Methodism in Newfoundland: A Study of its Social Impact - Batstone

METHODISM IN NEWFOUNDLAND: A STUDY OF ITS SOCIAL IMPACT.

by

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A thesis.

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research of McGill University in partial fulfillmemt of the requirements for the degree of Master of Sacred Theology.

Montreal, Canada.

1967.

PREFACE

Having been born and raised in a Newfoundland outport and experienced Methodism as it must have been practiced from its earliest days; and having as a youth rebelled against some of the practices of Methodism; I have long hoped for an opportunity to study it in more detail. My association with McGill University has given me that opportunity.

It will appear, and for very good reason, that what I have written is slanted toward the so called 'outports.' Any study of Newfoundland Methodism must inevitably be so. I have tried to set forth the reasons for this in Chapter VI.

In this study I am indebted to McGill University, its Department of Graduate Studies and to the Faculty of Divinity in particular for the opportunity to work under their direction.

I would like to express my appreciation to Dr. H. H. Walsh who has encouraged me in this work and to the staff of the various libraries both in Montreal and St. John's, Newfoundland. In particular I would thank Mr. Walter H. Butt of the United Church Archives in St. John's; Mr. N. C. Crewe of the Newfoundland Archives; Miss O'Dea

of the Newfoundland Room of the Memorial University Library, St. John's; Miss Cramm of the Gosling Memorial Library, St. John's; Mr. R. Bartlett QC of St. John's for making available to me his copy of the Journal of William Thoresby; Mr. W. Lewis of St. John's for historical clippings; Mr. Raymond Rock M.P. for Jacques Cartier through whom I was able to get some help from the Parliamentary Library in Ottawa; and my congregation at Ste. Genevieve United Church.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE FORGOTTEN ISLE

Introduction

Much of what has been written about Newfoundland has been simple historical narrative or glorified travelogue. Few efforts have been made to understand the underlying motives and factors which make Newfoundland unique on the North American continent. Some of its uniqueness may lie in the fact that so much of it remained undeveloped when other parts of the continent were being opened and populated. The proud boast of being Britain's oldest colony may not have been for its ultimate good. It may be interesting to speculate what France would have done with Newfoundland if the tide of history had flowed another way. The pattern set by France in other parts of the world suggests that things would have been little different.

For many years the British merchants used and abused the island and the few people who dared to settle there. Many had come to Newfoundland with the same idea that homesteaders once went to the western prairies; to make a fortune and return. While the sea may have occasionally yielded up a substantial living, few of the

settlers ever made fortunes. Years grew into lifetimes, and generation followed generation, and the people were bound forever to the rugged island they knew as home.

The course of history was such that Newfoundland presented a field of labour and a challenge to the vigorous reformation of the Wesleys. It was the beginning of the great century of missionary expansion and many churches were beginning to write the most exciting chapter in modern Christian history. Methodism too was anxious to try itself and the island colony offered a field when the desire was at its height.

We have chosen for our study the years 1815 to 1925. The first date is the year that Newfoundland was made a district of the Methodist Church in England. 1925 saw the entry of Methodism into the union that formed the United Church of Canada. At that time Methodists as a name disappeared from the Newfoundland scene. The Methodist Church was the only one to enter into that union. The single Presbyterian church chose to remain independent as well as a small Congregational church which remained out of union until World War II when relationship with the mother church in England was difficult. Thus while 'Methodists' as a name ended in 1925, it was only in name, for the church in Newfoundland has retained more of the elements and practices of Methodism than in

any other part of Canada. The only other date representing organizational change was in 1855 when Newfoundland became a District of the Methodist Church of British America. That relationship had little effect, and the predominant culture flowed from England rather than from the American mainland.

The years 1815 to 1925 saw Methodism in Newfoundland grow from a small beginning to the limit of its influence.[1] With the impact of the Salvation Army at the turn of the twentieth century and the Pentecostals just prior to 1925 the Methodist Church became more consolidated. On the whole the general policy of the Methodist Church was never aggressive as far as other churches were concerned and it went into areas where it felt there was a definite need. The map in Appendix I which shows Methodism at its height illustrates the fact that nearly two thirds of the island was untouched by it.

