamette River Valley while being deliberately lethargic in complying with Beaver's request to build a Protestant church at the fort.⁷³⁶ In one report, Beaver commented that if the Governor and Committee were serious about the "ecclesiastical part" of their establishment, they should fund the construction of an Anglican parish, along with offices for the Chaplain and a more adequate schoolhouse.⁷³⁷ None of which were ever sufficiently addressed.

For his part, Beaver complained incessantly about his accommodations, which did little to put him in the good graces of the Company's officers. Many, including McLoughlin, argued that his housing and rationing were some of the best the post could offer. Beaver was afforded

⁷³³ Beaver to the Governor and Committee, 2 October 1838, 133.

⁷³⁴ Beaver and Clark, "Experiences of a Chaplain," 25.

⁷³⁵ Ibid.

⁷³⁶ Beaver to Harrison, 15 November 15, 1836, 24. Beaver added that the construction of his Catholic parish has been unfair to certain settlers in the Willamette, including former servants of the Company, who have been forced to work on the project at the expense of neglecting their own farms. Ibid.

⁷³⁷ Beaver to the Governor and Committee, 19 March 1838, 56.

certain luxuries that most had to do without. Even the minister's stipend of wine and brandy was "much greater" than the typical allowance.⁷³⁸ This became somewhat of a problem. Apparently, Beaver did not follow Company regulations and would consume liquor on occasions other than for dinner (which was against Company policy). McLoughlin added in a letter to London that he had heard about "two instances of partial inebriety having been observed here lately," and that "Mr. Beaver was in the habit of having liquor on the table when visitors called to see him in [the] evening"⁷³⁹ The Chief Factor reminded London that the open consumption of liquor, regardless of the office held by the culprit, "does not suit our situation as besides generally degenerating in the long run in to intemperance. It causes business to be neglected and I have always found it best (I might say necessary) in order to keep up regularity and attention to business to limit the use of liquor to the dinner."⁷⁴⁰

It seems based on his constant grumbling, complaints which Chief Trader James Douglas referred to as "hackneyed," Beaver thought of himself in aristocratic terms, as he was accustomed to based on the social role of an ordained Anglican minister in England.⁷⁴¹ Overall, Beaver's irritation seemed rooted in his inability to fully transfer the social capital he accumulated in London to a colonial post whose personnel operated on very different notions of what constituted social capital in the first place. In short, neither Beaver or his wife were ever suited for life in the fur trade.⁷⁴²

⁷³⁸ Rich, *The Letters of John McLoughlin*, 176.

⁷³⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁴¹ Beaver to Harrison, 15 November 1836, 21.

⁷⁴² Jessett suggests that McLoughlin's reports of Beaver's demands (at least in terms of accommodations) were probably just as exaggerated as Beaver's reports of his inconveniences. In other words, hyperbole likely

Of course, he did not make his situation any easier. Beaver not only complained; he also vehemently attacked established institutions of the trade. He openly contested the "unsanctioned" marriages between HBC employees and native or Metis women, labeling them as nothing more than "concubinage."⁷⁴³ To Harrison he wrote, "It seems to me, that now a Clergyman is here, every couple, living hitherto in a state of concubinage, in all classes of society should immediately be married, or be regarded [as]...imprudent scoundrels....Religion and decency require this."⁷⁴⁴ Beaver went so far as to request that London make it a matter of company policy that any "concubinage" couple would not be permitted to live within the confines of the fort, claiming that such a lifestyle was "altogether offensive in the sight of Christian people."⁷⁴⁵ The Chaplain's encouragement of such moral regulation fell on deaf ears. The Governor and Committee remained silent on the issue, knowing full well that such legislation would have dire ramifications for the Company, given that a significant number of laborers and officers partook of the practice, including McLoughlin himself.

Questioning the virtue of the Chief Factor's "country wife" in Beaver's final report drew

reigned on both sides of the conflict, especially in their correspondence to the Governor and Committee. Jessett, *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver*, 17.

⁷⁴³ Beaver to Harrison, 10 March 1837, 35.

⁷⁴⁴ Beaver to Harrison, 19 March 1838, 86. Although "respectable" in their own cultural setting, such wives, even once their marriages were sanctioned by the "Established Church," were, in the eyes of Beaver, "little calculated to improve the manners of society." Beaver to Harrison, 10 March 1837, 35. Mrs. Beaver never saw these women as equal and she, along with her husband, entertained a steady disdain for their kind. Beaver to the Governor and Committee, 19 March 1838, 54.

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid., 57. Beaver commented on one of the daughters of HBC clerk James A. Birnie, who entered into a "concubinage" with another clerk named A. C. Anderson. In a separate letter addressed to Chief Factor Peter Ogden, Beaver explained that he could not baptize her because she did not seem "acquainted" enough with the teachings of the Church of England, as she was living in flagrant violation of the Church's sacrament of marriage. Peter Ogden to Herbert Beaver, Fort Vancouver, 17 June 1837, in *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver, 1836-2838: Chaplain to the Hudson's Bay Company and Missionary to the Indians at Fort Vancouver*, ed. Thomas E. Jessett (Portland, OR: Champoege, 1959), 49. While Beaver had heard that a Protestant missionary in the Walla Walla district would be willing to baptize the young woman, Beaver trusted that "no minister of Christ [should] be found so unfaithful a dispenser of the sacraments of His Church." Beaver to the Governor and Committee, 19 March 1838, 51.

the ire of his former ally, James Douglas. The Chief Trader wrote that "the intrusion of Dr. McLoughlin's private affairs into a public report, is decidedly in bad taste, and I deeply regret that Mr. Beaver sullied those pages with unhandsome reflections upon Mrs. McLoughlin, who is deservedly respected for her numerous charities, and many excellent qualities of heart."⁷⁴⁶ What angered Douglas even more was the Chaplain's comment on the officers of the establishment engaging in eliciting sexual activity with mistresses, of which the Chief Trader demanded an explanation. In response to his request, Beaver tersely stated in a letter that "I do not conceive that I can be required to give an explanation of any part of it," which only served to strengthen Douglas' resentment.⁷⁴⁷ Overall, the Chief Trader concluded that Beaver was "determined to allow none of our institutions, however harmless and useful, to escape unscathed by the touch of his distortive remarks."⁷⁴⁸

McLoughlin was not as civil in his chastisement. In his last report to London, Beaver

⁷⁴⁶ James Douglas to the Governor and Committee, Fort Vancouver, October 5, 1838, in *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver, 1836-2838: Chaplain to the Hudson's Bay Company and Missionary to the Indians at Fort Vancouver*, ed. Thomas E. Jessett (Portland, OR: Champoege, 1959), 141.

⁷⁴⁷ Herbert Beaver to James Douglas, Fort Vancouver, 2 October 1838, in *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver, 1836-2838: Chaplain to the Hudson's Bay Company and Missionary to the Indians at Fort Vancouver*, ed. Thomas E. Jessett (Portland, OR: Champoege, 1959), 144. Beaver's insulting words led Douglas to refuse all "intercourse with him, beyond the interchange of those relative duties, which our respective situations in the service, rendered unavoidable." Despite his previous praise of the Chaplain, the Chief Trader viewed him like many of the posts officers: as little more than "an idle spectator of the busy throng around him." Douglas to the Governor and Committee, 18 October 1838, 266.

⁷⁴⁸ James Douglas to the Governor and Committee, Fort Vancouver, 5 October 1838, in *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver, 1836-2838: Chaplain to the Hudson's Bay Company and Missionary to the Indians at Fort Vancouver*, ed. Thomas E. Jessett (Portland, OR: Champoege, 1959), 146. Beaver also thought it vulgar to "officiate in any burial-ground where any service is performed by any person, except by ministers of the same Establishment." Beaver to the Governor and Committee, 2 October 1838, 134. He demanded that "all burials in the burial-ground at Vancouver should be conducted under the direction of your Chaplain, or another burial-ground should be appropriated for his exclusive performance of his own ceremony." Ibid. Furthermore, Beaver criticized the Company for what he argued was its abuses. After listing his concerns and examples of mistreatment at the post, especially for "inferior servants," the Chaplain went on to conclude that "the abuses and mismanagement, existing here, are more than I can narrate." Beaver to Harrison, 15 November 1836, 20. To illustrate his point even further, he forwarded a letter to George Simpson from a Orkneyman who apparently had been flogged over a wage concern. Beaver to Harrison, 10 March 1837, 36-37. Beaver even sided with William Slacum, an agent for the U. S. government in reporting that "slave labor underlay many aspects of the [HBC's] domestic economy and [its] commercial operations on the Pacific." Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains*, 304-306.

recounted an unfortunate episode between he and the Chief Factor, in which the latter seized the former's walking stick and "struck [him] severely with it on the shoulders."⁷⁴⁹ Just prior to the assault, McLoughlin had sent a brief note officially suspending Beaver from service. As a reply, Beaver "tore the letter in half" and had it placed at the doorstep of McLoughlin's office, thus sparking the rage of the old, temperamental doctor.⁷⁵⁰ To a large extent, the physical confrontation marked the culmination of two years of mounting tension between the two parties. In the months following, Beaver refused to speak with McLoughlin for fear of his "violent disposition, language, and behavior," or as stated elsewhere, "'the Doctor's big stick' [which] is proverbial among" those stationed at the fort.⁷⁵¹ While McLoughlin attempted to apologize to him publically, the Chaplain replied, "without hesitation, 'I do not accept your apology, Sir.'"⁷⁵² Instead, Beaver made it clear that he and his wife intended to travel to London to file formal charges. He would never again return to the Columbia.

This would not, however, be the last time the HBC would directly fund the ministry of a clergyman at Fort Vancouver. In the last year of his service, Beaver commented on the plight of Hawaiian employees at the post, noting that even though many of them have been in the service "more than ten or twelve years," they remain "totally uninstructed."⁷⁵³ Even though many of them had been converted in the Islands prior to their engagements, he lamented that "the little

⁷⁴⁹ Herbert Beaver to the Governor and Committee, Fort Vancouver, 20 March 1838, in *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver, 1836-2838: Chaplain to the Hudson's Bay Company and Missionary to the Indians at Fort Vancouver*, ed. Thomas E. Jessett (Portland, OR: Champoege, 1959), 93-94.

⁷⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁷⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 97.; Letter from Herbert Beaver to the Benjamin Harrison, Fort Vancouver, 27 March 1838, in *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver, 1836-2838: Chaplain to the Hudson's Bay Company and Missionary to the Indians at Fort Vancouver*, ed. Thomas E. Jessett (Portland, OR: Champoege, 1959), 102.

⁷⁵² Beaver to the Governor and Committee, 20 March 1838, 97.

⁷⁵³ Beaver to the Governor and Committee, 2 October 1838, 131.

Christianity, which they brought with them, becomes speedily forgotten and lost, and their former good, but unstable, principles are quickly undermined by the inroads of surrounding corruption."⁷⁵⁴ As a remedy, he recommended that the Company work in cooperation with the Protestant missionaries in the Islands to provide the Columbia with a Hawaiian and his wife "who might act as a kind of [moral] overseer."⁷⁵⁵

After several years, the Company finally obliged. In 1844, McLoughlin sent a letter addressed to HBC agents in Honolulu, requesting they send him "'a trusty educated Hawaiian of good character to read the scriptures and assemble his people for public worship'" and who could also serve as a "teacher, religious instructor, and interpreter."⁷⁵⁶ McLoughlin's order was "passed to Dr. G. P. Judd, one of Hawaii's foremost missionaries." He replied by sending a native Hawaiian named William. R. Kaulehelehe, who according to Judd was a man of "'good character and high recommendation as a faithful, industrious skillful teacher, and in regular standing as a member of the church.'"⁷⁵⁷

Upon their arrival at the fort in the summer of 1845 the chaplain and his wife, Mary, encountered a rather "hostile" constituency, who assumed the couple had been sent to "curtail the freedom and pleasures" they had grown to enjoy as HBC laborers in the Pacific Northwest.⁷⁵⁸ In a letter to Judd, Kaulehelehe admitted that his fellow Hawaiians did not appreciate his efforts to

⁷⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁵ Ibid., 132.

⁷⁵⁶ E. Ruth Rockwood, ed., "Diary of Rev. George H. Atkinson, D. D., 1847-1858," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (June 1939): 181n.

⁷⁵⁷ Yvonne Mearns Klan, "Kanaka William," *Beaver* 38, no. 1 (Spring 1979): 40.

⁷⁵⁸ Ibid.

push them to "observe the Sabbath"⁷⁵⁹ The Chaplain only exacerbated the resentment of his fellow Hawaiians by ignoring their pleas for him to alleviate the abuse they occasionally experienced at the hand of white officers.⁷⁶⁰ During his stay at the fort, the Reverend George Atkinson observed that "Kanaka William" had but "few members" (only "twenty or forty hearers every Sabbath") and had tremendous difficulty convincing his fellow Hawaiians to abstain from alcohol.⁷⁶¹ Despite the shaky beginning, Kaulehelehe's ministry eventually improved. After establishing himself in the local Hawaiian community, he was happy to report that "there is a little order on Sundays now, not like former times when there was much disturbance."⁷⁶²

The legacy of Company Chaplains is one of market rivalry. When it comes to the "Beaver affair," in particular, historians have looked almost exclusively at the strained relationship between Beaver and McLoughlin and have mostly ignored much of how this tension affected the religious dynamic at the fort. Moving passed the bickering, it becomes clear that from this clash of personalities emerged a marketplace in which two competing religious/moral ideologies sought to either acquire or retain the patronage of HBC laborers and their families. These active consumers experienced a barrage of tactics (coercion, persuasion, and so on) designed to secure their brand loyalty, with the ultimate goal of driving out their competitor and achieving a monopoly over religious behavior at the post. Aside from the actual commodities being exchanged, the character of the religious marketplace at Fort Vancouver from 1836-1838 and those of the wider fur trade during this same period bore a close resemblance. This should come as little surprise given McLoughlin's involvement. As Chief Factor he had the opportunity

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid., 41.

⁷⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁶¹ Atkinson, "Diary of Rev. George H. Atkinson," 181.

⁷⁶² Klan, "Kanaka," 41.

to set the tone for the religious market in which he and Beaver competed and did so according to the cadence with which he as a businessman for the HBC (and earlier with the NWC) was most familiar.⁷⁶³

McLoughlin, however, was not the only Company agent to engage in religious activity. Throughout the reign of the HBC in the Pacific Northwest, a number of Chief Traders, clerks, and even general laborers played key roles in various religious transactions between themselves and local indigenes, many of whom had become enamored by some of the doctrines and ritual performances associated with Euro-American Christianity. The consequences of these transactions would be far-reaching.

**"Dancing and Praying to the Great Master of Life":
Company Proselytizing, Indigenous Ceremony, and the
Significance of Sabbath-Day Exchanges**

Based on the records they left behind, Company officers thought frequently about religious matters. This was certainly true for clerk John McLean, who was promoted to Chief Trader only after his brief stint in New Caledonia, the setting for most of his memoirs. In these writings he spent considerable space describing the exchanges between Indians and missionaries, as well as the motives and strategies of missionaries themselves. To his irritation, he observed that "the Roman Catholic convert is first baptized, then instructed in the forms of worship, taught to repeat Pater nosters and Ave Marias, to make the sign of the cross,...to confess...and is

⁷⁶³ Apparently, Beaver himself was no stranger to economic processes. In his personal correspondence, he reflected on the commercial atmosphere of the Columbia, noting that the American settlement in the Willamette "is a fast increasing and thriving colony, while our's [Hudson's Bay Company] here seems to be stagnated, or even retrograding; and when we look at the immense difference of capital employed, this is a matter not only of regret, but of surprise." Beaver to Harrison, 19 March 1838, 78-79.

dismissed to his woods."⁷⁶⁴ In his view this differed dramatically from the more "constructive" tactics of the Methodists, who "pursue a different course," by demanding converts to "reform their lives" and "understand thoroughly the sound principles of Christianity."⁷⁶⁵ McLean concluded that "the Romish priest is often more successful than the Protestant missionary....With the former, the Indian needs only profess a desire to become a Christian, and he is forthwith baptized; whereas with the latter, a probationary course - a trial of the proselyte's sincerity - is deemed indispensable."⁷⁶⁶ Reflecting on the comments made by actual natives with whom he allegedly conversed, he added that they "find the priests far more accommodating than these meddling parsons [Protestant missionaries]. The priests, for instance, allow [them] to amuse [themselves] in any manner we think fit, week-day or Sunday....The Protestant minister, on the contrary, never allows a violation of the sacred day to pass unnoticed, nor fails to warn the delinquent of the consequences."⁷⁶⁷

Chief Trader Peter Skene Ogden also offered religious commentary from time to time. In one anecdote he was trapping and trading in Western Caledonia, when he asked one of his men, Bernard Debreuille, what he should name a nearby mountain, having "now for the first time [been] traversed by civilized feet."⁷⁶⁸ His French-Canadian associate suggested naming the peak after his patron saint, St. Bernard. "'So let it be, my good fellow,'" Ogden replied, "'be your reasons what they may.'"⁷⁶⁹ Later, as the party prepared camp for the evening, Debreuille

⁷⁶⁴ McLean, *Notes of a Twenty-Five Years' Service*, 110.

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁶ Ibid., 318.

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid., 319.

⁷⁶⁸ Peter Skene Ogden, *Traits of American Indian Life and Character* (New York: Dover, 1995, 1933), 41.

⁷⁶⁹ Ibid.

confided in Ogden that he experienced a frightening dream the night before in which "Saint Bernard...had appeared to him in a vision, predicting death, and warning him of instant repentance of those sinful deeds which he, in common with other mortals, was daily committing."⁷⁷⁰ The Chief Trader attempted to comfort the poor fellow despite his distaste for what he referred to as Catholic "superstition."⁷⁷¹ He wrote, "I pointed out to him the folly of submitting to the influence of such trivial causes [and] endeavored to convince him that his foreknowledge of the approaching fete-day of his patron saint had given rise to his imaginary visitation."⁷⁷² Although Debreuille admitted this assessment was probably accurate, the "untoward fancies by which his mind was oppressed, yet haunted him."⁷⁷³ "Poor Fellow," Ogden concluded. "His was a disease which baffled the utmost skill of physicians more learned than myself, and the utmost care of...many solicitous and beloved friends!"⁷⁷⁴

Like Ogden (and other traders such as Yount), HBC officers sometimes found themselves combating what they perceived to be the "irrational" ideas and practices of both local indigenes and their own employees (whether French-Canadian, Hawaiian, Scots-Irish, or Metis). At least according to McLean, these "gentlemen" were somewhat profitable in their undertaking. In his memoir, he celebrated the notion that the "unsophisticated common sense" and "prejudices" of

⁷⁷⁰ Ibid., 42.

⁷⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷⁷² Ibid., 43.

⁷⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁴ Ibid. Tragically, Debreuille met his end on the same expedition while attempting to cross a "frail bridge" spanning a deep ravine. According to Ogden, the "maniac" was halfway across when he became paralyzed with anxiety, lost his step, and "disappeared for ever in the foaming torrent, leaving the horror-stricken spectators gazing after him, as if able to pierce the dark waste of waters which had swallowed him up." Ibid., 50-51. Three years later, Ogden found himself in the chapel of the Hotel Dieu Convent in Montreal where, during mass, he "recognized the heart-stricken lover of the hapless Bernard Debreuille." Ibid., 51-52.

many in the region "have been so much shaken by their intercourse with the gentlemen of the trading posts."⁷⁷⁵ London encouraged its officers in the field to "set an example of propriety and public worship" and there were few better ways of fulfilling this expectation than by penetrating the region's religious economy with a particular brand of spirituality that, in their minds, fostered these imported ideals.⁷⁷⁶

There are many examples of this kind of activity among Chief Traders and other Company personnel.⁷⁷⁷ During his brief stay at Fort Vancouver, Herbert Beaver observed that James Douglas and William Tolmie had "commenced a sort of Sunday School for Indians of all ages in the school room," in which the traders attempted to teach the natives a Christian prayer in their own language.⁷⁷⁸ According to Douglas, "they attended in great numbers," but Beaver suspected it was only because the two "bribed Indians to attend by offering biscuits and molasses."⁷⁷⁹ At the same time, Tolmie also led a Sunday School at Fort Nisqually and although the "more abstruse points of theology were not introduced," the Chief Trader "conveyed some idea of divine attributes, the certainty of the future state of retribution, [and] the moral and social

⁷⁷⁵ McLean, *Notes of a Twenty-Five Years' Service*, 319-320.

⁷⁷⁶ Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 673.

⁷⁷⁷ Chief Traders, in particular, were versatile. As Historian Richard Mackie notes that they were well-educated men, who "became experts in matters of geography, exploration, and Pacific trade; they developed a rigorously competitive, mercantile, spatial mentality." Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains*, 34. Thus, it should come as little surprise that religious instruction also fell within their purview. But, as historian David Chance suggests, it is important to keep in mind that "the [actual] amount of religious instruction imparted often depended upon the individual ambitions of various Company personnel." Chance, *Influences of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 76-77.

⁷⁷⁸ Beaver to Harrison, 19 March 1838, 84. The Chaplain criticized such an exercise, arguing that "without other instruction, which cannot be given till we either know it better, or can teach them our own [language], any attempt at conversion must be futile, and amount to no more than the ignorant worship of an unknown God." Ibid.

⁷⁷⁹ Douglas to the Governor and Committee, 18 October 1838, 239.; Beaver to Harrison, 19 March 1838, 84.

duties of man."⁷⁸⁰ Apparently, the latter point was particularly useful in curbing theft, murder, and general "mischievousness."⁷⁸¹

Further up the Columbia at Fort Colville, Chief Trader Francis Heron also had been busy producing converts. As one who did not have a very high view of professional clergy (including missionaries) - suggesting that all they do is "pursue the object of their hatred (though he begs on his knees for Christian mercy) to the extremities of the earth, nay even to eternity if they could, to obtain revenge" - Heron, in the spirit of Tolmie, took matters into his own hands by attempting to "inculcate religio[n], morality, and industry" in the minds of local natives.⁷⁸² According to his own assessment, he was quite successful. In the post's journal he happily reported that "from the little instruction I have given them on religious matters, they have become perfect saints."⁷⁸³

Heron expounded in an 1831 letter to his friend James Hargrave stationed at York Factory:

Every Chief is parson to his tribe and...holds forth to them in real Orthodox style - It is really a pleasant sight to see old and young of both sexes going to church on Sundays with faces...sanctified looking...The Chiefs likewise perform family service morning and evening throughout the week - attends the sick and infirm, when he is no less fervent in offering up his prayers on their behalf to the great Master of life, nor will one of these reverend gentry sit down to a meal without asking a blessing before he begins and returning thanks when he has done.⁷⁸⁴

In the same correspondence Heron also remarked on his own surprising piety. He told Hargrave that he was "no less than High Priest and Head of the Church. I dare say," he continued, "you

⁷⁸⁰ Douglas to the Governor and Committee, 18 October 1838, 239.

⁷⁸¹ Ibid.

⁷⁸² Francis Heron to James Hargrave, Fort Garry, 1 August 1826, in *The Hargrave Correspondence, 1821-1843*, ed. T. Glazebrook (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1938), 18.; C. T. Heron's Journal of Occurrences of Fort Colville, 12 April 1830 to 13 April 1831, B.45/a/1, Hudson's Bay Company Archives.

⁷⁸³ Ibid. Elsewhere Heron referred to the local Indians who frequented his sermons as "true and faithful Christians." Ibid.

⁷⁸⁴ Francis Heron to James Hargrave, Fort Colville, 1 April 1831, in *The Hargrave Correspondence, 1821-1843*, ed. T. Glazebrook (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1938), 71.

will smile at this, as I would have, (you will know) been the last man thought of for such Holy Offices on the East side of the ridge [Continental Divide], but you must remember a prophet is not honored in his own country."⁷⁸⁵ Heron's "messiah-complex" did not sit well with his boss, George Simpson, who remained skeptical of his spiritual transformation. In the Governor's famous "Character Book" he wrote that the Chief Trader was "capable of anything however mean, dishonourable, or improper to indulge his revenge or to gain a selfish end."⁷⁸⁶ He went on:

[Heron] was getting into habits of drunkenness but found they were likely to injure his prospects of advancement and therefore changed from a grog to a rigid water drinker but must sooner or later break through all his sober resolutions: fancied that an appearance of sanctity would bring him into notice but if I am at liberty to judge of his sincerity by his conduct he is a perfect hypocrite.⁷⁸⁷

In short, Simpson accused the Chief Trader of using his newly-acquired religious capital to improve his standing in the Company, a strategy the Governor found reprehensible.

Heron, regardless of his motivations, was not the only one at Fort Colville engaged in

⁷⁸⁵ Ibid., 72. A Clear reference to Jesus Christ in the Gospels.

⁷⁸⁶ Williams, *Hudson's Bay Miscellany*, 194. Soon after his appointment to Governor, Simpson created a system of official and formal reporting on all of the Company clerks. This document became known as the Servant's Character Book which ran consecutively from 1822-1830. Evidently, it was discontinued by Simpson to the chagrin of the Governor and Committee who requested further updates. Simpson responded to the request by noting regretfully that some of the confidential information (which was often critical) had made its way back to some of the clerks themselves, thus leading to some unfortunate and uncomfortable situations. This, however, did not prevent Simpson from creating his own character book of first and second class officers (Chief Factors and Chief Traders respectively), which, according to Glyndwr Williams he kept under lock and key (his personal secretary did not even have access) so as to prevent a similar mishap. He added even more security by using a numbering system instead of names, keeping a key on a separate sheet of paper. Ibid., 156. Simpson wrote his personal Character Book during the winter of 1831/32, where he was quartered, with his wife, in a rather cramped house in the Red River settlement. During the season, his emotional, mental, and physical health deteriorated. In addition to his poor physical condition, a point a great irritation for the Governor, he experienced one of the darkest days of his life up to that point, when his infant son died, bringing he, along with his wife, to the brink of a nervous breakdown. This, coupled with his concern over business matters created in him an ill-disposition. As Glyndwr Williams writes, "embittered by quarrels and criticism at the settlement, worried by financial problems, in poor health himself, and facing a second winter of anxiety,... the Governor was in no mood for charitable comment. He was at that point in his life a bitter man and it showed in the incisive critiques he leveled against many of his subordinates by candlelight in the privacy of his chambers. Ibid., 162.

⁷⁸⁷ Williams, *Hudson's Bay Miscellany*, 195.

nurturing a Christian atmosphere. The following decade, Father Joseph Joset was pleased to announce that the "Catholic servants of the Hudson Bay Company were helping much to the conversion of the Indians by their good behavior."⁷⁸⁸ This should come as little surprise considering that by the late 1840s it was well known that the Indians "were habituated to following the example of the Canadians," both of whom lived "partly under the strictures and supervision of the Company officers, who were usually Protestant."⁷⁸⁹ Under these circumstances, a "common bond," as historian David Chance puts it, emerged between Indians and Canadians (strengthened through intermarriages), which fostered exchange between the two groups.⁷⁹⁰

Producing Catholic converts was an industry in which Chief Trader Pierre Pambrun, was particularly adept. When the American trader and explorer Benjamin Bonneville arrived at Fort Walla Walla in the Spring of 1834, he observed that the "Nez Perce were already indoctrinated in Catholicism, although there had never been a priest in the area."⁷⁹¹ In the words of Washington Irving, "Mr. Pambrune [sic] informed Captain Bonneville, that he had been at some pains to introduce the Christian religion, in the Roman Catholic form, among [the Flatheads, Nez Percés, and Cayuses] where it had evidently taken root; retaining...the principal points of faith, and its entire precepts of morality."⁷⁹² More specifically, Pambrun had "given them a code of laws, to which they conformed with scrupulous fidelity," and "all the crimes denounced by the Christian

⁷⁸⁸ Chance, *Influences of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 76.

⁷⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁹¹ Andrew Dominique Pambrun, *Sixty Years on the Frontier in the Pacific Northwest* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon, 1978), 145.

⁷⁹² Washington Irving, *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville in the Rocky Mountains and the Far West* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1868), 372.

faith, met with severe punishment among them."⁷⁹³

Simpson himself even dabbled in religious transactions. In his published journal, he recalled one encounter where "two Nez Perces Chief arrived to see [him] from a distance of between 2 & 300 miles" to hear him speak.⁷⁹⁴ The "moral lessons" he delivered to Coastal and Plateau natives during his travels throughout the Columbia District had become so popular that some suggested he was "one of the 'Master of Life's Sons' sent to see 'if their hearts are good.'"⁷⁹⁵ Apparently, these "lessons" were a common enough practice for him to only casually mention in his outgoing dispatches to London. For example, in one letter dated March 1, 1829, he noted pithily that the "Lillewaite Tribe" had yet to acquire the "habits of industry." To encourage them in this direction, he wrote that "a formal harangue was here made to the natives as usual...[and] left me with assurances of improved conduct."⁷⁹⁶ HBC trader Archibald McDonald recalled another such lecture by Simpson. After the Indians had assembled, "the Governor, in due form...addressed them, and at some length, adverted to the propriety of behaving well among themselves, and exhorted them never to be guilty of theft, murder, or of any inhuman deed towards the Whites."⁷⁹⁷ The traders went on to note that "to strengthen this argument [Simpson] produced, read, and translated to them two letters sent by the Indian boys at the Red River Settlement Missionary School to their parents at Spokane, and the Kootanais Country."⁷⁹⁸

As the purported son of the "Master of Life," Simpson encountered resistance from local

⁷⁹³ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁴ Merk, *George Simpson's Journal*, 136.

⁷⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁶ Simpson to the Governor and Committee, 1 March 1829, 32.

⁷⁹⁷ McDonald and McLeod, *Peace River*, 34.

⁷⁹⁸ Ibid. He was referring to two young men who went by the names Spokane Garry and Kootenay Pelly.

shamans who did not appreciate the competition he represented. Upon meeting the Governor, some took the opportunity to display their spiritual power and on occasion Simpson responded with like force. During one of his journeys through the region, Simpson met a conjurer who "did many strange and wonderful feats."⁷⁹⁹ To test his powers, the Governor "offered him ten gallons of rum if he could extricate himself after being bound."⁸⁰⁰ He agreed to the challenge and "was tied by a sailor with stout hemp rope...and...thrown into a wigwam or conjuring house."⁸⁰¹ As the story goes,

He had been in but a short time, when strange noises were heard, as if in response to his talk and song, suddenly the noised ceased, and the conjurer said, 'the Chief has a book of which the spirits are afraid,' and to the surprise of all, the Governor had a pocket Bible, which he sent away, and the hideous and infernal noise was renewed.⁸⁰²

Simpson came face-to-face with other elements of indigenous spirituality during his travels. On a separate occasion he encountered a group of Saukteaux Indians who called on the Governor to heed their request for an audience. In an effort to sway his decision, some of the Saukteaux "pelt[ed] away at him with incantations" from a nearby "conjuring tent."⁸⁰³ According to Simpson, the goal of such "superstitious observances" was to "enlighten and convert me [through] charms...[and] rattles."⁸⁰⁴ As the Governor sought to open and maintain trade networks with native communities he also sought to influence them through instruction in Euro-American modes of religion and morality. At the same time, some within these communities

⁷⁹⁹ Pambrun, *Sixty Years on the Frontier*, 44.

⁸⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁰¹ Ibid.

⁸⁰² Ibid.

⁸⁰³ Simpson, *Narrative of a Journey*, 41-42.

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid.

sought to influence the Governor through their own indigenous practices, which they employed for the purpose of placing themselves in a more favorable position within their own community or for the purpose of placing their community in a more favorable position within the region's fur trade economy.

Overall, native responses to the proselytizing efforts of Company personnel often included some type of hybridization between indigenous and imported beliefs and practices. Devotional dances on Sundays were a common fixture at many HBC posts throughout the Columbia during the 1830s. On one Sabbath, the Indians who gathered at Fort Colville "followed up" a sermon with "dancing and praying to the Great Master of Life."⁸⁰⁵ According to one observer, "their first request is long life and second is plenty of food," which in his view, are the two things that comprise the "main and principal object of an Indian's petition."⁸⁰⁶

Fort Nez Perce was an especially lively place on the Christian Sabbath. From March 36, 1831 - March 17, 1832, the vast majority of Sunday entries in the post's journal included some reference to natives dancing.⁸⁰⁷ For example, on September 25, 1831, an entry read: "The Indians came from above and below...and had their usual devotional dance."⁸⁰⁸ On November 6th of that same year the journal noted that the "Nez Perce danced at the corner of the fort very quietly and orderly."⁸⁰⁹ Even the spread of disease could not halt the religious exercise; if

⁸⁰⁵ Heron's Journal of Occurrences, HBCA.

⁸⁰⁶ Ibid. Chance writes that "these priorities, incidentally, fail to show the existence of "cargo cult" materialism, the existence of which has been suggested by Deward Walker for the Plateau. To infer a "cargo cult" from the data of the fur trade in the Colville District would be to greatly enlarge on the evidence." Chance, *Influences of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 76.

⁸⁰⁷ See the Fort Nez Perce Journal, 26 March 1831 to 17 March 1832, B.146/a/1-2, Hudson's Bay Company Archives.

⁸⁰⁸ Heron's Journal of Occurrences, HBCA.

⁸⁰⁹ Ibid.

anything it made it all the more prudent.⁸¹⁰ During times when intermittent fever was running its course at the fort, many still danced, but on the other side of the river for precaution.

As historian Theodore Stern reminds us, "we know nothing directly about the doctrine associated with these ceremonies."⁸¹¹ Ethnohistorian Larry Cebula does note that there was an "emphasis on a single ruling deity" such as the "Great Master of Life," and that "observing the Sabbath was...important," but beyond these basic elements, the theologies are unknown.⁸¹² In terms of form, we do know that they often were led by a "chief or headman," which may have been patterned on the "master of the post [such as a Chief Trader] officiating at the Sunday services and, at least at Fort Nez Perce, the dances were circular in motion and often centered around a "bastion of the fort, from which a pennant flew."⁸¹³

Furthermore, we have some indication of how these dances fit within the larger indigenous scheme of reciprocal exchange. On May 15, 1831, the Fort Nez Perce journal noted that "Walla Walla Indians danced on the North side of the fort," and that a man named Patgin "officiated as High Priest."⁸¹⁴ It was typical for the Walla Walla to not only perform the religious ceremony but also ask for tobacco as a gift for their presentation. Such a request infuriated Chief Trader Simon McGillvray who claimed that they were always trying to get

⁸¹⁰ On Wednesday October 26, 1831, Simon McGillvray suggested that the dancing among the Nez Perces and Walla Walla has increased. He noted that "they are afraid of the intermittent fever." Ibid.

⁸¹¹ Theodore Stern, *Chiefs and Change in the Oregon Country: Indian Relations at Fort Nez Perces, 1818-1855*, vol. 2 (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 1996), 6.

⁸¹² Larry Cebula, *Plateau Indians and the Quest for Spiritual Power, 1700-1850* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 82.

⁸¹³ Stern, *Chiefs and Change*, 6.

⁸¹⁴ Fort Nez Perce Journal, HBCA. The "High Priest" at these events frequently changed from week to week. For example, on another Sunday the post's journal read that the "natives had their devotional dance near the North side of the fort and Mr. Babine Fender officiated as High Priest." Ibid.

"everything for nothing."⁸¹⁵ The Indians request for tobacco as payment for religious services bore an uncanny resemblance to their requests the other six days of the week (meaning tobacco for furs). Just because no fur trading was taking place on the Sabbath did not mean that similar kinds of exchange were absent. Indeed, Sunday was often a day of high economic activity at many HBC posts.

Fort Nisqually offers one of the better case studies. On January 21, 1835 the post's journal mentioned that "a few So qua mish arrived headed by a young man who is rising up a new religion. He came on purpose,...but as yet has not made up his mind to speak in respect to his vision of celestial beings"⁸¹⁶ Reminiscent of Kauxuma-nupika decades prior, the man claimed that "in a dream he was presented with a written letter and 18 blankets from above, the latter are invisible, but the former the Indians say he has about him."⁸¹⁷ Eleven days later, "a great party of Indians" (over 300 in number) gathered at the fort "for the sake of getting information [about] living well."⁸¹⁸ Seizing on the opportunity, Company clerk William Kittson "thought proper to give them instructions respecting [their] duty to the Giver of Life as also the

⁸¹⁵ Ibid. Devotional dances were common enough that men stationed at the various posts grew tired of hearing them. On a Sunday in 1834, the Fort Nisqually journal recorded that all was quiet and that everyone was thankful the "Indians do not trouble us as formerly with their dance." Clarence B. Bagley, "Journal of Occurrences at Nisqually House, 1833-1835," *The Washington Historical Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (1916): 65. For some the dances were nothing more than an annoyance, especially after an evening of drinking. One Sunday Simon McGillvray closed Fort Nez Perce to all Indians until the conclusion of their "usual Sunday dance," after which the Chief Trader opened the fort's doors and "all were admitted indiscriminately." This was to allow the men to recover from the previous night's frolicking. Fort Nez Perce Journal, HBCA. Nevertheless, there were times when the dances were missed. Chief Trader Peter Ogden recounted the deafening silence that accompanied the spread of disease among an indigenous community. He wrote that the "death-like silence around me...[spoke] louder than words, more than volumes; they tell me with awful distinctness that here, where the voice of laughter, and the rude Indian chant, have so often made my heart glad, the fever-ghoul has wreaked his most dire vengeance; to the utter destruction of every human inhabitant." Ogden, *Traits*, 69.

⁸¹⁶ Clarence B. Bagley, "Journal of Occurrences at Nisqually House, 1833-1835," *The Washington Historical Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (1916): 157.

⁸¹⁷ Ibid.