We must realize that during the years which our study covers, the life of the average settler remained more static than in any other part of the English world. While these years did see the coming of the railroad and power driven ships, these had little effect on the life and work of the individual. The industrial revolution

1. See Appendices E to I.

of the middle of the nineteenth century had virtually no effect on the Newfoundland population during most of the period. It was in 1895 that an iron mine was opened in Bell Island; and the only major industrial efforts, the paper mills at Grand Falls and Corner Brook, were opened in 1909 and 1923 respectively. Small copper mines were in operation in a few places, but for the most part the settlers relied entirely on the fishery and a limited amount of commercial lumbering. In 1906 the total value of manufactured goods amounted to less than two million dollars. These goods were produced mainly in small shops and establishments which could hardly qualify as factories. By 1929, however, the value of manufactured goods had risen to eight million dollars; but Newfoundland never aspired to become an industrial country and until 1925 imports equalled or exceeded exports.

The fisherman and the lumberman, who became the main concern of the Methodists, saw life move along virtually unchanged. Their contact with the outside world was limited. The first newspaper was printed in St. John's in 1807 but its circulation was confined mainly to the capital. Mail delivery to the outlying parts of the island was in terms of weeks, which were

increased to months during the winter season. For most of the population transportation was by boat in the summer and by dog-team in the winter.

After the turn of the twentieth century many people left Newfoundland for the larger cities of Canada and New England. Some of them returned during the depression years, but for the most part there has been a continual move of people out of the island. Places that were once thriving fishing villages have become almost ghost towns.

Our period of study does not cover what might be called the new Newfoundland, which has come about since World War II. With the advent of radio and modern means of communication the horizon of the Newfoundlander broadened and he became acutely conscious of the world around him.

Our study therefore covers a difficult period, but perhaps also an exciting period in the history of Newfoundland. While outwardly things remained unchanged and life followed the same pattern year after year, within the spirit of the people a vibrant force was at work. It was a field that presented unlimited potential for the work of dedicated missionaries. Throughout our study we shall attempt to investigate the influence of Methodism in Newfoundland during these years, with

a particular emphasis upon its social impact. Our reference to other churches will be only in so far as they affect the course of Methodism. It would be presumptuous to suggest that any other church would not have had a similar impact. It ought to be noted from the beginning that Methodism, unlike the established churches, was at the crest of a new wave of religious enthusiasm, and Newfoundland provided a challenging shore upon which that wave could break.

Our study begins with a short historical sketch, leading up to the time when Methodism came to the shores of Newfoundland. In an attempt to understand the motivation behind the Methodist missionary effort we shall look briefly at the philosophy of Methodism, particularly its social aspects. We shall go on to point out that the social impact of Methodism, while felt on the whole of Newfoundland society, exerted its greatest influence on the areas of life that were in a state of flux. We shall try to find why education became one of the most important of these areas. Following our survey of Methodism and education we shall study its impact on the morality of the people, and here we shall have occasion to discuss its role in ethics: temperance, crime, Sunday observance and other related subjects.

Any study of the social impact of Methodism would

be incomplete without reference to the work of the church on the local scene and in the community. On the larger and general issues of life any church would exert an important influence, but in the communities, shut off as they were for the greater part of the year, the church and its missionaries were bound to mould the lives of its followers. The church became the centre of the community and in so many places where there were no municipal authority, no law enforcement agent, no medical services, no social organization of any kind, it came to fill the needs which these would normally meet. The missionary became at one and the same time, lawyer, doctor, education director, policeman, counsellor, and by no means least, prophet. His 'thus saith the Lord' became not so much his mandate of authority, as the assurance to the people that they were not entirely alone in a difficult world.

Whatever our conclusions may be, Methodism, like any religious body, had a sociological impact. It will be for us to ascertain if this were always for social improvement. Every endeavour, religious or secular, has to depend on fallible individuals to put it into effect. That Methodism had such goes without saying. On the other hand Methodism itself as a religion and a philosophy may have missed opportunities for a greater or more relevant impact because of its social or

theological interpretations. As we go along we shall be dealing primarily with Methodism's point of impact, and although it must be recognized that action is the outcome of basic beliefs, we shall have little occasion to deal with the doctrine of Methodism, except as it determines social action.