⁸¹⁸ Ibid., 158.

duty to one another."⁸¹⁹ On the 10th of February, 1835, the post's journal mentioned that "Indians are coming in daily but bring in nothing to trade."⁸²⁰ Their desire to be near the white traders may have been influenced by the So qua mish prophet who was once "again doing wonders about his tribe - it is said he has a coat covered with dollars and is making presents to the natives."⁸²¹ Unfortunately for the young man, it was soon discovered that he was "robbing the dead" to make presents and was subsequently banished from the community.⁸²² The prophet's "villainous conduct" became the topic of a brief sermon the following Sunday in which Kittson implored his native audience to "keep on good terms with one another."⁸²³

Adding another layer to these Sabbath-day exchanges, William Tolmie, Chief Trader at Fort Nisqually, recalled a story in his personal journal of a "Skalatchet chief,...styled the "The Frenchman,"" who one Sunday "took the opportunity of haraugging" some nearby natives, who had gathered at the fort, "on their miserable & wretched condition and the numberless advantages which would accrue them, from being at peace with each other, & obeying the dictates of our blessed religion [Christianity]."⁸²⁴ The audience responded by forming a "large semicircle round a fire" and a "religious dance was performed in nearly the same manner as at Fort Vancouver - the Frenchman being Master of Ceremonies - after dancing in a circle, all dropped except him,...and they repeated a short chant."⁸²⁵ The Frenchman followed up with a

⁸¹⁹ Ibid.

⁸²⁰ Ibid., 159.

⁸²¹ Ibid.

⁸²² Ibid., 160.

⁸²³ Ibid., 161.

⁸²⁴ *The Journals of William Fraser Tolmie, Physician and Fur Trader* (Vancouver: Mitchell, 1963), 214.

⁸²⁵ Ibid.

"prayer which terminated the affair."⁸²⁶

Versions of this scripted and clearly hybridized ritual performance appeared at other HBC posts during the same period.⁸²⁷ For example, in May of 1835, one visitor recorded his observations of the daily prayers performed in the evenings at Fort Walla Walla by natives (roughly fifty in number) living nearby. After the participants had been arranged "very similar to a European congregation," the chief rose to his feet and offered a "short address, in a low tone," which the participants followed by a formal prayer performed on one's knees.⁸²⁸ Following the prayer, "there were fifteen hymns, in which the whole congregation joined" - the songs "resembling the monotonous Indian song which [they] sing while paddling their canoes."⁸²⁹ The participants followed this rhythmic and participatory singing with a closing prayer. The entire service "lasted about three-quarters of an hour."⁸³⁰ Also at Fort Walla Walla, Captain Bonneville observed during his brief stay that the natives resisted any activity during the Sabbath and "'besides Sunday, they observe[d] all the cardinal holidays of the Roman Catholic church,' but that with them they mixed some of their pagan ceremonials, such as dancing and singing."⁸³¹ Whether taking place at Fort Nisqually or Walla Walla, these rituals represented the tangible

⁸²⁶ Ibid.

⁸²⁷ Chief Trader John McLean referred to these syncretistic practices as the "Columbian Religion." As Cebula writes, "This new faith spread rapidly across the Plateau after 1831. Transmission was fueled by an ancient tradition of exchanging religious ideas, especially during the winter season." Cebula, *Plateau Indians*, 82.

⁸²⁸ Meredith Gairdner, "Notes on the Geography of the Columbia River," *The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 11 (1841): 257.

⁸²⁹ Ibid.

⁸³⁰ Ibid.

⁸³¹ Francis Fuller Victor, *The Early Indian War of Oregon Compiled from the Oregon Archives and other Original Sources, with Master Rolls* (Salem: F. C. Baker, 1894), 22-23.

product of religious exchanges that occurred within the networks of the region's fur trade.⁸³²

Like the actions of the Indians in Simpson's accounts, these rituals, and even the dances in general, may have served as a means of acquiring and preserving control over, or at least a level of agency within, the posts' individual economies. According to Robin Fisher, it was not uncommon for Indians to "congregate" around a fur trading post and attempt to "control its trade," by placing their own native "agents and dealers" whose role was to regulate exchanges at the site.⁸³³ Often, these "home guards" would encourage their kin to withhold their furs if the prices offered were too low, thus creating a sometimes crippling financial deficit for the post. This would continue until leadership relented and offered a more appealing price. It is quite possible that these same "home guards" who regulated trade also served as the "High Priests" and "Master of Ceremonies" responsible for regulating native ritual performance, given that both offices required a respected member of the community who had the intuition to negotiate between Euro-American and Native American interests.⁸³⁴ In this light, the dances and other scripted rituals led by these headmen could have served as yet another outlet for natives to demonstrate autonomy within the trade. If anything, the hybridized character of these religious expressions make it clear they were not defined nor dictated solely according to Euro-American configurations, and that they were, at least to some degree, regulated by natives themselves in

⁸³² Cebula articulates well that "the kinship networks and trading partnerships that were of such importance on the Plateau also proved ideal for the transmission of new ideas." Cebula, *Plateau Indians*, 82.

⁸³³ Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 29-30.

⁸³⁴ In an entry in the post journal of Fort Colville, Kittson mentioned that the Indians were "about the place" and "as usual" were gathered in the "little Chief's lodge for the purpose of devotion." Heron's Journal of Occurrences, HBCA. It is certainly possible this "little Chief" served also as a "home guard" in other fur trade exchanges. The same could be said of the Skalatchet chief "styled the Frenchman."

ways that would maximize the spiritual profitability of the exercises through the strategic blending of the local with the imported.⁸³⁵

Conclusion:
**The Hudson's Bay Company and the
Further Expansion of the Pacific Northwest Religious Economy**

In the words of David Chance, the "overall religious influence of the Company has been underrated."⁸³⁶ If scholars have diminished the religious activity of the HBC than they have certainly overlooked the extent to which this religious activity was intimately tied to the rest of the Company's commercial objectives. During the period of its "Great Monopoly," it sought not only to minimize competition in the fur trade, but did so in other markets, including religious ones. It was not uncommon for the HBC to regulate the presence and activities of both Protestant and Catholic missionaries with the intent of reducing the possibility of religious discord, which Company officers feared would have a negative effect on production. At the same time, the HBC itself invested in the religious instruction of those linked to the Company and also concerned itself with maintaining a particular moral order, both of which leadership deduced would yield stronger profits in the long term. In addition, the HBC actively supplied its personnel with clergy, in the form of a Company Chaplain, whose appointment at Fort Vancouver had the unintended effect of transforming the post, for a brief period of time, into a religious marketplace in which he and the Chief Factor competed for patrons among the post's

⁸³⁵ Examples of such regulatory power are common in the literature. For instance, in his journal, American missionary Samuel Parker claimed that "reason assigned [by HBC personnel] for including dancing in the services of the holy sabbath, was the fear, that singing and praying, without dancing, would not interest the Indians; and to include it, would not be so great a departure from their common practices, as to excite aversion to pure worship." Samuel Parker, *Journal of an Exploring Tour Beyond the Rocky Mountains, Under the Direction of the A.B.C.F.M., Performed in the Years, 1835, '36, and '37* (Ithaca, NY: Mack, Andras, & Woodruff, 1838), 254n-255n.

⁸³⁶ Chance, *Influences of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 76-77. To some extent, this remains true in the historiography today.

employees. Finally, various Company officers played a pivotal role in introducing aspects of Christian doctrine (both Protestant and Catholic) to Columbia natives who responded with the formation of a hybridized religious movement that would serve as the prolegomena for a strong missionary push in the region.⁸³⁷

Instrumental in the development of this new "Columbian Religion" (as some have called it) were two young native men. In 1824, Simpson wrote to Harrison suggesting that the company invest in sending "'a few children from each [Plateau] tribe'" to the Missionary Society's school at Red River "'where they could be educated with a due regard to morality and religion and afterwards sent back to their relations for the purpose of instructing them.'"⁸³⁸ London obliged and in the Fall of 1825 Simpson had two sons of "Spokan [sic] & Flat Head Chiefs" sent to the Indian school, where they were christened Kootenay Pelly and Spokane Garry.⁸³⁹ Pelly died at Red River in 1831 at the suspected age of 18 (having preached to his fellow Flathead a couple of years prior), and Spokane Garry left the school for good a year later and returned to his kin having been "well instructed in divine truth."⁸⁴⁰ Once back in the Columbia he "spent the great part of his time in instructing his people, who were all so anxious to hear him that they brought presents of various kinds, and indeed seem to have maintained him

⁸³⁷ Henry Spalding admitted that the HBC played an important role in altering the "savage" mindset of natives, thus paving the way for missionary exertions. He wrote that such a change in the disposition of Indians "is the result of the intercourse of the H. B. Co.," and added that "they have changed the savage cannibal to an inoffensive Indian; broken by many of their heathen habits, & just prepared the field for missionary laborers; & are themselves anxious & will to much to have the field occupied." Whitman Mission Correspondence, 1834-1852, Bancroft Library.

⁸³⁸ George Simpson to Benjamin Harrison, 1 August 1824, in "Oregon Indians in the Red River School," ed. Clifford M. Drury, *Pacific Historical Review* 7, no. 1 (1938): 52.

⁸³⁹ *George Simpson's Journal*, 135.

⁸⁴⁰ Clifford M. Drury, "Oregon Indians in the Red River School," *Pacific Historical Review* 7, no. 1 (1938): 57.; Tucker, *The Rainbow in the North*, 71.

in Indian abundance."⁸⁴¹ According to the Reverend David T. Jones the "'impression'" which Spokane Garry had on his kin "'seems to have been very great,'" and in the words of John McLean, the young man "introduced a sort of religion, whose groundwork seemed to be Christianity, accompanied with some of the heathen ceremonies of the natives." ⁸⁴²

Spokane Garry helped whet the appetite of Columbia natives for Euro-American forms of Christianity.⁸⁴³ Some historians suggest that he, along with Kootenay Pelly, were directly responsible for inspiring a "deputation of natives" to travel to St. Louis with the sole purpose of acquiring "more particulars about the religion of the 'white men,' and to request that teachers might be sent."⁸⁴⁴ However, others such as Chance argue that the "delegation [to St. Louis]...leaves ample room for us to point the finger at employees of the Hudson's Bay

⁸⁴¹ Ibid. Chief Trader Duncan Finlayson recalled one encounter: "I had myself a striking instance of this spirit of inquiry among them. I had one day taken my station on an elevated spot near the Kettle Fall, not far from Colville House, that I might overlook the men who were carrying the baggage, and was occasionally glancing at a book in my hand, when my attention was attracted by the voice of a man who was approaching me, and haranguing me with increasing animation as he drew nearer and nearer, while with passionate gestures he pointed alternatively to the sun and to the book in my hand. I knew not his language, but I could evidently gather from his action that he thought I could give him information on religious subjects. I could only answer him by signs, and, afraid of conveying erroneous impressions, I made him understand that Spogan Garry was at Colville. He repeated the name two or three times, as if to satisfy himself that he had caught my meaning, and darted off towards the place with the rapidity of lightening. I am convinced that man of piety, who knew something of the language of these poor people, and devoted himself to their instruction, would soon obtain an unbounded influence over them, and might expect a rich and abundant harvest. I do not know any part of America where the natives could be so easily instructed as on the banks of the Columbia." Ibid., 72.

⁸⁴² Drury, "Oregon Indians," 54.; McLean, *Notes of a Twenty-Five Years' Service*, 159.

⁸⁴³ Also, we have reason to believe that Garry viewed the influx Protestant missionaries throughout the 1830s as competition and refused for quite some time to cooperate with their endeavors. The tension between Garry and the Protestant missions (as least those operated by the ABCFM) was significant enough to prompt Chief Trader Archibald McDonald to intervene on the missionaries behalf and encourage Garry to align himself with their cause. Writing to ABCFM missionary Elkanah Walker, McDonald noted rather optimistically that "I have again spoken to Garry on the propriety of his attaching himself closely to the mission, which I think he is disposed to do." Archibald McDonald to Elkanah Walker, Fort Colville, 14 March 1842, Elkanah Walker Papers, Washington State University Library.

⁸⁴⁴ Tucker, *The Rainbow in the North*, 73.

Company for having provided at least some of the original impetus."⁸⁴⁵ After all, it was the Company that provided Garry and Pelly with religious instruction in the first place. The literature seems to substantiate this claim. Cushing Eells, an American Protestant missionary to Oregon, wrote in his journal that the "human instrumentality that caused the Nez Perce delegation to go to St. Louis in 1832 to obtain information respecting the white man's God and the Book of God, was instruction imparted by gentlemen of the Hudson's Bay Co. and native boys educated by the Company."⁸⁴⁶ Regardless of who primarily motivated these Plateau natives to travel such a long distance for religious instruction, the journey itself, which was heralded in American Protestant periodicals as the "Macedonian Call," became the primary incentive for many missionaries to travel to the Columbia themselves with hopes of supplying what they assumed was an insatiable demand for the Gospel.⁸⁴⁷

⁸⁴⁵ Chance, *Influences of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 72. Arguing against Leslie Spier, Chance suggests that Catholic Iroquois were less of a religious influence than the HBC. Ibid.

⁸⁴⁶ Drury, "Oregon Indians in the Red River School," 59-60. His son made a similar statement. Myron Eells wrote in the biography of his father, Cushing Eells, that the "information gained by the Oregon Indians from the Hudson's Bay Company and other traders and trappers, early in the present century, led them to send four or five Nez Perces to St. Louis, in 1832, to secure religious teachers." Myron Eells, *Father Eells or The Results of Fifty-Five Years of Missionary Labors in Washington and Oregon, a biography of Rev. Cushing Eells, D. D.* (Boston: Congregational Sunday School and Publishing Society, 1894), 33. Another missionary by the name of Asa Bowen Greene reported to the Secretary of the ABCFM in 1839 that until a decade ago the Plateau Indians "knew nothing of the Christian religion or of the Sabbath. My teacher [a man known as Ish-hol-hol-hoats-toats, also known as Lawyer] tells me that they had indeed before this seen a flag flying at the Forts of the H.B.C. on certain days & that they men were shaved & dressed different from usual." He added that "some white men in the mountains [trappers and traders]...told them some things, & before or after this some had learned to make the cross." Asa Bowen Smith to David Greene, Kamiah, Oregon Territory, 27 August 1839, in *The Diaries and Letters of Henry H. Spalding and Asa Bowen Smith relating to the Nez Perce Mission, 1838-1842*, ed. Clifford M. Drury (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1958), 106-107.

⁸⁴⁷ Historian Albert Furtwangler writes that "just as Paul's steps into Macedonia had started the spread of Christianity across the Roman Empire and into Europe, so this call could begin the spread of the gospel across America to the Pacific." Albert Furtwangler, *Bring Indians to the Book* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 36.

CHAPTER FIVE

HARVESTS AND HANDOUTS: AMERICAN PROTESTANT MISSIONARIES AND THE SCOPE OF THE NORTHWEST FUR TRADE

On Friday, August 29, 1834, Methodist missionary Jason Lee recorded in his dairy that "the chief of the Walla Walla tribe [whom historian Gray Whaley names as Piupiumaksmaks - a "veteran fur trader" in his own right]...showed [him] some old papers with scraps of writing on them and a calendar showing the day of the month with Sunday distinctly marked - written - [he] presume[d] by some gentlemen of the H. B. Company."⁸⁴⁸ Lee proceeded to inscribe, "in red ink," his name, as well as the name of his nephew Daniel Lee and their purpose for being in the country, along with the date.⁸⁴⁹ With the "contract" signed, he then returned it to the chief who "seemed quite pleased with it" and in exchange "took [Lee] out and presented [him with] an elegant horse."⁸⁵⁰ Later that same day the missionary participated in another transaction with a "Kioos chief," who also gave him a horse and in exchange Lee presented him with "knives, fish hooks, awls, etc., not of great value, but considerable importance to them."⁸⁵¹ He added, "we smoked with them, sang a hymn, and commended them to God in prayer, and then dispersed, and prepared to go, some of us, and sup with Capt. Bonneville and wandering traders, in company

⁸⁴⁸ "Diary of Reverend Jason Lee - II (Continued)," *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 17, no. 3 (1916): 255.; Gray Whaley, *Oregon and the Collapse of the Illahee: U. S. Empire and the Transformation of the Indigenous World, 1792-1859* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 106.

⁸⁴⁹ "Diary of Reverend Jason Lee," 255.

⁸⁵⁰ Ibid. Whaley refers to this document as a simple "contract," which in itself signifies the extent to which indigenous patterns of commercial negotiation had changed in the Pacific Northwest during the late fur trade era. Whaley, *Oregon and the Collapse of the Illahee*, 106.; "Diary of Reverend Jason Lee," 255.

⁸⁵¹ Ibid.

with Capt. Stewart, and were treated in a very friendly manner."⁸⁵²

In short, Jason Lee's August 29th represents an abbreviated example of the mission economy as it unfolded within the larger framework of the region's fur trade. When he and other American Protestant missionaries first arrived in the Pacific Northwest, they "entered a world in flux." As Whaley reminds us, "malaria [had] devastated Native villages; social structures adapted to meet the challenges of the fur trade were collapsing" and the HBC was in the process of searching "for a colonial economy less dependent on furs and better able to meet the growing threat of Euro-American colonization."⁸⁵³ Despite this regional volatility, the cultural, social, political, and economic institutions established by over three decades of the fur trade had yet to fully crumble. Even with the strength of its monopoly having shown signs of weakening (throughout much of the 1830s and even into the 1840s), the HBC retained a large amount of control over local commercial activity and local governance. In their eyes, the Columbia was still their territory and all those who resided there still subject to the Company's oversight. Although missionaries "entered a world in flux," it was one in which old orders lingered and accommodation to such orders remained vital to the success of any enterprise, whether its goal was proselytizing, commerce, or as was often the case with the Protestant mission economy, some conflation of the two.

Mission operations - whether sponsored by the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church or the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) - were extensive. Alongside their overall aim of converting indigenes to Protestantism, American missionaries engaged in linguistics; farmed and promoted the sedentary lifestyle through agricultural training; raised cattle and other livestock; traded a wide range of durable goods with

⁸⁵² Ibid.

⁸⁵³ Whaley, *Oregon and the Collapse of the Illahee*, 99.

natives, fellow missionaries, and fur traders; employed a variety of personnel, including natives, Hawaiians, and Euro-American settlers; fought for temperance; competed against Catholics for Indian souls; and distributed religious products. At the same time, this mission economy was a trans-regional endeavor. Missionary boards headquartered in east coast metropolitan areas such as New York and Boston provided the bulk of financial support, while congregants, relatives, and friends furnished Oregon missionaries with the equally important commodities of remembrance and prayer.⁸⁵⁴ It was not uncommon for missionaries to feel a sense of isolation, and any encouragement (or simply communication) from the east was valued highly. For their part, missionaries reported to their respective boards, as well as the general public, on a regular basis, often depicting their stations as more successful (mainly calculated in terms of the number of those baptized into the fellowship) than they may have been, with the expectation of securing future support for their labors.

Most important, the emergence and development of the multi-layered and trans-regional operations of the American Protestant mission system was in large part contingent on their absorption into the structures, resources, and networks of the region's fur trade. Despite how some missionaries viewed trading companies such as the HBC, without their aid they would never have been able to function in an environment so far removed from their own sources of provision.⁸⁵⁵ The fur trade did more than simply endorse American evangelical activity in the

⁸⁵⁴ Upon his arrival in Boston, George Simpson remarked that "she is the centre and soul of those religious establishments, which have placed the United States next to Great Britain in the divine task of shedding on the nations the light of the Gospel." The very next sentence, he wrote that "she is the nursery and home of most of those commercial adventurers, who have elevated the influence of America above that of England, in more than one of those regions which lie within the contemplated range of my wanderings." George Simpson, *Narrative of a Journey Round the World During the Years 1841 and 1842*, vol. 1 (London: Henry Colburn, 1847), 6-7.

⁸⁵⁵ It was not uncommon for some American missionaries and settlers to express resentment towards the HBC. William Gray admitted in his lengthy history of the region that he learned upon arriving in the Oregon Country that "there was an overgrown, unscrupulous, and exacting monopoly that would prevent any interference in their trade, or intercourse with the Indians." William Henry Gray, *A History of Oregon, 1792-1849: Drawn from*

Pacific Northwest, it enabled it.

**"Not There to Catch Them in a Trap as a Man would Catch a Beaver,
But to do Them Good":
The American Protestant Mission Economy and the Backdrop of the Fur Trade**

It could be said that American missions in the Columbia were little more than firms tapping into a particular market demand. For Protestant organizations back east, the "Great Macedonian Call" of 1832 was definitive proof that the natives of the region desired to hear the gospel and alter their habits accordingly.⁸⁵⁶ What early missionaries encountered only furthered this preconception. In his initial journey out West, ABCFM member Marcus Whitman reported to the Secretary of the Board, David Greene, that the Flatheads and Nez Perce "have obtained some notions of religions from the traders and travelers in their country which seems to be a mixture of Catholick [sic] cermonys Protestantism and common morality," and that "they say they have always been unhappy cinse [sic] the[y] have become informed of the religion of the whites they do not understand it," but are eager to "adop[t] any thing that is taught them as religion."⁸⁵⁷ As historian Alvin Josephy suggests, it was not uncommon for native communities

Personal Observation and Authentic Information (Portland, OR: Harris and Holman, 1870), 136. Indeed, Gray was frequently critical of the HBC's policies, often describing the Company as despotic, corrupt, extortive (especially with regard to American settlers), and generally morally-bankrupt.

⁸⁵⁶ Evidently the demand for Christian teachers, had been around for quite some time, even prior to the St. Louis delegation. According to the *Missionary Herald*, the natives of the Northwest Coast have long "manifested" a "desire for [religious] instruction." He suggested that "some of the savages when they heard of missionaries being sent to teach the Sandwich Islanders, inquired why they were not sent to them." Jonathan S. Green, *Journal of a Tour on the North West Coast of America in the Year 1829* (New York: Chas, Fred, Heartman, 1915), 10.

⁸⁵⁷ Whitman Mission Correspondence, 1834-1852, Bancroft Library. Also, according to Whitman's account, the Flathead and Nez Perce chiefs whom they met at the annual Rendezvous in 1835 expressed a clear desire to have teachers furnish them with knowledge of Euro-American Christianity. He recalled one Nez Perce leader saying that "he had heard something about the worship of God from the traders but he did not understand it; it had only reached his ears, he desired to be taught so that it might sink deep into his inward parts." Ibid. Moreover, during the same Rendezvous, a Nez Perce chief confronted Whitman and offered him one of his sons who was "furnished with a horse and equipage," so that he could "be taught the religion of the whites or the Christian religion." Ibid.

to treat early missionaries such as Jason and Daniel Lee, Samuel Parker, and Marcus Whitman as genuine commodities. For instance, during Parker's trip from the Rendezvous at Green River to the Columbia Plateau, he was accompanied by Indians who "clustered around him and treat[ed] him like a precious cargo."⁸⁵⁸ Josephy also notes that "arguments broke out between the Nez Perce and Cayuse women over which people the missionaries were going to live with, and [Marcus' wife] Narcissa wrote that 'the contradiction was so sharp they nearly came to blows.'"⁸⁵⁹ For the indigenes who pampered them, these missionaries were carriers of, in the words of ethnohistorian Larry Cebula, "a source of spirit power so strong that it would restore the aboriginal world of their fathers."⁸⁶⁰

American missionaries were happy to oblige. The deep-seeded desire to save the souls of the "heathen," which emerged from the evangelical fervor of the Second Great Awakening, was the primary reason why missionary organizations and fellow congregants funded the missions, as it was the primary reason why each decided to become a missionary in the first place (more often than not following a transcendent experience at a revival meeting).⁸⁶¹ For most, it was an aspiration they would retain despite numerous setbacks. After being in the region for four years and confronting many difficulties, Narcissa Whitman wrote to her mother back east, proclaiming

⁸⁵⁸ Alvin M. Josephy, *The Nez Perce Indians and the Opening of the Northwest* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 134.

⁸⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁸⁶⁰ Larry Cebula, *Plateau Indians and the Quest for Spiritual Power, 1700-1850* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 124.

⁸⁶¹ As an example, Asa Smith experienced, in the words of Clifford Drury, a "spiritual regeneration" during a Congregationalist camp meeting in 1831, which "reoriented" his life and "filled [him] with missionary zeal." Clifford Merrill Drury, ed., *The Diaries and Letters of Henry H. Spalding and Asa Bowen Smith relating to the Nez Perce Mission, 1838-1842* (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1958), 31. He soon became an "avid reader" of the flagship periodical of the ABCFM, *The Missionary Herald*, in which he was introduced to the work of Whitman and Spalding in the Oregon Country. *Ibid.*, 32-33. His colleague (and nemesis) Henry Spalding had an even more dramatic testimony. In his words, he was "from infancy separated from all friends, bound out to strangers at the age of 16 months [and] lived a very wicked life among wicked men till the age of 22 when God in great mercy rescued me from the depths of sin." Whitman Mission Correspondence.

her "chief anxiety is [still] to see [natives] choosing Christ - loving and serving him," and reaffirmed that "it is for this we live and are willing to wear out our lives in endeavoring to persuade them to obey Christ."⁸⁶²

Tied to this objective was the promotion of piety and virtue, though this was easier said than done. ABCFM missionaries in particular made desperate attempts to keep the Sabbath while traveling overland with fur traders who thought little of resting, and when they arrived, many found themselves engrossed in the mundane chores of the mission station, which had an equally adverse effect on their personal devotional lives.⁸⁶³ Just as exhausting was the fight for regional sobriety. As early as 1829, ABCFM liaison Jonathan Green wrote regarding the Columbia that "until the gospel shall make these wretched men free, foreign intercourse will only provide materials for strengthening their chains [e.g. rum]; they will furnish ingredients for embittering their cup of misery."⁸⁶⁴ In the 1840s, ABCFM and Methodist missionaries cooperated in the formation of a Temperance Society and pressured HBC personnel and Euro-American settlers to sign a pledge to abstain from selling spirits to natives. Some even resorted to physical intimidation. In one instance, Methodist missionary Elijah White apprehended a "criminal and his distillery, broke his apparatus, and buried it in the Willamette river."⁸⁶⁵

⁸⁶² Narcissa Whitman to Mother, Waillatpu, 2 May 1840, in *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1847* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1996), 96.

⁸⁶³ At one point in their overland journey in 1838, the Smiths, along with the Walkers and Eells, stopped in Cincinnati and spent some time with Lyman Beecher before moving hastily on to St. Louis. They expressed to Dr. Beecher their concern of traveling on the Sabbath and when asked what he would do in such a circumstance, he replied that "if I were crossing the Atlantic, I certainly would not jump overboard when Saturday night came." Clifford Merrill Drury, ed., *The Diaries and Letters of Henry H. Spalding and Asa Bowen Smith relating to the Nez Perce Mission, 1838-1842* (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1958), 44.

⁸⁶⁴ Green, *Journal of a Tour*, 77.

⁸⁶⁵ A. J. Allen, *Ten Years in Oregon* (Ithaca, NY: Mack, Andrus, & Co., 1848), 228. On occasion missionaries went so far as to publically reprimand officers of the HBC for supplying natives with liquor. Asa Smith noted that "just before our arrival here in '38, a Temperance Society was formed & Mr. Pambrun the gentleman in charge of Fort Walla Walla was induced to sign the pledge, but conditionally however." The Chief Trader agreed to

Whether proselytizing natives or regulating their conduct, communication mattered. In the 1839 Annual Meeting of the ABCFM mission it was resolved that "school instruction in the native language [would be] an important branch of [their] operations & that each member of the mission give as prominent attention to this department of labor as...circumstances will admit."⁸⁶⁶ The production of religious texts was an equally valuable undertaking, especially for Asa Smith and Henry Spalding. In the same Annual Meeting it was resolved that,

Mr. Smith be appointed to prepare a book containing religious instruction or translation from the New Testament & Mr. Spalding his reviewer. Also, that Mr. Spalding be appointed to prepare a book containing religious instruction from the Old Testament & Mr. Smith his reviewer...Also, that Messrs. Spalding & Smith be a committee to translate the ten commandments to be published at the Islands under a cut. Also that Messrs. Spalding & Smith be appointed to prepare hymns in the native language & [be] each others reviewers.⁸⁶⁷

This labor would prove frustrating for Smith in particular who reluctantly compiled a Nez Perce grammar that in his opinion was riddled with errors. He wrote to the Secretary of the Board in the winter of 1840 lamenting that he "found scarcely a correct sentence of Nez Perce in the

not provide local natives with alcohol but would continue to drink it himself and provide it for his officers on a limited basis. Yet, one of Henry Spalding's recent converts claimed Pambrun attempted to give him a drink of hard liquor and the missionary responded the following Sabbath by haranguing against the Chief Trader before a predominately Indian audience, accusing him of being a liar. Asa Bowen Smith to David Greene, Kamiah, Oregon Territory, 3 September 1840, in *The Diaries and Letters of Henry H. Spalding and Asa Bowen Smith relating to the Nez Perce Mission, 1838-1842*, ed. Clifford Drury (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1958), 165. Despite this incident, the HBC did support the American missionaries when it came to temperance. Daniel Lee noted in his memoir that McLoughlin "seconded the efforts of the missionaries and friends of temperance, and that the course he has taken in regard to spirituous liquors has done much to preserve the general order and harmony of the mixed community of which the settlement is composed." Daniel Lee and Joseph Frost, *Ten Years in Oregon* (New York: J. Collord, 1844), 140.

⁸⁶⁶ Minutes of the 1839 Annual Meeting of the Oregon Mission of the American Board, Lapwai, 2-5 September 1839, in *The Diaries and Letters of Henry H. Spalding and Asa Bowen Smith relating to the Nez Perce Mission, 1838-1842*, ed. Clifford Drury (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1958), 116.

⁸⁶⁷ Ibid., 115. It is important to note that women also contributed to the mission's linguistic operations. At the Wieleptoo mission, Narcissa operated a school in which she taught her young pupils how to read and write in their own language. Letter from Narcissa Whitman to Parents, Wieletpoo, Walla Walla River, Oregon Territory, April 11, 1838, in *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1847* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1996), 57.

whole of it."⁸⁶⁸ Smith was not alone. Disheartened by the difficulty of the Spokane language, fellow ABCFM missionary Elkanah Walker recorded in his diary that "never did I so earnestly desire the gift of tongues," and "among the Methodists," writes ethnohistorian Robert Boyd, "[Henry] Perkins was the only missionary who thoroughly learned and used the vernacular [Walla Walla]." ⁸⁶⁹ These are testaments to how difficult indigenous languages were to master for missionaries who regrettably found themselves with very little time to devote to linguistic training.

The "ordinary care of the station," as Marcus Whitman put it, demanded much attention.⁸⁷⁰ Agricultural pursuits were at the top of the list. In an 1843 letter to the Missionary Board of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Perkins noted that in the second Spring since the founding of his station he "had to turn [his] attention to the making of a farm" for the purpose of subsistence living.⁸⁷¹ He justified this diversion from his other missionary duties by writing that "thus far we had been obliged to keep our canoes constantly going, to and from the Willamette and Fort Vancouver for supplies, and at such expense as could not well be longer afforded."⁸⁷² Missionaries sponsored by the ABCFM also devoted much of their energies to farming. Upon

⁸⁶⁸ Asa Bowen Smith to David Greene, Kamiah, Oregon Territory, 6 February 1840, in *The Diaries and Letters of Henry H. Spalding and Asa Bowen Smith relating to the Nez Perce Mission, 1838-1842*, ed. Clifford Drury (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1958), 130.

⁸⁶⁹ Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown, *The Spokane Indians: Children of the Sun* (Norman: University Oklahoma Press, 1970), 64.; Robert Boyd, *People of the Dalles, the Indians of Wascopam Mission: A Historical Ethnography Based on the Papers of the Methodist Missionaries* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 192.

⁸⁷⁰ Marcus Whitman to David Greene, Wieletpoo, 1841, in Narcissa Whitman, *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1847* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1996), 121.

⁸⁷¹ Henry Perkins to the Corresponding Secretary of the Missionary Society of the M. E. Church, Wascopam, 21 March 1843, in *People of the Dalles, The Indians of Wascopam Mission: A Historical Ethnography Based on the Papers of the Methodist Missionaries*, by Robert Boyd (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 239.

⁸⁷² Ibid.

first visiting the Whitman's Waiilatpu mission, Smith reported to Greene that they had "about 17 acres under cultivation," including 2.5 acres of wheat, 6 acres of potatoes, and several acres of corn, all of which yielded sizable crops throughout the year.⁸⁷³

Mission stations also bred and traded livestock. Although cattle, sheep, and hogs were difficult to come by in the Columbia, having to be imported from California or Hawaii - or even herded during an overland trek from the east - both ABCFM and Methodist missions had them in limited quantities. Such scarcity made livestock valuable - so valuable that the death of a milk cow could be disastrous for a missionary family, as it was for the Smiths during their brief tenure in the region - prompting missionary organizations to demand that their missionaries keep an accurate account of the animal population for each station.⁸⁷⁴ To illustrate, in their 1839 report to the American Board, Walker and his associate Cushing Eells reported having "12 cattle, 7 of which are females; 14 horses & 7 mules."⁸⁷⁵ Even as late as 1847, the ABCFM required that the "number of cattle, horses & mules, sheep & swine be embodied in the station reports together with their increase & diminution during the year."⁸⁷⁶ And, as a way of distinguishing these animals (namely cattle) from those belonging to local natives, settlers, and the HBC, missionaries such as Walker marked them with the Mission brand, which was nothing more than

⁸⁷³ Letter from Asa Bowen Smith to David Greene, Waiilatpu, 15 September 1838, in *The Diaries and Letters of Henry H. Spalding and Asa Bowen Smith relating to the Nez Perce Mission, 1838-1842*, ed. Clifford Drury (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1958), 88. Specifically, Smith recorded that "from 2 1/2 acres [of wheat] it is thought there will be from 75 to 100 bushels" and from the corn fields, "it is all harvested & amounts to about 300 bushels." Ibid. He added that Dr. Whitman "has about 6 acres of potatoes, which he thinks with yield 1000 bushels" and "his garden is filled with abundance of vegetables of various kinds." Ibid.

⁸⁷⁴ Drury, *The Diaries and Letters*, 17-18. Smith noted that an "American cow" is "so valuable...to us for our support and comfort." Smith to Greene, 3 September 1840, 162.

⁸⁷⁵ Clifford M. Drury, ed., *Nine Years with the Spokane Indians: The Diary, 1838-1848, of Elkanah Walker* (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1976), 120.

⁸⁷⁶ Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Oregon Mission of the American Board, Lapwai, 4-9 July 1840, in *The Diaries and Letters of Henry H. Spalding and Asa Bowen Smith relating to the Nez Perce Mission, 1838-1842*, ed. Clifford Drury (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1958), 155.

the letter "M."⁸⁷⁷

Besides their production of converts, texts, and agriculture, Columbia missionaries also participated in manufacturing. Upon the arrival of reinforcements in the fall of 1838, the small group of ABCFM missionaries held a business meeting (as they did every year in the beginning) during which they addressed several pressing issues. Among those were the construction of a "corn & flour mill" and a "blacksmith shop."⁸⁷⁸ Both Whitman and Spalding - who by the time the reinforcements arrived had been in the region for over two years - viewed these projects as vital to the mission's overall success. Concerning a mill, Whitman wrote to Greene in 1841 arguing that "its simple construction, its safe and durable water power, make it a great labor-saving machine."⁸⁷⁹ Time spent traveling to the nearest HBC post for flour or horse shoes could be time spent learning indigenous languages, preparing sermons, and educating native children.

Reducing the amount of the time spent on the "secular" operations of the mission was a habitual challenge. In an 1840 letter to Secretary Greene, Smith informed the Board that "it is of immense importance that we have faithful servants to take care of our temporal concern[s]. If we cannot have such," he concluded, "we had better leave the country at once, for we should be wearing out our lives here to little or no purpose."⁸⁸⁰ Like Smith, Narcissa Whitman also commented on the difficulties of their dual roles. In an 1840 letter she wrote that "we need more prayer and holy living," but, "with our hearts divided between our appropriate missionary work

⁸⁷⁷ Drury, *Nine Years with the Spokane Indians*, 197.

⁸⁷⁸ Drury, *The Diaries and Letters*, 90.

⁸⁷⁹ Marcus Whitman to David Greene, Wietpoo, 1841, in *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1847* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1996), 121.

⁸⁸⁰ Asa Bowen Smith to David Greene, Kamiah, Oregon Territory, 5 August 1840, in *The Diaries and Letters of Henry H. Spalding and Asa Bowen Smith relating to the Nez Perce Mission, 1838-1842*, ed. Clifford Drury (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1958), 148. In the same letter Smith added that Indian help was not good and that "if we are not dependent on them for assistance or any of the means of living, it will save us from endless perplexity & trouble with them." Ibid. Hawaiian workers vetted by fellow ABCFM missionaries in the Islands proved to be a popular alternative.

and getting a living, how can we expect it otherwise?"⁸⁸¹ In a separate letter to her mother, she added that her husband Marcus "finds the responsibilities of a station too much for one man."⁸⁸² Likewise, toward the end of his tenure in the region, it seems, based on his journal entries, Walker was spending more time with the upkeep of his station and very little time in preparation for his Sabbath sermons. Some Methodists also felt overwhelmed. Finding himself weighed down by the duties of starting a new mission, Perkins commented to his wife that he intended to "petition [the missionary board] for...a miller, carpenter, blacksmith, physician, school master and farmer."⁸⁸³

Indeed, employing non-clerical personnel was a popular practice. The vast historiography on Oregon missionaries is replete with claims concerning the connections between the Protestant missions and American imperialism. The evidence for such a linkage is clear. As Methodist missionary Philip Leget Edwards wrote in the early 1840s, "The missionaries have, since the year 1834, wielded a most happy influence on the moral and intellectual character of the infant colony; and around the Mission, there is slowly and gradually forming a moral, religious and industrious population - perchance the germ of a powerful state."⁸⁸⁴ Much of this had to do with the missionaries' direct contribution to the early development of Euro-American institutions and industries. However, it also had much to do with the missions as agents of employment. Many of those blacksmiths, farmers, millers, and

⁸⁸¹ Narcissa Whitman to Sister Perkins, Waillatpu, 1 January 1840, in *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1847* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1996), 90.

⁸⁸² Whitman to Mother, 2 May 1840, 96.

⁸⁸³ Henry Perkins to Elvira, Wascopam Village, 4 April 1838, in *People of the Dalles, The Indians of Wascopam Mission: A Historical Ethnography Based on the Papers of the Methodist Missionaries*, by Robert Boyd (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 230.

⁸⁸⁴ Philip Leget Edwards, *Sketch of the Oregon Territory* (Liberty, MO: The "Herald" Office, 1842), 18.

teachers (and even some of the missionaries themselves) hired by missionary organizations in the east and shipped westward became key players in the formation of Oregon's first provincial government. Even those settlers not employed by a missionary organization used the missions as a stepping stone to their new life in the region. The Whitmans' Waiilatpu mission even served as a waypoint for many weary emigrant parties traveling to the Willamette, persuading the missionaries to build "houses to accommodate the families that will be obliged to winter here."⁸⁸⁵ As the flagship periodical of the ABCFM, *The Missionary Herald*, suggested, there could be no more "worthy American enterprise" than to "convey the inestimable treasure of divine truth to pagan tribes, scattered over a vast extent of territory, and to prepare the way for future settlers."⁸⁸⁶

Such rhetoric notwithstanding, missionaries and the organizations who supported them routinely differentiated between the "religious" and "secular" functions of the mission. Evidently, when Methodist missionary George Gary arrived in Oregon he "found the mission greatly...involved in secular business. The missionaries had not abandoned their proper calling," he added, "but so great was the number of secular employed in the mission, and such the extent of the mercantile, mechanical, and agricultural operations connected with it, that it presented more the appearance of a design to establish a colony than of an associated effort to promote true Christian evangelization."⁸⁸⁷ The Board responded by demanding that its missionaries "confine

⁸⁸⁵ Narcissa Whitman to Parents, Waiilatpu, 9 October 1844, in *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1847* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1996), 182. Similarly in 1843, Elkanah Walker employed a New Englander named Mr. Campbell for "a dollar per day & his food," but had to cook the food himself. The missionary added one more stipulation: "that he was not to trade beaver." Drury, *Nine Years with the Spokane Indians*, 251-252. The mission also served as an impromptu orphanage for children whose parents had perished in the overland crossing.

⁸⁸⁶ Green, *Journal of a Tour*, 18.

⁸⁸⁷ Charles Henry Carey, ed., "Methodist Annual Reports Relating to the Willamette Mission (1834-1848)," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (1922): 360.

[themselves] strictly to their proper calling," and thus remove the "greatest hindrance to ministerial influence and success."⁸⁸⁸ Ultimately, they wanted to keep the two activities separate so as not to forfeit the public's confidence with suspicions of ulterior motives relating to fiscal gain among its missionaries. The Board of the ABCFM had similar concerns, prompting Whitman to reassure Greene that despite his attention to temporal affairs he viewed himself as not losing "sight of the spiritual part of my duty here to the natives whom I endeavour to teach the truths of the gospel."⁸⁸⁹

There is a certain irony in this dichotomization that cuts at the heart of the missionary enterprise. The way in which American missionaries articulated their purpose was through language that conflated the temporal and eternal. They frequently used agricultural metaphors to describe their ministry, in which the Indian (as an object) was cultivated, sowed, and harvested in the identical fashion as the wheat and corn also attended to in the station's fields.⁸⁹⁰ Moreover, the very conversion strategies used by many of these missionaries established a tight linkage between industry and piety. Like many Protestant missionaries of the time period, both Whitman and Spalding argued that in order for the Indians to acquire the full benefits of instruction in the faith they must renounce their nomadic ways and become settled. Spalding, in particular, became an enthusiastic promoter of such an approach and worked diligently to "induce the

⁸⁸⁸ Ibid., 348-349. Elsewhere it was suggested that "the multiplicity of business, and the accumulation of care and perplexity occasioned by the different branches, were decidedly deleterious to the missionaries themselves." Ibid., 351. The document also noted that in retrospect the mission accumulated significant financial losses in its "ill-directed efforts to sustain this load of business....It was constantly sinking under the burden; and every successive effort to relieve it but increased the difficulty under which the mission groaned." Ibid.

⁸⁸⁹ Whitman Mission Correspondence.

⁸⁹⁰ As Parker noted in the journal of his initial trip out West, "the Nez Perce and Flathead Indians present a promising field for missionary labor, which is white for the harvest." Samuel Parker, *Journal of an Exploring Tour Beyond the Rocky Mountains, Under the Direction of the A.B.C.F.M., Performed in the Years, 1835, '36, and '37* (Ithaca, NY: Mack, Andras, & Woodruff, 1838), 78.

natives to...become farmers and raise cattle, hogs, and sheep."⁸⁹¹ He even developed what historian Clifford Drury refers to as a "demonstration center of agriculture and animal husbandry," and, in a symbolic gesture, posed for a picture in which he held a Bible in one hand and a hoe in the other.⁸⁹²

Methodist missionaries Jason and Daniel Lee also advocated for the marriage of agriculture and Christian instruction. Despite the occasional unease of his sponsors, Jason, in the words of historian Robert Loewenberg, "seemed to play fast and loose with the morality of the marketplace to achieve the higher morality of the missionary goals he hoped to fulfill."⁸⁹³ As a "man of business" he did little to "disguise his economic plans for Oregon," and every indication suggests that he and his nephew Daniel chose the Willamette Valley to establish their mission because of the resources it offered.⁸⁹⁴ Overall Loewenberg argues that when it came to Lee's

⁸⁹¹ Drury, *The Diaries and Letters*, 17. Similarly, Whitman expressed a desire to help Indians fence and plough their land, as well as teach them how to build store houses for their grain and corn. Whitman Mission Correspondence.

⁸⁹² Drury, *The Diaries and Letters*, 146n. Of Spalding, Methodist missionary Gustavus Hines wrote that he and his wife "are laboring faithfully for both the spiritual and temporal good of this people [Nez Perce], and in no place have I see more visible fruits of labor thus bestowed." Gustavus Hines, *A Voyage Around the World: With a History of Oregon Mission...* (Buffalo, NY: George H. Derby and Co., 1850), 175. However, not all of Spalding's and Whitman's contemporaries were pleased with what he was doing. As early 1839, Asa Smith began to separate himself from their strategy for converting and civilizing natives but suggesting that "furnishing the Indians with cattle [and] ploughs...appears to me to be departing from the object which the Board has in view." Asa Bowen Smith to the Prudential Committee of the ABCFM, Wieletpoo, Oregon Territory, 29 April 1839, in *The Diaries and Letters of Henry H. Spalding and Asa Bowen Smith relating to the Nez Perce Mission, 1838-1842*, ed. Clifford Drury (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1958), 98. He added that "I feel that there is a very great danger of introducing the habits of civilized life faster than the natives are capable of appreciating them. We might spend our whole time in manual labor for the Indians, but it would only increase their selfishness." Ibid.

⁸⁹³ Robert J. Loewenberg, *Equality on the Oregon Frontier: Jason Lee and the Methodist Mission, 1834-43* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976), 180. Jason Lee wrote his friend Caleb Cushing stating that although the "'exclusive object of the mission [was] the benefit of the Indian tribes west of the Rocky mountains,...it is [just as] necessary to cultivate the soil, erect dwelling houses, and school houses, build mills and in fact, introduce all the necessaryes and helps of a civilized colony.'" Ibid., 181.

⁸⁹⁴ Anna Maria Lee to George, Mission House Willamette, 26 October 1837, in *Life and Letters of Mrs. Jason Lee: First Wife of Rev. Jason Lee of the Oregon Mission*, ed. Theresa Gay (Portland, OR: Metropolitan, 1936), 163; Loewenberg, *Equality on the Oregon Frontier*, 181; Whaley, *Oregon and the Collapse of the Illahee*, 107. Similarly, when scouting for a place to build a mission station, Asa Smith looked for a "site which would combine fertile land with plenty of good timber and water." Drury, *The Diaries and Letters*, 93.

efforts in the Columbia "the secular ventures of the mission were joined to the business of making Christians, and the whole was imbued with aspirations to harmony."⁸⁹⁵

Generally speaking, mission stations were far from harmonious places. Besides experiencing bitter conflict among themselves, beginning in the 1840s, Protestant missionaries throughout the region found themselves embroiled in stiff competition with newly-arrived priests.⁸⁹⁶ In the Summer of 1839, Smith wrote to Secretary Greene lamenting that "Catholicism is now making his appearance, & the errors of that church are beginning to be diffused among this people [Nez Perce]."⁸⁹⁷ He went on: "Already has the priest denounced us because we have wives & the people told that they are going to hell because they are unbaptised....One thing is certain, the natural heart loves such kind of instruction as the Catholics usually give, & we have reason to fear that our work will soon be done up."⁸⁹⁸

Like many of his colleagues, Smith's correspondence is rife with anti-Catholic anxiety. In the Fall of 1840, he commented to Walker that a Catholic priest was beginning to encroach on their "field," and a "great many children both Flat Head & Nez Perces have been baptized & have been presented with the image of the cross or other emblems of Popery."⁸⁹⁹ The strategy of

⁸⁹⁵ Loewenberg, *Equality on the Oregon Frontier*, 169.

⁸⁹⁶ Correspondence from ABCFM missionaries in the Columbia suggest they fought incessantly. Smith accused Spalding of being mentally deranged, Spalding preserved a vendetta against Narcissa for refusing him as a suitor years prior, and they frequently argued about petty matters. Such internal conflict threatened the credibility of the entire operation. As Alvin Josephy notes, much of the fighting was done "in front of the Indians, who were either confused or contemptuous, and many of the Nez Perce began to regard the missionaries as ridiculous and childish." Josephy, *The Nez Perce Indians*, 198.

⁸⁹⁷ Asa Bowen Smith to David Greene, Kamiah, Oregon Territory, 27 August 1839, in *The Diaries and Letters of Henry H. Spalding and Asa Bowen Smith relating to the Nez Perce Mission, 1838-1842*, ed. Clifford Merrill Drury (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1958), 110.

⁸⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹⁹ Asa Bowen Smith to Elkanah Walker, Kamiah, 12 October 1840, in *The Diaries and Letters of Henry H. Spalding and Asa Bowen Smith relating to the Nez Perce Mission, 1838-1842*, ed. Clifford Merrill Drury (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1958), 192.

the priests in penetrating the religious market was to use "what has been exceptionable in the conduct of Mr. Spalding [stories of him whipping and even murdering Indians]...with great effect in prejudicing the minds of the Indians against the mission."⁹⁰⁰ Smith reiterated that the Priests successes lie in his willingness to "hold out great temporal encouragement, & this is very flattering to the Indians."⁹⁰¹

Methodist missionaries expressed similar complaints. Perkins argued that Catholic priests seduced natives with material objects such as crosses, beads, and pictures. They apparently "had the desired effect," for Perkins noted that "so afraid have they since been of our doctrines that we cannot even get a hearing with them."⁹⁰² He also reported that priests were stealing away members of his flock by re-marrying and re-baptizing them using the liturgy of the Church.

The Whitmans also had their share of frustrations with Catholic competition. In an 1839 letter to her mother, Narcissa complained that "a Catholic priest has recently been at Walla Walla and held meetings with the Indians and used their influence to draw all the people away from us."⁹⁰³ She added, "some they forbidden to visit us again, and fill all their minds with distraction

⁹⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁹⁰¹ Ibid., 193.

⁹⁰² Henry Perkins, "History of the Oregon Mission: Part Two," in *People of the Dalles, The Indians of Wascopam Mission: A Historical Ethnography Based on the Papers of the Methodist Missionaries*, by Robert Boyd (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 267.

⁹⁰³ Narcissa Whitman to Jane, Wieletpoo, Walla Walla River, Oregon Territory, 9 October 1839, in Narcissa Whitman, in *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1847* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1996), 89. Like many of her fellow Protestants, Narcissa interpreted their competition with Catholics to be an extension of a supernatural conflict. In an 1844 letter she wrote that "the powers of darkness have long held their undivided sway over this land, and we feel that Satan will not quietly yield his dominions to another. He is on alert with all his hosts, and in as many ways as he has numbers employed to gain the entire victory to keep and drive from the field all who molest or disturb his quiet." Narcissa Whitman to Lydia Porter, Waiilatpu, Oregon Territory, 18 May 1844, in Narcissa Whitman, *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1847* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1996), 176.

about truths we teach."⁹⁰⁴ The Whitmans' neighbor, Spalding experienced similar difficulties which he linked to Catholic influence. In his diary, he accused the local priests of "telling the Indians that we are false teachers because we do not feed & clothe the people, that we have wives as other men, & wear pantaloons as common men & not frocks as he does."⁹⁰⁵

The extent to which natives were themselves active in this market rivalry should not be overlooked. A man referred to by Euro-Americans as "Lawyer" for his perspicacious demeanor served as a linguistic teacher for several ABCFM missionaries.⁹⁰⁶ It is also believed he was a staunch critic of Catholic doctrine and endorsed the Protestant missions whenever possible. In an 1840 letter to Walker, Smith reported:

Lawyer saw him [the priest]...& he says they tried to get the cross on him. He heard considerable from the priest & says the priest inquired of him about the mission & according to this account, he defended the mission very well, tho' he did not deny the reports about Mr. S. According to his account he ridiculed the priest & his doctrines most thoroughly to the interpreter & of course it must have gone to the priest. When they pretended that the cross was God, he said it was only *Kiswi*, like the ring on his finger. He denied to the interpreter the saving efficacy of baptism & when the priest said it was bad for us to have wives, he in a sarcastic manner asked the interpreter how the priest came into the world? if it was not by means of a father & mother?....So the Lawyer tells his story.⁹⁰⁷

Similarly, Spalding rejoiced over a young Walla Walla chief who "refused to have his boy baptised by the Catholic priest on condition that he should never go into the house of the Am.

⁹⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁵ Drury, *The Diaries and Letters*, 276.

⁹⁰⁶ His Spokane name was Ish-hol-hol-hoats-toats, and Smith referred to him as "the best teacher that could be obtained in the country." He added that Lawyer "exhibits more mind than I have witnessed in any other Indian. He is one who has been much in the mountains with the American Fur Co. & [has] knowledge of different languages." Smith to Greene, 27 August 1839, 103-104. The compensation for his language instruction was food and clothing for himself and his family.

⁹⁰⁷ Smith to Walker, 12 October 1840, 193.

Missionary."⁹⁰⁸ To be fair, not all natives who were engaged in the religious market were pro-Protestant. Whitman regrettably mentioned one young chief who built a house for a priest roughly 30 miles from his own Waiilatpu mission. In his words, the Indian "has shown an aversion to hear instruction from us since the baptism of his child by the Priest."⁹⁰⁹

To make matters worse, Protestants accused Catholic clergy of promising Indians that if they removed Whitman and Spalding from the region, they would establish a mission among them and other Americans would come to take the others' place who would trade more liberally with them.⁹¹⁰ This prompted former ABCFM mission William Gray to claim in his historical narrative that the Cayuse men responsible for killing of the Whitmans and their compatriots were incited by local Catholic priests in cooperation with the HBC to strike a blow against American Protestant settlement in the region. He wrote that "the crime itself was most inhuman and brutal, being mixed with religious prejudice and sectarian hate, guided and brought about by foreign commercial influences under the direction of a British monopoly."⁹¹¹

Regardless of who was involved, we do see in the years leading up to the Whitman killings a growing dissatisfaction among some natives toward the American missionary presence.

⁹⁰⁸ Drury, *The Diaries and Letters*, 279. According to Clifford Drury, Spokane Garry was also "strongly anti-Catholic and succeeded in keeping the Catholic priests from obtaining a foothold among the Middle and Lower Spokanes." Drury, *Nine Years with the Spokane Indians*, 244.

⁹⁰⁹ Whitman Mission Correspondence. Gustavus Hines observed that native throughout the Columbia were "about equally divided betwixt the Protestant and Catholic religion." Hines, *A Voyage Around the World*, 175.

⁹¹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹¹ Gray, *A History of Oregon*, 528. In an 1841 missive to her sister Jane, Narcissa also complained about the intimate connection between the HBC and the region's Catholic presence, as well as the regulation by Catholic Indians. She wrote: Now we have Catholics on both sides of us, we may say, right in our midst, for Mr. Pambrun, while he was alive, failed not to secure one of the principal Indians of this tribe to that religion, and had his family baptized. He acts upon his band, and hold from us many who would be glad to come and hear us. And then, the Indians are acted upon constantly through the servants of the Company, who are all, scarcely without exception, Catholics. Narcissa Whitman to Jane, Weiletpoo, Oregon Territory, 1 October 1841, in *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1847* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1996), 108. In another letter she went so far as to argue that if Herbert Beaver had "established himself at [Fort] Vancouver...we think Papacy would not have gained such a footing." Narcissa Whitman to Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Allen, Cuba, Christian Friends, Waiilatpu, 23 August 1842, in *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1847* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1996), 137.

By the late 1830s many Plateau communities had grown disenchanted with the spiritual power of the missionaries. For the Nez Perce, their "loyal attention to sermons failed to improve their fortunes or bring them great material rewards than they had been getting from the Hudson's Bay Company."⁹¹² This sentiment also developed among the Walla Walla and Cayuse. One commented to Narcissa that "it was good when they knew nothing but to hunt, eat, drink, and sleep; now it is bad."⁹¹³ Striking a similar tone, a Wascopam chief harangued Perkins, saying that "'before you came among us we were fearless, & strong: our hearts were upon our trade....Your words have made us fearful. We have listened to you, we have prayed, we have lost our interest in our trade - we have been growing poor.'"⁹¹⁴ Adding to this loss in wealth, bouts of disease continued to wreak havoc on indigenous communities, and all many could do was lie sick and dying as the world they once knew took a turn for the worse. In the words of Cebula, "the Whitman massacre was an extreme example of a judgment that many Plateau Indians were making concerning [Protestant] Christianity at roughly the same time."⁹¹⁵

The incident also offers a window into the strategies used by Plateau natives to regulate the region's religious economy for their own material benefit. Protestant missionaries gave few

⁹¹² Josephy, *The Nez Perce Indians*, 170.

⁹¹³ Narcissa Whitman to Parents, Wiletupoo, Walla Walla River, Oregon Territory, 11 April 1838, in *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1847* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1996), 57. Dr. Whitman responded to these allegations by suggesting that he and his wife "were not there to catch them in a trap as a man would catch a beaver, but to do them good; and if they would lay aside their former practices and prejudices, stop their quarrels, cultivate their lands, and receive good laws, they might become a great and a happy people." Hines, *A Voyage Around the World*, 181.

⁹¹⁴ Journal of Henry Perkins, 1843-1844, in *People of the Dalles, The Indians of Wascopam Mission: A Historical Ethnography Based on the Papers of the Methodist Missionaries*, by Robert Boyd (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 277.

⁹¹⁵ Cebula, *Plateau Indians*, 127.

gifts and did little to prevent the spread of disease.⁹¹⁶ What they did do was seize native lands for their own stations without any official transaction. This act, in particular, pressed some natives and Metis to direct a series of threats at some of the ABCFM missions - threats that included property seizure, destruction of buildings/crops, physical violence against persons, and so on. Whitman attributed much of the recent descent to an Iroquois man named Joe Gray (also an employee of the HBC) who told the Indians that "we ought to pay for the lands," while Spalding had his hands full with a Nez Perce shaman named "Old James," who was trying to drive away all associated with the Lapwai mission.⁹¹⁷ Smith experienced a similar encounter later that month when some Indians confronted him claiming that the land was theirs and that he needed to pay them for it. After some heated discussion they left "on their own accord, ordering [him] to stop [his] work & leave the next day." One native assured Smith these threats were empty and nothing more than a ploy to "force [him] to give them goods."⁹¹⁸ The missionary speculated that some "prefer to have us go [and] hope [for] a change which will bring them more profit," especially with the encroachment of Catholic priests who apparently promised plentitude.⁹¹⁹

⁹¹⁶ Pathogens such as small-pox, malaria, yellow fever, ague, measles, and so on ravished natives who chose to live nearby or frequent the mission stations. Children who were sent by their parents to the missions for the purposes of spiritual empowerment tended to be a higher percentage of the victims. Furthermore, it was a common view among many indigenous communities that missionaries were able to control physical ailments through their own forms of conjuring, which meant they could remove disease, but it also meant they could unleash it. This is one of the reasons why a band of Cayuse killed Dr. Marcus Whitman and his wife Narcissa, among others, at the Wailiaptu mission in 1847. Plus, it was a common practice among the Cayuse for the kin of the diseased to enact retribution (sometimes in the form of death) on a shaman who was unable to perform his duties in a satisfactory manner. As Cebula writes, "Christianity's greatest failing, from the native point of view, was that it did not protect the Indians from illness." *Ibid.*, 118.

⁹¹⁷ Whitman to Greene, 1841, 124.; Smith to Walker, 12 October 1840, 193. One chief who Whitman referred to as I-a-tin argued that "if any one came on the white men's land and he refused to go off, he was kicked off," and wondered why he could not do the same. Whitman to Greene, 1841, 121-122.

⁹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹¹⁹ Drury, *The Diaries and Letters*, 195-196. Following this unfortunate confrontation, Smith penned a notice to Greene stating that "it is the decided opinion of Doct. W., Mr. Gray, Mr. Pambrun, & the company of

From the onset, Protestant missionaries in the Columbia informed local indigenes that their purpose in the country was not commercial. But their ideology and rhetoric did not always coincide. In 1829, Green informed a coastal chief that he "had nothing to do with trade," and ironically went on to asked the chief that "if he we would protect a man who should come and live with his people" he would "afford them instruction."⁹²⁰ A similar incongruity appeared in the correspondence of Spalding. According to an 1836 letter, upon arrival at the annual Rendezvous, he notified the Flathead and Nez Perce chiefs who were expecting them that "we had not come to trade with them, but to do them good, to live and die with them, to teach them about God, to cultivate their lands, to raise grain and cattle, & live as white men live."⁹²¹ To paraphrase, he denounced the missionaries' material intentions and continued by enumerating the missionaries' material intentions. While indigenous concepts relating to the interplay between spirituality and materiality played a significant role in their confusion regarding the Protestant missionary agenda, the inconsistent message conveyed by the missionaries themselves certainly did not help clarify the matter.

Like the Euro-Americans who came to the region before them, Columbia natives expected the missionaries to engage in some trade as per the conventions established by over three decades of the fur trade. Prior to the early 1830s, the only white establishments most Indians had every known were beaver trading houses and many looked to the missions to serve

Independent missionaries...that it would be best to vacate this station immediately in order to show the Indians the effect of their conduct & to promote peace at other stations." Asa Bowen Smith to David Greene, Kamiah, 21 October 1840, in *The Diaries and Letters of Henry H. Spalding and Asa Bowen Smith relating to the Nez Perce Mission, 1838-1842*, ed. Clifford Drury (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1958), 202. Smith added that "Mr. Pambrun too fears from the Indians at this time & has put his fort in readiness for an attack." Ibid. Apparently, the same chiefs who threatened Smith also claimed that they "'tied Mr. Pambrun & made him a slave & since that he had been a little good.'" Ibid., 201-202.

⁹²⁰ Green, *Journal of a Tour*, 56-57.

⁹²¹ Whitman Mission Correspondence.

as replacements for posts the HBC had closed down in their area.⁹²² In an 1838 letter, Perkins wrote the following account:

[Some local Indians] had heard of our coming and soon as our canoes touched shore about fifty came out to meet us. Mr. Birney used to have a trading house here, and the Indians suppos[ing] we had come for the same purpose[, were therefore loud in their joy on our arrival and hastened to show us all the land, the wood for building, and the horses for hauling it, and were all ready to turn out and work for us, as they did for Mr. Birney.⁹²³

This is also why at Rendezvous in 1834, Jason Lee and his associates encountered Indians who "said if we could build a house for them they would [catch] plenty of Beaver for us."⁹²⁴

Furthermore, just as it had been with fur trade houses, for missionaries to settle in the territory of a particular tribe gave that community a level of "prestige" among its neighbors.⁹²⁵ This was one of the reasons why following the violence at Waiilatpu, Spokane headmen such as Big Star and Big Head attempted to persuade Walker and Eells to remain at their station, arguing that if they chose to seek shelter at an HBC post or the Willamette Valley "the Spokanes would be a laughing stock among the other tribes for not protecting them."⁹²⁶

Such experiences confirmed in the minds of Protestant missionaries that the "heathens" they had come to save were more "prideful" and "materialistic" than the Macedonian Call had implied. Smith was the most outspoken concerning his disillusionment. Not only did he

⁹²² Cebula, *Plateau Indians*, 116.

⁹²³ Henry Perkins to Elvira, Wascopam Village, 21 March 1838, in *People of the Dalles, The Indians of Wascopam Mission: A Historical Ethnography Based on the Papers of the Methodist Missionaries*, by Robert Boyd (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 224.

⁹²⁴ "Diary of Rev. Jason Lee," *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 17, no. 2 (1916): 139. Several years later, Asa Smith was still remarking that the Nez Perce "seem to wish to make the stations their trading posts." Asa Bowen Smith to David Greene, Kamiah, Oregon Territory, 31 August 1840, in *The Diaries and Letters of Henry H. Spalding and Asa Bowen Smith relating to the Nez Perce Mission, 1838-1842*, ed. Clifford Drury (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1958), 151.

⁹²⁵ Josephy, *The Nez Perce Indians*, 157.

⁹²⁶ Ruby and Brown, *The Spokane Indians*, 78.

frequently refer to Nez Perce chiefs using the biblical trope of the "Pharisee," he also out-rightly accused them of wanting nothing but temporal gain.⁹²⁷ "Even now," he exclaimed, "they seem to have an idea that all these things [ploughs, livestock, crops, houses, and so on] are included in the commission of Christ to his disciples & on one occasion when told that Christ sent forth his disciples without any thing, one chief replied, 'God is stingy.'"⁹²⁸ Moreover, Smith argued that fur trade competition was the culprit, citing that these "people had come in contact with the Americans in the mountains from whom they had rec'd more for their beaver than they had from the H.B.C., & this had raised in them a hope of gain from [American] missionaries."⁹²⁹ Whitman echoed this theory when he wrote that the Cayuse wanted him to become "an opposition trader among them," who would allow them to fetch "large[r] prices for their beaver and horses."⁹³⁰

While it is clear Columbia natives used missionaries (and what missionaries offered) to advance their own longstanding projects, what many encountered at the stations left them with little to exploit.⁹³¹ Historian Robert Berkhofer reminds us that, regardless of the geographical context, "missionaries had to arrange for 'something of a comfortable habitation'...to lure the Indians to settle," which was a tall task for Oregon missionaries who found themselves routinely

⁹²⁷ Smith to Greene, 27 August 1839, 107. Similarly, Narcissa Whitman wrote of the Nez Perce that "they are rich, especially in horses, and consequently haughty and insolent." Narcissa Whitman to Brother, Waskopum, March 31, 1843, in *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1847* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1996), 157.

⁹²⁸ Smith to Greene, 3 September 1840, 176.

⁹²⁹ Smith to Greene, 27 August 1839, 107.

⁹³⁰ Whitman Mission Correspondence.

⁹³¹ In his correspondence Smith noted that the chiefs "desire instruction [but] only that they may appear wise & gain influence among their people." Smith to Greene, 6 February 1840, 125. Smith came to the conclusion that "these Indians are often very shrewd & manage well with strangers to take advantage of them." *Ibid.*, 127. As an example, Smith also offered his reader, Secretary David Green, a hypothetical situation in which an Indian offers the missionary a horse as a gift, but "expects twice as much from me, at least, as tho' he had sold me the horse & he will come at a future time & ask me for whatever he wants." *Ibid.*

undersupplied.⁹³² In 1838, Perkins lamented to his wife that the mission station under his care had few items for exchange, including tools. "What fools they must think we are," he wrote, "to come here to teach them to work, and not a tool to put into their hands, even when they desire to purchase them honorably!"⁹³³ Labor was another point of discontent. According to Narcissa, local natives believed the missions were an extension of the region's slave trade. In her words, "they are so impressed with the idea that all who work are slaves and inferior persons, that the moment they hear of their children doing the least thing they are panic-stricken and make trouble."⁹³⁴ One Methodist missionary added that Northwest Indians "consider everything that has the appearance of work, that does not yield an immediate visible profit, as slavery; hence, it is disgraceful, in their estimation, to labour."⁹³⁵ Similarly, Spalding was dumbfounded at the accusations that he made slaves of natives by forcing them to "work for the property they received instead of my supplying them with all their clothing & provisions."⁹³⁶

Spalding's Lapwai mission was a particularly contentious place. He was in no mood to be philanthropic and nearby natives were in no mood to work for little or no compensation. The situation reached a climax when on the 14th and 16th of March, 1839, local leaders refused to

⁹³² Robert F. Berkhofer, *Salvation and the Savage: An Analysis of the Protestant Missions and American Indian Response, 1787-1862* (Lexington: University Kentucky Press, 1965), 73.

⁹³³ Perkins to Elvira, 4 April 1838, 231-232.

⁹³⁴ Whitman to Parents, 11 April 1838, 57.

⁹³⁵ Lee and Frost, *Ten Years*, 311.

⁹³⁶ Drury, *The Diaries and Letters*, 309. Spalding, like most of his contemporaries, had very little understanding of indigenous notions of gift giving and reciprocal exchange. Indeed, the literature is rife with examples, many of which revolve around access to agricultural produce. According to Perkins, when the "potatoes, corn, & other vegetables" had been gathered, the Indians would "hang around for days, & weeks, sometimes, just to beg." Journal of Henry Perkins, 291. As Cebula reminds us, "the white concept of ownership of crops seemed foreign to a people accustomed to helping themselves to the bounties of the earth." Cebula, *Plateau Indians*, 100. This is why one Sabbath when Elkanah Walker exhorted his native audience to no steal like the Egyptians and thus escape the "awful judgment [that] would fall upon them," they "looked strangely at [him]." Drury, *Nine Years with the Spokane Indians*, 288.

allow their people to work at the station until certain demands were met regarding payment.

Reminiscent of the indigenous strategies of implemented by "home guards," Spalding wrote in his diary on these days that "the Chiefs hold out" and the "Chiefs hold out still."⁹³⁷ As one who was himself known for being obstinate, Spalding countered by taking away the only commodity he could. According to Smith, it was reported that the missionary refused to "have worship with the people for several days,...in order to bring them to his terms."⁹³⁸

Despite such episodes, there was consistent trade between missionaries and natives. In fact, Protestants in the Northwest played an integral role (along with the HBC and other fur traders) in reshaping the material culture of indigenous peoples throughout the region. They helped introduce goods such as livestock and crops, contributed to changes in native clothing and the tools which they used, and helped supply commodities such as guns, ammunition, and blankets.⁹³⁹ Indeed, exchange (in one form or another) was a daily exercise between the two parties. Narcissa summed it up best when she wrote to her siblings that "the Indians do us many favours...and get as many from us in return."⁹⁴⁰

Food and other perishable goods switched hands in many of these transactions. Perkins recalled one exchange with Wascopam natives, in which he traded clothes for Salmon, while his fellow Methodist missionary, John Frost, came across several Indians during his travels throughout the region, who offered he and his companions a "few wurtle berries for which [they]

⁹³⁷ Drury, *The Diaries and Letters*, 258.

⁹³⁸ Smith to Greene, 3 September 1840, 173.

⁹³⁹ Boyd, *People of the Dalles*, 144-158.

⁹⁴⁰ Narcissa Whitman to Jane and Edward, Waiilatpu, 1 March 1842, in *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1847* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1996), 128.

gave them a little ammunition and tobacco."⁹⁴¹ Specially, tobacco, with its significance in indigenous spirituality, served as a useful currency for missionaries who needed to reimburse natives for goods or services. In one instance, after his Hawaiian worker narrowly saved him from being beaten by an outraged Indian, Spalding demanded of the chiefs that they admit their kinsman was wrong in disobeying him, which they did. As Smith wrote, "when the subject ended...Mr. Sp gave them a piece of tobacco to smoke together in token of friendship. Thus ended the affair, the chiefs seeming well paid for their trouble by the tobacco."⁹⁴²

Tools were equally important in the mission economy. In an 1845 letter, Whitman informed Greene that "ploughs are in great demand," and added that he "sold even [his] last cast plough from the States – as they are the ones preferred by the Indians."⁹⁴³ He went on to explain that a "horse is given for a plough and the horses are sold for from ten to fifteen dollars to meet expenses."⁹⁴⁴ In a letter to the American Board in Boston, Whitman proudly exclaimed that "we are turning our hoes into horses which are to be sent into the lower Columbia & exchanged for iron which will be made into hoes again for the same purpose & in this way we hope to supply the nation in a few years with means of cultivating their lands."⁹⁴⁵

Whitman also trafficked in livestock. He was known to purchase cattle from Northern California and sell them "mostly to Indians," often, but not always, for horses.⁹⁴⁶ He also dealt

⁹⁴¹ Perkins to Elvira, 4 April 1838, 231.; Nellie B. Pipes, ed., "Journal of John H. Frost, 1840-43," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (1934): 250.

⁹⁴² Smith to Greene, 3 September 3, 1840, 174.

⁹⁴³ Whitman Mission Correspondence.

⁹⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁴⁶ Ibid. According to Boyd, prestige was one of the motivating factors for natives to acquire cattle in the first place. He writes that "certain scarce commodities [such as cattle and horses], held in large quantities, had social

in sheep. In an 1843 letter, he talked about sheep as yet another currency in the local economy, arguing that they are "more important to Oregon's interests than soldiers....We want to get sheep...for Indians instead of money for their lands."⁹⁴⁷ The Pacific Northwest certainly provided a suitable climate for raising sheep, as evinced by Whitman's flock which he had "imported from the Sandwich Islands [back] in 1838" and to his delight "increased one hundred and twenty-five per cent in eight years."⁹⁴⁸

Along these same channels, missionaries provided their principal product of Christian instruction, which was, in the words of Boyd, a "seductive" commodity for many natives.⁹⁴⁹ The core of their teachings focused on the notion of resurrection or rebirth, which would have had great appeal to indigenous communities struggling with disease and rapid depopulation.⁹⁵⁰ However, theological concepts were not nearly as alluring as the anecdotes of the biblical text. When it came to Old Testament tales in particular, Narcissa mentioned that the Walla Walla "will repeat [them] day after day and night after night, as if their salvation depended upon it,"

value," and added that "such commodities might also be used as working capital to obtain other goods [of which natives used horses on a routine basis]." Boyd, *People of the Dalles*, 146.

⁹⁴⁷ Marcus Whitman to Brother Galusha, Shawnee Mission, 28 May 1843, in *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1847* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1996), 161. By the mid 1840s, mission stations such as the Whitman's were manufacturing wool and teaching local natives how to do the same. Whitman Mission Correspondence.

⁹⁴⁸ Marcus Whitman to Rev. L. P. Judson, Waiilatpu, November 5, 1846, in *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1847* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1996), 216.

⁹⁴⁹ Boyd, *People of the Dalles*, 215.

⁹⁵⁰ As a caveat, not all elements of traditional Christianity theology were attractive. In a letter to Green, written in August of 1839, Smith noted that "as long as they [Nez Perce] listened to the interesting historical parts of the bible, they were pleased, but the great truth that all are under condemnation & exposed to the penalty of the law while in their present situation, is very offensive to them." Smith to Greene, 27 August 1839, 108. Narcissa even claimed that the Indians threatened her husband with whipping or with the destruction of their crops if he did not "talk good talk," or provide religious instruction that focused not on theological concepts such as condemnation and atonement, but on biblical stories that apparently enamored many them. Narcissa Whitman to Father, Waiilatpu, W. W. River, Oregon Territory, 10 October 1840, in *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1847* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1996), 102. According to Narcissa, the natives did not like to hear talk of their sins or hell and sometimes reacted violently toward it. Many viewed such talk as insulting and took offense.

while Smith added that those who listen most intently to the biblical narrative were the chiefs "in order that they may remember what is said so as to rehearse it afterwards in their lodges."⁹⁵¹

Based on this data, it seems that indigenous communities throughout at least the Columbia Plateau incorporated, with ease, imported stories from the Bible into their traditional frameworks of oral transmission and the sacredness of the spoken word.

They also seemed to integrate such teachings into their modes and networks of exchange. In his diary, Jason Lee remembered one encounter he had with "two Indians" who "came to [his] tent...and told [him] they wanted to give [him] two horses."⁹⁵² He continued:

Being suspicious that it was their intention to pursue the course which the traders say they generally do to give a horse and then require more than its value in good that they want, I therefore told them that if they gave me horses I had very little to give them in return and they replied that they wanted nothing in return. I then told them that I would take them.⁹⁵³

Lee's claim that the natives wanted "nothing in return" is a bit misleading. They were, in all likelihood, wanting to trade those commodities for another commodity, that of religious knowledge. In fact, the very next day, Lee wrote again stating that two more Indians "came and presented me with two beautiful wite [sic] horses," and added that "they presented them because we are Missionaries."⁹⁵⁴ Lee's colleague, Perkins, had a similar experience. On his way to the future site of his Dalles mission, he encountered several Wascopam Indians who were, "going with dry salmon and acorns to the Fort to trade."⁹⁵⁵ He spoke with a chief by the name of

⁹⁵¹ Narcissa Whitman to Father, Waillatpu, 30 April 1840, in *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1847* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1996), 92.; Smith to Greene, 31 August 1840, 151.

⁹⁵² "Diary of Reverend Jason Lee," 242.

⁹⁵³ Ibid.

⁹⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵⁵ Perkins to Elvira, 21 March 1838, 223.

Wamcutta who expressed his excitement for the presence of missionaries in the region and "offered to accompany" Perkins the rest of the way and even offered to "build houses" in exchange for Christian instruction.⁹⁵⁶

Within these same networks also circulated religious goods of a more tangible variety. While many American missionaries decried the use of material objects in the conversion techniques of their Catholic counterparts, they also engaged in the practice, if for no other reason than to compete in the market.⁹⁵⁷ Spalding freely distributed pictures of biblical scenes, painted by his wife Eliza, to chiefs so that they may "carry it away with them in order to instruct the people from them."⁹⁵⁸ It was even reported that Spalding "sold these paintings for a horse." Apparently, he "gave a chief one of these paintings containing a representation of Christ under various circumstances, & the chief in return presented Mr. Sp with a horse which was accepted."⁹⁵⁹ Robert Boyd argues that the Spaldings' paintings "carried long distances, must have been effective," while Larry Cebula adds that they "were presented to Indians and circulated along trade routes as valued items."⁹⁶⁰

Both Methodist and ABCFM missionaries also distributed versions of the Protestant Ladder. In the early 1840s, Catholic missionary F. N. Blanchet created a mnemonic device meant to guide Indians through the important steps in biblical and church history. Witnessing the popularization of this "Catholic Ladder" in indigenous circles, Daniel Lee and the Spaldings

⁹⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁵⁷ At one time Smith witnessed an Indian hold a piece of paper with Christ's name written on it "with all the apparent affection of a mother embracing a darling child." Smith despised such "superstition," which, in his mind, reflected the "blind adoration of a Catholic." Smith to Greene, 6 February 1840, 128.