Newfoundland continues, today, to be one of the few remaining places where religious expression retains a vibrant characteristic reminiscent of other days. Nowhere in the United Church of Canada have the traditions of Methodism been kept more alive and fresh then in Newfoundland. This may be partly due to the fact that Methodism was the only experienced tradition and Newfoundland Methodists came into union without experiencing any relation to the other two churches which, along with it, made up the United Church of Canada.

There is in the average Newfoundland community a great respect for the Christian faith in whatever form of expression. While this may be due in part to the nature of the Newfoundland community and the people, some of it must be credited to the influence of the churches themselves. It will be our task in this study to ascertain the contribution made by Methodism not only in this respect but in every aspect of social life.

A. A brief historical sketch.

In recent years a great deal of controversy has raged over the question of who were the real discoverers of the Western World. While the history of the Western Hemisphere largely dates from the landing of Christopher Colombus in the New World in 1492, it is now generally accepted that Norse voyagers, the Vikings, travelled far to the west and landed on the coast of Newfoundland about the year 1000.[2] From their colonies in Greenland and Iceland the Norsemen attempted to settle in the land which they called Vinland. The Norsemen may have spent several winters in what is now Newfoundland, but with the abandoning of the Greenland colonies, all attempts to settle in the new land were also abandoned. Recent excavations in northern Newfoundland tend to confirm the tales recounted in the sagas of the Vikings.

For three centuries the Vinland of the Vikings lay hidden behind the inhospitable stretches of the North Atlantic. The fifteenth century which produced so many maritime adventurers would inevitably push back the veil which hid these lands men knew lay to the west.

2. Mowat, F. Westviking. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965. pp 92, 404, 408.

The breakthrough came in 1497 when John Cabot, a Genoese sailor who had become a naturalized citizen of Bristol, England, was given a charter by Henry VII to sail west and to lay claim, in the name of England, to any lands found.[3] On May 2, 1497 John Cabot sailed from England in a small vessel with a crew of seventeen. For nearly two months Cabot sailed west, and on June 24, 1497 sighted land.[4] There is very little evidence to indicate what that landfall was, but tradition points to a landing at Cape Bonavista, on the extreme eastern coast of Newfoundland.

Cabot spent no time exploring the New-found-land, and returned to England by August of the same year. The next year he was given a fleet of ships and again set sail for the lands of the west. Little is known of this second voyage, and John Cabot disappeared from the story.

For nearly a century England failed to follow up the discoveries made by Cabot, and it was left to the Portugese and the French to investigate the potential of this new land. It was not until 1583 that Queen Elizabeth granted a charter to Sir Humphrey Gilbert

3. English, L. E. F. Outlines of Newfoundland History. London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1930. p. 19.
4. Ibid., p. 20.

and Sir Walter Raleigh to take possession of Newfoundland. This took place on August 3, 1583, but the loss of his fleet and the death of Gilbert himself on the return voyage marked a disastrous end to this attempt.[5]

In 1610 John Guy a merchant of Bristol made the first real attempt to colonize the island, by establishing a colony at Cupids.[6] Guy's colony did not flourish and was soon given up. However the venture did increase the attention of England to Newfoundland.

Various attempts to colonize Newfoundland followed the efforts of John Guy. To enumerate them is outside the scope of this study. The failure of colonization in these early years was due mainly to the efforts of the English merchants who wanted to keep the island as a resort for their vessels. This led in 1633 to the passing of one of the most infamous decrees to plague a land.[7] Charles I, under the influence of the English merchants, decreed that the captain of the first vessel to reach Newfoundland in the spring would be the admiral and judge of the whole island for that season. Thus followed a period of oppression for the few settlers there, and the discouragement of those who would settle.

5. English, L. E. F. op. cit., p. 28.
6. Ibid., p. 31.
7. Ibid., p. 36.

This absurd system continued for nearly a century. At one time a decree was issued that all inhabitants should be driven out and their houses destroyed. A protest from the Newfoundland planters succeeded in a later decree that the number of settlers remain at one thousand. Thus in a period when the rest of the New World was being settled and colonized Newfoundland was to remain little more than a summer fishing resort.

At the same time as colonists were contending for the right to remain in Newfoundland, the island itself became a battleground between the French and the English. Newfoundland experienced all the horrors of war during the last half of the seventeenth century, with the English burning French villages and the French burning English villages.

The Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 gave the English sole right to Newfoundland. The French were allowed only fishing rights on a portion of the northern coast called and designated until recent years the 'French Shore.' Many of the place names, Bellevue, Fleur de Lys, L'Anse a l'Eau, Griquet, still remain as evidence of that period in its history.

The French made one last attempt in 1762 to regain Newfoundland for the French Empire. Their attempt, while

experiencing a measure of success, was invalidated by the Treaty of Paris 1763 which ratified the former treaty, and Newfoundland for the last time came into undisputed possession of England.

The first governor had been appointed in 1729, and thus began the real history of Newfoundland. In due course all the various elements in the political structure were established. In 1793 a Supreme Court was set up, and the first Chief Justice of Newfoundland, John Reeves, became one who attempted to correct some of the injustices of that unhappy island.[8]

By the beginning of the nineteenth century such things as a post office, a newspaper and numerous other innovations had taken place to make Newfoundland a proud addition to English possessions. In 1804 there were 20,380 persons who lived in the island.

The first three decades of the nineteenth century saw Newfoundland advance more rapidly and further than in all its previous history. This advance was crowned finally in 1832 when it was granted representative government. Elections were held, and on January 1, 1833 the first session of the Newfoundland House of Assembly was opened.[9]

8. English, L.E.F. op. cit., p. 52.
9. Ibid., p. 60.

The establishing of representative government did not mean that the political trials of Newfoundland were over. We shall have occasions to refer to various legislation as we go on, but this brief sketch will serve to give us something of a background on which nineteenth century Methodism was formulated.

B. Newfoundland at the turn of the nineteenth century.

When Europeans first came to Newfoundland the natives were a type of Indian who became known as the 'Beothucks.' They lived mainly by hunting and fishing. When their fishing grounds were taken over by armed invaders the Indian was forced farther and farther away from the haunts he knew and on which he depended.

Ignorance and indifference on the part of the first white men to come to Newfoundland succeeded in diminishing the tribe through persecution and famine. A few efforts were made to establish friendly relations, but it was too late; the tribe was both so decimated and so suspicious that all efforts failed. The last known of the Beothucks died in captivity in 1829.[10]

The majority of settlers to populate the island of Newfoundland came from the south and the south-west

10. Howley, J. P. The Aboriginal Inhabitants of Newfoundland. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915. p. 231.

of England. These were people who knew the sea and were prepared to make their living off the sea. Because of the ridiculous laws in Newfoundland, many of the people who may have come to its shores were moved to settle either in Canada or the New England area. Newfoundland, unlike other places of the New World, did not become a refuge from the religious persecution of the seventeenth century England, for the reasons given above.

Many Irish fishermen found their way to Newfoundland in the eighteenth century so throughout that period they made up half the population. As colonization opened up, the English came in greater numbers so that by the end of the nineteenth century more than two-thirds of the population was English.

Newfoundland never appealed as much to the Scottish people, or to the Europeans. In the case of the Scots they were for the most part landsmen and Newfoundland offered little future on the land. The Scots who did come were involved more in trade than in production.

During the eighteenth century, apart from the city of St. John's, settlers were left very much to themselves. There is no evidence that any concerted efforts were made to increase its population by settlers from

England. Newfoundland could be said to be the 'forgotten isle' for the most of this century. We can understand why L. A. Anspach in 1819 could say,

> Newfoundland has hitherto been little known, because it has not forced itself upon the nature of the historiographer by deeds of cruelty or by entertine divisions or external attempts which endangered the safety or the peace of its neighbours; but on the contrary ... unobserved and unknown it silently distributed subsistence to a considerable portion of the inhabitants, and particularly of the poor of both hemispheres. 11

In order to understand the conditions existing in Newfoundland when Methodism first came to its shores we have to understand the fact that St. John's was practically a colony unto itself. The isolated communities along the coast were out of contact with St. John's for eight months of the year, and often there was no contact at all. Thus when we have conditions described which moved the Methodist missionaries to come to Newfoundland we have to think in terms of the so-called 'outports.' Any community other than St. John's has always been referred to as an 'outport.'