⁹⁵⁸ Smith to Greene, 3 September 1840, 170. Smith attacked Spalding's method of using paintings as a means to convey biblical stories. In his opinion, the Indians "filled up the picture from their own imaginations & in this way they have acquired a vast amount of error." Smith to Greene, 6 February 1840, 128.

⁹⁵⁹ Smith to Greene, 3 September 1840, 170.

⁹⁶⁰ Boyd, *People of the Dalles*, 187.; Cebula, *Plateau Indians*, 106.

each created their own Protestant renditions. The Spaldings' included not only scenes from biblical and church history, but also elements of New Testament theology (through the character of the Apostle Paul) and were much more anti-Catholic than the Catholic Ladders were anti-Protestant.⁹⁶¹ There was a scene in the upper left of the document that depicted a Jesuit priest falling into the clutches of demons, meant to signify the final end of all who were baptized by the Catholic missionaries and ultimately the final end of the Roman Church. Protestants on the other hand were depicted as rejoicing in persecution and shown to be lifted up into the clouds where a resurrected Jesus (whose face looked strangely similar to the depiction of Martin Luther below) greeted them with open arms. As Josephy proposes, Spalding, himself, "was sometimes surprised to learn how widely [his ladders] had circulated."⁹⁶² And, similar to Eliza's paintings, the information conveyed in the documents "worked their way into oral traditions and have been preserved, in the local vernaculars, in several myths and folklore collections."⁹⁶³

Beyond its cross-cultural movement, the effects of the Oregon mission economy were also far-reaching in terms of geography. Missionaries in the field were just one part of a much larger enterprise that linked local actors to a wider, trans-oceanic and trans-continental community. To speak of American evangelical activity along the banks of the Columbia is to speak of a hemispheric operation.

⁹⁶¹ Speaking on the evolution of ladders in the Pacific Northwest during the 1840s, historian Albert Furtwangler write that "the earliest devices may have been broadly pictorial, but the ladders became increasing literary, containing stylized pictures tightly intertwined with legends and captions." Albert Furtwangler, *Bring Indians to the Book* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 139. He adds that they "were not just held up to catch the eye," which they most certainly would have, but "were [also] meant to be read, or retraced with the recollections of words and phrases." Ibid. The Spaldings never had their Protestant Ladder printed but instead Eliza reproduced each copy "by hand, using ink, lampblack, and berry dyes." Cebula, *Plateau Indians*, 115. The dimensions of the original Protestant Ladder created by Henry and Eliza Spalding was 6' x 2.' Furtwangler, *Bringing Indians*, 146.

⁹⁶² Josephy, *The Nez Perce Indians*, 159.

⁹⁶³ Boyd, *People of the Dalles*, 214.

**"We are So Kindly Remembered":
American Protestant Missionaries and their Trans-Regional Connections**

The American mission economy in the Pacific Northwest drew from an intricate web of associations that transcended local boundaries. The leading players in these trans-regional networks were the sponsoring missionary organizations themselves. In the words of historian C. L. Higham, "Nineteenth-century...American missionaries were like cogs in a large machine. While they pursued the missionary societies' goals, the missionary societies acted as liaisons with the congregations and governments, and supplied missionaries with policies, financial and spiritual support, a plan for conversion, and structure for communication."⁹⁶⁴ To use an anatomical metaphor, they served as the heart of the missionary body, pumping vital elements to its extremities, keeping each alive and properly functioning.

Among these "vital elements" was monetary support. Receiving a steady flow of funding from back east was crucial to the survival (let alone success) of the missionary enterprise.⁹⁶⁵ This, however, was not always easy, especially for larger societies such as the ABCFM or the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church who often found themselves spread quite thin, having taken on the responsibility of supporting mission stations not only domestically but abroad. This was one of the primary reasons why the ABCFM in particular was reluctant to establish a mission in the Pacific Northwest. In their eyes, such a venture would "require

⁹⁶⁴ C. L. Higham, *Noble, Wretched, & Redeemable: Protestant Missionaries to the Indians in Canada and the United States, 1820-1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 29. Higham adds that the structure of the large missionary societies such as the ABCFM and the Methodist Missionary Society were "run by boards consisting of ministers, businessmen, and politicians who oversaw the many activities of the organization." Ibid., 16. These "boards set policy, negotiated with the governments in their mission areas, sponsored publications, and directed fund-raising." Ibid.

⁹⁶⁵ Narcissa Whitman argued that future missionaries to the region must be associated with the American Board in Boston. Without such support they could do nothing but devote their time to survival and not be able to perform any missionary labors. "In this country," she concluded, "it is as much as we can do to take care of ourselves if we have no help" or support from the East. Narcissa Whitman to Jane, Weiletpoo, Oregon Territory, 17 May 1842, in *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1847* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1996), 112.

extensive fund-raising from the Christian citizenry of the Northeast," and that "such donations needed a tremendous spark." Fortunately, such a "spark" came in the form of the "Macedonian Call."⁹⁶⁶ But even faced with such an impressive demand, the Board offered only partial support to its agents in the field. According to Clifford Drury, ABCFM missionaries journeyed to the Pacific Northwest "without the promise of a salary. The Board," he added, "had merely assured them that it would pay travel and necessary living expenses."⁹⁶⁷ Furthermore, "nothing was said about educational grants for children, furlough allowances, or retirements benefits...[Instead] their laurels would be redeemed lives."⁹⁶⁸

This is not to say that sponsoring societies were parsimonious. In the earliest stages of the Methodist mission, the Methodist Episcopal Church appropriated \$3,000 "to be drawn for as occasion may require, and the expenditures were left to the Rev. Jason Lee,...[but] with the advice and counsel of a committee appointed for that purpose."⁹⁶⁹ Evidently the "Treasurer was authorized to place funds in the hands of the Treasurer of the Wesleyan Methodist Mission [Society] of London, subject to the order of Rev. Jason Lee or the Superintendent of the Mission."⁹⁷⁰ Like the ABCFM, Methodists regularly paid for the expenditures of their missionaries by invoice from the London headquarters of the HBC.

Aside from monetary support, missionary societies in the east also exported material

⁹⁶⁶ Gray Whaley, *Oregon and the Collapse of the Illahee*, 104-105.

⁹⁶⁷ In addition to the Board itself, ABCFM missionaries such as Marcus Whitman received financial support from a variety of sources. Even before his trek to the Pacific Northwest he had received direct donations from individuals and congregations in Cincinnati, Ohio and Erie, Pennsylvania. Whitman Mission Correspondence.

⁹⁶⁸ Drury, *The Diaries and Letters*, 89. In his journal Samuel Parker lamented "how little of the faith, and love, and liberality of the church is invested in the most profitable of all enterprises, the conversion of the world." Parker, *Journal of an Exploring Tour*, 292.

⁹⁶⁹ Robert M. Gatke, "A Document of Mission History, 1833-1843," *Oregon Historical Society* 36 (March, 1935): 74.

⁹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 75.

goods to the Columbia - at least those goods that did not interfere with the HBC's commercial interests. As an example of this generosity, Narcissa Whitman wrote to her mother in 1840 stating that "the Board are constantly sending us books and papers and boxes of clothing" and that "there are two barrels now at [Fort] Vancouver for us."⁹⁷¹ Likewise, in his diary, Henry Spalding reported receiving packs from the American Board in Boston comprised of books, clothing, kitchen ware, and other goods.⁹⁷² The Board was in the habit of collecting these materials from congregational donors throughout New England and shipping them to the missionaries who were mostly grateful for the assistance. Narcissa commented that receiving such items "save[d] so much of my time" for her missionary labors of "teaching and writing."⁹⁷³ Smith, known for his incessant complaining, was less pleased. In fact, in a letter to the Secretary of the Board, David Greene, the missionary spoke of the dangers of sending large loads of clothing in particular. He wrote,

It is to be hoped that friends will not make clothing & send out for the Indians. Some clothing has come to me for this purpose. To give it to them would be extremely bad policy & do injury instead of good. It is not of a suitable kind also. Should any be prepared in the future, it would be far better than it should be stopped at the Missionary House [Boston] than that it come here. Should the Indians know that clothing is sent for them & they are in the habit of finding out many things which they ought not, they would suppose every thing sent to the mission was for them & might tear our houses down over our heads unless free distribution was made.⁹⁷⁴

⁹⁷¹ Narcissa Whitman to Mother, Waillatpu, W. W. River, Oregon Territory, 9 October 1840, in *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1847* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1996), 97.

⁹⁷² Drury, *The Diaries and Letters*, 282.

⁹⁷³ Whitman to Parents, 11 April 1838, 58.

⁹⁷⁴ Smith to Greene, 31 August 1840, 154. Similarly, in an 1836 letter to Greene, Spalding request that the Board not send "clothing or grains" but instead "send materials for a saw mill & grst mill books." Whitman Mission Correspondence.

Evidently, there was some confusion among Plateau natives regarding the missionaries' property. In the Indians' perspective, the clothing, houses, crops, and livestock of the mission stations were a sign of great wealth, which demanded charitable giving. However, the missionaries viewed themselves as not truly possessing any of that which was entrusted to them by the Board and thus were hesitant to freely hand out goods.⁹⁷⁵

Support from missionary societies also came in the form of lay personnel. In 1836 Spalding warned the American Board that if more laborers do not tend to the mission field of Oregon, "the mighty harvest must sink ungathered into the earth."⁹⁷⁶ Indeed, for missionaries such as Spalding the Indians of the far Northwest were, like all natives, a vanishing breed. If they were to become Christianized, it needed to happen soon, and if no ministers were willing to heed the call, then Whitman (alongside his colleague), urged the Board to send blacksmiths, farmers, mechanics, teachers, and laymen. He argued that it is "much better for laymen to come than none at all," for at least they could assist in the day-to-day operations of the mission, effectively freeing the missionaries to focus exclusively on their language studies and ultimately on rescuing the "savage" soul from eternal damnation.⁹⁷⁷

In exchange for its financial and material support, missionary societies required that their agents in the field report back regularly, which many did officially on an annual basis. For example, in the Fall of 1840, Smith - who acted as scribe for the annual business meeting - sent to the American Board in Boston the "Annual Report from the Mission," which included data such as the number baptized, the number in attendance for Sabbath worship, number of attendees

⁹⁷⁵ In an 1841 letter to her parents, Narcissa noted that "not a thing we possessed was our own," but entrusted to them by the Board. Narcissa Whitman to Parents, Weiletpoo, Oregon Territory, 6 October 1841, in *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1847* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1996), 117.

⁹⁷⁶ Whitman Mission Correspondence.

⁹⁷⁷ Ibid.

at the mission schools, how much land had been cultivated and the quality of crops, a brief inventory of livestock and other goods, the total amount (in pounds) of the previous year's expenses, building projects, printing projects, linguistic projects, and lists of the theological concepts conveyed to local natives in sermons throughout the year.⁹⁷⁸ Individual reports would often include expenditures relating to clothing, bedding, groceries, furniture, boxes for freight, travel expenses, wages for hired hands, and so on.⁹⁷⁹

In contrast, unofficial reporting, which missionaries sent via private correspondence throughout the year, often amounted to little more than biased opinions mixed with mean-spirited gossip. Smith was the most persistent in this activity. Not only did he charge his colleagues, especially Spalding, with misappropriating the Board's funds for imprudent projects and (more insidiously) for his own fiscal gain, the missionary reported to the Secretary of the Board on numerous occasions that the Oregon mission was not worth the cost.⁹⁸⁰ He argued that it had been "established & prosecuted thus far at great expense to the Board, & for a mere handful of people."⁹⁸¹ He added that "by the time this reaches you [speaking to Greene], this mission will have cost the Board not less than \$17,000 (the expense is already incurred), not less \$12,000 of which must be considered as belonging to the Nez Perce mission, making an expense of at least four dollars to each individual of the whole tribe."⁹⁸² In Smith's mind "the same array of means,

⁹⁷⁸ Asa Bowen Smith to David Greene, Kamiah, Oregon, 28 September 1840, in *The Diaries and Letters of Henry H. Spalding and Asa Bowen Smith relating to the Nez Perce Mission, 1838-1842*, ed. Clifford Drury (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1958), 181-186.

⁹⁷⁹ Smith to the Prudential Committee, 29 April 1839, 96.

⁹⁸⁰ Specifically, Smith informed the Board that the horses Spalding intended to purchase from local natives were the property of the Board and according to Smith, his reply was, "I think they will never come to get the property." Smith to Greene, 3 September 1840, 161.

⁹⁸¹ Smith to Greene, 6 February 1840, 140.

⁹⁸² Ibid.

the same machinery is necessary here for 3,000, as needed for the millions of Siam, or of China."⁹⁸³ Later that same year, he recommended that if the ABCFM's financial situation deteriorate further, it should "abandon some of the least important & least promising fields, that those missions which are now in successful operation may be prosecuted without further embarrassment."⁹⁸⁴ Smith never really wanted to labor in Oregon (he initially wanted to travel to Asia) and his impromptu reports to the Board reflected his eagerness leave.

On the other side of the spectrum, there were some missionaries (both ABCFM and Methodist) who took it upon themselves to portray the Oregon missions in a favorable light, even if it meant the use of a little hyperbole. As Higham reminds us, "the missionary societies...placed pressure on [their missionaries] to generate funds from their work to support other missions."⁹⁸⁵ This meant consistently reporting on the supposed successes of the mission so as to appear as profitable a venture as possible in the eyes of potential investors. The Methodist mission in Oregon was especially adept at this type of itinerating. Whether it was true or not, Lee and others frequently reported on the "extraordinary success of the Gospel" among the indigenous peoples - news which had the capability "to give a new impulse to the prayers and liberality of [the] entire church fellowship."⁹⁸⁶ Those in the east who prayed and especially those who gave "inspired" a sense that "every dollar expended or demanded for [the mission's support

⁹⁸³ Ibid., 141. Striking a similar tone, Methodist missionary John Frost wrote in the journal that "it is my sincere conviction that the money that is being expended in sustaining several of us in this field under present circumstances and in view of future prospects, might and ought to be expended to better purpose elsewhere." Pipes, "Journal of John H. Frost," 359.

⁹⁸⁴ Smith to Greene, 31 August 1840, 153.

⁹⁸⁵ Higham, *Noble, Wretched, & Redeemable*, 18.

⁹⁸⁶ Carey, "Methodist Annual Reports," 318.

would] soon be refunded into [the] treasury as the fruit of [their] appeals in its behalf."⁹⁸⁷

Methodist missionaries even used the "camp meeting" as an imported strategy to increase conversion rates.⁹⁸⁸ According to reports, these meetings sparked several religious revivals including the Willamette Revival of 1838-1839 and the Wascopam Revival the following year. Daniel Lee referred to latter as the "work of God...at the Dalls," and in his account, "more than half the number [of those attending] gave evidence of a happy change."⁹⁸⁹ He observed that "their agitated hearts felt an unknown peace, a joyful smile sat on their faces, and their lips praised the name of Jesus."⁹⁹⁰ Perkins description of the revival was reprinted in the *Christian Advocate and Journal* in 1840 with the following preface: "Let it be remembered...that funds are much needed just now to enable the society to prosecute its evangelizing plans as extensively and vigorously as the pressing wants of the heathen demand."⁹⁹¹ Such glowing reports from the field certainly made Jason Lee's job easier when he returned east to raise funds. According to fellow Methodist missionary Gustavus Hines, "crowds thronged [and]...liberal collections were taken up for the Oregon mission in almost every place, and there, with the appropriations of the Board for the purchase of goods, amounted to forty thousand dollars."⁹⁹²

⁹⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸⁸ They also found success in other performances. The Methodists, unlike the missionaries of the ABCFM, celebrated Christmas with communal gatherings that bore a striking resemblance to the kinds of religious gatherings participated in by middle Columbia natives during mid-winter. Boyd, *People of the Dalles*, 210.

⁹⁸⁹ Lee and Frost, *Ten Years*, 184.

⁹⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹⁹¹ Henry Perkins, "Wonderful Work of God among the Indians of the Oregon Territory," in *People of the Dalles, The Indians of Wascopam Mission: A Historical Ethnography Based on the Papers of the Methodist Missionaries*, by Robert Boyd (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 243.

⁹⁹² Hines, *A Voyage Around the World*, 37. According to historian Alvin Josephy, the Boston trader Nathaniel Wyeth "made personal appearances with Lee, helping him raise money for the missionary effort." Josephy, *The Nez Perce Indians*, 120. Wyeth introduced audiences to a young native whose head had been flattened for esthetics. The appearance of the lad "moved audiences to wondrous gasps and opened their pocketbooks for Lee's mission." Ibid., 121.

ABCFM missionaries in the Columbia also engaged in this kind of self-promoting. In 1840, Spalding and Whitman reported baptizing several natives into the newly-formed Presbyterian Church in Oregon to the suspicion of Smith who accused the two of admitting these members clandestinely so as to demonstrate quantitative progress.⁹⁹³ In his opinion, none of the natives in question were "prepared for admission to the church."⁹⁹⁴ Despite Smith's best efforts to label the Oregon mission a failure, its chief promoters - namely Whitman and Spalding - remained unbowed in their opinion that "our situation here [has] enough for the cause of Christianity and civilization to more than compensate for all the labour and expense involved."⁹⁹⁵

By and large, the need for missionaries to exhibit success had its roots in a scarcity of funds. According to Higham, "as...missionaries consistently failed to meet the goals of the missionary societies, the missionary societies reduced funding, staffing, and support."⁹⁹⁶ Meanwhile, they increased these sources to the continuously successful missions of Africa,

⁹⁹³ Smith warned Secretary Greene against false advertising to those in the east, something which he himself fell victim to after reading the testimonial of none other than Spalding in an 1837 edition of the *Missionary Herald* (something that Smith clearly resented). He wrote: I feel it to be of immense importance for missionaries to be extremely careful what they write on first entering their field of labor. It is easy for any one of an excitable temperament & vivid imagination to write a most flattering account on first entering the missionary field, especially where the people appear well disposed, & raise the expectations of Christians at home to the very highest pitch, especially that portion who are not the most discerning, but such expectations are raised only to be disappointed. Smith to Greene, 6 February 1840, 126.

⁹⁹⁴ Ibid., 143. Smith made it clear to Greene what, in his mind, constituted a "truly" converted Indian. He wrote, "evidence of regeneration should be very clear & decisive among this people [Nez Perce] from the fact that they make great religious pretenses & we are extremely liable to be deceived in their characters unless we watch them closely." Ibid.

⁹⁹⁵ Whitman Mission Correspondence.

⁹⁹⁶ Higham adds that as missionary societies began to cut funds from missionaries working among native peoples in the middle part of the nineteenth century, these missionaries found themselves in a financial crisis that could only be solved by explaining their lack of successes to those in the general public through images such as the "wretched Indian," which was in his words, "the picture of an economically struggling, dirty male Indian prone to theft, drunkenness, and wife abuse." Higham, *Noble, Wretched, & Redeemable*, 124. By "declaring the natives to be wretched and highlighting their faults and the damage done to them by morally lax whites, missionaries produced an explanation for the slow pace of their work." Ibid., 127. Others made clear that a lack of support itself was the reason for slow progress. In an 1842 letter, Narcissa wrote that if the missionary is expected to labour and toil "without a single Aaron or Hur to stay up his hand, what slow progress must he make, if any at all." Whitman to Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Allen, Cuba, Christian Friends, 23 August 1842, 136.

India, and China."⁹⁹⁷ Domestic missionaries in the mid-nineteenth century found themselves embroiled in a stiff, global contest over resources with missionaries sponsored by the same organization and proving their continued value to the promotion of the gospel and western civilization became the only means of staying competitive.⁹⁹⁸

Just as important as securing financial support was keeping alive the spiritual exertions of those back home. Prayer in particular became quite the commodity. Narcissa reminded her readers in an 1842 letter that "those of us who are now on the ground need your prayers eminently," and two years prior confessed to her mother that "we need the prayers of our Christian friends at home and I trust we have them. Could they know just how we are situated and all our discouragement I know they would pray more ardently for us and more importunately for us."⁹⁹⁹ Mr. Whitman also shared this sentiment. It was not unusual for him to end letters by expressing his "desire for the prayers of our patrons."¹⁰⁰⁰

This "economy of prayer" had been a staple of the missionary enterprise for some time. According to historian Laura Stevens such an economy enveloped much of the Atlantic World in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. She writes that missionaries' writings "marked prayer as crucial contributions, at least as important as financial ones," and that "prayer and money appear in these texts within parallel systems of desire and exchange."¹⁰⁰¹ For those not in the

⁹⁹⁷ Higham, *Noble, Wretched, & Redeemable*, 106.

⁹⁹⁸ In terms of promoting civilization, one report on the Methodist mission in Oregon read that it promises "great usefulness to the rising colony in that part of the country, and therefore demands the vigorous support of the society." Carey, "Methodist Annual Reports," 310.

⁹⁹⁹ Whitman to Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Allen, Cuba, Christian Friends, 23 August 1842, 136.; Whitman to Mother, 2 May 1840, 94.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Whitman Mission Correspondence.

¹⁰⁰¹ Laura M. Stevens, *The Poor Indians: British Missionaries, Native Americans, and Colonial Sensibility* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 103.

field, Stevens suggests that the act of praying "constituted a form of labor that connected distant spectators with participants, making them feel invested in missionary work."¹⁰⁰² Little had changed a century later when Oregon missionaries corresponded with friends, family, and fellow believers, asking for their spiritual support.

Sending and receiving letters was especially critical. "From requesting funds to reporting conversions," writes historian Laura Stevens, "these documents provided channels for information exchange between organizations, their supporters, and their employees."¹⁰⁰³ She adds that letters "offered a discursive mode through which colonial missionaries and their metropolitan supporters could develop a...network of people connected by their desire to save American Indian souls."¹⁰⁰⁴ They also facilitated the growth of a trans-regional or even global network among missionaries themselves. Despite any rivalry, Higham writes that missionaries "communicated with each other across denominational and national lines, sharing stories, impressions, and knowledge about native groups."¹⁰⁰⁵ Letters, like books and periodicals, created a virtual community among American evangelical workers and supporters alike.¹⁰⁰⁶

Unfortunately for those stationed in the Pacific Northwest, sending and receiving letters

¹⁰⁰² Ibid., 103-104.

¹⁰⁰³ Ibid., 62.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Ibid., 82.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Higham, *Noble, Wretched, & Redeemable*, 14. For example, Asa Smith kept in correspondence with his brother who was serving as a missionary in South Africa. Asa Bowen Smith to Elkanah Walker, Kamiah, 27 April 1840, in *The Diaries and Letters of Henry H. Spalding and Asa Bowen Smith relating to the Nez Perce Mission, 1838-1842*, ed. Clifford Drury (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1958), 191. Also, in 1838 the Oregon missionaries of the ABCFM resolved in their annual business meeting that "that a committee be appointed to correspond with the Mission of the Board & those under direction of other denominations." Drury, *The Diaries and Letters*, 90. For the regions, Cushing Eells was given Africa; Elkanah Walker, Western Asia; Asa Smith, Southern Asia; William Gray, Nestoria; Henry Spalding, The Sandwich Islands & Red River; and Marcus Whitman, Missions in the Indian Country.

¹⁰⁰⁶ See Candy Gunther Brown, *The Word in the World: Evangelical Writing, Publishing, and Reading in America, 1789-1880* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

was not always reliable. According to Drury "one of the major complicating factors which contributed to the difficulties faced by the members of the Oregon Mission of the American Board was the long delays occasioned in the transmission of mails."¹⁰⁰⁷ The standard time of delivery via the HBC's overland Express was seven months (much quicker than the sea route). What's more, the time it would take a letter to travel from Oregon to Boston was the same as it would take to travel from Boston to Oregon. In the words of Drury, "it was possible for a full two years to elapse before the missionaries in Oregon could receive an answer to a question or advice on a problem."¹⁰⁰⁸ By then the issue had long been resolved. For example, in February of 1842, the American Board "dismissed Spalding, closed the Wailaptu and Lapwai stations,...ordered the Whitmans to move to Tshimakain" and "advised" William Gray to return home, along with Smith on account of his wife who remained unwell, all in response to Smith's scathing accusations written to Secretary Greene in the winter of 1840.¹⁰⁰⁹ By the time the missionaries received their new orders, the conflicts had been mostly resolved. The Smiths were on their way to Hawaii and the Spaldings' Lapwai mission continued to be the most successful. Whitman had no other choice but to return east in 1842 to advise the Board on the matter in person and hopefully prevent the collapse of the ABCFM presence in the region.

Methodists also had difficulties. Like the ABCFM, the vast distance between the Missionary Board of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Columbia limited the organization's ability to legislate. One report read that "the extreme distance of the mission from the seat of the Society operations, the long intervals between our dispatches, and sometimes the

¹⁰⁰⁷ Drury, *The Diaries and Letters*, 199.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Ibid., 18.

conflicting statements of the missionaries, rendered it impossible even for the Board to judge...the facts."¹⁰¹⁰ In the Willamette Valley, Jason Lee had become frustrated with the "board's inattention to regularity in correspondence," and remained perplexed as to why they refused to use the HBC's overland Express to send letters, choosing instead to send them by sea.¹⁰¹¹ This lack of open communication between the two parties, or more specifically the clear absence of annual fiscal reports, led to mounting fears that the Oregon mission was being "injudiciously managed" by Lee, whom the Board suspected of engaging in personal speculation with the Society's funds.¹⁰¹² Lee was soon replaced and the mission overhauled.¹⁰¹³

The limitations of letters in preserving trans-regional relationships sometimes created a sense of isolation among Oregon missionaries. For instance, in the Fall of 1838, Narcissa Whitman wrote to her sister stating that "I cannot say who are the most hungry, you, who are saturated daily with every kind of intelligence, or us here, who can hear but little else than what passes in our little world, west of the Rocky Mountains, up and down the Columbia river."¹⁰¹⁴ However, where letters failed, material goods often succeeded. In the Spring of 1842 Narcissa

¹⁰¹⁰ Carey, "Methodist Annual Reports," 341.

¹⁰¹¹ Loewenberg, *Equality on the Oregon Frontier*, 187. Loewenberg goes so far as to suggest that the "Missionary Society in New York left Lee stranded." Ibid., 182.

¹⁰¹² Gatke, "A Document of Mission History," 84.

¹⁰¹³ The Reverend George Gary replaced Jason Lee as superintendent of the Oregon Missions and immediately set about tightening the belt by dismissing most laymen attached to the mission and selling the Oregon Mission school house (he refused to sell to Catholic priests who offered an attractive price). Of these financial reforms, Gustavus Hines remarked that the "mission was not only relieved of a ponderous load, but assumed a decidedly spiritual character." Hines, *A Voyage Around the World*, 242.

¹⁰¹⁴ Narcissa Whitman to Jane, Wieletpoo, Walla Walla River, Oregon Territory, 18 September 1838, in *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1847* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1996), 62. Evidently, such isolation was too much for Smith's wife, Sarah. All signs point to her experiencing some mental health problems during her time in Oregon. As Drury mentions "she was remembered by the Nez Perce of Kamiah as 'the weeping one.'" Drury, *The Diaries and Letters*, 17. For her part, Narcissa did her best to stay abreast of the latest news from the east. She was known to request copies of periodicals such as the *New York Observer* and the *New York Evangelist*. Whitman to Jane, 18 September 1838, 62.

mentioned receiving a cooking stove from the Board, as well as "some boxes...containing carding, spinning, and weaving apparatus, clothing and books."¹⁰¹⁵ Such a generous donation reassured Narcissa that "our Christian friends in the states have not forgotten us," and even in "a desert land...we are so kindly remembered."¹⁰¹⁶

Societies imported most of these goods by way of the Hawaiian Islands. In fact, one of the reasons why American missionary organizations considered the Pacific Northwest as a possible location for a mission was its link to Hawaii through the shipping routes of the fur trade.¹⁰¹⁷ Jonathan Green even proposed to the Board in Boston that a mission in the Pacific Northwest "had better be attempted...by some of the missionaries from the Sandwich Islands," and that it should be "regarded as a branch of the Sandwich Island mission, and labors and laborers might be interchanged, as should be deemed expedient."¹⁰¹⁸ Although Green's suggestion never fully materialized, the ABCFM - whose presence and infrastructure in the Islands was unparalleled - was able to use Hawaii as a source for supplying their Columbia missionaries with goods they would have had difficulty accessing otherwise. Aside from providing help in the form of Hawaiian workers, the Islands' most generous donation came in the form of a printing press, type, and paper for Spalding's Lapwai mission. Moreover, they sent other commodities such as molasses and sugar, which could serve as useful bartering tools with local natives.¹⁰¹⁹

Overall, the trans-regional connections of the Protestant missions in the Pacific

¹⁰¹⁵ Whitman to Jane and Edward, 1 March 1842, 129, 131.

¹⁰¹⁶ Ibid., 131.

¹⁰¹⁷ Whaley, *Oregon and the Collapse of the Illahee*, 102.

¹⁰¹⁸ Green, *Journal of a Tour*, 16-17.

¹⁰¹⁹ Drury, *The Diaries and Letters*, 262.

Northwest would not have been possible without the trans-regional connections of the area's reigning commercial and imperial authority: the HBC. In fact, the missionary enterprise in general would have collapsed much sooner had it not aligned itself with many of the cultural, social, political, and economic schemes forged by decades of intense (and sometimes violent) fur trading. By the time American missionaries arrived, the trade was in a steep decline; yet, it remained a force to be reckoned with or, in the case of these missionaries, strategically channeled to profit their own undertaking.

**"That We should be...Nearly Allied to Old England ":
American Protestant Missionaries and the
Structures, Resources, and Networks of the Columbia Fur Trade**

American missionary efforts in the Pacific Northwest were only made possible through the structures, resources, and networks of fur trade organizations. The American Fur Company assisted missionaries in their overland travels and the transmission of their correspondences, and, despite its misgivings concerning the American presence, it was the HBC, as represented by the administration of John McLoughlin, which supplied these clergyman with nearly all of their provisions. It was also the Company that helped both agents of the Methodist Missionary Society and those of the ABCFM find suitable locations for their stations and even regulated exchanges between these missionaries and local natives, going so far as to declare "what articles they might trade to the Indians and fixed a price for each."¹⁰²⁰ It remained the HBC's territory and if incoming missionaries "attended to their proper business," the Company was more willing

¹⁰²⁰ Myron Eells, *Father Eells or The Results of Fifty-Five Years of Missionary Labors in Washington and Oregon, a biography of Rev. Cushing Eells, D. D.* (Boston: Congregational Sunday School and Publishing Society, 1894), 64.

to invest in their project.¹⁰²¹

Upon arrival in the region (and for some even prior to their arrival), American Protestant missionaries encountered a world still upheld by the scaffolding of the fur trade. In the words of Myron Eells, the son of Cushing Eells, the "currency of the country was beaver, with tobacco and clothes for change."¹⁰²² Accessing certain goods became essential and missionaries who were left with few options but to borrow from the storehouses of the HBC. Provided they did not "interfere...at all in the beaver trade, nor...furnish provisions to any one who did," as Whitman described, the Governor and Committee in London had "no objection to their being supplied from our stores with such absolute necessities...they may require."¹⁰²³ For the leadership of the HBC, furnishing the missionaries with supplies was a strategy designed to preserve the Company's monopoly and regulatory power over all goods circulating within the local economy.¹⁰²⁴ McLoughlin recommended offering missionaries "supplies at the present or even a lower rate of advance or give them freight, as if you refuse them they will get their supplies from Wahou [Oahu] as they are connected with the missionaries at the Sandwich Islands who have a vessel of their own."¹⁰²⁵ He warned that "if they send [their ship] here we may be

¹⁰²¹ Ibid., 65.

¹⁰²² Ibid., 74. Similarly, Jason Lee delivered to the missionary reinforcement aboard the *Lausanne* a lecture informing them "of the Hudson's bay company, their beaver currency, successes, etc." He also gave them "an account of the American fur company." John M. Canse, ed., "The Diary of Henry Bridgman Brewer, Being a Log of the *Lausanne* and the Time Book of the Dalles Mission," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (1928): 353.

¹⁰²³ Whitman Mission Correspondence.; Governor and Committee to John McLoughlin, London, 31 December 1839, in *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver to the Governor and Committee, 1839-44*, ed. E. E. Rich (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1943), 18n.

¹⁰²⁴ E. E. Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, vol. 2 (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1959), 684.

¹⁰²⁵ John McLoughlin to the Governor and Committee, Fort Vancouver, 16 November 1836, in *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver to the Governor and Committee, 1825-38*, ed. E. E. Rich (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1941), 174.

sure that some adventurers will avail themselves of the opportunity to come and open shop in opposition to us, give us immensity of trouble, and make us incur great expence [sic]."¹⁰²⁶ Just as important, it would make the mission stations entirely dependent on the HBC, which would protect the Company's foothold in the region and ultimately slow the progress of American settlement.

The HBC also aided missionaries in order to minimize any bad publicity they were receiving in American presses. For instance, McLoughlin recalled when Samuel Parker came stumbling into Fort Vancouver "alone and entirely destitute....To have refused lodging and food to a man of his character and functions at his time of life - above sixty years of age - would have been worse than churlish and would have deservedly exposed us to a merited load of obloquy."¹⁰²⁷ Aside from the commercial ramifications of supplying the missionaries, acquiring their "good will...rather than...enmity" was foremost in the Chief Factor's mind.¹⁰²⁸ For him, American settlement was an inevitability, but by befriending the American clergyman, one might be able to soften its blow.

Methodist John Frost summed it up best when he wrote that,

The H. B. Co. is engaged in the traffick [sic] of the country. They have means for the purpose of carrying forward and executing their plans; but they are called upon, from time to time, by missionaries for their boats &c. Well, they are professedly gentlemen, and will not refuse, if it is possible for them to render the assistance required, but by accommodating the missionary they are straightened in carrying forward their own plans, and say to themselves, and to one another, these men are professing to do much for the Heathen, but surely they are very lame in all their operations; they can effect nothing without our assistance; and as they, the Co. design, as far as possible monopolize all the trade in the country, they will

¹⁰²⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰²⁷ Ibid., 175.

¹⁰²⁸ John McLoughlin to the Governor and Committee, Fort Vancouver, 31 October 1837, in *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver to the Governor and Committee, 1825-38*, ed. E. E. Rich (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1941), 203.

make the necessity of the missionaries turn to their advantage.¹⁰²⁹

At least early on in their relationship, the HBC managed a local economy in which American missionaries had little choice but to participate.

Many of these same missionaries also found themselves immersed in a world of behaviors that often contradicted their own conceptions of piety and social decorum. For ABCFM missionaries, their first encounter with the fur trading lifestyle was at the annual Rendezvous in the Rocky Mountains, where they witnessed what seemed to them to be an endless stream of lewdness and vulgarities. Despite efforts to "distribute...bibles & testaments among the men," and invite them to attend sermons on the Sabbath, there remained in the words of Asa Smith, "considerable carousing" among the men, who in all likelihood were intoxicated on the very same whiskey brought out as cargo from Kansas alongside other cargo, such as the missionaries themselves.¹⁰³⁰ Revelry aside, what alarmed missionaries the most was the negative impact these traders had on natives who had traveled to Rendezvous from the surrounding areas (including the Columbia Plateau). Parker noted that the fur trader's "demoralizing influence with the Indians has been lamentable, and they have imposed upon them, in all the ways that sinful propensities dictate."¹⁰³¹ What incensed him further was a rumor that the traders had sold the Indians "packs of cards at high prices, call[ed] them the bible; and have told them, if they should refuse to give white men wives, God would be angry with them and punish them eternally."¹⁰³² In the minds of many missionaries, fur traders - at least some of those associated with the American Fur Company - were little more than crooked opportunists who lacked any semblance

¹⁰²⁹ Pipes, "Journal of John H. Frost," 67.

¹⁰³⁰ Drury, *The Diaries and Letters*, 67-68.

¹⁰³¹ Parker, *Journal of an Exploring Tour*, 80.

¹⁰³² *Ibid.*, 80-81.

of a moral compass.

It was not unusual for fur traders to view missionaries with a similar disdain. During their travels with the American Fur Company, Parker and Whitman were, as historian Alvin Josephy writes, "constantly critical of the fur men's conduct and refused to move with the caravan on Sunday."¹⁰³³ In response, members of the brigade "cut loose a raft which was to carry the missionaries' outfit across a river, pelted Whitman with rotten eggs, and made Parker believe that they were plotting to murder the two of them once they got out on the plains."¹⁰³⁴ These same traders also believed William Gray to be "about as obnoxious a human as had ever come into the West," and following an incident in which he abandoned four of his Flathead companions to be slaughtered in order to save his own life, he was looked upon by both traders and Plateau natives as an insufferable coward.¹⁰³⁵ On occasion, even British traders employed by the HBC had little tolerance for what they perceived to be the arrogance of American Protestant missionaries. While visiting Fort Vancouver in the late 1830s, one Chief Trader remarked rather drolly that "there is a missionary there from the United States of the presbyterian [sic] persuasion [Parker] who sends us all to Hell...with as little ceremony as I would drive a rump steak into my bread basket."¹⁰³⁶

Despite the discrepancy between traders and missionaries over normative behavior, there

¹⁰³³ Josephy, *The Nez Perce Indians*, 130.

¹⁰³⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰³⁵ Ibid., 167-168.

¹⁰³⁶ W. G. Rae to James Hargrave, Fort Nez Perce, 20 March 1836, in *The Hargrave Correspondence, 1821-1843*, ed. T. Glazebrook, (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1938), 235. Apparently, this was also an issue for members of the American Fur Company. In his correspondence with the Secretary of the Board, Smith noted that "I think there is no difficulty in traveling with [the American Fur Company], if we will treat the men kindly & be familiar with them & give them the impression that we do not feel ourselves above them." Asa Bowen Smith to David Greene, Rendezvous on Wind River, 10 July 1838, in *The Diaries and Letters of Henry H. Spalding and Asa Bowen Smith relating to the Nez Perce Mission, 1838-1842*, ed. Clifford Drury (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1958), 71.

were many moments of synthesis. For their part, fur traders sometimes appreciated the expertise of missionaries. Protestant servants of the HBC - who had few opportunities to hear a message delivered by a professional clergyman - welcomed American missionaries to their posts to deliver a sermon on the Sabbath.¹⁰³⁷ They also sought out missionary women to tutor their children and, on occasion, American traders requested the medical services of missionary physicians. For example, the famous mountain man, Jim Bridger, sent his six year old daughter to the Whitman's Waiilatpu mission to be educated by Narcissa and several years prior had an arrow point - sustained during a skirmish with Blackfeet - extracted from his back by Marcus at the annual Rendezvous."¹⁰³⁸

Missionaries, on the other hand, learned to adapt (in a variety of ways) to life within the fur trade economy. While they maintained a strict commitment to temperance and sabbatarianism, some of the men exchanged their standard clothing for more appropriate attire. Narcissa recorded in her journal that McLoughlin gave her husband a pair of leather pantaloons and went on to note that "all the gentlemen here wear them for riding," as "riding horseback and carrying a gun is very destructive to cloth pantaloons."¹⁰³⁹ Others began utilizing certain disciplinary techniques of the trade. The hot-tempered Spalding was known to have had disobedient and disrespectful Indians whipped by their fellow natives, which he acquired from HBC traders who "sometimes employed headmen to use the lash on unruly members of their

¹⁰³⁷ Drury, *The Diaries and Letters*, 322. Spalding happily reported that "all the Chief Factors, Traders, & clerks of the H. B. Co...with the exception of two [probably McLoughlin and Pambrun], are members either of the Episcopal or Presbyterian church." Whitman Mission Correspondence.

¹⁰³⁸ Ibid. In another act of medical assistance, Whitman sent "letters of introduction and recommendation to the medical college of Fairfield, Herkimer County, N.Y." on behalf of the son of an HBC clerk, Thomas McKay. Whitman to Parents, 11 April 1838, 57.

¹⁰³⁹ *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman*, 39.

own bands around British posts."¹⁰⁴⁰

These missionaries also relied heavily on the trade's linguistic structure. Chinook or "jargon" as Henry Perkins named it, was a hybrid language forged out necessity during the early days of the trade. Specifically, it was crafted out of French, English, and various native terms and remained a popular means of cross-cultural communication, especially in the coastal regions, where the language had been spoken - by the time Methodist missionaries arrived - for well over three decades. For this reason, the Methodist missionaries who settled in the Willamette Valley "readily took it up."¹⁰⁴¹ They found it quite useful for everyday exchanges but became frustrated with the language's inability to convey more abstract theological concepts, such as redemption and atonement (for them the crux of the gospel message). Nevertheless, without a working knowledge of indigenous dialects, Chinook was all that most missionaries had, and they did with it what they could.¹⁰⁴²

Finally, missionaries in the Pacific Northwest relied heavily on the general infrastructure of the fur trade. Some patterned the construction of their stations on the architecture and layout of fur trading posts. The "Indian hall," as it often was labeled, served as a way to receive native guests while keeping them separated from the merchandise they sought to acquire (mainly for security purposes). According to historian Theodore Stern, "the usefulness of such a reception hall was felt by the missionary, Marcus Whitman, and his wife, who found their domestic quarters in their first mission house overrun by visitors; they incorporated an Indian room on the

¹⁰⁴⁰ Josephy, *The Nez Perce Indians*, 161.

¹⁰⁴¹ Perkins to the Corresponding Secretary, 21 March 1843, 234.

¹⁰⁴² The following is an example of a brief sermon in the Chinook tongue: Mican tum-tum Cloosh? (Your heart good?) Mican tum-tum wake cloosh. (Your heart no good.) Alaka mican ma-ma lose. (Bye-and-bye you die.) Mican tum-tum cloosh mican clatamy Sakalatie (Your heart good you go to God.) Sakatie mamoke hiyas cloosh mican tum-tum. (God make you very good your heart.) Hiyack wah-wah Sakalatie. (Quick speak to God.) Whaley, *Oregon and the Collapse of the Illahee*, 113.

model of the nearby post when they enlarged their establishment."¹⁰⁴³ Also, both Methodist and ABCFM missionaries depended on the trade routes used by local natives and HBC traders during their own journeys throughout the region. These well-worn paths and waterways proved to be the safest and most efficient means of traveling for missionaries who had little knowledge of the terrain and little time to waste roving it.¹⁰⁴⁴ Lastly, American missionaries saw in the intricate web of HBC posts scattered throughout the Columbia a vital network for unfurling their own operations. Upon arriving at Fort Walla Walla in 1836, Spalding learned "from the traders that unless [he and his fellow missionaries] formed a connecting chain of intercourse & supplies, between [the] fort & Flat Head & Nez Perces country the cause of the Missions would in the end sustain an irreparable loss."¹⁰⁴⁵ The choice to do so proved profitable, for only two years later, Whitman reported to the Secretary that "the Company [has] facilities to favour us which no others possess & so far have exceeded our most sanguine expectations."¹⁰⁴⁶

The HBC supplied missionaries liberally. It became standard practice for the Company to provide a package of goods, including clothing, food, boats, and horses to newly-arrived

¹⁰⁴³ Theodore Stern, *Chiefs and Chief Traders: Indian Relations at Fort Nez Perces, 1818-1855* (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 1993), 140-141.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Sometimes they were old trails that had nearly disappeared, which occasionally led to missionaries getting lost. There is no better example of this than a journey taken by Methodist missionary Daniel Lee who, in the words of A. J. Allen, "strayed" from a dilapidated Company trail and the journey took almost four times as long. Allen, *Ten Years*, 116.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Whitman Mission Correspondence.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Ibid. This supply network extended as far east as London and as far west as the Hawaiian Islands. Cushing Eells noted that the goods used to supply the missions throughout the region were imported mostly from England and Spalding added that the goods purchased from the HBC, including "clothing, bedding, materials for building and farming, medicines, groceries, Indian goods, etc.," were paid for "by a draft on the treasurer of our Board in Boston, to be paid by bill of exchange in London." Eliza Spalding Warren, *Memoirs of the West: The Spaldings* (Portland, OR: Marsh Printing Company, n.d.), 111. Similarly, Whitman provided a clear example of the trans-regional cooperation between missionaries and the fur traders when he referred to the following in his expense report: "two boxes shipped at Boston by Henry Bill Jan 18th 1837 in the Brig Peru & cosigned to the care of Levi Chamberlain Oahu & reshiped by him to Fort Vancouver in the Hon H. B. Co's ship containing books paper clothing bedding &c in part \$48.32." Whitman Mission Correspondence.

missionaries for the purpose of sustaining them during their transition into the country and to provide them with a means to scout for sites on which to build their stations.¹⁰⁴⁷ These British traders even furnished clergymen with heads of cattle to replace those left behind during the strenuous overland passage. Of the ABCFM missionaries, Drury writes that "some of the[ir] cattle were left at Fort Hall because of the condition of their feet, but arrangements were made with the Hudson's Bay Company to have replacements turned over to the missionaries in the Columbia River Valley."¹⁰⁴⁸

The Company's storehouses remained open even once missionaries became firmly settled. Throughout his entire tenure in the region, Whitman obtained most of his medical supplies from either Fort Vancouver or Fort Walla Walla, while most others used the HBC to access building and farming supplies, along with other miscellaneous necessities.¹⁰⁴⁹ Moreover, both Methodist and ABCFM Missionaries drew on the Company's resources to acquire trade goods, which they then used as currency in their exchanges with native workers who helped in the initial construction and ongoing upkeep of many of the stations. Even for non-native workers, "Vancouver goods" became useful for settling debts. Spalding recorded in his diary on April 1, 1840 that he gave a hired hand, James Connor, "\$28.00 in Vancouver goods and provisions," and to Rev. Mr. Griffin \$27.00 in Vancouver goods and provisions. In all," he

¹⁰⁴⁷ Narcissa mentioned in her correspondence that she and her husband received from the Company "a good supply of pork, flour, butter, etc., from [Fort] Vancouver...and corn and potatoes from [Fort] Walla Walla." She added that "we are well provided for in everything we could wish - good boats, with strong and faithful men to manage them." Narcissa Whitman to Mother, Walla Walla, 5 December 1836, in *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1847* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1996), 44.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Drury, *The Diaries and Letters*, 79.; In an 1840 letter to the Secretary of Board in Boston, Smith wrote that he and his wife have been forced to part with "our main dependence for living comfortably, our American cow." He did, however, mention that they had another cow from "the wild herds of California, which was rec'd from the H.H.B. Company in return for cows we were obliged to leave at Fort Hall." Smith to Greene, 6 February 1840, 125.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Whitman Mission Correspondence.

calculated, "\$324.80 expense at [Fort] Vancouver."¹⁰⁵⁰

Supplying missionaries with trade goods did not only benefit the HBC's regional autonomy, it was in many ways critical to the very survival of the missionary endeavor. In the blunt words of Herbert Beaver, American missionaries in the Columbia "could never have existed here a day without our [the HBC's] assistance."¹⁰⁵¹ Striking a similar tone, Perkins, in an 1843 letter to the Missionary Board, admitted that if it were not for the assistance of the HBC in supplying them with certain commodities, they would not have been able to "render [native workers at the mission] satisfactory equivalent for their labor."¹⁰⁵² Fellow Methodist, Elijah White agreed, informing the Board that there is "no other house in this country where I can draw...articles as I require for necessary presents to Indians."¹⁰⁵³ The failure to acquire such goods would have had a damaging affect on the missionaries' ostensible goal, as they had learned through experience that natives interpreted their material possessions to be indicative of spiritual authority.

Given the demand, the HBC was certainly in a position to inflate their prices for foreign buyers and did so on occasion with American settlers. However, McLoughlin and other Company officers rarely took such a course in their transactions with American missionaries. In

¹⁰⁵⁰ Drury, *The Diaries and Letters*, 287. In 1839, Smith mentioned the arrival to two Protestants by the names of J. S. Griffin and Asahel Munger who came "from the American Rendezvous with Mr. Ertmatinger, the gentleman in charge of Fort Hall." Smith to Greene, 27 August 1839, 111. He added that "they have brought themselves & the cause of Christ into disgrace," and that "the H.B.Co. must have mercy on them or they will starve. Already has Mr. Ertmatinger brought one of them at his own expense & on his own animals from Fort Hall to this place." Ibid. Smith informed Greene that they had made it clear to the HBC that these individuals "have no connection with us or the A.B.C.F.M.," and that the only relationship he or anyone else would have these self-supporters would be to hire them strictly as manual labor. Ibid.

¹⁰⁵¹ Letter from Herbert Beaver to Benjamin Harrison, Fort Vancouver, March 10, 1837 in *Reports and Letters of Herbert Beaver, 1836-2838: Chaplain to the Hudson's Bay Company and Missionary to the Indians at Fort Vancouver*, ed. Thomas E. Jessett (Portland, OR: Champoege, 1959), 42.

¹⁰⁵² Perkins to the Corresponding Secretary, 21 March 1843, 240.

¹⁰⁵³ Elijah White, *A Concise View of the Oregon Territory* (Washington, DC: T. Barnard, 1846), 36.

fact, it was not uncommon for the HBC to simply absorb the costs of such goods. After making his arrangements to return east, Parker "called upon the chief clerk for [his] bill."¹⁰⁵⁴ According to the missionary, the clerk "made no bill against me, but felt a pleasure in gratuitously conferring all they have done for the benefit of the object in which I am engaged."¹⁰⁵⁵ Parker added that he had "drawn upon their store for clothing, for goods to pay my Indians, whom I had employed to convey me in canoes...to pay my guides and interpreters; and have drawn upon their provision store for the support of these men while in my employ."¹⁰⁵⁶ The Whitmans experienced similar gratuity. Regarding the assistance of Chief Trader Pierre Pambrun, Narcissa wrote to her parents in the Spring of 1838 stating that "I am at a loss many times to repay them for their kindness, for they will set no prices for anything they do."¹⁰⁵⁷ Early Methodists in the region even received this gracious treatment from time to time. In the late summer of 1834, Jason Lee attempted to purchase some extra pounds of flour just in case of an emergency, but "Capt. McCay" (referring to a Chief Trader named Thomas McKay) "refused to sell us any though he sold to others but said he would send us some if we would accept it as a present. Accordingly he sent us say 15 or 20 lbs. which would cost there...many dollars."¹⁰⁵⁸ Evidently, such a practice was widespread enough to prompt one HBC officer to write that he "wished" missionaries "were on 'their own hook'" and that supporting them with supplies created "a pretty

¹⁰⁵⁴ Parker, *Journal of an Exploring Tour*, 263.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Whitman to Parents, 11 April 1838, 58.

¹⁰⁵⁸ "Diary of Reverend Jason Lee," 251.

piece of expense to the trade."¹⁰⁵⁹

In addition to taking in the costs of certain goods, some HBC personnel even donated hard currency from their own private funds. On Saturday March 5, 1836, the Mission Record Book of the Methodist Episcopal Church included a letter from McLoughlin that stated the following:

The Rev. Jason Lee
Dear Sir,

I do myself the pleasure to hand you the inclosed subscription which the Gentlemen who have signed it request you will do them the favour to accept for the use of your mission and they pray our heavenly Father without whose existence we can do nothing, that of his infinite mercy he may vouchsafe to bless and prosper your pious endeavours - and believe me to be with esteem and regard your sincere well wisher and humble servant

John McLoughlin

McLoughlin gave £6, Finlayson £6, Douglas £5, McKenzie £2, Boulton £2, Allan £2, and McLeod £3.¹⁰⁶⁰

By the end of the 1830s, the HBC had developed a solid reputation for investing in the American missionary enterprise. From 1834 onward, reports flooded back to sponsoring Boards and congregations recounting the profound hospitality experienced by their brethren at the hand of Company officers, who routinely welcomed them into their posts and treated them as honored guests. There are many examples. After a long and arduous overland passage, Smith and his fellow travelers arrived at Fort Hall and "were very kindly rec'd & treated with much

¹⁰⁵⁹ Donald Ross to James Hargrave, Norway House, 21 December 1843, in *The Hargrave Correspondence, 1821-1843*, ed. T. Glazebrook (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1938), 460-461.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Charles Carey, "The Mission Record Book of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Willamette Settlement, Oregon Territory, North America, Commenced 1834," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (1922): 242-243. Henry Spalding referred to McLoughlin as a "kind-hearted Catholic philanthropist." Warren, *Memoirs of the West*, 115. Narcissa Whitman viewed him as their "kind benefactor." Narcissa Whitman to Parents, Wiletspoo, Walla Walla River, Oregon Territory, 14 March 1838, in *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1847* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1996), 53.

attention."¹⁰⁶¹ He went on to note that they "took breakfast at the fort & had the privilege of sitting down to a table, which we have not enjoyed since we left the States."¹⁰⁶² Jason Lee's first trip to Fort Vancouver was also a positive experience. In his diary, he recalled that "the governor and other gentlemen connected with the fort [were] on shore awaiting our arrival, and conducted us to the fort and gave us food, which was very acceptable."¹⁰⁶³ He added that "our baggage was brought and put into a spacious room...[and] Dr. McLoughlin, the governor of the fort, seems pleased that missions have come to the country and freely offers us any assistance that it is in his power to render."¹⁰⁶⁴

Aside from its material and monetary backing (not to mention general hospitality), the Company also served as the primary means of communication between missionaries and their supporters back east. Both Methodist and ABCFM clergy relied on the HBC's overland express to transport letters to and from the region. According to Daniel Lee:

It leaves on the 20th of March, and proceeds by water up the Columbia to Fort Colville, and then to the head waters of that river, where they leave their boats, make a portage of the mountains, proceed to the Saskatchewan River, embark in boats, and follow it to Lake Winnipeg, and then proceed to Fort York [also known as York Factory], on Hudson's Bay; where it intersects a counter express from Lachine, near Montreal, in Lower Canada, and which leaves every April for the

¹⁰⁶¹ Drury, *The Diaries and Letters*, 78.

¹⁰⁶² Ibid. According to his ABCFM colleague, Henry Spalding, most officers of the HBC "received us with that kindness and hospitality which ever characterized the gentlemen of the Hudson Bay Company in their intercourse with our missionaries." Warren, *Memoirs of the West*, 101. He recalled one episode in particular where Chief Trader McLeod "invited us into his tent, where he had his oil-cloth table spread, and with such a dinner for beings, who had been so long without bread! Sea biscuits and ham, coffee and sugar, plates and knives. And often on the journey did these gentlemen deny themselves to afford our ladies a rich feast of hard bread." Ibid.

¹⁰⁶³ "Diary of Reverend Jason Lee," 262.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Ibid. His fellow Methodist missionary, Henry Perkins had similar words. He commented to the Missionary Board that the servants of the HBC at Fort Vancouver "treated the brethren as they always have our missionaries, with a generous hospitality, and afforded them every facility in their power for prosecuting their work." Perkins, "Wonderful Work of God," 256. Indeed, Perkins recalled holding back tears when leaving Fort Vancouver for his mission station in the Dalles, citing that by leaving the post he was "going for the first time beyond the pale of civilization." Perkins to Elvira, 21 March 1838, 222. For many missionaries, the fur trading posts of the HBC were havens of "civility" in an otherwise "savage" wilderness, especially Fort Vancouver, which Narcissa Whitman called the "New York of the Pacific Ocean." *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman*, 36.

Columbia, where it generally arrives about the 25th of October.¹⁰⁶⁵

Like most of the operations of the HBC, their express functioned, in the words of Narcissa, "without failure" and thus served as the most dependable postal service in the region.¹⁰⁶⁶ Even so, from time to time, ABCFM missionaries also sent mail via the American Fur Company. It was not uncommon for the Whitmans or Spaldings to dispatch letters with an agent of the HBC on their way to the annual Rendezvous where they would transfer the letters to agents of the American Fur Company to take back with them to St. Louis, where they would be shipped eastward to Boston. The only problem with such a system was the unreliability of the American Fur Company itself. In an 1837 letter to her family, Narcissa wrote that "we can send letters very safely to Rendezvous, so long as this expedition goes, but the great uncertainty lies in the expedition of the American Fur Company."¹⁰⁶⁷ Sometimes they would show, other times they would not, and even if they did show there was no guarantee they were planning to return east anytime soon. In addition to overland correspondence, missionaries also sent letters to the Pacific, namely the Hawaiian Islands and Canton (China), using the cargo frigates of the HBC. Whether it was east or west, through the HBC or the American Fur Company, the only way in which missionaries were able to effectively communicate with their sponsors, fellow missionaries, prayer supporters, and the general public were through the faculties of the fur trade.

Representatives of the fur trade not only trafficked in missionary letters, they also trafficked in missionaries themselves. Most clergy who traveled overland to the Pacific Northwest did so in the accompaniment of a fur trade brigade. It was here where the American

¹⁰⁶⁵ Lee and Frost, *Ten Years*, 214.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Whitman to Parents, 6 October 1841, 120.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Narcissa Whitman to Parents, Brothers, and Sisters, Wieletpoo, 30 March 1837, in *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1847* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1996), 48.

Fur Company was most useful, especially for those sponsored by the ABCFM. Whether it was the Whitmans and Spaldings in 1836 or the reinforcement two years later, the only way these missionary parties were able to make the trek through some of the more inhospitable areas of the Trans-Mississippi were by linking themselves to the "main caravan of the Fur Company" and following them "in the rear."¹⁰⁶⁸ Once in the region, the HBC took over responsibility and it was customary for both Methodist and ABCFM missionaries to hitch a ride with a brigade traveling on the Columbia or its many tributaries. For some, such as Narcissa, this was the preferred way to travel. Gustavus Hines recalled in his memoir one occasion when he was traveling with Mrs. Whitman and she "decided to stop for the arrival of the Hudson's Bay Company's brigade of boats from the upper forts, which was expected in a day or two, preferring that mode of conveyance to riding on horse-back."¹⁰⁶⁹ Hines himself gained passage on these boats which were "all loaded with furs which had been collected in the vast interior, and now on their way to the general depot at Vancouver, where they were to be examined, dried, packed, and shipped for London."¹⁰⁷⁰ Missionaries also obtained passage on HBC vessels traveling to and from the Hawaiian Islands and even when the boat was not their own, servants of the HBC would often volunteer to steer the vessel from Bakers Bay at the mouth of the Columbia, further inland to Fort Vancouver. Such was the case with the *Loussanne*, which brought a reinforcement of Methodist missionaries (and some settlers) to the region in 1840. According to Hines, who was aboard the ship at the time, "a gentleman by the name of Birney, residing at Fort George, and

¹⁰⁶⁸ Drury, *The Diaries and Letters*, 52, 55. Even when they were not traveling with the American Fur Company, it was not uncommon for these missionary parties to hire an independent fur trader as a guide. For example, in the last leg of their trip, the 1838 party secured the services of mountain man named James Conner. *Ibid.*, 79.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Hines, *A Voyage Around the World*, 185.

¹⁰⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

belonging to the Hudson's Bay Company, came on board, and volunteered his services as pilot."¹⁰⁷¹ While this may have been less about charity and more about preventing a shipwreck which was sure to block the waterway, the rigors of the channel were so that the Methodist reinforcement may not have made it to their destination without the aid of such experienced Company workers.

Traveling with fur traders was not only efficient, it was also much safer. With brigades reaching sizes as large as a "moving village," there was plenty of protection against native communities who may not have welcomed the intrusion and who may have desired to purloin some the valuable goods being carried.¹⁰⁷² During the 1838 Rendezvous, Bridger advised that Gray and his small party remained at the gathering until the company left, to ensure that he would have safe travels, especially with his precious cargo of horses, which were, in the words of Smith, "a temptation to any party of Indians."¹⁰⁷³ Once missionaries reached the Columbia, they typically came under the protection of the HBC. The primary sources are saturated with accounts of Company personnel acting as a buffer between their missionary neighbors and local natives who demonstrated aggression. The Chief Trader of Fort Walla Walla, Archibald McKinlay, was known to visit Narcissa and attend to her safety while her husband was away. He also made arrangements for her to spend some time at the post when she was not feeling well or when the rife of the Cayuse was particularly inflamed. On one occasion, when word of the

¹⁰⁷¹ Ibid., 89.

¹⁰⁷² Narcissa Whitman to Sister Harriet and Brother Edward, Platte River, Just above the Forks, 3 June 1836, in *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1847* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1996), 15. In addition to the typical size of brigades (especially those coming to and from Rendezvous), American missionaries felt safe traveling with traders because of their seemingly fearless disposition, especially in comparison with the recurrent unease of missionaries themselves. In his diary, Jason Lee marveled at the courage of the fur trappers in their overland party who "expose themselves...[to] greater risks for a few Beaver skins than we to save souls." "Diary of Rev. Jason Lee," 129.

¹⁰⁷³ Smith to Greene, 10 July 1838, 72.

Indians' threats against the Whitmans reached the Chief Trader, he "sent word to the Indians that he felt the insult offered to [the Whitmans] as offered to himself, and that those who conducted themselves so much like dogs would not be permitted to see him with complacency."¹⁰⁷⁴

When these threats transformed into action in the Fall of 1847 (Whitman massacre), it was an HBC officer who ransomed the survivors of the attack. Chief Trader Peter Ogden participated in what Eells referred to as a "melancholy transaction," in which he addressed the Cayuse and Nez Perce chiefs responsible, scolded them for their violent actions, called them hermaphrodites, and promised that if they delivered "all the prisoners," he would pay them in exchange.¹⁰⁷⁵ After some conversation, the chiefs agreed to free the captives and were "paid some \$500 in property" from the Company's holdings.¹⁰⁷⁶ In an 1848 letter to Secretary Greene, Spalding wrote, "Too much praise can not be awarded to the H. B. Co., especially to Mr. Ogden for his very Christian efforts in flying to our relief, & for his prompt, indefatigable, & very judicious efforts in effecting our rescue."¹⁰⁷⁷

Despite the Company's best efforts to safeguard their missionary neighbors, sickness and injury were inevitable. But, even in these circumstances, HBC personnel were quick to provide medical care. In an 1843 letter, Narcissa mentioned to her sister Jane that she was once again addressing her from Fort Vancouver, "where I am spending a little time very pleasantly, and where I am favored with the medical advice and treatment of two very able physicians," Doctors

¹⁰⁷⁴ Whitman to Greene, 1841, 124. In other words, the McKinley determined that those who insulted the missionaries would not be permitted to come to the post for the purposes of trade.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Whitman Mission Correspondence.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Ibid.

Forbes Barclay and William Tolmie.¹⁰⁷⁸ Dr. Barclay also took care of Asa Smith's wife, Sarah, and diagnosed her as having a "distressing" spinal affliction and recommended a more "salubrious climate."¹⁰⁷⁹ This is one of several reasons why the Smiths petitioned the Board to be restationed in the Hawaiian Islands.¹⁰⁸⁰

After witnessing the sights, sounds, smells, and people of Fort Vancouver, one missionary commented in her diary that "this is more than I expected when we left home - that we should be...nearly allied to Old England, for most of the gentlemen of the Company are from there or Scotland."¹⁰⁸¹ Indeed, the relationship between American Protestant missionaries and fur traders, namely those associated with the HBC, went well beyond simple pleasantries. It was an intimate bond born out of the mutual desire to witness their respective enterprises not only survive but thrive in an environment far removed from the seats of empire.

Conclusion: An Imperfect but Necessary Marriage

The Protestant mission economy in the Pacific Northwest was as hemispheric in its reach as it was dependent on the structures, resources, and networks of the Trans-Mississippi fur trade. Even a random excerpt from the daily entries of missionary journals exposes this web of

¹⁰⁷⁸ Narcissa Whitman to Sister Jane, Vancouver, 11 July 1843, in *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1847* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1996), 163.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Drury, *The Diaries and Letters*, 215.

¹⁰⁸⁰ It also bears mentioning that the women of the HBC also assisted the missionaries medically from time to time. For example, Mrs. Pambrun, the wife of Chief Trader Pierre Pambrun (and a committed Catholic), acted as midwife for the birth of Narcissa's daughter, Alice Clarissa in 1837. Tragically, two years later, Alice drowned in a river near the mission. Marcus interpreted the tragedy (in good Calvinist form) as God's judgment for the discord among the missionaries and in the words of Drury, they "sought full reconciliation and forgiveness." Drury, *The Diaries and Letters*, 100.

¹⁰⁸¹ Whitman to Parents, Brothers, and Sisters, 30 March 1837, 37.

interconnection. In the late Fall of 1840, a Methodist colleague of Henry Perkins, Henry Brewer, recorded the following in his diary:

- 22. Felled a yellow pine tree and sawed some blocks, preparing to make shingles.
- 23 and 24. Made shingles
- 26, 27, 28. Covered house.
- 28. The Hudson's Bay Company express boats passed.
- 30. Killed two hogs; average weight apiece 250 lbs.
- 31. Salted pork and drew wood.
- November 6 [1840]. Sent a letter to the islands directed to Rev. Reuben Ransom Wilbraham Mass; also to Rev. John Roper.
- 8 [Sunday]. Resolved anew to be the Lord's. I commenced reading the Holy Bible, with Dr. Clarke's comments.
- 9. Made mortar for the partition walls of our house.
- 11. Rev. Mr. Griffin and wife called upon us, on their way to [Fort] Vancouver.¹⁰⁸²

Such an account not only offers a window into the daily activities of the average missionary, it also gives insight into what the average missionary found important enough to document. In this respect, it makes sense that the information Brewer provided was not peripheral but central to his experience in the region.

During their comparatively brief tenure in the Columbia (roughly from the mid-1830s to the late 1840s) missionaries such as Brewer engaged in a wide range of operations, designed primarily to sustain themselves through subsistence living, so as to maximize their time in the country and ultimately increase their chances for a profitable return on the investments (financial and otherwise) made by those located on the other side of the continent. However, there was another piece to the puzzle. These missionaries (and the Boards who sponsored them) were able only to advance their plans by aggressively tapping into the substantial means of fur trading giants such as the American Fur Company and especially the HBC. It was an imperfect marriage - containing its share of conflict and distrust - but it was one that proved vital to the survival and growth of the Protestant missionary enterprise, as it was important for the HBC, in particular, to

¹⁰⁸² Canse, "The Diary of Henry Bridgman Brewer," 58.

retain its longstanding control over local commerce.

If American Protestant missionaries shared an "imperfect marriage" with the fur trade, so too did their Catholic competitors. In the late 1830s, priests began arriving in the Pacific Northwest and shared many of the same experiences as their Protestant counterparts. They encounter privations and physical hardships, had difficulties in converting some natives, and even engaged in heated disagreements with fellow representatives of the Church. They, like Protestants, also leaned heavily on the HBC, who supplied them generously and provided a social and economic framework within which to carry out their own plans for the region. Their primary goal was to tap into an already flourishing religious market with the intention of ministering not only to the many Catholics employed in the fur trade but also to the area's many indigenous communities, who were at present being "deceived" by the Methodist and ABCFM missionaries already at work. As latecomers, the priests launched an aggressive campaign (a counter-reformation of sorts) to challenge and eradicate what they perceived as Protestant heresy and to persuade natives, in particular, that authentic spirit power could only be accessed through baptism into the universal Church. Although a monopoly never fully materialized, the Catholic push would leave a permanent stamp on the region's religious economy for years to come.

CHAPTER SIX

BAPTISMS, BENEFACTORS, AND BRIGADES: THE CATHOLIC MISSION ECONOMY AND THE FUR TRADE IN COLONIAL OREGON

In an 1861 letter, the famed Jesuit missionary, Pierre-Jean De Smet, relayed the following story:

An old chief...came from a great distance...to consult [a] priest; his only object being to receive baptism, if he should be considered worthy of the privilege. He stated to the missionary that, in spite of his ardent desire to be baptized, he had no dared to approach the priest for that purpose, owing to a small debt of two beaver skins...The missionary, accompanied by the old man, went to the clerk of the Company [HBC] to learn the particulars of the debt. The clerk examined the books, but said that no such debt existed. The chief still insisted on paying, but the clerk refused to take [a buffalo] robe [he brought instead]. "Have pity on me," at last exclaimed the worthy old man, "this debt has rendered me wretched long enough; for years it has weighed on my conscience. I wish to belong to the blameless and pure prayer (religion), and to make myself worthy of the name of a child of God. This buffalo robe covers my debt," and he spread it on the ground at the feet of the clerk. He received baptism, and returned home contented and happy.¹⁰⁸³

This multi-dimensional transaction represents the convergence of actors and commodities that so often characterized the interrelationship between the fur trade and Catholic mission economies in early nineteenth-century Oregon. Debts, forgiveness, peace, purity, pelts, baptisms, Indians, priests, and traders all operated at times in conjunction with one another, where the buying and selling of Roman Catholic "products" unfolded as a subsidiary of the region's boarder fur trading market.

Like the trade itself, Catholicism had a longstanding presence in the Columbia. Catholic writers throughout the nineteenth century made a point of crediting the Spanish with the "discovery" of the Northwest coast and the first efforts to plant the Catholic faith among local

¹⁰⁸³ Letter of S. J. De Smet, St. Louis University, 1 December 1861, in *Life, Letters, and Travels of Father Pierre-Jean de Smet, S. J., 1801-1873*, vol. 3, eds. Hiram Martin Chittenden and Alfred Talbot Richardson (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1905), 961.

indigenes. In his 1847 narrative, Father S. J. De Smet reported that early Europeans found crucifixes around the necks of coastal natives and reminded his reader that the "strait which separates [the island of Vancouver] from the mainland [still] bears the name *Juan Fuca*."¹⁰⁸⁴ His contemporary, Father J. B. Z Bolduc, corroborated this evidence by indicating that "even at the present day, we find ruins of birch edifices, constructed [by the Spaniards] for the purpose of drawing the savage nations to the knowledge of the gospel."¹⁰⁸⁵ Though the Spanish Catholic legacy in the Pacific Northwest faced redaction in the plethora of American/Protestant histories published throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries - all of which tended to begin with the 1792 voyage of American sea captain Robert Gray who famously traveled several miles up the river that would later bear the name of his ship, the Columbia - Catholicism in the region is arguably as old as the first European explorer to set foot on its rocky shoreline.

The first Catholics to travel and settle in the interior were Iroquois who left their tribal lands in the east to serve in the Trans-Mississippi fur trade. Many imported a rudimentary knowledge of Catholic theologies, cosmologies, and ritual performances, which some freely imparted to natives who, in exchange, incorporated these foreigners into their kinship networks through intermarriage. Still others served, alongside their duties in the trade, as prophetic voices, forecasting the eminent arrival of formal clergy. According to one Flathead tradition, an Iroquois named Shining Shirt prophesied as early as the eighteenth century that men would soon come to their territory who had light colored skin and who wore black gowns and would, in the words of historian Robert Burns, "teach them religion, give them new names, and change their

¹⁰⁸⁴ Father P. J. De Smet, *Oregon Missions and Travels Over the Rocky Mountains, in 1845-1846* (New York: Edward Dunigan, 1847), 116.

¹⁰⁸⁵ J. B. Z Bolduc to Mr. Cayenne, Cowlitz, 15 February 1844, in *Oregon Missions and Travels Over the Rocky Mountains, in 1845-1846*, by Father P. J. De Smet (New York: Edward Dunigan, 1847), 145.

lives radically both in spiritual and material ways."¹⁰⁸⁶ His message became even more tantalizing when he produced "a piece of metal inscribed with a cross," which he claimed was a powerful talisman given to him by one of these "Black Robes."¹⁰⁸⁷

By the late 1830s, priests from eastern Canada and Europe began arriving in the Columbia. Their objective was to not only minister to those French-Canadian Catholics working in the fur trade, but to administer baptism and offer catechetical instruction to indigenous communities, who based on reports, had exhibited a clear demand for the faith. Early Oblate missionaries settled in the region and quickly became commodities in the minds of many local natives, along with the rituals, material items, and knowledges they freely distributed. Also, with the arrival of these priests came an intense competition for the Indian soul. Catholics, like their Protestant counterparts, deployed a diverse set of tactics designed to popularize their brand of Christianity among indigenes, many of whom had already expressed a disenchantment with the quality of Protestant "medicine." This, coupled with the visual appeal of Catholic worship and its past intercourse with fur trade culture, gave representatives of the Church a distinct advantage in the market. They also had substantial trans-regional connections. Catholic clergy in the Columbia relied on contributions from organizations and individual donors to manage their respective projects. On occasion, this required begging tours, during which priests would travel to eastern North America and Europe where they would deliver presentations and meet with potential investors with hopes of accumulating further financial support. They also asked for prayer and had converted natives pray on behalf of their benefactors back east - an exchange that would form the core of the Catholic economy of prayer. But it was the fur trade economy that

¹⁰⁸⁶ Robert Ignatius Burns, S. J., *The Jesuits and the Indian Wars of the Northwest* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 16.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Ibid.

Catholic missionaries relied on most. The historic attachment between Catholicism and the trade bore a collaborative relationship that, in some ways, outweighed any prior cooperation between traders and Protestants. The HBC's regional authorities granted passage to priests, built them chapels, relayed Church correspondence, donated money from private funds, and opened lines of credit for the construction and maintenance of mission stations. It was a partnership that would forever alter religious life in the region.

"The Field is Vast, Our Occupations are Numerous": Commodities, Competitions, and the Foundation of the Catholic Mission Economy

In the mid-1830s, Canadians - most being former servants of the HBC who had settled in the Willamette River Valley following the expiration of their contracts - wrote a series of letters to the Bishop of Juliopolis (Father Norbert Provencher of the Red River colony) requesting the services of professional clergy, who could perform the sacraments and instruct their children in the faith.¹⁰⁸⁸ Foremost in their minds was the shadow cast over the Valley's fertile landscape by the seemingly endless stream of Protestant migrants.¹⁰⁸⁹ They wanted options and were prepared to flood the Bishop's desk with petitions until he relented.¹⁰⁹⁰

¹⁰⁸⁸ According to one text, many of these retired furmen had "not seen priests for 30, 40, and 50 years." *Notices and Voyages of the famed Quebec Mission to the Pacific Northwest*, trans. Carl Landerholm (Portland, OR: Champoege Press, 1956), 11.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Melinda Marie Jette, "'We Have Almost Every Religion but Our Own': French-Indian Community Initiatives and Social Relations in French Prairie, Oregon, 1834-1837," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 108, no. 2 (2007): 240.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Allegedly, Provencher would have fulfilled their request sooner if it was not for the close relationship between Protestants and HBC leadership (particularly Governor Simpson). The Jesuit, Pierre-Jean De Smet suggested that the arrival of Jason Lee and Herbert Beaver two years later delayed the Canadian's demand from being adequately supplied. De Smet, *Oregon Missions and Travels*, 118. Another obstacle was that Provencher had no "disposable" priests at Red River, but told the Willamette Catholics that he would try to recruit some during his upcoming travels in Europe and Eastern Canada. Bishop of Juliopolis to all the families settled in the Willamette Valley and other Catholics beyond the Rocky Mountains, Red River, 8 June 1835, in *Historical Sketches of the Catholic Church in Oregon during the Past Forty Years*, by F. N. Blanchet (Portland, OR: 1878), 22.

In 1837, after years of diplomatic wrangling, Provencher received permission from Governor George Simpson to send two Oblate missionaries to Oregon, provided they remain north of the Columbia, which in a twist of irony, prevented these priests from settling near the very community who requested them. This was, however, a minor concern, given the Bishop's intentions. Years prior, he made it clear to the Willamette Canadians that the goal of sending priests was "not to procure the knowledge of God to [them] and [their] children only, but also to the numerous Indian tribes among which [they] live[d]." ¹⁰⁹¹

Two French-Canadian priests, Francis Norbert Blanchet and Modeste Demers, received the call and the Bishop of Quebec sent them with clear orders. ¹⁰⁹² He prioritized the missionaries' responsibilities, instructing them that their "first object" was to "withdraw from barbarity...the Indians scattered in that country," while their "second object" was to "tender [their] services to the wicked Christians who have adopted there the vices of Indians, and live in licentiousness and the forgetfulness of their duties." ¹⁰⁹³ Despite accusations from the Diocese that the Willamette Canadians lived in morally laxity, most of them still identified as Catholic, unlike the indigenous inhabitants of the region who represented a largely untapped market. For the Bishop, the Protestant presence was also a consideration. Since 1834 Methodist missionaries

¹⁰⁹¹ Ibid. As one priest put it, "no sooner had these courageous soldiers of the cross learned that there were thousands of souls pining for the presences of the true disciples of God, than they set to work at once perfecting their plans so that the bread of life might be broken to the Indians in the far west." F. N. Blanchet, *Historical Sketches of the Catholic Church in Oregon during the Past Forty Years* (Portland, OR: 1878), 20.