William Wilson, a Methodist missionary, who served in Newfoundland about 1820 writes of the time when the first Methodist came there in 1765. "Not a school was

11. Anspach, L. A. A History of the Island of Newfoundland. London: T. & J. Allman, 1819. p. x.

known in the island, nor was a single temple there to the worship of Almighty God."[12]

This may not be altogether true, except for the Methodists, for there was an Anglican minister located at St. John's as early as 1699.[13] The Roman Catholic Church was active in the island as early as 1623[14] and so firmly had it established itself by 1784 that it was recognized by Rome.[15]

However, Methodism was concerned in Newfoundland, as it had been in England, over the 'lesser breeds without the law.' It was to these lonely and forgotten folk along the coast that the Methodists came. This period was described by Wilson as one of,

> ... oppression, violence, swearing, debauchery, profanity, licentiousness, when every crime that can degrade human nature, sink civilized man to a savage or reduce him below the brute, was practiced without a check; in a word the people were demoralized to an extent that could scarcely have been exceeded by the thunder-smitten inhabitants of Sodom's plain. 16

12. Wilson, W. Newfoundland and its Missionaries. Cambridge, Mass.: Darkin & Metcalf, 1866. p. 138.
13. Prowse, D. W. A History of Newfoundland. London: Eyre & Spottswoods, 1896. p. 601.
14. Ibid., p. 604.
15. Ibid., p. 605.
16. Wilson, W. op. cit., p. 138.

CHAPTER TWO

A RELIGION OF THE OUTPORTS

A. Methodism comes to Newfoundland.

In chapter one we noted the fact that Methodism was the religion of the 'outports' for it was the plight of the 'liviers' in these fishing villages which invoked the interest of the Wesleyan movement in England: By the time Methodism came upon the scene in Newfoundland, three classes of people had developed in its society. In one class were the merchants, made up for the most part of wealthy men. Most of them were agents for large firms in England and Scotland. Their task was to supply the rest of society with the various commodities to live and to carry on their trade.

Business was usually done on the 'barter system.' This was a practice whereby the settler would 'outfit' from the merchant at the beginning of the season. When the voyage was over the produce of the sea was sold to the merchant usually at a price the merchant chose to pay. The fishery products were then shipped to various ports of the world. Very little cash, if any, changed hands between the merchant and the settler. The most

that the settler could hope for was that his harvest would pay for his summer supplies, with some left over to buy food staples for the long winter. When his income was less than his expenses he was forced to appeal to the mercy of the merchant, in the hope that next season would bring an extra dividend. The usual pattern was that the settler was constantly in debt to the merchant. The barter system prevented any competitive buying or selling, and often there was only one merchant in a community, so the settler had no choice. The fisherman became little more than a serf of the merchant.

This infamous system continued into the twentieth century. Although the merchants were a very necessary part of the economic society they were, for the most part, responsible for much of the poverty in Newfoundland.

A second class in Newfoundland society was composed of the 'planters' so called. They were resident fishermen who owned, a plot of land on which they could grow some vegetation, and a sea front on which they could construct their stores and docks, from which they carried on the fishery.

The third class we could simply call 'fishermen,' or the colloquial name for them may be more appropriate, 'sharemen.' They came, usually from England, and were given employment with the planters on a share basis.

The planter divided the harvest of the sea into the number of shares corresponding to the number of men involved. The 'shareman' gave half of his share to the planter as a sort of hire for equipment as well as supplies.

Few sharemen managed to get rich, although the amount they received was profit on the season's work. Sometimes the sharemen did better than their employer, who saw all his profits go to the unscrupulous merchant. Many sharemen managed to save enough to secure property of their own and moved into the second class of society to become 'planters.'

The work in the Newfoundland outport was not entirely done by the men. The whole family became involved. In the days before refrigeration all fish had to be cured, usually in the sun, and it fell to the wife and family of the planter to take care of proceedings on the land, which often involved cleaning the fish as well as curing it.

When the fishing season was over the income of the planter came to an end. However, the rest of the year was not spent in idleness. As soon as the snow covered the land he went to the forest to secure firewood, logs and lumber. His boats must be repaired, and

new ones built, his fishing equipment put in order for the next year. The planter spent much time hunting; and seabirds, seals, deer and rabbits went far to augment the larder. And so one season gave place to another.