¹⁰⁹² Regarding the character of F. N. Blanchet (who would later become Bishop of the Diocese), historian Wilfred Schoenberg writes that "if somewhat autocratic, even rigoristic like many French Canadian priests of his time, he was also capable of an easy rapport with the rustics of his village." Wilfred P. Schoenberg, S. J., *A History of the Catholic Church in the Pacific Northwest, 1743-1983* (Washington, D.C.: The Pastoral Press, 1987), 29.

¹⁰⁹³ Joseph Signay to Francis Norbert Blanchet and Modeste Demers, Quebec, 17 April 1838, in *Historical Sketches of the Catholic Church in Oregon during the Past Forty Years*, by F. N. Blanchet (Portland, OR: 1878), 26. F. N. Blanchet recorded in greater detail his responsibilities: "To stop at the different posts, inhabited by white people and visited by Indians, but for the administration of the sacraments, the visitation of the sick and the exhortation of the poor sinners; such is, the life of the Missionaries." F. N. Blanchet to Joseph Signay, Fort Vancouver, 17 March 1839, in *Historical Sketches of the Catholic Church in Oregon during the Past Forty Years*, by F. N. Blanchet (Portland, OR: 1878), 37.

had promoted their brand among Indians virtually unopposed. Catholicism had to make its mark, and its with this sense of urgency Signay added to his standing orders that "in all the places remarkable either for their position or the passage of the voyagers, or the gathering of Indians, [the missionaries] will plant more crosses, so as to take possession of those various places in the name of the Catholic religion."¹⁰⁹⁴

A growing demand for Black Robes opened the door for this market penetration. For decades, Columbia natives had been informed by Canadian and Iroquois fur traders that those whose religious instruction was most authentic wore long Black garments, carried certain symbolic items, and took no wives. Especially when tensions rose between ABCFM missionaries and local chiefs, some Indians began to interpret the arrival of Protestants as little more than a prolegomena. Many anticipated that these newcomers would supply them with a more reliable product. By the time the famed Jesuit, Pierre-Jean De Smet, arrived on the Columbia Plateau in 1840, indigenous communities throughout the area, including the Nez Perce, had grown "tired of their self-styled ministers with wives, and show[ed] a great preference in favor of Catholic priests."¹⁰⁹⁵ This was certainly true at various HBC posts throughout the area. Upon reaching Fort Colville, Blanchet recalled that "as soon as [the natives] saw the boats coming they rushed to the shore and placing themselves in file, men, women, and children, they begged to touch the hands of the priests."¹⁰⁹⁶ It appears these feelings of attachment were enduring, for after a one year hiatus Demers returned only to find that the Indians "showed

¹⁰⁹⁴ Ibid., 27.

¹⁰⁹⁵ P. J. De Smet to F. N. Blanchet, The Fork of the Jefferson, 10 August 1840, in *Notices and Voyages of the famed Quebec Mission to the Pacific Northwest*, trans. Carl Landerholm (Portland, OR: Champoeg Press, 1956), 72.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 34.

themselves eager to demonstrate the pleasure they felt in seeing me again."¹⁰⁹⁷ Such encounters were also commonplace at Fort Walla Walla where "Cayuse Indians, who, having heard by the express of the coming of the priests, had come to see and hear them on their passage, notwithstanding the contrary orders of the Head of the Wailatpu mission [Marcus Whitman]."¹⁰⁹⁸

Initial encounters suggest that Catholic clergy were in high demand among Columbia natives. Missionary records are replete with references to the gathering of "immense crowds" who expressed a keen interest in witnessing, first-hand, these newly-arrived shamans, touching their garments, and listening to their teachings.¹⁰⁹⁹ Some natives even traveled "from remote distances" to have such an experience.¹¹⁰⁰ Recalling the Indians' dedication, Father Nicholas Point exclaimed, "What had they not done to procure the services of the Blackrobes! What distances they had traveled! What sacrifices they had made!"¹¹⁰¹ Striking a similar tone, Blanchet was amazed when he learned that twelve Indians journeyed to the Cowlitz mission from the Puget Sound area and after two days of "arduous" travel they arrived "with bleeding feet, famished, and broken down." According to the priest stationed there they had come to see the "'Black Gown' and hear him speak of the Great Spirit."¹¹⁰² These allusions to the pain, hardship, and overall desperation of Indians go a long way in demonstrating the commodified

¹⁰⁹⁷ *Notices and Voyages*, 32.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 35.

¹⁰⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 28, 84.

¹¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹¹⁰¹ Joseph Donnelly, ed., *Wilderness Kingdom: Indian Life in the Rocky Mountains, 1840-1847, the Journals & Paintings of Nicholas Point, S. J.* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), 38.

¹¹⁰² F. N. Blanchet, *The Key to the Catholic Ladder, Containing a Sketch of the Christian Religion and Universal History* (New York: T. W. Strong, 1859), 1. Some natives gave more than their physical health to see and hear priests. According to the writings of Father J. B. A. Brouillet, one young chief "had waited for a long time and [invited] the priest...to use his house and also his land if he wanted it." Edward J. Kowrach, ed., *Journal of a Catholic Bishop on the Oregon Trail: The Overland Crossing of Rt. Rev. A.M.A. Blanchet, Bishop of Walla Walla, from Montreal to Oregon Territory, March 23, 1847 to January 23, 1851* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon, 1978), 151.

value of Catholic clergy.¹¹⁰³ While it is important to keep in mind that some of the language might be hyperbolic, it is equally important to consider that by the time priests arrived in the region, many native communities, particularly those on the Plateau, had grown disenchanted with the medicine of Protestants. Taking into account this mounting tension, together with the long history of Black Robe prophecies, it is understandable why representatives of the Church would have received such a cordial welcome, like the one experienced by Blanchet and Demers at Fort Vancouver where "the Canadians wept for joy, and the savages assembled from a distance of one hundred miles, to behold the *black gowns* of whom so much had been said."¹¹⁰⁴

But, in the end, it was quality that mattered most. Many Plateau communities saw in the beliefs and practices of the Protestants an ineffective means of curbing the threat of disease and looked to the Black Robes for a more useful alternative. And when the priests came bearing sacred objects, performing choreographed gestures, and, unlike their Protestant counterparts, offering immediate access to spirit power through the physical act of water purification, many natives - aware of the basic differences in the missionaries' respective theologies - pursued the product of the Black Robes with enthusiastic abandon.¹¹⁰⁵ According to De Smet, his colleagues

¹¹⁰³ This commodification is illustrated in an 1839 letter by F. N. Blanchet in which he expressed his desire to have more priests sent to the region, for no other reason than the demand outweighed the supply. He suggested that "not less than six associates [are needed] to be able to respond to the eagerness which the natives to whom they have been sent display for instruction." *Notices and Voyages*, 22-23.

¹¹⁰⁴ De Smet, *Oregon Missions and Travels*, 119. In some ways, Catholic missionaries represented hope among natives amid their disappointment with Protestants who neglected to take care of them despite their perceived wealth. Auguste-Magloire Alexandre Blanchet (the younger brother of F. N. Blanchet) traveled to the Columbia Plateau in the summer of 1847 and encountered a local chief named Tilocate who asked "if the priests will give presents to the Indians; if they will make them plough their lands; if they will help them build houses; if they will feed and clothe the children, etc.'" Kowrach, *Journal of a Catholic Bishop*, 76. Tilocate also expressed his desire for priests and, according to Blanchet, "wished to send away Dr. Whitman." Ibid.

¹¹⁰⁵ According to ethnohistorian Jacqueline Peterson, certain "aspects of Catholic theology and practice resonated or found points of contact" with natives throughout the Columbia Plateau. These included: "the sacramental and transformative power of chant, prayer, and devotional hymns; a sacred calendar associated with sacred colors; the veneration of sacramental objects and sacred sites; the use of water and incense for purification and for transporting prayers to the spirit world; innumerable feast days and sensorially rich ritual dramas and processions; the intercessory powers of saintly guardians and religious specialists." Jacqueline Peterson, *Sacred*

Blanchet and Demers baptized, in a single year, "three hundred and nine persons" into the faith, while the Italian Jesuit, Father J. Nobili (who was stationed at Fort Vancouver at the time), "baptized upwards of sixty persons, during a dangerous sickness which raged in the country."¹¹⁰⁶ In a separate encounter in New Caledonia, Nobili met "fifty Indians [who] had come down from the Rocky Mountains, and patiently awaited [his] arrival for nineteen days, in order to have the consolation of witnessing the ceremony of baptism."¹¹⁰⁷ Others traveled similar distances, such as those Indians encountered by Father J. B. Z. Bolduc, who journeyed to Whidbey Island from the mainland. Seeing the priest they "threw themselves on their knees" and claimed to have walked four days so that their children could receive the baptism and so please the "Master in Heaven."¹¹⁰⁸

Some indigenous communities offered material goods in exchange for the sacrament. De Smet may have even received animal pelts. He recalled one visit to a native village in which "one hundred children were presented for baptism, and eleven old men borne to me on skins, seemed only awaiting regenerating waters."¹¹⁰⁹ One of the elders spoke to the Jesuit saying that

Encounters: Father De Smet and the Indians of the Rocky Mountains (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 23-24.

¹¹⁰⁶ De Smet, *Oregon Missions and Travels*, 130.; Letter of J. Nobili, Fort Colville, 1 June 1846, in *Oregon Missions and Travels Over the Rocky Mountains, in 1845-1846*, by P. J. De Smet (New York: Edward Dunigan, 1847), 274. Nobili added that "the majority of those who received baptism, died with all the marks of sincere conversion." Ibid. Before one could receive the sacrament of baptism, one had to recite a statement of faith. What follows is a sample of F. N. Blanchet's profession of faith and abjuration for Columbia natives: "Yes, we believe in God, who created all things. Yes, we believe in Jesus Christ, who came to redeem us. Yes, we believe He has made seven medicines to make us good. Yes, we believe He has made but one road to heaven. Yes, we promise to keep and follow the road of the blackgown, which is that Jesus Christ made. Yes, we renounce the devil, his thoughts, words and deeds. Yes, we desire to know, love and serve the great master of all things." Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 112.

¹¹⁰⁷ Nobili, 1 June 1846, 276.

¹¹⁰⁸ Letter of J. B. Z. Bolduc, Cowlitz, 15 February 1843, in *Mission of the Columbia*, ed. Edward J. Kowrach (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon, 1979), 113.

¹¹⁰⁹ Letter of P. J. De Smet, Kalispel Bay, 7 August 1845, in *Oregon Missions and Travels Over the Rocky Mountains, in 1845-1846*, by Father P. J. De Smet (New York: Edward Dunigan, 1847), 189.

the "Great Spirit has taken pity on me, I have received baptism, I return him thanks for this favor."¹¹¹⁰ Father Point, who accompanied De Smet in many of his travels throughout the Trans-Mississippi, may have had a similar experience. In addition to his primary duty as a missionary, he was also a talented painter who was particularly adept at depicting scenes of religious encounter.¹¹¹¹ In several of these paintings, the evidence of transaction is salient. The most vivid example is an image of a Indian camp, where the entire community surrounds two Black Robes, touching them and listening to them with undivided attention. Off to the side of the crowd stands a white horse, which, according to one interpretation, was a gift offered to the priests in exchange for the ritual of baptism.¹¹¹²

The desire for baptism (and other Catholic ritual performances) had much to do with its association with spirit protection, particularly in the areas of physical healing and warfare. Clergy regularly informed natives that the diseases they experienced such as smallpox, yellow fever, and malaria were scourges from God meant to punish them for their "abominable lives."¹¹¹³ In response, many deduced that the rituals of the Black Robes would placate the anger

¹¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹¹ Many of Point's works include natives performing Catholic rituals before an altar in a makeshift sanctuary or Black Robes giving Indians instruction or administering a sacrament of the Church, typically either baptism, the Eucharist, penance, or the anointing of the sick and dying. Other paintings portray natives seeking out the "medicine" of the priests such as one in which a woman clasping a child wades across a flowing stream determined to have her son or daughter baptized before sickness consumed its young life, or the one in which a native man wearing snowshoes and a full suit made of leather enters the tent of a priest in search of baptism, having traveled a long distance in the inclement weather of the Rocky Mountain winter.

¹¹¹² Donnelly, *Wilderness Kingdom*, 50-51.

¹¹¹³ *Notices and Voyages*, 18. The relationship between disease and spirituality had existed in tribal mythologies for some time. De Smet described one of the previous beliefs of the Coeur d'Alene: "The first white man they saw in their country, wore a calico shirt spotted all over with black and white, which to them appeared like the smallpox, he also wore a white coverlet. The Coeur d'Alene imagined that the spotted shirt was the great manitou himself - the great master of that alarming disease, the smallpox - and that the white coverlet was the great manitou of snow; that if they could obtain possession of these, and pay them divine honors, their nation would never afterwards be visited by that dreadful scourge; and their winter hunts be rendered successful by an abundant fall of snow. They accordingly offered him in exchange for these, several of their best horses. The bargain was eagerly

of this powerful spirit and, in so doing, "had the power not only to purify the soul, but to restore health to the body."¹¹¹⁴ Of course, Catholic ritual served other uses, as well. Father De Smet noted how the Flathead believed that the medicine of the priests was "'strongest of all,'" and could protect them in battle. The Jesuit offered one such anecdote where,

In 1840, when threatened by a formidable band of Black-Feet, amounting to nearly eight hundred warriors, the Flat-Heads and Pends-d'Oreilles, scarcely numbering sixty, betook themselves to prayer, imploring the aid of Heaven, which alone could save them in the unequal contest. Confident of success, they rose from their knees in the presence of their enemies, and engaged the overwhelming odds against them. Their battle lasted five days. The Black-Feet were defeated, leaving eighty warriors dead upon the field; while the Flat-Heads and Pends-d'Oreilles sustained a loss of only one man.¹¹¹⁵

In addition to baptism and prayer, making the sign of the cross was thought to possess significant power. Father Point mentioned that "they have great faith in the sign of the cross."¹¹¹⁶ He went on to recount a rather macabre story where a "father and mother [bent] over the cradle of an only son, who was about to die. They made their best efforts to suggest to him to make the sign of the cross, and the child having raised his little hand to his forehead, made the consoling sign and immediately expired."¹¹¹⁷

closed by the white man." Letter of P. J. De Smet, Valley of St. Mary's, 10 August 1846, in *Oregon Missions and Travels Over the Rocky Mountains, in 1845-1846*, by Father P. J. De Smet (New York: Edward Dunigan, 1847), 305.

¹¹¹⁴ Letter of Nicholas Point, Village of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, 1845, in *Oregon Missions and Travels Over the Rocky Mountains, in 1845-1846*, ed. Father P. J. De Smet (New York: Edward Dunigan, 1847), 318. As an example of yet another form of exchange, we see periodically Catholic missionaries using indigenous medicines to help cure certain ailments. For example, Sister Loyola commented in an 1844 letter how some of the priests "conformed to the way of life" of the Indians at least with respect to some organic medicinal remedies for maladies such as the severe cold. *Notice sur le Territoire et sur la Mission de l'Oregon, Suivie de Quelques Lettres des Soeurs de Notre-Dame Établies à Saint Paul du Wallamette* (Bruxelles: Bureau de Publication de la Bibliothèque d'Education, 1847), 124.

¹¹¹⁵ Letter of P. J. De Smet, Flat-Head Camp, Yellowstone River, 6 September 1846, in *Oregon Missions and Travels Over the Rocky Mountains, in 1845-1846*, ed. Father P. J. De Smet (New York: Edward Dunigan, 1847), 326-327.

¹¹¹⁶ Point, 1845, 318.

¹¹¹⁷ Ibid.

It was not only these outward performances that had value in the Catholic mission economy; in some cases, religious knowledge was itself a commodity. According to Bolduc, a chief on Vancouver Island diligently sought out men who "taught the knowledge of [the] Master," while another ordered his slaves to cut timber to build the visiting priests a house in exchange for instruction in their medicine.¹¹¹⁸ Similarly, Modeste Demers recorded an encounter with a young chief known as William, "who had shown himself so generous and zealous for the building of the chapel."¹¹¹⁹ As a sign of gratitude, the priest offered him "ample recompense through enlightenment with which God illuminated his understanding, and the docility with which he yielded to the observance of the faith."¹¹²⁰ The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, who established a boarding school in the Willamette Valley in the mid-1840s, experienced the same commodification of religious knowledge among Indian and Metis women. Sister Loyola noted in her correspondence that by the late summer of 1844 their institute had already nineteen pupils ranging from ages 16 to 60, and indicated that the "poor savages are eager for instruction."¹¹²¹

Access to religious knowledge depended heavily on the use of creative strategies. Catholic missionaries had very little fluency in indigenous languages and very little understanding of indigenous cosmologies and mythologies, but after a little time in the region, they soon realized that, in the words of Father Point, natives throughout the Columbia "learned

¹¹¹⁸ Bolduc to Cayenne, 15 February 1844, 150.; Letter of J. B. Z. Bolduc, Cowlitz, 15 February 1843, in *Mission of the Columbia*, ed. Edward J. Kowrach (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon, 1979), 115.

¹¹¹⁹ Modeste Demers to the Bishop of Quebec, Fort Alexandria, New Caledonia, 20 December 1842, in *Notices and Voyages of the famed Quebec Mission to the Pacific Northwest*, trans. Carl Landerholm (Portland, OR: Champoege Press, 1956), 162.

¹¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹¹²¹ *Notice sur le Territoire*, 122. In her own correspondence, Sister Aloysia affirmed that their early successes were a good "omen" for their future prospects and added that the inhabitants of the region (both indigenous and Canadian) "desire[d] to hear the word of God." Ibid., 135.

more quickly through their eyes than through their ears."¹¹²² Utilizing material objects and visualizations that appealed to indigenous consumers would prove to be the most efficacious means of saturating the local market. In the spring of 1839, while ministering in the Cowlitz area, F. N. Blanchet manufactured his first visual aid, dubbed the Sahale Stick by local natives, which translates from the Chinook as "Stick from Heaven." It was a square rod made of wood and contained carved markings to represent the 40 centuries of biblical history prior to the birth of Christ, the 33 years of Jesus' ministry, the cross, and the 18 centuries and 39 years of church history to the present date.¹¹²³ For Blanchet, "the plan was a great success." He remarked that "after eight days explanation, the chief and his companions became masters of the subject; and...they started for home well satisfied, with a square rule thus marked."¹¹²⁴

The Sahale stick would later develop into a more sophisticated and cost-effective mnemonic tool known as the Catholic Ladder. Also produced at the Cowlitz mission by Blanchet in the early 1840s, the Ladder (or "Big Paper" as it was labeled by some natives) was a "historical and chronological chart of religion, from the creation of the world down to the present day," marking many of the same moments in biblical and church history as the Sahale Stick, but in a format more appropriate for ecclesiastical pedagogy.¹¹²⁵ Blanchet "found [it] very useful in

¹¹²² Donnelly, *Wilderness Kingdom*, 12.

¹¹²³ Philip M. Hanley, *History of the Catholic Ladder*, ed. Edward J. Kowrach (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1993), 18. Blanchet's more detailed account of the creation of the Sahale Stick: "The great difficulty was now to give them an idea of religion so plain and simple as to command their attention, and which they could retain in their minds and carry back with them to their tribes [making their product more accessible]. In looking for a plan the Vicar General [Blanchet himself] imagined that by representing on a square stick, the forty centuries before Christ by 40 marks; the thirty three years of our Lord by 33 points, followed by a cross; and the eighteen centuries and thirty nine years since, by 18 marks and 39 points, would pretty well answer his design, in giving him a chance to show the beginning of the world, the creation, the fall of angels, of Adam, the promise of a Savior, the time of his birth, and his death upon the cross, as well as the mission of the Apostles." *Historical Sketches*, 84-85.

¹¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹¹²⁵ Blanchet, *The Key to the Catholic Ladder*, 1. It was not uncommon for a Ladder to be 6 feet by 15 inches like the one described by Blanchet in Tsalakom's village. Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 108. There are

imparting instruction, as many of the neophytes did not understand French sufficiently to be instructed in that language," and at places like Fort Nisqually it was particularly useful in teaching the women and children their prayers and "explaining the catechism."¹¹²⁶ Overall, the impetus behind the creation of the Catholic Ladder was, in the words of Blanchet, the "impending necessity of infusing into these untutored mind, an idea of religion, at once definite and accurate; one so plain, clear and easy, as to command and bind down their attention."¹¹²⁷

Both the Sahale Stick and Ladder became highly-prized goods within the Catholic mission economy. This should come as little surprise, given that the objects were, according to Modeste Demers, "suited to catch the eye of the savages."¹¹²⁸ Their outward appeal, combined with native inclinations toward recognizing the sacred quality of material objects, made the new talismans attractive.¹¹²⁹ According to Larry Cebula, "the first ladders were sketched by hand, but the demand was such that the fathers could not keep up."¹¹³⁰ In 1842, De Smet had a batch of the ladders printed in St. Louis. These ladders were popular gifts to the Plateau Indians, who used

even reports of some being as large as 10 feet by 2.5 Feet.

¹¹²⁶ Ibid., 92, 96.

¹¹²⁷ Blanchet, *The Key to the Catholic Ladder*, 1-2. Blanchet noted elsewhere that the Ladder was "useful to all, but especially to the young, to whom it supplie[d] a catechism of the most impressive form." Ibid., 2. The document offered a visual supplement to the oral teachings of the priests so as to have the Church's teachings "stamped upon the memory in such a form as never to be blotted away." Ibid. In short, it served as a means for the "learner to master the elementary history of religion, and teach...him Christian doctrine, namely: all that he is to believe, to do, to ask, and to receive." Ibid.

¹¹²⁸ *Notices and Voyages*, 40.

¹¹²⁹ In his travels throughout the region, Blanchet encountered a chief in 1842 who two years prior "came out victorious" in a battle against a rival community. Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 131. He attributed the triumph to "his chaplet and Catholic Ladder," both of which Blanchet had given him sometime earlier. Ibid.

¹¹³⁰ Other priests manufactured items that were not explicitly religious but were interpreted so by natives. Father J. B. Z. Bolduc was mechanically-minded and was able to build an "electrical machine" at Fort Vancouver, which the local indigenes viewed as a sign of great shamanic power and concluded that the medicine which he offered was quite strong. Letter of J.B.Z. Bolduc, Cowlitz, 7 October 1843, in *Mission of the Columbia*, ed. Edward J. Kowrach (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon, 1979), 102-103. Not only did Bolduc manufacture sophisticated machinery, he also built coffins, especially during periods of sweeping epidemic such as dysentery or ague. Ibid., 126.

the sketches to teach bible stories to one another."¹¹³¹ It was not uncommon for the ladders to be, in the words of De Smet, "passed from one nation to another," or for some chiefs to remanufacture the Sahale Stick to use as a gift for nearby tribes as a demonstration of wealth and power, or simply to serve as a gesture of peace.¹¹³² Not only did the stick and ladder assist in explaining the catechism, its distribution and redistribution among natives allowed Catholic clergy to penetrate further into the region's religious market than their numbers and resources would have otherwise allowed.¹¹³³

The commodification of these objects also led to their frequent use in exchanges between priests and natives. Some were impromptu like the transaction experienced by Blanchet in the Summer of 1840 in which he gave a copy of the Catholic Ladder to a chief named Netlam, who then "offered to carry [the Jesuit] to Nesqually in his large wooden canoe."¹¹³⁴ Others were more deliberate and sometimes included the exchange of the stick or ladder for other local commodities. For instance, during Demers' trip to New Caledonia, he encountered a tribe who was enamored by his "historic ladder" and as a way of demonstrating their appreciation for such a document the chief gave the priest "two beaver skins."¹¹³⁵ And to express his gratitude for the

¹¹³¹ Larry Cebula, *Plateau Indians and the Quest for Spiritual Power, 1700-1850* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 113.

¹¹³² De Smet, *Oregon Missions*, 131.

¹¹³³ According to De Smet, when Blanchet made it to Cowlitz, a group of twelve Indians journeyed "from a distance of nearly one hundred miles in order to see and hear him." Ibid., 128. The native visitors "remained at Cowlitz long enough to acquire a knowledge of the principal mysteries of our faith, and to understand the use of the ladder which Mr. Blanchet gave them, set about instructing their tribe as soon as they returned home, and not without considerable success." Ibid. During his travels the following year, Father Blanchet encountered several Indians, in the vicinity of Whitby island, who "were acquainted with the sign of the cross, and knew several pious canticles." Ibid., 129.

¹¹³⁴ Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 113.

¹¹³⁵ Modeste Demers to Monseigneur of Juliopolis, Cowlitz, 10 November 1841, in *Notices and Voyages of the famed Quebec Mission to the Pacific Northwest*, trans. Carl Landerholm (Portland, OR: Champoege Press, 1956), 106.

furs, Demers "had them sit down" and "distributed some tobacco to them, and there was great smoking."¹¹³⁶ Such episodes suggest that indigenous peoples viewed the Sahale Sticks and especially the Catholic Ladders as comparable with other merchandise circulated throughout the larger regional economy. With this in mind, it is not surprising that an American sea captain, while visiting Whidbey Island, would come across a local chief who had in his possession "'a chest of valuables...the contents of which were shown by him with no small pride, and consisted of a long roll of paper, on which were many representations of European houses and churches, together with rude sketches of the heavenly bodies.'"¹¹³⁷

The stick and ladder were important goods within the Catholic mission economy, but they were not the only items of value. Crosses were also desirable.¹¹³⁸ Both priests and natives viewed material objects - especially the cross as the premier symbol of the Black Robe's medicine - as having power sufficient enough to heal and protect the individual and corporate body. In times of rampant disease and mounting colonial tensions, there were few better charms. The strong demand among indigenous communities prompted priests, such as F. N. Blanchet, to bless little wooden crosses and distribute them among tribes throughout the Columbia with the expectation they would be displayed in people's homes.¹¹³⁹ Also displayed were Catholic medallions given as prizes for such feats as being the first catechumen to learn all of the prayers

¹¹³⁶ Ibid., 107.

¹¹³⁷ Hanley, *History of the Catholic Ladder*, 31-32.

¹¹³⁸ From the earliest moments of the Catholic missionary presence, natives witnessed clergy positioning these strange wooden shapes in the ground, as if staking a claim to the land itself. Indeed, according to Patricia Seed, planting the cross was, historically speaking, the ritual of procession for Francophile priests as opposed to Anglophile Protestants who announced ownership through the construction of physical borders and the cultivation of the soil. For more see Patricia Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World, 1422-1640* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹¹³⁹ *Notices and Voyages*, 13. In some instances, such distribution was anything but an egalitarian affair. An 1841 report noted that Father Blanchet "made a distribution of images and crosses of different values, according to the quality of the persons [receiving them]." Ibid., 46.

and canticles.¹¹⁴⁰ These amulets, like the crosses, were cherished items. According to ethnohistorian Jacqueline Peterson, it was not uncommon for them to be "sewn by Indian people to their clothes," and quoting the words of Father Mengarini, the loss of such a token among the Salish would make "even grown men cry in sorrow."¹¹⁴¹

Another popular devotional object was the Rosary. Natives (at least those not already dedicated to the Protestant cause) viewed them as a strong source of spirit power and sought to acquire a pair as quickly as possible. Similar to the crosses and medals, the demand for Rosaries was palpable. Only after a few months in the region, Father Demers had "distributed fifty of them in a short time" to those gathered near Fort Vancouver, while the Jesuit, De Smet, gave away "many thousand pairs of beads" and took comfort in knowing that they were "recited in each family."¹¹⁴² Furthermore, clergy periodically gifted flags to chiefs who would then display the banner in the middle of the camp as a means of demonstrating their kinship with the Black Robes.¹¹⁴³ Following an encounter with Blanchet, a headman named Pophoh "left very pleased with a red flag having a cross in the center," which the community liked to see "floating in the middle of their village, to the great regret of the Protestant ministers who would [have] like[d] to strike it down."¹¹⁴⁴ In comparison to rosaries, these flags were a rare find and therefore treasured even more by those fortunate enough to obtain one. There are few better illustrations of their

¹¹⁴⁰ Donnelly, *Wilderness Kingdom*, 155, 159.

¹¹⁴¹ Peterson, *Sacred Encounters*, 103.

¹¹⁴² Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 67.; P. J. De Smet to S. Parmentier, St. Ignatius, 25 July 1846, in *Oregon Missions and Travels Over the Rocky Mountains, in 1845-1846*, by Father P. J. De Smet, (New York: Edward Dunigan, 1847), 291-292.

¹¹⁴³ According to Blanchet, "a native does not believe himself belonging to us and attached to our faith until he is covered with [our] insignia." F. N. Blanchet to the Bishop of Quebec, St. Paul of Walamette, 17 February 1842, in *Notices and Voyages of the famed Quebec Mission to the Pacific Northwest*, trans. Carl Landerholm (Portland, OR: Champoege Press, 1956), 79.

¹¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 79.

value than the interment of one neophyte chief whose body, Father Point noted, "was wrapped in the prayer flag, that is, in the flag which was raised every Sunday to announce the Day of the Lord."¹¹⁴⁵

In many ways, the exchange of religious objects between Catholic missionaries and Columbia natives was more robust in comparison to their Protestant counterparts for reasons that had much to do with the iconoclastic posture of Reform theology. This was something Blanchet had difficulty comprehending. He found it preposterous that a Protestant minister "pretended to teach the poor Indians Christ crucified, without showing them a cross!!! Great God!" he added.¹¹⁴⁶ Although he did not understand, Blanchet was more than willing to let these Protestants continue their strategy, which in his view, crippled their chances of capturing the attention of local indigenes so enamored with imported liturgical instruments. Of one tribe, Blanchet admitted that "the sight of altar, vestments, sacred vessels, and great ceremonies were drawing their attention a great deal more than the cold, unavailable and lay service of Bro. Waller [a nearby Methodist missionary]."¹¹⁴⁷ He added rather triumphantly that "9 families out of ten had been rescued from Bro. Waller."¹¹⁴⁸ Upset about losing some of his "flock"; the Methodist pulled down the red flag raised by Pohpoh to the "great displeasure" of many of those

¹¹⁴⁵ Donnelly, *Wilderness Kingdom*, 43. Similar to what we see among indigenous Hawaiians, the process of interment among Columbia natives reflected their understanding of the interrelationship between the material and spiritual worlds. For example, Demers observed that when a native died, especially a chief, his kin would "lay by his side his gun, his powder horn and his bag," and "valuable objects such as, wooden plates, axes, kettles, bows, arrows, skins &c., [were] placed upon sticks around his canoe." Modeste Demers to F. C. Cazeault, Cowlitz, 5 February 1840, in *Historical Sketches of the Catholic Church in Oregon during the Past Forty Years*, by F. N. Blanchet (Portland, OR: 1878), 103.

¹¹⁴⁶ Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 137.

¹¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* Sister Loyola remarked in here correspondence that the only way Protestants were able to gain converts was through bribery. *Notice sur le Territoire*, 112.

around him.¹¹⁴⁹ Despite their best efforts to "distribute Bibles in profusion," Modeste Demers determined that "the forest does not bear fruit to suit the ministers, especially if they are forced to set up a comparison with the Catholic missions."¹¹⁵⁰

Notwithstanding their perceived failures, the Protestant presence was anything but innocuous in the minds of Catholic clergy. Above all, priests viewed Protestant missionaries as more interested in "secure[ing] large tracts of land, large bands of cattle, and...enlarg[ing] their numerous commercial speculations," than they were in converting native souls.¹¹⁵¹ In the words of F. N. Blanchet, clergy such as Daniel Lee and J. H. Frost were little more than "slave[s] to mammon" and took very little time for them to transform into "land-sharks and horse-jockeys."¹¹⁵² Moreover, priests such as Blanchet chastised these "propagandists of Protestant error" for being entirely too concerned with their own leisure and well-being, citing that when these missionaries discovered they were unable to live affordably among the Flatheads without much sacrifice, they "quietly 'folded their tents' and left [them] in the mist of that pagan darkness in which they found them enshrouded."¹¹⁵³ He went so far as to label these clergy as nothing

¹¹⁴⁹ Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 121. Elsewhere, Blanchet suggested that the only way Protestant ministers abiding near Fort Vancouver could compete with Catholics was by "singing with their wives in their rooms late in the evenings,...drawing some of the ladies and children to hear them." *Ibid.*, 72.

¹¹⁵⁰ *Notices and Voyages*, 33. Even outside parties commented on the success of the Catholic enterprise in the comparison to that of the Protestants. Commander Charles Wilkes of the United States Navy observed during an exploratory voyage to the Oregon coast that since leaving the Catholic mission in the Willamette and visiting the ones maintained by the Methodists he saw no indication of natives who had been inculcated with "good-habits and [the] teaching of the word of God." Charles Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition during the Years 1838, 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842*, vol. 4 (New York: G. P. Putnam & Co., 1856), 352.

¹¹⁵¹ Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 10.

¹¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 12-13. He added that "these gentlemen tell us that the Oregon mission involved an expenditure of forty-two thousand dollars in a single year, and no wonder, when there were sixty-eight persons connected with the 'mission' each of them represented by a respectable array of figures on the yearly pay-roll." *Ibid.*, 12.

¹¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 11. Striking a similar tone, Blanchet concluded that the "temporal welfare of the well-fed Protestant missionaries was far more important in their own estimation than any spiritual comforts which they pretended to extend to the Indians." *Ibid.*, 18.

more than "tourists" wanting to see "a new country and participate...in strange adventures," which represented a stark juxtaposition with Catholic missionaries who, according to Blanchet, "never abandoned" their labors despite insurmountable hardship.¹¹⁵⁴

Such preconceptions fueled the Catholic notion that Protestants had theologically and morally corrupted local denizens. These "holy horse-traders," as one priest put it, allowed their "trading propensities [to] overcome their religious zeal, until finally the cause of Christianity was wrecked on the shoals of aggrandisement."¹¹⁵⁵ Another report criticized their emphasis on agriculture by accusing the Americans of "exploiting [the] virgin ground for the profit of their false doctrines."¹¹⁵⁶ What horrified priests the most was the importation of Protestant views on baptism as not being essential to one's eternal salvation. In his journal, Blanchet argued that "to deny the necessity of baptism is to deny the existence of original sin; and to deny the existence of original sin is to deny the necessity of a Redemption, and declare that religion is a fable."¹¹⁵⁷ The Oblate added that "alas, such was nevertheless the horrible and damnable doctrine which the Methodist ministers of Wallamette preached."¹¹⁵⁸ To make matters worse, an 1841 report mentioned that these "Bible colporteurs" also had distributed copies of the sensationalist novella, *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk*, which according to one priest "inspired...a mistrust of

¹¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 11-12.

¹¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 14, 17.

¹¹⁵⁶ *Notices and Voyages*, 29.

¹¹⁵⁷ Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 105. Similarly, Father Demers argued that the "absence of [Catholic] missionaries, made necessary by the vast extent of the country they must ravel over, the latitude given to morals by the [Protestant] ministers, and the prejudices inspired by them against the black robes are the expedients of the spirit of error for dragging into heresy these tribes." *Notices and Voyages*, 33.

¹¹⁵⁸ Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 105.

the [Catholic] missionaries" among some local natives and even Canadians.¹¹⁵⁹

Reversing the effects of the Protestant program necessitated a wide range of tactics. First, there was the ladder. In addition to marking the important developments in biblical and church history, the mnemonic device also symbolized the birth of Protestantism as a withered branch. Apparently, such an illustration was effective in persuading some natives of the counterfeit nature of the Protestant faith. Blanchet mentioned the Clackmas chief, Pohpoh, who "was a Methodist,....but on looking at the Ladder and seeing the crooked road of Protestantism made by men in the 16th century, he at once, abjured Methodism, to embrace the straight road made by Jesus Christ."¹¹⁶⁰ The same priest wrote to the Bishop of Quebec about another chief named Tamakoun who told the priest that "he had only been two Sundays to hear Minister Perkins, and that, having seen our ladder since 1839, he had constantly refused since then all promises from the Methodist side."¹¹⁶¹ The success of the Catholic Ladder in deterring Indians from Protestantism played a large part in the decision by Spalding and Lee to create their own versions of the visual aid in hopes it would somehow dissuade these very same Indians from receiving baptism into the Catholic Church. In some cases, the two were even displayed side-by-side with both Catholic and Protestant clergy present, allowing natives to make the most

¹¹⁵⁹ *Notices and Voyages*, 35, 54. Blanchet had to focus much of his attention on "prov[ing] the work to be a tissue of falsehoods and calumnies," and in response, the Canadians ire toward the Methodists grew. Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 91. "The Methodists, discovering that their efforts to malign their Catholic neighbors were recoiling upon their own heads," Blanchet wrote, "they quietly withdrew the vile book which caused so much trouble." Ibid.

¹¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 119. Methodist missionaries Henry Perkins and Alvin Waller even attempted to persuade a chief referred as Pophoh to convert back to Protestantism but he "remained firm," saying "No....I can't change; now my eyes and ears are open, since the priest has spoken to me." Blanchet to the Bishop of Quebec, 17 February 1842, 95. Similarly, Demers used the Catholic Ladder to "bring [the Canadians] back from the erroneous road of Protestantism." Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 105. He even went so far as to "relate to the natives the fifteen centuries prior to that epoch of error when vicious men had dared to attack the wonderful work of Jesus Christ, in order to substitute the concepts of their pride-corrupted hearts." *Notices and Voyages*, 45.