In 1822 W. E. Cormack, an English adventurer, walked across Newfoundland, accompanied by an Indian guide. He describes a little village, Bonaventure, in Trinity Bay:

> The inhabitants ... gain their livlihood by the cod fishery. They cultivate only a few potatoes, and some other vegetables, which were of excellent quality, amongst the scanty patches of soil around their doors; obtaining all their other provisions ... from merchants ... giving in return the produce of the fishery, viz. codfish and cod oil .... The whole population of Newfoundland may be viewed as similarly circumstanced with those of Bonaventure. 1

For the most part this was the picture that faced the first missionaries to Newfoundland. We use the term missionaries because that is the designation given to those sent out by the Methodist Society in England, and in a very real sense they were coming to people who had been left alone and forgotten.

While the records show that as early as 1720 there was an Anglican church in St. John's, its aim was to

1. Howley, J. P. The Aboriginal Inhabitants of Newfoundland. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915. p. 133.

serve the garrison and the business men of the place. About the same time there was also an Anglican minister at Bonavista and at Trinity. These were large shipping ports and the position of the Anglican minister was more of a chaplain than a missionary.

In England, however, the need was recognized for more extensive care of the people of Newfoundland and in 1765 'The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts' sent Lawrence Coughlan to Harbour Grace. Coughlan had been ordained by the Bishop of London and came to Newfoundland as an Anglican. Both the Anglicans and the Methodists lay claim to Coughlan, and think of their own efforts in Newfoundland as beginning with him.

The fact was that Coughlan had come under the influence of John Wesley, and the Wesleyan movement, so the ministry he practiced in Newfoundland was along the lines of the Methodists rather than the Anglican. This raised considerable opposition from those who represented what was considered the established church. Some indication of how Coughlan was received may be gained from a letter by Governor Byron to the people of Carbonear, who had signed a bond to pay Coughlan one hundred pounds a year. The letter dated July 18, 1770 reads as follows:

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> Whereas, I am informed that the Rev'd Mr. Coughlan is the minister so procured and residing amongst you, and that so far from paying him cheerfully the stipend aforesaid, great numbers of you have refused to contribute towards it, insomuch that he is annually much in arrears to the disgrace of religion and dishonour of yourselves. I do therefore desire and command you and every one of you as aforesaid, to pay him what sums are in arrears, and that you also comply with your said agreement in paying him annually his salary of 100 pounds, every one of you according to your abilities. 2

Coughlan laboured faithfully for eighteen years and carried on his mission in the manner of the Methodists. So great became the opposition that the "New body was practically driven out of the church and compelled to form themselves into a separate society."[3]

It would appear that by 1782 the 'Society for the Propagating of the Gospel in Foreign Parts' had written off the work of Coughlan, for it was to John Wesley that he wrote in November 1782 and announced his return to England. In the letter he comments on his work,

> In winter I go from house to house, and expound some part of God's word. This has also given offense, but God is above men, devils and sin. The Society, I make no doubt, have many complaints against me; but in this I shall commit all to God .... We have the sacraments once a month and have

2. Prowse, D. W. A History of Newfoundland. London: Eyre & Spottswoods, 1896. p. 331.
3. Ibid., p. 331.

about two hundred communicants.[4]

Coughlan returned to England in 1783 and died in obscurity a few years later, but the work he started was carried on by two devoted laymen, John Stretton and Arthur Thomey. Very little is known about the work of Stretton and Thomey. It must be assumed that they carried on in the Methodist manner as class leaders. It was their lot to keep the message of Methodism alive until their efforts and that of Coughlan were linked up with the work of the one who might be called the real founder of Methodism in Newfoundland.

John Hoskins was a school teacher who had been converted under John Wesley. In 1774 he left England bound for New England. On the way he stopped in Newfoundland and his financial position forced him to seek employment before he could get to New England. Eventually he came to Old Perlican, a small fishing village about sixty miles from the scene of Coughlan's labours. Hearing that the villagers were looking for a teacher he went there and started a school.