¹¹⁶¹ Blanchet to the Bishop of Quebec, 17 February 1842, 89.

informed decision regarding which imported doctrine they preferred.¹¹⁶²

The conversion of Pohpoh and Tamakoun was indicative of another tactic used by priests throughout the Columbia: counter-Reformation. Priests actively proselytized Protestant neophytes (especially chiefs), to the chagrin of Methodist and ABCFM missionaries who claimed that they deliberately "enter[ed] into [their] sheepfold" and stole what they had long labored for.¹¹⁶³ Priests, on the other hand, envisioned their methods as entirely justified, given that the Protestant missionary in general was "not a true shepherd," but more akin to a wolf in sheep's clothing.¹¹⁶⁴ Indeed, emotions swelled in this competitive relationship and there are few better examples than Blanchet's brief encounter with the Reverend Alvin Waller. The priest recalled that,

After the mass and instruction, while I was surrounded by many natives, I saw the minister Waller enter, followed by his farmer. He gave evidence of his displeasure that I came, as an intruder, he said, to preach to the natives of his jurisdiction, whom he was accustomed to teach every Sunday. My answer was that my mission on the Columbia did except any part of the country; that, not considering him as a true messenger, my duty was to disabuse the natives of the false doctrines that he was teaching them. He went from one point to another; I answered him patiently; but I noticed that he was serious and hurt.¹¹⁶⁵

¹¹⁶² Blanchet wrote in his correspondence about a chief named Katamus who, upon encountering the priest, went "to get the evangelical ladder of his minister and spread it out beside [Blanchet's]. The natives [saw] with their eyes that the religion of this poor [minister] does not begin with J[esus] C[hrist]....Many abandoned him from that moment and sent word to him to come and look for his ladder." Ibid., 85.

¹¹⁶³ Ibid., 84. Priests also used the authority of these chiefs. Upon their arrival at Fort Colville, Father Demers recalled encountering natives from "five different tribes," who "with an attentive eagerness...listened to the Word of God, which being translated by the chiefs, acquired a new force and an additional weight." Modeste Demers to C. F. Cazeau, Vancouver, Oregon, 1 March 1839, in *Historical Sketches of the Catholic Church in Oregon during the Past Forty Years*, by F. N. Blanchet (Portland, OR: 1878), 56.

¹¹⁶⁴ Blanchet to the Bishop of Quebec, 17 February 1842, 84. With Methodism so deeply entrenched in the Willamette Valley, the Jesuit, De Smet, argued that "nothing short of the most arduous toil and constant vigilance on the part of the Catholic clergymen, could have withdrawn so many individuals from the danger of spiritual seduction." De Smet, *Oregon Missions and Travels*, 127.

¹¹⁶⁵ Blanchet to the Bishop of Quebec, 17 February 1842, 85.

Following the altercation, Waller issued a formal complaint to James Douglas at Fort Vancouver and according to Blanchet, the Chief Trader "told his informant curtly that 'it was none of his business.'"¹¹⁶⁶ For priests such as Blanchet, challenging Protestant clergy before an audience of local natives worked to their advantage, especially when the minister presented himself as hot-tempered and territorial.

Finding opportunities for such confrontation motivated priests to shadow their counterparts wherever their ministry took them. In the Spring of 1839, a Methodist missionary named David Leslie "arrived at Cowlitz en route to Nesqually where he intended on establishing a mission among the Indians."¹¹⁶⁷ As Blanchet remembered, "this information at once prompted him to despatch [sic] an Indian express to Father Demers at Vancouver, asking him to proceed at once to Nesqually in order to plant the true seed in the hearts of the Indians there."¹¹⁶⁸ Evidently, the Nisqually mission was a success and Demers departed confident that there was a "very feeble chance for a Methodist mission there," and believing that Leslie "must have been greatly despondent at being witness to all he had seen."¹¹⁶⁹ Similarly in 1845, a rumor circulated throughout the Catholic ranks that ABCFM missionary Elkanah Walker planned to build a mission at Kettle Falls, along the Columbia. The Italian Jesuit, Father Ravalli, was immediately sent to the same location with instructions "to construct a rough chapel."¹¹⁷⁰

¹¹⁶⁶ Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 90.

¹¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 89. By 1844, Blanchet was confident that the "schemes of the Protestant ministers had been fought and nearly annihilated, especially at Nesqually, Vancouver, Cascades, Clackamas, and Wallamette Falls." *Ibid.*, 153.

¹¹⁷⁰ William N. Bischoff, S. J., *The Jesuits in Old Oregon, 1840-1940* (Caldwell, ID: Caxton Printers, 1945), 153. In his journal, Blanchet envisioned Ravalli's chapel and other efforts by fellow priests to block the diffusion of Protestant doctrine throughout the region as erecting a wall of separation between the natives and the Methodists. Blanchet to the Bishop of Quebec, 17 February 1842, 90.

By the end of the 1840s, the once stiff competition posed by Protestant missionaries began to wane. Much of this decline had to do with the killing of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman in 1847 and the subsequent hostilities between American settlers and Cayuse Indians. While these events only temporarily suspended some of the missionary work of Catholics, according to Blanchet, "very different were the effects of the murder and war upon the Presbyterian Missions of Wailatpu, Lapwai and Spokane. They had for effects their total destruction forever."¹¹⁷¹ To say that Catholic clergy interpreted the outcome of the violence against Protestants as a boon for their own cause is not an overstatement. As Blanchet wrote elsewhere, the massacre and conflict signaled the "fall of the Presbyterian missions," and "had the effect of increasing those of the Catholics by the establishment of St. Peter's at the Dalles, and converting five supposed Cayuse murderers [those found guilty for the killings at Wailatpu by dubious means] from Presbyterianism to Catholicism."¹¹⁷²

The price of this diminishing competition were the discrediting accusations from Protestant missionaries and settlers who claimed that Catholic clergy were responsible for inciting the violence. Upon hearing of the massacre, Father J.B.A Brouillet wasted little time in journeying to the scene of the crime to help bury the dead. He also "started in haste in order to meet and save Minister Spalding's life who was coming on that day from the Cayuse camp to the Doctor's house."¹¹⁷³ He reached Spalding in time to help plead for his life with one of the

¹¹⁷¹ Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 172. While in Hawaii years prior, Father Bolduc had a similar premonition that Protestantism on the Islands was "taking [its] last breath." Edward J. Kowrach, ed., *Mission of the Columbia* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon, 1979), 87.

¹¹⁷² Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 180. F. N. Blanchet's younger brother A.M.A. Blanchet agreed that the Whitman massacre, despite its heinous violence, did bring about the demise of the Protestant missions on the Columbia Plateau and for that he was thankful. Kowrach, *Journal of a Catholic Bishop*, 105.

¹¹⁷³ Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 166.

murderers and his translator, and, as a consequence, "was held responsible [by the Cayuse] for the escape of the minister," placing his own life in jeopardy.¹¹⁷⁴ However, according to Blanchet, Spalding was far from grateful. In his narrative he noted that "the minister...shutting his soul to all the noble sentiments of gratitude, and forgetting all its duties, accused the Bishop [Blanchet himself] and his clergy of having been the instigators of the horrible massacre."¹¹⁷⁵ Surrounded by a growing number of American Protestant migrants, the publication and popularization of Spalding's indictments (despite the refutations in Father Brouillet's 1848 pamphlet) placed "the Catholic Churches and establishments in the Wallamette Valley...in the greatest danger of being burnt down."¹¹⁷⁶ Such accusations even prompted one young chief named Edouard to interrupt a meeting with the Bishop of Walla Walla, in which he displayed in his hand a Catholic Ladder covered with blood. According to Brouillet, the young man "repeated [Whitman's] words when he showed it to them," saying, "you see this blood, it is to show to you that at present, because you have received the priests, this country will be covered with blood, and there will be nothing else but blood in the land."¹¹⁷⁷

Despite these (sometimes grotesque) scenes of contestation, Protestant/Catholic

¹¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 167-168. Historian Robert Burns suggests that the Jesuits' intervention in the conflicts between Euro-American and Indians had an economic effect. His premise is that the prices of durable goods (guns, ammunition, food, and other supplies) always increased during wartime, so by working as intermediaries to foster peace between quarrelling parties, the Jesuits were also working, inadvertently, to minimize inflation in the local market. Burns, *The Jesuits*, 272.

¹¹⁷⁵ Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 172. Many Protestants, Spalding included, ignored the positive impact Catholic clergy had on the return of the captives. In an attempt to broker the release of the Waiilatpu captives, Peter Ogden had the Cayuse and Nez Perce chiefs meet him at the Fort Walla Walla, along with the Bishop, A.M.A. Blanchet. Kowrach, *Journal of a Catholic Bishop*, 164. It was a British Chief Trader and a French-Canadian Bishop negotiating with Cayuse and Nez Perce chiefs for the release of American captives from a Protestant mission.

¹¹⁷⁶ Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 173.

¹¹⁷⁷ Kowrach, *Journal of a Catholic Bishop*, 163. According Father Brouillet, Marcus Whitman "spoke against the Catholic Ladder and said he would color it with blood to make the Indians see the persecution of the Catholics against the Protestants." Ibid., 150.

antipathies actually found little resonance within the fur trading culture of the Columbia. As historian Melinda Marie Jette reminds us, "strict adherence to sectarian and ethnic differences were the exceptions rather than the norm."¹¹⁷⁸ For former fur traders (who were also Catholic) to assist Protestant missionaries whenever possible and in turn request the missionaries hold worship in their homes was, by no means, uncommon in locations such as the Willamette, where pragmatism and necessity trumped doctrinal difference.¹¹⁷⁹ As Jette argues "the Protestant mission provided social, educational, and Christian religious services to the community that were initially more important than its denomination."¹¹⁸⁰ Even by the mid 1840s, Protestant/Catholic relations in the Willamette had yet to fully sour. In his correspondence, Demers noted that the American settlers living in the Valley expressed their appreciation for the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, whom they viewed as a positive force in the community for their success in educating women and children and their willingness to take in orphans.¹¹⁸¹

There was also some common ground between Protestant and Catholic mission economies. Despite other ideological differences, both ministers and priests underscored the central role of agriculture in the conversion process. Just as they had been for Methodist and ABCFM missionaries, agricultural metaphors proved to be a helpful way for Catholic clergy to

¹¹⁷⁸ Jette, "We Have Almost Every Religion," 227.

¹¹⁷⁹ One of the unifying issues between Protestant and Catholic missionaries was temperance. In his correspondence the Father Bolduc wrote regrettably that local denizens "have begun to manufacture [alcohol] here," and it is "going to do the country incalculable ill." J.B.Z. Bolduc to Bishop Turgeon, Walamette, 19 November 1844, in *Mission of the Columbia*, ed. Edward J. Kowrach (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon, 1979), 129. He added that "already a good number of our old Canadian voyageurs have felt their former passion for intoxicating liquors reawaken and it is to be feared that they will sacrifice all to satisfy it." Ibid.

¹¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹¹⁸¹ *Notice sur le Territoire*, 166. It also bears mentioning that amid this Protestant/Catholic cooperation was ongoing inter-Catholic conflict. Historian Wilfred Schoenberg writes that F. N. Blanchet "regarded the Jesuits...with unfriendly eyes," especially when he became the Archbishop of Oregon, while the Jesuit, Anthony Langlois "had been bitterly critical" of F. N. Blanchet, of which Demers "complained to Quebec" that his colleagues divisiveness was "disgraceful." Schoenberg, *A History of the Catholic Church*, 28, 83. Such infighting was reminiscent of the discord among ABCFM missionaries, particularly Henry Spalding and Asa Smith.

articulate their calling and explain their labors. Phrases such as "producing fruit," "cultivating a new vineyard," and "reaping an abundant harvest," appeared frequently in priests' writings when describing their efforts to convert indigenous peoples.¹¹⁸² But it went beyond mere rhetoric. As with their Protestant counterparts, agricultural production served as the backbone of the Catholic mission economy (in terms of the subsistence it provided) and became a useful means by which to settle local natives, teach them the ethic of hard work, and ultimately bring them out of what many priests viewed as a perpetual state of poverty and starvation.¹¹⁸³

The cost of such an endeavor was enormous. In the light-hearted words of historian Wilfred Schoenberg, "plows, tools, seed, farm animals, nails, and other supplies [had] to be purchased from the Hudson's Bay Company, which did not take Hail Mary's in exchange."¹¹⁸⁴ The bills piled up quickly. The Catholic missions under the leadership of F. N. Blanchet became, as Schoenberg put it, "so deeply in debt that it would be many years before the debts

¹¹⁸² For example, upon reciting mass for the first time on Vancouver Island, Father Bolduc wrote in his correspondence, "May the blood of the Spotless Lamb, fertilize this barren land, and cause it to produce an abundant harvest." Bolduc to Cayenne, 15 February 1844, 151. It should be noted that many of the references to agriculture were paraphrases or even direct quotes from the biblical text such as the Latin phrase found in the correspondence of F. N. Blanchet, *Messis quidem multa, operarii autem pauci*, which translates as "the harvest is great, but the workers few." Blanchet to the Bishop of Quebec, 17 February 1842, 94.

¹¹⁸³ Similar to their Protestant competitors, the plan of Catholic missionaries such as Nicholas Point was to not only lift them from their current state of "paganism" but also assist in the "transition from dire poverty to great abundance" by introducing them "to a much more sedentary existence." Donnelly, *Wilderness Kingdom*, 43. However, for Point and others, this transition was secondary to baptism and was to proceed "little by little." Ibid. As a result, some Oblate missionaries found it necessary to hire Canadians who were not only religiously zealous but also had "some knowledge of agricultural matters" and could thus help in the training process. Ibid., 47. Having individuals who could tend to the "secular" operations of the mission was quite helpful, as many missionaries found the daily chores tedious and distracting from their spiritual labors. For instance, Sister Loyola complained in her correspondence that their mission's garden demanded a lot of attention and labor, which kept them busy. They were forced to "continually weed." *Notice sur le Territoire*, 166.

¹¹⁸⁴ Schoenberg, *A History of the Catholic Church*, 58. Still, the fact that Company personnel were willing to provide such provisions expedited the process and, in the larger picture, reduced costs, making a permanent Catholic presence in the region (at least in terms of professional clergy) a real possibility.

were liquidated."¹¹⁸⁵ Those who belonged to the Society of Jesus fared little better. According to historian Robert Burns, it was difficult for the Jesuits to "settle" Indian communities around the mission, mainly because they could not afford to supply instructors to teach Indians farming and animal husbandry, nor could they afford the expense of providing land, livestock, and tools.¹¹⁸⁶ Nevertheless, such a reality did not mean that all Jesuits were unsuccessful in this regard. Speaking of his mission among the Coeur-d'Alene, Father De Smet noted that in addition to having a magnificent chapel, it has "a large, cultivated field, of some two hundred acres."¹¹⁸⁷ The Jesuit added that the "Indians have learned to plough, sow, till the soil generally, milk cows (with both hands), and do all the duties incident to a farm."¹¹⁸⁸

Exhibiting this kind of behavioral "progress" served as an important currency. Adjusting to western conceptions of moral conduct became a means by which natives accessed the services of Catholic clergy, who saw in these external acts of accommodation a receptive audience. Sister Mary Aloysia recounted one episode where a chief urged a Black Robe to stay with his people. The priest responded by promising the chief that if he corrected his corruptions, he would stay. "The proposal was made," she wrote, "and his conduct became exemplary."¹¹⁸⁹ As with Protestants, Catholic missionaries desired to observe among the Indians they had baptized

¹¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁸⁶ Burns, *The Jesuits*, 51.

¹¹⁸⁷ S. J. De Smet to the editor of *Precis Historiques* (Brussels), University of St. Louis, 16 July 1857, in *Missions and Missionaries: A Series of Letters*, by P. J. De Smet (New York: Edward Dunigan and Brother, 1863), 289.

¹¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 290.

¹¹⁸⁹ Sister Mary Aloysia to Mother Constantine, St. Paul, Willamette, 3 March 1845, in *Early Catholic Missions in Old Oregon*, vol. 2, ed. Clarence B. Bagley (Seattle: Lowman & Hanford Company, 1932), 97.

the tangible mark of repentance in a timely manner, or discouraged, would just move on.¹¹⁹⁰

Natives throughout the Columbia determined that their renunciation of the authority of the shamans, as well as traditional practices such as polygamy, slavery, and what priests recognized as the wide range of "superstitious" rituals, was what needed to be offered to the Black Robes for their medicine and, especially early on, were more than willing to make the trade.¹¹⁹¹

Pity also served as a useful currency. In many indigenous communities to represent oneself as pitiful increased one's chances of acquiring gifts from wealthier kin or from spirit beings who were, in many mythologies, more apt to assist those who were exceptionally unfortunate.¹¹⁹² Many indigenes confidently employed a similar strategy when enticing Catholic clergy to settle among them. According to Demers, when Blanchet left a native village in the Cowlitz, the inhabitants commented to the nearby Canadians that "'the priests are going to stay with us; we are poor, and have nothing to give them.'"¹¹⁹³ Father Nobili experienced this disposition firsthand while traveling in the region alongside representatives of the HBC. He encountered "three old men," who "earnestly begged [the Jesuit] to 'take pity on them, and prepare them for heaven!'"¹¹⁹⁴ Fortunately for such natives, inducing Catholics to pity them took

¹¹⁹⁰ Priests even enjoyed seeing the "tangible mark" among children. Father Point recorded in his journal the story of one young child who confessed having "made a little companion cry by hitting him on the head with a toy." Donnelly, *Wilderness Kingdom*, 82. The Jesuit added that "as proof of his repentance, the child handed over the toy, which he valued highly." Ibid.

¹¹⁹¹ Certainly not all natives were willing to give up prior practices, especially when those of the Catholics were just as misguided. According to Father Bolduc, some exclaimed that "missionaries do not need to reproach them for their superstitions, since people that pretend to be civilized make more of them than they do." *Notices and Voyages*, 24.

¹¹⁹² For more on the use of pity in Northwest indigenous communities see Cebula, *Plateau Indians*, 13-14.

¹¹⁹³ Demers to Cazeau, 1 March 1839, 59.

¹¹⁹⁴ Nobili, 1 June 1846, 2.

little effort, given the preconceptions of most priests. In an 1845 letter, De Smet articulated a sentiment held by many of his contemporaries:

Poor, unfortunate Indians! They trample on treasures, unconscious of their worth, and content themselves with the fishery and chase. When these resources fail, they subsist upon roots and herbs; whilst they eye, with tranquil surprise, the white man examining the shining pebbles of their territory. Ah! they would tremble, indeed, could they learn the history of those numerous and ill-fated tribes that have been swept from their land, to make place for Christians who have made the poor Indians the victims of their rapacity.¹¹⁹⁵

The strong sympathy exhibited in the rhetoric and actions of Catholic clergy throughout the Columbia played into the hands of local Indians, who used pity to obtain the various commodities they desired.¹¹⁹⁶

Overall, the Catholic operations in the colonial Northwest pivoted on a series of commodities, currencies, competitions, and exchanges that integrated a wide range of local actors into a shared market economy. They were also dependent on a number of trans-regional relationships. To construct and maintain the Church's missions required the financial, material, and even spiritual support of organizations and individuals back home.

"An Enterprise so Vast and so Eminently Catholic": Begging Tours, Benefactors, and the Building of Trans-Regional Relationships

In *Rome in America* (2004), historian Peter D'Agostino argues that the identity of North American Catholicism was, contrary to the conventional narratives of American religious history, preeminently trans-national. While this thesis centers on the late nineteenth and early

¹¹⁹⁵ Letter of P. J. De Smet, Ford at Flat-Bow River, 2 September 1845, in *Oregon Missions and Travels Over the Rocky Mountains, in 1845-1846*, by P. J. De Smet (New York: Edward Dunigan, 1847), 203.

¹¹⁹⁶ For some priests, humor served as currency of sorts. Father Bolduc commented in an 1843 letter that "it is important to be kind to the Indians, to make them laugh...so as not to frighten them, and so give them a favorable impression of our religion." Letter of J. B. Z. Bolduc, Mission of the Cowlitz River, 6 March 1843, in *Mission of the Columbia*, ed. Edward J. Kowrach (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon, 1979), 17. He added that they are "generally gay and take teasing very well." Ibid.

twentieth centuries, it is equally applicable to Catholics of prior decades. By virtue of the Church's institutional structure and administrative protocols, Catholic clergy in the colonial Northwest operated within trans-regional networks that were better established and further reaching than those of their Protestant competitors. But the types of exchanges conducted within these networks were often the same. In their petitions for money, material goods, and prayer from the likes of Blanchet and Demers, one can clearly hear the echo of Lee's and Whitman's pleas for assistance. Although Catholic missionaries offered a moderately different product, they too discovered (just as Protestants had a few years prior and the HBC before them) that doing business in the Columbia required the deployment of every connection they had.

Itineration became one of the more worthwhile endeavors. Known as "begging tours," ecclesiastical representatives of the Oregon missions would sometimes leave the region for French Canada - as well as certain metropolitan centers in the northeastern United States and Europe - in hopes of garnering further support from Church societies, independent groups, and private donors. F. N. Blanchet's begging tour was by far the most remarkable. In the mid 1840s, the priest "received letters from Canada,...informing him that, upon the application of the Fifth Council of Baltimore, he had been appointed Vicar Apostolic of Oregon Territory, and that bulls to that effect,...had been despatched [sic] to him."¹¹⁹⁷ Instead of traveling to California for his consecration, he decided to conduct the ceremony in Montreal, after which he intended to return to Europe and there obtain "further reinforcement for his extensive mission."¹¹⁹⁸ He took passage aboard the HBC's *Columbia*, sailed to Honolulu, around Cape Horn, eventually making his way to London, where he stayed for ten days. From England he set sail for Boston and upon

¹¹⁹⁷ De Smet, *Oregon Missions and Travels*, 140.

¹¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

arrival, journeyed northward to Quebec and finally onto Montreal, where he received his commission as the Bishop of Drasa (the name given to the Columbia territory by the Holy See).¹¹⁹⁹ Blanchet then set out for Europe, once again, "to obtain...some assistant Bishops, to look for new missionaries and new sisters, and collect funds to enable him to buy the requisites for his vicariate, and pay the freight upon them and also the passages of the missionaries."¹²⁰⁰ In other words, the newly appointed Bishop needed investors. He first journeyed to Belgium, then on to Rome followed by Paris, Marseilles, and a host of other cities, including those in Prussia, Bavaria, and Austria. According to his narrative, he was "met everywhere with...warm sympathies," and added that "he was received in audience by their majesties the King and Queen of Belgium; by his majesty the King of Bavaria, by their I. M. the Emperor and Empress Mother, and his highnesses the Archduke Louis of Austria, and three times by his majesty Louis Philippe, King of France," who donated over 17,000 Francs.¹²⁰¹ When he finally returned to the Columbia, Blanchet had been absent for "two years and seven months."¹²⁰²

Jesuits also participated in these trans-regional begging tours. In the Fall of 1843, Father De Smet left for Europe, in his words, "to make further provision for the conversion and civilization of Oregon."¹²⁰³ He found the Association for the Propagation of the Faith to be particularly generous to the point of inspiring him to make appeals to the liberality of others,

¹¹⁹⁹ Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 154.

¹²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 155.

¹²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 157. Questions over the jurisdiction of the Oregon Vicariate reveal much about the region's fluid boundaries in the eyes of the Holy See. According to Wilfred Schoenberg, Bishop Signay recommended that the territory be placed under the jurisdiction of either the Bishop Rosati of St. Louis or the Bishop of Nicopolis [Rouchouze] who was the vicar apostolic of the Vicariate of East Oceania. The Bishop of Quebec went so far as to suggest that Rouchouze was "'better placed,' than himself or Rosati, since the most recent route from Canada to the Columbia was via South America and the Sandwich Islands." Schoenberg, *A History of the Catholic Church*, 78.

¹²⁰² Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 161.

¹²⁰³ De Smet, *Oregon Missions and Travels*, 135.

which in his estimation, "alone can furnish the means of conducting to a happy conclusion an enterprise so vast and so eminently Catholic."¹²⁰⁴ In addition to collecting further support, De Smet also acquired more laborers. When he finally returned to Fort Vancouver, the Jesuit had brought with him "four new Fathers; Rev. Fathers Ravalli, Accolti, Nobili, Vercruisse [all Italian], some lay brothers, and six Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur."¹²⁰⁵ Marketing the mission's project abroad (whether through sermons, lectures, or individual conversation), sometimes motivated clergy and laity alike to not only donate funds but also give of themselves.

Still, gaining greater financial support remained the most important objective. While much of the funding came from para-church organizations such as the Association for the Propagation of the Faith, some clergy collected from individual, affluent donors, who heard the plight of the mission and responded with munificent contributions.¹²⁰⁶ Priests stationed throughout the Columbia valued these monetary gifts especially and did their best to give these gracious patrons a return on their investments. Sometimes it was calculated in terms of the number of souls baptized or number of catechisms completed; at other times, it was more metaphysical. In the Summer of 1846, De Smet wrote a letter to one such donor, a Belgian woman living in Brooklyn, New York named S. Parmentier.¹²⁰⁷ In a show of gratitude, the Jesuit

¹²⁰⁴ S. J. De Smet to the Directors of the Association at Lyons, St. Louis, 10 June 1849, in *Life, Letters, and Travels of Father Pierre-Jean de Smet, S. J., 1801-1873*, vol. 3, ed. Hiram Martin Chittenden and Alfred Talbot Richardson (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1905), 1191.

¹²⁰⁵ Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 143.

¹²⁰⁶ Reliance of individual donors was even more crucial during periods of social upheaval in Europe, which tended to slow the stream of funds coming from established organizations. For example, A.M.A. Blanchet "received news [by way of the HBC's express] that all payment had stopped at the office [of] the Propagation of the Faith because of the troubles in France." Kowrach, *Journal of a Catholic Bishop*, 107. Having supplementary revenue was necessary if the mission hoped to avoid being buried further in debt.

¹²⁰⁷ Donors also came from Europe. In the summer of 1844, Father Blanchet "undertook the erection of an academy at Willamette, for which funds had been given by a Mr. Joseph Laroque of Paris." De Smet, *Oregon Missions and Travels*, 135.

had "given directions to the Indians...to recite, every week, the Rosary for...their great benefactresses."¹²⁰⁸ De Smet also took the opportunity to petition Parmentier for additional assistance in the form of "a flour and saw mill, a few more ploughs, with other agricultural implements, and carpenter's tools."¹²⁰⁹

Second only to hard currency were donations of material goods. De Smet argued that missionaries needed "adequate means" to instill civilization among natives and "if aided and assisted, in a proper situation, with agricultural implements, with schools, mills, blacksmiths, etc.,...thousands of the aboriginies might be reclaimed."¹²¹⁰ The Jesuit found the Indians of the Upper Columbia to be "very industrious" and claimed that if only they had the necessary equipment they would become successful stewards of the land, instead of having to dwell in a "perpetual Lent."¹²¹¹ He confirmed that "buffalo and beaver are becoming every year more scarce and will soon fail [the Indian] altogether," and that "we hope the providence of God will come to their relief and that means will be found to procure them implements and tools to settle them permanently."¹²¹² De Smet's pleas for material items did not fall on deaf ears. On several

¹²⁰⁸ De Smet to Parmentier, 25 July 1846, 291. Moreover, demonstrating at least some return served as means of easing concerns over the mishandling of funds. By the early 1840s it had become public knowledge that some Protestant societies had grown suspicious of the spending habits of some of their missionaries. In the words of Father Bolduc, they went so far as to "cut off the monies which had clothed these pretended propagators of the faith who occupied themselves only with commerce." Bolduc, 15 February 1843, 121. This was a scandal both Catholic clergy and their sponsors wanted to avoid. Father Blanchet even went out of his way to declare his intention to be "prudent, in spending our money, as possible, for pious objectives." F. N. Blanchet to the Bishop of Quebec, Willamette, 8 March 1843, in *Notices and Voyages of the famed Quebec Mission to the Pacific Northwest*, trans. Carl Landerholm (Portland, OR: Champoege Press, 1956), 173.

¹²⁰⁹ De Smet to Parmentier, 25 July 1846, 301.

¹²¹⁰ Letter of S. J. De Smet, Fort Vancouver, May 28, 1859, in *Life, Letters, and Travels of Father Pierre-Jean de Smet, S. J., 1801-1873*, vol. 3, ed. Hiram Martin Chittenden and Alfred Talbot Richardson (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1905), 973.

¹²¹¹ De Smet, 1 December 1861, 959.

¹²¹² Letter of S. J. De Smet, 1845, in *Life, Letters, and Travels of Father Pierre-Jean de Smet, S. J., 1801-1873*, vol. 3, ed. Hiram Martin Chittenden and Alfred Talbot Richardson (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1905), 995.

occasions, he acknowledged receiving "supplies of tools, seeds, groceries, clothing, &c...direct from Europe to the Columbia river," and rejoiced in knowing that these foreign wares would "steadily increase [the] welfare [of the Indians]." ¹²¹³

While the importation and circulation of "agricultural implements" bore some resemblance to the operations of the Protestant missions nearby, it was the importation and even exportation of religious artifacts that set the Catholic mission economy apart. It was routine for clergy to receive shipments from Canada or Europe containing boxes of "ornaments, images, crucifixes, rosaries, and...books." ¹²¹⁴ In one consignment, F. N. Blanchet even received "a beautiful folio edition of the bible presented by Rev. Antoine Parent, of the Seminary of Quebec, and which was greatly admired by all who saw it." ¹²¹⁵ Similar decorative pieces served as the region's primary religious export. According to historian Robert Carriker, it was not uncommon for priests to send ornate copies of the Sahale Stick and especially the Catholic Ladder back east as a gift in return for a generous donation or, if need be, [to] sell to the curious." ¹²¹⁶ Ladders circulated throughout European cities such as Brussels, Belgium and Paris, France, namely among the aristocracy who admired the exotic text as an *objet d'art* plucked from the savage wilderness. They even captured the attention of the Archdiocese of Quebec who under the leadership of Bishop Signay and with the support of the Association for the Propagation of the

¹²¹³ De Smet to the editor of *Precis Historiques*, 16 July 1857, 282.

¹²¹⁴ *Notices and Voyages*, 54. Some of these goods even came from South America. Before leaving Lima, Peru, the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, who were en route to the Pacific Northwest, received a number of goods including "objects of piety" for their chapel in the Willamette. *Notice sur le Territoire*, 89.

¹²¹⁵ Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 90. It bears mentioning that the aesthetics of the book (along with the other imported iconography) proved useful in attracting indigenous peoples to the liturgy of the Catholic Church.

¹²¹⁶ Robert Carriker, *Father Peter John De Smet: Jesuit in the West* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 64. De Smet used these symbols of the Catholic advance during his begging tours throughout the eastern United States to raise funds for the mission. Ibid. Similarly, during a begging tour throughout South America in 1855, F. N. Blanchet "published a pamphlet in Spanish," which included a copy of his Catholic Ladder as a way to illustrate their successes. Hanley, *History of the Catholic Ladder*, 73.

Faith decided, in the words of historian Philip Hanley, "to print the catechetical device not only for the use of the Columbia Missions but also for general distribution throughout the Missions under the jurisdiction of Quebec."¹²¹⁷ By the mid-century mark, Blanchet's ladder had become a trans-regional product.

Intercessory prayer shared a similar quality. Catholic clergy in the Pacific Northwest participated in their own economy of prayer that resembled, yet differed from that of their Protestant counterparts. The correspondences, narratives, and private journals of these Catholic missionaries are abounding with references to the importance of prayerful support from those abroad. Most agreed that such prayers formed the backbone of their entire operation and any success was attributed to "powerful intercession" from those outside the region.¹²¹⁸ What made this Catholic economy of prayer unique were the reciprocal exchanges associated with the tradition of patronage. While the faithful prayed for the salvation of the Indian, those natives who converted as a result of these prayers (as was assumed) were then encouraged to pray for the wellbeing of those who so graciously and generously interceded for their eternal souls. It was within this spiritual transaction where the prayers of the Indian became a powerful ritual gesture for the distant supporter. "What confidence have I in the prayers of those Indians, whose merit is known only to God," wrote De Smet to Parmentier. "Oh! if it is true that the prayer of him who possesses the innocence, the simplicity, and the faith of a child, pierces the clouds...then be assured that in these new missions...these virtues reign preeminently, and that the prayer of the Indian will also be heard on your behalf."¹²¹⁹ In the same letter, the Jesuit reassured his reader

¹²¹⁷ Ibid., 47.

¹²¹⁸ *Notice sur le Territoire*, 155.

¹²¹⁹ De Smet to Parmentier, 25 July 1846, 292.

once more that "the grateful prayer of the Indians is daily ascending to the throne of the Almighty, to implore the blessings of Heaven on their benefactors."¹²²⁰

As De Smet's correspondence demonstrates, such emotional nourishment could only be delivered through open lines of communication. Like many of their Protestant neighbors, Catholic missionaries in the Columbia experienced bouts of isolation that left some pining for a connection beyond the Pacific Slope. For example, Mary Aloysia of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur expressed on several occasions her delight in receiving letters from "the beloved Sisters of Cincinnati," and added that "to understand this joy, one must live for a while in these distant regions."¹²²¹ Others did not seem to mind the seclusion as much. Father Bolduc reassured his reader in one letter that "in spite of [his] isolation, [he was] nonetheless happy," and added that he would not "change [his] solitude for all the riches in the world."¹²²² This is not to say that Bolduc (and others like him) did not appreciate the trans-regional connection correspondence offered. Indeed, he cherished the letters of his colleagues, noting that "I treasure them with affection and consider them faithful portraits of my friends and of the close ties of our union which must have no end. This closeness," he added, "brings me again more joy and delightful memories."¹²²³ Quoting the words of St. John Chrysostom, Bolduc concluded that his "true friendship...was not lessened by distance of separation...but was increased in height as a

¹²²⁰ Ibid., 301. De Smet also mentioned that when he returned from his travels back East, he praised God "for so special a protection," and took comfort in knowing that "from the moment of my departure until my return, [the Indians] had not ceased to invoke, morning and evening, the blessing and assistance of Heaven on its unworthy servant." Ibid., 294.

¹²²¹ *Notice sur le Territoire*, 128.; Sister Mary Aloysia to Mother Superior, St. Paul, Willamette, 13 November 1844, in *Early Catholic Missions in Old Oregon*, vol. 2, ed. Clarence B. Bagley (Seattle: Lowman & Hanford Company, 1832), 95. Striking a similar tone, another Sister commented that "we offer tribute of our loving feeling to all persons who deign to take an interest in us." *Notice sur le Territoire*, 84.

¹²²² Bolduc, 6 March 1843, 18.

¹²²³ Bolduc, 15 February 15, 1843, 104.

flame"¹²²⁴

More than just emotional strength, Catholic missionaries drew inspiration from those in other regions. There are few better examples of this than the Paraguayan Reduction. According to Peterson, the successes of the Catholic missions among Paraguay's indigenous populations served as a model for De Smet and his fellow Jesuits as they made their way to the Columbia Plateau.¹²²⁵ She writes that "in the evenings, by camp light, they read scripture and a book by L. V. Muratori describing the legendary seventeenth-century Jesuit Reductions among the Gurani Indians of Paraguay," while historian Robert Burns adds that "the methods and daily order [of De Smet's mission] were 'to be executed in conformity with the method formerly adopted in the[se] missions.'"¹²²⁶ Unfortunately for the Jesuits the "dream of an Oregon Paraguay" would never fully materialize. As Burns suggests, De Smet lacked the laborers and funds to "do the job properly."¹²²⁷

The support Catholic missionaries received from their patrons abroad was crucial to the success of their respective projects. But it was the local support from those in the fur trade that proved most beneficial. Representatives of the HBC and American Fur Company supplied missionaries with the tools, provisions, transportation, finances, and general infrastructure needed to meet their temporal and spiritual goals.

¹²²⁴ Ibid.

¹²²⁵ Peterson, *Sacred Encounters*, 28.

¹²²⁶ Ibid., 84.; Burns, *The Jesuits*, 42.

¹²²⁷ Ibid., 55.

**"A Perfect Catholic is Head of the Hudson's Bay Company":
Aid, Adaptation, and Catholic/Fur Trade Intersections**

Employees of the fur trade first imported Catholicism (along with other valuable commodities) into the interior of the Columbia. They were voyageurs from eastern Canada who, in the words of historian Carolyn Podruchny, "relied on their Roman Catholic backgrounds to help them understand their cosmological location" amid the tapestry of indigenous beliefs and practices throughout the *pays d'en haut*.¹²²⁸ Within their everyday exchanges and along the trade networks in which they operated, many of these servants introduced local natives to the rudiments of the Catholic faith. Some taught Indians to make the sign of the cross and, in the case of one voyageur, had them recite the following words, "'Au nom du Pere, de son Frere, et puis de son petit Garcon!' (In the name of the Father, his Brother, and his little Boy!)."¹²²⁹ Others simply talked about a "Master of Heaven" and prophesied the arrival of more powerful shaman dressed in long black garments. By the time De Smet had arrived on the Columbia Plateau, the Flathead and Nez Perce had "heard the black robes spoken of by the Canadians that trade in furs with them, and evidence[d] desire to become acquainted with them."¹²³⁰

Those voyageurs who had greatest religious impact were transplanted Iroquois. It was not uncommon for Catholic Iroquois, who had journeyed to the Pacific Slope as engages of fur trade companies, to enter the kinship networks of local tribes and play a formative role in

¹²²⁸ Carolyn Podruchny, *Making of the Voyageur World: Travelers and Traders in the North American Fur Trade* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 53.

¹²²⁹ John McLean, *Notes of a Twenty-Five Years' Service in the Hudson's Bay Territory*, (London: Richard Bentley, 1849), 161.

¹²³⁰ Letter from F. N. Blanchet to the Bishop of Quebec, St. Paul of Walamette, February 23, 1841, in *Notices and Voyages of the famed Quebec Mission to the Pacific Northwest*, trans. Carl Landerholm (Portland, OR: Champoege Press, 1956), 68.; *Notices and Voyages*, 21.

reshaping the community's religious identity.¹²³¹ The most famous of these was a man affectionately known as "Old Ignace," who migrated to the Upper Columbia during the peak of the fur trade and was, along with several other Iroquois, adopted by the Flathead, among whom he succeeded in introducing the main tenets of the Church. According to Schoenberg, he was "as devout in his religion as some of the voyageurs were lax."¹²³² It was the influence of Old Ignace that prompted several delegations of Plateau natives to travel to St. Louis during the 1830s in search of further religious instruction. According to the records of Father Joseph Rosati, Bishop of St. Louis, the first delegation arrived in the city around 1830, but soon fell sick and requested baptism from local priests, who administered the sacrament.¹²³³ This was the event many Protestant periodicals heralded as the "Macedonian Call." However, Rosati made mention of two other delegations roughly two years and nine years later. These were comprised of mainly Iroquois who were finally able to convince the Bishop that the demand for Catholic instruction was strong enough to send two priests to the region the following Spring.¹²³⁴ Later missionaries such as Blanchet and Demers would praise the "apostleship of the Iroquois" and would go so far as to argue that the Catholicization of Pacific Northwest indigenes began as early as 1642, when Father Isaac Jogues "first planted the seeds of faith among the Iroquois Indians on the banks of the Mohawk."¹²³⁵

Fur trade officers were also responsible for contributing to the early Catholic ministry. In

¹²³¹ Burns goes so far as to argue that "the most pervasive, lengthy, and intense influence [in regards to Catholicism] was that of the Iroquois Indians." Burns, *The Jesuits*, 16.

¹²³² Schoenberg, *A History of the Catholic Church*, 12. Old Ignace died at the hand of hostile Sioux while accompanying William Gray to St. Louis - the very episode that left a permanent stain on Gray's reputation..

¹²³³ Joseph Rosati to Father General of the Society of Jesus, St. Louis, 20 October 1839, in *Historical Sketches of the Catholic Church in Oregon during the Past Forty Years*, by F. N. Blanchet (Portland, OR: 1878), 19.

¹²³⁴ Ibid. Rosati referred to these Iroquois as "precious gems." Ibid.

¹²³⁵ Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 117.

the words of Schoenberg some, like Chief Trader Pierre Pambrun, "casually slipped into the roles of quasi-deacons, without formalities, simply because they were needed, for lack of priests, and because they wanted to share the religion they themselves valued."¹²³⁶ Other than Pambrun, the most impressive example of this type of religious brokering among HBC gentlemen was John McLoughlin. When Blanchet and Demers first arrived at Fort Vancouver, they met the Chief Factor whose reputation for hospitality exceeded all expectations.¹²³⁷ While the priests were appreciative of such a welcome, they were more enchanted with McLoughlin's promotion of the Catholic faith in the face of a Protestant onslaught from missionaries and especially from Herbert Beaver, the Fort's Anglican Chaplain. They went so far as to consider him the "patriarch of the Columbia" and suggested that "everything...the missionaries found of good at Vancouver" were because of his labors.¹²³⁸ Even the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur rejoiced in knowing that the "perfect Catholic is head of the Hudson's Bay Company," and he "presides over the pious exercises which he practices in the Fort with great edification."¹²³⁹ Fort Nisqually was also a site where HBC officers (and those related to them) participated in marketing the faith. In one report, Father Demers recorded that William Kitson, who was in charge of the post in the absence of William Tolmie, was "pleased to undertake...the distribution of a certain number of historic ladders to the leading men of the natives."¹²⁴⁰ Demers also mentioned Kitson's wife,

¹²³⁶ Schoenberg, *A History of the Catholic Church*, 48.

¹²³⁷ According to De Smet, one traveler in the region informed him that "the liberality and hospitality of the all the gentlemen of the Honorable Hudson's Bay Company are proverbial." Letter of P. J. De Smet, St. Paul's Station, Near Colville, 29 May 1846, in *Oregon Missions and Travels Over the Rocky Mountains, in 1845-1846*, by Father P. J. De Smet, (New York: Edward Dunigan, 1847), 274.

¹²³⁸ Blanchet to the Bishop of Quebec, 8 March 1843, 15.

¹²³⁹ *Notice sur le Territoire*, 111. Sister Loyola also noted that in the "absence of a priest [McLoughlin] has said the prayers aloud in the morning, and it makes a statement to the savages employed by the Company." Ibid.

¹²⁴⁰ *Notices and Voyages*, 45.

whom he referred to as Madam Kitson, as being "endowed with a remarkable intelligence, with an active faith, and with an enlightened piety."¹²⁴¹ He added that "she enjoys a great influence over the minds of the native women, and already she has succeeded in having those in Nesqually discard the cedar bark petticoat, and replace it with another of skin coverage," in a demonstration of Christian modesty.¹²⁴²

The willingness of laborers and officers of the HBC to advance the doctrines of the Church within their commercial relationships is indicative of the tight linkage between Catholicism and the fur trade. In an 1845 letter, De Smet reflected on the qualities of the typical Canadian furman:

The skins of the rein and moose deer are the materials of which his portable palace is composed; and to use his own expressions, he embarks on horseback with his wife and seven children, and lands wherever he pleases. Here, no one disputes his right, and Polk and Peel, who are now contending for the possession of his dominions, are as unknown to our carbineer, as the two greatest powers of the moon. His sceptre is a beaver trap - his law a carbine - the one on his back, the other on his arm, he reviews his numerous furry subjects the beaver, otter, muskrat, marten, fox, bear, wolf, sheep, and white goat of the mountains, the black-tailed roe-buck, as well as its re-tailed relative, the stag, the rein and moose deer; some of which respect his sceptre - others submit to his law.¹²⁴³

The Jesuit went on to note that "our Canadian does not forget his duty as a Christian. Each day, morning and evening, he may be seen devoutly reciting his prayers, midst his little family."¹²⁴⁴

While spun with a poetic flare, De Smet's description does not seem to be too far from reality.

The vast majority of trappers and traders employed by the HBC were Canadian and

¹²⁴¹ Ibid., 43. Shortly after his arrival, Demers baptized Mrs. Kitson and in the words of Blanchet "had the happiness to open her eyes to the light." Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 88.

¹²⁴² *Notices and Voyages*, 43.

¹²⁴³ Letter of P. J. De Smet, Head of the Columbia, 9 September 1845, in *Oregon Missions and Travels Over the Rocky Mountains, in 1845-1846*, by Father P. J. De Smet (New York: Edward Dunigan, 1847), 209-210.

¹²⁴⁴ Ibid., 210.

overwhelming Catholic. According to one report, "the Company possesses 28 establishments west of the Rocky Mountains for the fur trade with natives. Three hundred whites [not including their families], almost all Catholics, are employed in the service of these establishments."¹²⁴⁵ Adding the numbers of Catholics in the Cowlitz and Willamette areas among former employees of the Company, the report concluded that there are "about 900 souls" altogether.¹²⁴⁶ By the mid 1840s, Blanchet estimated the number of "white" Catholics in the region to be about one thousand, the vast majority being attached to the HBC: "600 were in the Wallamette Valley, 100 at Vancouver, 100 at Cowlitz, and the rest in the various trading posts."¹²⁴⁷

Such a preexisting infrastructure gave priests a distinct advantage over Protestants, who found themselves with few ideological allies among the region's fur trading populace. Having the head of the Company's Columbia operations as a "fervent Catholic" was particularly helpful.¹²⁴⁸ According to De Smet, in addition to granting passage to priests and supplying them liberally once they arrived McLoughlin oversaw the construction of a Catholic chapel in the Willamette, which had been mostly finished by the time the first Oblate missionaries arrived.¹²⁴⁹ The Chief Factor even displayed a Catholic Ladder on the wall in his private quarters at Fort Vancouver. Protestant missionaries such as the Whitmans who paid him periodic visits took

¹²⁴⁵ *Notices and Voyages*, 16.

¹²⁴⁶ *Ibid.* According to another report, roughly "seven-eighths" of the employees of the HBC, including officers and engages, "profess the Catholic religion." *Ibid.*, 26.

¹²⁴⁷ Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 149. The apparent connection between Catholicism and the HBC, in particular, caused some American Protestants to criticize "the influence and teaching" of missionaries such as Blanchet as "naturally in favor of the authority and interest of the Hudson Bay Co." *Ibid.*, 151.

¹²⁴⁸ Aloysia to Superior, 13 November 1844, 86. According to Blanchet, McLoughlin officially converted to Catholicism on November 18, 1842 (a full four years after the Beaver Affair), when "he made his abjuration and profession of faith," and "made his confession and had his marriage blessed on the same day." Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 69. Blanchet added that the Chief Factor "made his first communion at Fort Vancouver, at midnight mass on Christmas, with a large number of the faithful women and servants of the Hudson Bay Co." *Ibid.*

¹²⁴⁹ De Smet, *Oregon Missions and Travels*, 128.

umbrage at the sight of the manuscript which in their words "binds" Indians from hearing Protestant instruction.¹²⁵⁰ McLoughlin was mostly willing to aid in the endeavors of Methodist and ABCFM clergy, but did so with the expectation that such kindness would endear the Company to the ever-growing number of American settlers and would, most of all, minimize the risk of commercial competition. And although HBC leadership (who were mostly Protestant) outlined only two circumstances under which they would lend support to Catholic priests - (1) if they agreed not to "fog the Indians' mind by rancour against the Protestant missions" and later on (2) if they assisted in strengthening the land claims of the HBC (and by extension the British) against the encroachment of American Protestants south of the River - McLoughlin's sponsorship of Catholicism did not seem to require such ulterior motives.¹²⁵¹

For their part, priests worked hard to reciprocate the patronage they received from those in the fur trade. It was common for Catholic clergy to attend to "the spiritual wants" of a fur trading brigade, such as the one that arrived at Fort Vancouver on June 15, 1841. According to F. N. Blanchet, it was "composed of a large number of servants, trappers of the H. B. C.,

¹²⁵⁰ Narcissa Whitman to Parents, Weiletpoo, Oregon Territory, October 6, 1841, in *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1847* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1996), 117. Priests such as Blanchet also gave copies of the Catholic Ladder to HBC officers such as Chief Traders Pambrun and Tolmie. Hanley, *History of the Catholic Ladder*, 33. When Tolmie was transferred to his new post at Fort Victoria, the new administrator of Fort Nisqually Edward Huggins cleared out many of Tolmie's personal papers and discovered a "Symbolical chart...used by the Roman Catholic Missionaries to aid them in teaching the Indians the Christian religion, at or near Fort Nisqually." Ibid., 37.

¹²⁵¹ E. E. Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, vol. II (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1959), 548. The Governor and Committee agreed to fund the transportation of two Catholic priests to the region if they promised to persuade the freemen of the Willamette to relocate north of the Columbia at Cowlitz farm and trade only with representatives of the Company. Galbraith goes so far as to suggest that "Catholic missionaries were the strongest allies that the Company possessed against the Americans in Oregon." John S. Galbraith, *The Hudson's Bay Company as an Imperial Factor, 1821-1869* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 204. In a 1841 letter Simpson confirmed to the Governor and Committee that two priests were "brought into the country under the auspices of the Honourable Company." George Simpson to the Governor and Committee, Fort Vancouver, 25 November 1841 in *London Correspondence Inward from George Simpson, 1841-1842*, ed. Glyndwr Williams (London: Hudson's Bay Company Record Society, 1973), 82.

returning from California with horses laden with fur."¹²⁵² He baptized 44 and performed the sacraments for many others during their brief stay at the post.¹²⁵³ It was also routine for priests to assemble together employees of the HBC in the evenings for activities such as prayer, sermons, recitation of the Rosary, the chanting of canticles, confession, and other forms of ritual performance.¹²⁵⁴ At least three days out of the week, priests devoted their time to instructing the children and wives of these Canadians workers. Catholic clergy even helped preserve an open and peaceful trade relationship between Company personnel and local indigenes (a clear contrast with Protestant missionaries). Early in his tenure in the region, Father Demers journeyed to Fort Nisqually where he encountered a large number of natives who had come there to exchange their furs and use the facilities of the post to secure "better circumstances of living."¹²⁵⁵ The priest recalled one native who caused an uproar that might have resulted in significant bloodshed had he not "suddenly calmed that untamed crowd."¹²⁵⁶

Missionaries such as Demers entered a world that was preeminently Catholic, but one built around an unfamiliar framework to which he and his contemporaries had but little choice to conform. This accommodation was most clear linguistically. Priests relied heavily on the Chinook tongue, which by the time of their arrival had become, in the words of one clergyman, "universally known."¹²⁵⁷ It was for this reason, the trade language served as the basis for Catholic publications, such as the catechism, which Demers translated along with a dictionary

¹²⁵² Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 93-94.

¹²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹²⁵⁴ *Notices and Voyages*, 48.

¹²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵⁷ Modeste Demers, *Chinook Dictionary, Catechism, Prayers and Hymns* (Montreal, 1871), 8.

and pertinent grammatical information to assist later priests in their communications.¹²⁵⁸ At its core, the jargon was a tool used to facilitate the transfer of commodities and Catholic missionaries, like many of the Protestants before them, used it for the same ends.

Acquiring knowledge of other languages was still important. Given the large number of Hawaiian workers in the trade, some priests found it necessary to learn some of the indigenous dialects of the Islands. Such was the case with Father J. B. Z. Bolduc who, due to the vacillation of the HBC's Governor and Committee regarding the passage of priests, found himself delayed in Honolulu, during which he vowed to spend his time wisely by the learning "the Sandwichian tongue," which in his words "will be of great use even on the Columbia, since more than 500 Sandwich Islanders are there in the service of the Company."¹²⁵⁹ Certainly not all priests were afforded such an opportunity. But even those who were unable to learn the local vernaculars - whether that be Chinook, Hawaiian, or the plethora of tribal languages - leaned on the resources of the trade. It was not uncommon for Catholic missionaries to hire current or former employees of the HBC to serve as translators. For instance, F. N. Blanchet, then Archbishop, hired a former Company trapper named Louis Moukemine for an annual salary of \$120 to assist him in his daily interactions with indigenous peoples.¹²⁶⁰

Members of the Society of Jesus also were willing to adapt to the region's peculiarities. In fact, Burns argues that Jesuits, more so than any other clergy in the region, were able to garner

¹²⁵⁸ *Notices and Voyages*, 19. According to Demers, the Chinook jargon had only an eighteen letter alphabet and acquired much of its vocabulary "from the French and English languages." Demers, *Chinook Dictionary*, 7, 9. Other words were "made by simply imitating an action, as: ho-ho, to vomit; ha-ha, to cough, or the noise of a cascade, the explosion of a gun, &c." Ibid., 7. Moreover, all the words were pronounced phonetically, thus, according to one nineteenth-century Catholic clergyman, "avoiding...the ridiculous and unphilosophical spelling found in most of our modern languages." Ibid., 12.

¹²⁵⁹ Jean Baptiste Bolduc to "Mr. T.," Honolulu, 5 August 1842, in *Notices & Voyages of the Famed Quebec Mission to the Pacific Northwest* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1956), 133.

¹²⁶⁰ Kowrach, *Journal of a Catholic Bishop*, 71.

a level of flexibility in relation to the area's social, cultural, and economic establishment. He writes that the Jesuit successes "were rooted in the principle of accommodation, of assimilating one's life to one's immediate environment, so as to influence not only individuals but the environment itself."¹²⁶¹ Burns adds that "the Jesuit was to adopt the language and manner of life of the country to which he moved," and "his rule had built-in mechanisms for change and exception, for mobility and experimentation."¹²⁶² Even the way in which they laid out their mission system bore the marking of the region's fur trade. In 1846, the General in Rome requested that the Jesuit mission in the Oregon Territory be "concentrated near the point of origin, the Rocky Mountain country below the Canadian border," and that "the spacing of the missions should take note of the Hudson's Bay Company experience, so that some communication and mutual support would effect a strong, interlocking network rather than completely isolated units."¹²⁶³

Catholic missionaries willingly "acquiesced to British rule and to the strictures of the Hudson's Bay Company."¹²⁶⁴ But this does not mean they always viewed themselves as associates. Indeed, the journals and letters of priests contain frequent references to traders and trappers as being a damaging influence on the local inhabitants. The common preconception that western natives were innocent and naive fueled ideas among clergy that Euro-American fur traders exploited Indians for prized pelts, leaving them destitute and dependent on further

¹²⁶¹ Burns, *The Jesuits*, 38.

¹²⁶² Ibid.

¹²⁶³ Ibid., 45-46.

¹²⁶⁴ *Notices and Voyages*, iii. What is interesting is the tension class and nationalist tension that existed between the HBC and priests. Schoenberg writes that the "Company was British and Episcopalian in character, if anything, hence it was very properly identified with traditional British upper class religion." He goes on to note that "Bishop Joseph Signay of Quebec, who had requested passage for the priests in one of the canoes to Oregon, was not only Romanist, but he was also one of those quaint French ecclesiastics." Schoenberg, *A History of the Catholic Church*, 26.

imported good. Point was particularly critical in this regard. "If, in their trading," he wrote, "they did not always give evil in exchange for good, they certainly never failed to exchange little for much."¹²⁶⁵ Others criticized the furmen of the HBC for their ecological pillaging, which in their minds had clear ramifications for "traditional" indigenous lifestyles. For example, De Smet noted that Columbia natives used to cloth themselves "very comfortably and neatly, with the furs which they possessed, but since the trade in skins has become so extensive, the natives of Oregon are much worse...and the poor can scarcely protect themselves against the severity of the seasons."¹²⁶⁶

Despite their misgivings, priests had to refrain from openly criticizing traders and trappers. After all, the initial establishment and continual success of the Catholic mission system depended, in large part, on the trade's networks and resources, particularly in the form of transportation. The only way early priests were able to enter the Columbia in a cost effective manner was by obtaining passage with an HBC brigade and so reduce themselves to yet another commodity imported into the region by way of fur traders (alongside goods such as firearms, blankets, and clothing). Traveling from eastern Canada, Blanchet and Demers accompanied one such brigade, which happened to be "made up of 11 bateaux manned by a large number of engages, women, and children, and loaded with merchandise."¹²⁶⁷ The size of the party was not unusual, hence the reason why they provided substantial protection for unarmed clergy, as they

¹²⁶⁵ Donnelly, *Wilderness Kingdom*, 19.

¹²⁶⁶ De Smet, *Oregon Missions and Travels*, 125.

¹²⁶⁷ *Notices and Voyages*, 5. For Blanchet and Demers, the passage was quite economical. Schoenberg writes that "the expenses for [their passage] from Canada to Fort Vancouver had been paid by the Company." Schoenberg, *A History of the Catholic Church*, 38.

did for mission assistants who were often just as vulnerable.¹²⁶⁸ Even when in the country, priests such as Demers did not hesitate to accept the invitation of certain Chief Traders or clerks who were generous enough to offer room in their canoes in exchange for little or no money.¹²⁶⁹ Indeed, the low cost of such travel was just as appealing as the security it assured. The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur were particularly amazed at the service they received from chivalrous traders and even more so by the discovery that, in the words of Sister Aloysia, "money is of little weight in this country."¹²⁷⁰ Servants of the Company were rarely willing to collect payment for transporting nuns or attending to their luggage, just as they had shown female Protestants (like Narcissa Whitman) preferential treatment.

Even so, traders and trappers were not in the habit of refusing paid employment. Throughout the 1840s, Catholic clergy regularly recruited and compensated current and former furlmen for their expertise as guides in expeditions from St. Louis to Oregon. Famed individuals, such as the American trapper, Thomas Fitzpatrick - who led the Whitmans and Spaldings for much of their Trans-Mississippi trek - also led priests to the Columbia using the same overland routes.¹²⁷¹ Experienced and reliable guides like Fitzpatrick were difficult to come by; knowledge of the western terrain demanded extensive time among its many hazards - a risk few were willing to take. Yet, these guides were necessary for priests to travel successfully south of

¹²⁶⁸ In the Summer of 1839, Demers took passage with a rather large fur trade brigade from Fort Vancouver that "consisted of a flotilla of nine barges manned by fifty-seven men under the command of Chief Factors [Traders?] Ogden and Black." Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 93.

¹²⁶⁹ Demers to the Bishop of Quebec, 20 December 1842, 159. Furthermore, it was not uncommon for Company officers to offer priests passage on barges that traveled from the Upper Columbia to Fort Vancouver. As Carriker notes, they could "ride on the barges at Boat Encampment as far as [they] wished to go on the Columbia." Carriker, *Father Peter John De Smet*, 95.

¹²⁷⁰ *Notice sur le Territoire*, 133.

¹²⁷¹ Narcissa Whitman to Jane, Weiletpoo, Oregon Territory, 1 October 1841, in *The Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1847* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1996), 108.

the U. S.-Canadian border, where HBC brigades rarely went. They were able to navigate faint trails, avoid indigenous communities reputed to be hostile, and knew where to locate food, water, and other provisions along the way. This is why an anonymous "Irishman" in St. Louis strongly advised A.M.A. Blanchet, who had never before traveled to the Pacific Northwest, to "contact" a former HBC and American Fur Company trader, Gabriel Prudhomme, who was himself planning to return to Oregon that same year" and who might be willing to lend his services.¹²⁷²

Once they arrived in Oregon - especially its commercial hub of Fort Vancouver - Clergy such as A.M.A. Blanchet experienced the fabled hospitality of McLoughlin's Columbia Department. Catholic writings are full of references to the kindness and generosity of Company gentlemen throughout the region, beginning with the Chief Factor himself, who received priests and other mission associates, in the words of Father Langlois, "with open arms."¹²⁷³ And when McLoughlin was away from his normal post, those in charge still carried on the spirit of his generosity. This was true even for officers who were Anglican. Priests such as Bolduc mentioned on several occasions the willingness of James Douglas in welcoming and supplying he and his colleagues. Bolduc accompanied an expedition led by Douglas to Vancouver Island, where the HBC was considering the establishment of a new post on its eastern shores. During their time together, the Chief Trader profited the Catholic cause by lending the priest "several of his men to help" him construct an altar "for celebrating on land the Lord's day," and even "assisted at the mass with some Canadians."¹²⁷⁴ Douglas' actions on Vancouver were by no means an aberration. In another account, one priest reported that upon their arrival in the Lower

¹²⁷² Kowrach, *Journal of a Catholic Bishop*, 34.

¹²⁷³ Mr. Langlois to "Mr. C.", Fort Vancouver, 16 October 1842, in *Notices and Voyages of the famed Quebec Mission to the Pacific Northwest*, trans. Carl Landerholm (Portland, OR: Champoege Press, 1956), 139.

¹²⁷⁴ Bolduc to Cayenne, 15 February 1844, 194.

Columbia, the Chief Trader "hurried to provide them with food and to procure all possible facilities for exercising their ministry."¹²⁷⁵ Blanchet was so pleased with the cooperation from HBC personnel that he wrote, "may heaven recompense them for a conduct so worthy of our thankfulness and praise!"¹²⁷⁶

As with Protestants, the liberality of Company officers toward Catholic missionaries bred dependence. Priests such as Bolduc observed that few items were actually manufactured in the region which, in his words, "makes it necessary to go to the Company for the smaller things as well as those important."¹²⁷⁷ And while it was commonplace for Catholic clergy to receive gifts from the HBC consisting of luxuries like "sugar, coffee, tea, chocolate, butter, crackers, flour, poultry, and so forth," most of the goods acquired from Company storehouses were anything but free.¹²⁷⁸ Bolduc made it clear that the HBC "does not give its merchandise for nothing, on the contrary, all is very expensive without being of good quality."¹²⁷⁹ Despite the gifts and other forms of assistance, the priest concluded that the mission was not as fortunate financially as one might assume.¹²⁸⁰

The question over whether or not Catholic missions were "fortunate" should not

¹²⁷⁵ *Notices and Voyages*, 9.

¹²⁷⁶ Blanchet to the Bishop of Quebec, 8 March 1843, 174.

¹²⁷⁷ Kowrach, *Mission of the Columbia*, 90.

¹²⁷⁸ Schoenberg, *A History of the Catholic Church*, 62. Such gifting toward Catholic clergy had been Company policy for quite some time. In the 1825 Council, the minutes praised the exertions of the Roman Catholic missions at Red River (headed by the Bishop of Juliopolis, Joseph Norbert Provencher) and even recommended to the Governor and Committee that they offer the missionaries a stipend for various luxuries as a reward for their good service to the Company. The same resolution was passed a year later. R. Harvey Flemming, ed., *Minutes of the Council Northern Department of Rupert Land, 1821-31* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1940), 120, 156. It also bears mentioning that some mission produced certain goods in house. Burns writes that the typical Jesuit mission was "able to produce its own bricks, candles, soap, smoking pipes, potato sugar, bronze crosses, chisels, bellows, [and] grindstones." Burns, *The Jesuits and the Indian Wars*, 49.

¹²⁷⁹ Kowrach, *Mission of the Columbia*, 90-91.

¹²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 91.

overshadow the fact that their success or failure was largely contingent on HBC credits. Orders for the Jesuit missions, for instance, "came directly from Rome," and "financial support came from continental alms deposited at the London headquarters of the Hudson's Bay Company."¹²⁸¹ Opening these lines of credit was a standard procedure. On behalf of De Smet's mission to the Flathead in 1842, McLoughlin wrote in his correspondence that the Jesuit's "agent in London will take up his note & pay it, and will leave funds in the Company's hands, or procure a letter of credit for any supplies he may require from us."¹²⁸² Jesuits were not the only representatives of the Church to receive credit from the Company. F. N. Blanchet remembered receiving "an official note," from McLoughlin "informing [him] that he had received an order [from the HBC headquarters in London] to place £100 sterling to the credit of [the] mission. Apart from this gratuity," Blanchet added, "one sees in addition appearing in [McLoughlin's] name the sum of £26 on the list of our credits."¹²⁸³ Just as they had done with Protestant missionaries, HBC officers were willing to donate to the Catholic missions from their own personal funds.

These same officers were also willing to oversee the transmission of Catholic correspondence. Priests had little option but to rely on the HBC's Express to connect them to the outside world. F. N. Blanchet went so far as to state that "the only means of communication from Canada to Oregon [was] in the hands of the Hudson Bay Co., by sending every year a number of canoes laden with goods and conducted by a number of Canadian voyageurs."¹²⁸⁴ It was also common for Catholic missionaries to dispatch letters via ship, likely owned or chartered

¹²⁸¹ Burns, *The Jesuits*, 46.

¹²⁸² John McLoughlin to the Governor and Committee, Fort Vancouver, 31 October 1842, in *The Letters of John McLoughlin from Fort Vancouver to the Governor and Committee, 1839-44*, ed. E. E. Rich (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1943), 94.

¹²⁸³ Blanchet to the Bishop of Quebec, 8 March 1843, 170.

¹²⁸⁴ Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 24.

by the HBC, destined for the East Coast of North America or more likely a Western European port. Now the Company was not the only fur trading entity employed in this manner. At least when it came to land-based transports in the interior of the U. S., representatives of the American Fur Company were particularly useful. The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur regularly sent correspondence with American traders and trappers en route to St. Louis, where they would then ship the letters up the Ohio River to the convent in Cincinnati.¹²⁸⁵ Moreover, these expresses not only imported and exported Catholic correspondence to and from the region, they also brought periodicals and "some newspaper clippings" to keep those stationed in the area abreast of the news from the outside.¹²⁸⁶ In the end, the fur trade played an integral role in minimizing the effects of isolationism among Catholic clergy by maximizing feelings of attachment to a wider, hemispheric community through the use of its own trans-regional channels.

Conclusion: Competition and Community Construction

Beginning in the late 1830s, the Roman Catholic Church extended its reach to a part of the world where, according to one report, "a Catholic priest had never visited before."¹²⁸⁷ Their goal was twofold: 1) administer the sacraments to former and current workers in the fur trade, and 2) introduce the local inhabitants of the region to the tenets of the faith. Priests such as the Jesuit, Pierre Jean De Smet, hoped that given "reasonable and sufficient time to instruct the Indians, [they] would most certainly meet with the most abundant harvest; the scalping knife might thus soon be laid aside, and where the Indian war-whoop has for centuries resounded,

¹²⁸⁵ *Notice sur le Territoire*, 143-144.

¹²⁸⁶ Kowrach, *Journal of a Catholic Bishop*, 112.

¹²⁸⁷ *Notices and Voyages*, 4.

might be heard in its stead the canticles and praises of the true and only living God."¹²⁸⁸ The mere prospect of such large scale conversion was enough for De Smet to surmise that even "if the days of the missionary are...filled with labor and fatigue, he had his full recompense of merit and consolation,...[and] counts them among the happiest days of his life."¹²⁸⁹

Though rewarding, the days of the Catholic missionary were often taxing. They traveled frequently from mission to mission throughout the Columbia in hopes of maximizing their presence in a region already dominated by Protestant clergy and a growing number of American settlers. They also periodically traveled abroad in hopes of wooing investors who would support financially and spiritually the Catholic cause in the remote western wilderness. Regardless of where priests journeyed, they more often than not relied on the resources of the HBC, whose generous assistance in the areas of transportation, provisions, and communication proved indispensable to the overall success of the Church's missionary enterprise.

During their missions, priests busied themselves with supplying religious demands.¹²⁹⁰ Since they first arrived, natives in particular viewed priests - as well as the artifacts and knowledges they imported - as commodities and actively sought to obtain them through processes of exchange. The popularity of the Black Robes' "medicine" had as much to do with the supposed failures of the Protestant brand in curing and preventing illness, as it did with prior prophecies by Canadian and Iroquois trappers who planted in the minds of many Indians the

¹²⁸⁸ Letter of P. J. De Smet, At the Foot of the Great Glaciere, one of the Upper Sources of the Athabasca River, 6 May 1846, in *Oregon Missions and Travels Over the Rocky Mountains, in 1845-1846*, by P. J. De Smet, (New York: Edward Dunigan, 1847), 172.

¹²⁸⁹ De Smet, 1 December 1861, 963.

¹²⁹⁰ In just one year, Blanchet offered the Archdiocese at Quebec the following report: "From March 1840 to March 1841, were performed: Baptisms 510; marriages 12, burials 11, communions 60; one abjuration at St. Paul. Of the 510 baptisms 233 were made by the Vicar General at Nesqually and Whidby Island; 164 by Father Demers at Chinook, Cowlitz and Colville missions; the rest, 113, at Vancouver and St. Paul. Of the 510 baptisms, about 410 Indians, 100 whites and 40 adults." Blanchet, *Historical Sketches*, 120.

seeds of anticipation for the coming of even stronger shamans who dressed in black, took no wives, used talismans, and made powerful gesticulations with their hands. In the end, the religious moorings of most fur trade laborers gave representatives of the Church a distinct advantage over their Protestant counterparts and, along with the support from ranking traders and those abroad, provided a firm foundation on which priests could build a regional Catholic community with clear trans-regional ties.

CHAPTER SEVEN

EPILOGUE

In the second volume of his *Narrative*, HBC Governor George Simpson wrote the following words: "The trade might be innocent and useful; and, in fact, commerce might safely be assumed...to be the modern instrument of Providence for the moral and religious amelioration of mankind."¹²⁹¹ Whether he overstated his case is debatable; but what is certain is that he understood religion and commerce to be interlocking exercises. This sentiment held true for many of Simpson's contemporaries. Whether a Native American prophetess, a Euro-American fur trader, a Protestant or Catholic missionary, or some variation thereof, those who called the colonial Northwest home seldom viewed their religious and economic lives as mutually exclusive, which makes it all the more perplexing why the historian, whose task is to accurately reflect these same peoples' lived realities, would ever compartmentalize the two. One cannot fully understand the fur trade in the Columbia without also understanding its religious dimensions, and one cannot fully understand religious encounter in the region without also understanding the influence of the fur trade.

I have argued that the multicultural encounters that characterized the Pacific Northwest in the first half of the nineteenth century provided the perfect climate for the flourishing of religious exchange. The exchanges that occurred, whether elaborate or mundane, did so within the purview of the area's foremost commercial entity: the fur trade. The same modes of exchange, economic processes, and local and trans-regional networks that shaped the trade also shaped religious interaction in the region to the extent that the two activities rarely could be

¹²⁹¹ George Simpson, *Narrative of a Journey Round the World During the Years 1841 and 1842*, vol. 2 (London: Henry Colburn, 1847), 101.

distinguished in peoples' everyday lives. When observed through the lenses of this "ecology of exchange" we find that within the fur trade's large imperial framework existed a religious economy that was equally hemispheric in its reach.

This dynamic, however, would not last long. The collapse of the fur trade in the Columbia had been in the works for years. In fact, by the time the HBC seized control of the region in the early 1820s, both the coastal and interior trades were already in an irreversible decline. The fierce competition between the Company and the NWC - not to mention the Company's monopolizing tactics - resulted in the depletion of fur resources throughout the area. Over time, beaver furs, in particular, became rarer in European markets and as their prices escalated, the winds of change began to sweep through the fashion industry. It would not take long after Prince Albert's appearance at a public function in 1854 - during which he wore a topper made not of beaver but silk - for furs to become altogether obsolete and with it those companies who harvested it.¹²⁹² By the mid-century, the HBC had become, in the words of historian Peter Newman, an "anachronism."¹²⁹³ With the population of American settlers growing daily, the Company had no other option but to stem its hemorrhaging and hope to sell its holdings in the Columbia for a handsome price.

With the increase in white settlers also came the collapse of the indigenous world. In the wake of the Cayuse War (1848-1855), natives throughout the Oregon territory underwent systematic removal and confinement on reservations. Unfortunately, this displacement, in the words of historian Gray Whaley, "in no way signaled the end of Native experiences with

¹²⁹² Silk hats were first produced in 1824 and began to become popular in Europe during the 1830s. Not only were they more fashionable but they were also cheaper than beaver felt hats. This change in European fashion affected the demand for and price of beaver. When aristocracy, those who were the primary consumers of fur, began to wear silk it served as the proverbial "nail in the coffin" for the trade.

¹²⁹³ Peter C. Newman, *Caesars of the Wilderness: Company of Adventurers*, vol. II (New York: Viking, 1987), 346-347.

colonialism. In many ways," he adds, "it was just the beginning, as their lives would be largely dominated by paternalist federal administration and shaped by their exclusion from dominant white society."¹²⁹⁴ In particular, the racialization of the native as "red" allowed Euro-American settlers to construct a clear, impenetrable barrier between themselves and the Indian other. Apartheid would become the new social order. By the end of the 1850s, the once vibrant, multicultural networks and exchanges that defined colonial society in the Columbia would exist only in memory.

At the same time, the missionary presence also faded. The displacement of the very natives they had come to save, coupled with the rise of churches and parishes to cater to the spiritual needs of pioneer settlements, made the role of the missionary (whether Protestant or Catholic) just as "anacharnistic" as the HBC. By the mid-1850s, they had all but disappeared. While the newly-formed Archdiocese of Oregon City subsumed much of the Catholic missionary activity in the region, Protestant work shifted to the north. In the latter half of the 1850s, the Church Missionary Society began establishing mission stations in the territory north of Oregon, renamed in 1858 British Columbia. The most famous of these missions, named Metlakatla, was founded by Anglican missionary William Duncan in 1862 in what is now southeastern Alaska. Despite some initial setbacks, the community flourished and still exists to this day.

Like the missionary, the figure of the fur trader/trapper became a relic of a bygone era. Some former employees of the HBC stayed in the region and became key players in its agricultural, mining, and logging industries, as well as its provisional and state governments. Many others surrendered to the siren's call and moved south to California or north to the Yukon Territory to seek their fortune in yet another natural resource. A small percentage even returned

¹²⁹⁴ Gray Whaley, *Oregon and the Collapse of the Illahee: U. S. Empire and the Transformation of the Indigenous World, 1792-1859* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 232.

east to reclaim a life with the family and friends they had left behind. Regardless of what these former furmen decided to do with the remainder of their days, it became clear - and for some painfully so - that they would never be able to return fully to the life they once lived. The future had arrived and it did not include the beaver trap.

In 1859, Oregon was admitted into the Union as the 33rd state, followed in 1889 by Washington. An era, defined by multilayered transactions between Native Americans, Metis, Hawaiians, British, Americans, French-Canadians, Protestants, and Catholics, had come to an official end. The fur trade had taken its last gasps and with it the religious economy it supported. But neither would die before leaving an indelible mark on the region.

In 2004, scholars Mark Silk and Patricia O'Connell Killen co-edited a volume of the Religion and Region Series entitled, *Religion and Public Life in the Pacific Northwest: The None Zone*. The subtitled revealed much about their perception of religious life in the region (which included the states: Oregon, Washington, and Alaska). They characterized it as a place where commitment to traditional religious communities or denominations were less common; a place where a large percentage of residents marked (or mark) "none" on standard surveys when answering the question pertaining to religious affiliation. According to Killen, the Pacific Northwest represented a religiously complex space "where boundaries and identities are fluid, where energy and movements coalesce and then dissolve."¹²⁹⁵ She added that among its denizens exists a tendency toward "cooperation across and beyond religious institutions...to religious indifference" itself.¹²⁹⁶ Indeed, the label "secular but spiritual" frames the religious lives of many current Northwesterners and represents a population who, in the words of Killen,

¹²⁹⁵ Patricia O'Connell Killen and Mark Silk, eds., *Religion and Public Life in the Pacific Northwest: The None Zone* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira, 2004), 10.

¹²⁹⁶ Ibid.

"grapples with what it means to be fully human and part of the region's ecosystem."¹²⁹⁷

Early nineteenth-century conflations between religion and commerce - "sacred" and "profane" commodities - set a precedent for this type of religious diffusion. The fur trade in the colonial Northwest opened up new opportunities for people to be religious that challenged the reality of the "secular" as it did the restraints of regional boundaries. Methodist missionary Daniel Lee stands as a prime exemplar. As told by historian Robert Loewenberg, Lee "charted a grand design for exploiting the connection between wheat and evangelism." He sought to acquire a ship that could export wheat grown at the mission stations to markets in the Pacific and South America and could be traded with Russians to the north for commodities necessary for the upkeep of the missions. In the words of the Loewenberg, the missionary was convinced that "a vast speculative venture in trade and shipping was a way to touch off a missionary revival and hasten the salvation of the world by centuries."¹²⁹⁸ Whether it was Lee's wheat or the HBC's regulatory measures or Kauxuma-nupika's job as a fur trade courier, the wide-spread dispersion of religious activity into the "secular" - into the "commercial" - defined religious life in the colonial Northwest as it would shape religious life in the region for centuries to come.

¹²⁹⁷ Ibid., 18.

¹²⁹⁸ Robert J. Loewenberg, *Equality on the Oregon Frontier: Jason Lee and the Methodist Mission, 1834-43* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976), 220-221.

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