> Many of the people had never seen a church or minister; but their fathers had come from England, and had called themselves churchmen, and now they had got a schoolmaster in their midst, they thought he

4. Wilson, W. Newfoundland and its Missionaries. Cambridge, Mass.: Darkin & Metcalf, 1866. p. 142.

> might become a parson as well, and do for them what they had been told parsons did in England. 5

So under the banner of the Church of England, guided by the Book of Common Prayer, Hoskins set out to preach Methodism to the people of Old Perlican. He had laboured for about five years when a revival began which spread to other parts of the area, particularly to Lower Island Cove, where a Society was formed. It was at Lower Island Cove that one of the first, probably the first, true Methodist church was built around 1780-81. Hoskins' work linked up with what Coughlan had started and which had been carried on through the efforts of Thomey and Stretton, who must take their place among the founders of Methodism in Newfoundland. After the death of Thomey, Stretton wrote to John Wesley asking that a regular preacher be sent to Newfoundland. Thus in 1785 John McGeary came to be the first Methodist minister appointed. He set up his headquarters in Carbonear, which evolved as one of the great centres of Methodism.

Meanwhile John Hoskins had spread his work to the north, and had crossed Trinity Bay and preached Methodism in the important shipping port of Trinity. In

5. Wilson, W. op. cit., p. 152.

spite of severe opposition the seeds of Methodism were sown.

William Wilson tells about the condition of Newfoundland about the time that Hoskins was working in Old Perlican and McGeary came to Carbonear.

> The country was not colonized; the forests were in their primitive simplicity; there were no roads, but few horses, and no vehicle of any kind; no bridges; and the weary traveller with his knap-sack or nunny bag at his back would climb the rocks, and wade every stream in his way. The children were without education, the people without religious instruction, and the land without Bibles 6

A turning point for Methodism in Newfoundland came when Rev. William Black of Nova Scotia visited there in 1791. Black spent six weeks on a preaching and visiting mission and many people joined the movement. His visit brought the cause of Methodism to the attention of the church at large.

John McGeary left Newfoundland in 1792, and for two years there was no regular Methodist minister in the island. In 1794 Rev. George Smith was sent to Carbonear, from which he extended the Methodist cause to Bonavista Bay. In 1796 he was joined by Rev. William Thoresby, who ministered mainly to the settlements in Conception and Trinity Bays. In 1791 McGeary had re-

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6. Wilson, W. op. cit., p. 174.

ported a membership of two hundred and seventy; by 1798 there was a membership of five hundred and ten.

By the turn of the nineteenth century more interest was being taken in Newfoundland, so that 1808 shows three missionaries serving in the colony. Of these the best known was William Ellis who spent twenty nine years there and became the first Methodist missionary to die in the island.

By 1810 a new place, destined to become another great centre of Methodism came into the picture. In 1810 Rev. William Ward was sent to Bonavista. His unfortunate death by drowning two years later, set back the cause at Bonavista, but only temporarily, for it came to be the Methodist capital of the north.

The year 1815 became a milestone in the history of Methodism in Newfoundland. In that year it was formed into a district and six missionaries were placed at different places along the coast from St. John's to Bonavista. St. John's is listed for the first time as having a resident missionary. Within two years there were eleven missionaries in the island and the work was expanded along the south west coast.

At the turn of the century most of the people lived on or near the Avalon peninsula. As time went on many moved farther and farther north to settle in

the bays and inlets, and on the sheltered islands that provided ready access to the fishing grounds and ample supplies of timber for fuel and boat building. Many of those who moved had been influenced by Methodism and they carried their faith with them.

During the summer, missionaries travelled north and found nuclei of Methodist folk. Thus in 1845 a missionary was listed for Green Bay, the farthest point Methodism had gone from St. John's. In 1846 Twillingate, another centre of Methodism, appeared in the record. By 1864-65 Methodist missions had been established all along the north coast and along the south coast to the Burin peninsula, and even into southern Labrador. In 1866 "there were 4099 members listed with close to twenty thousand adherents."[7]

When William Wilson wrote in 1866 he estimated that Methodism had reached at least one-third of the Protestant population, and one-sixth of the entire population of the island.[8] The formation of the Methodist Conference of eastern British America in 1855, of which Newfoundland became a district, gave to Methodism in Newfoundland a measure of supervision that it had lacked in the previous half century.

7. Wilson, W. op. cit., p. 428.
8. Ibid., p. 429.

After 1855 Methodism ceased to expand into new areas. The labour of its missionaries was taken up with consolidating the work in the areas already covered. This was done by more extensive coverage by more resident missionaries, the emphasis on education, and the construction of churches and schools. A look at the map will show that there were large areas of Newfoundland untouched by Methodism. For example the whole of the west coast from Cape Bauld to Cape Ray saw hardly any Methodist activity. Corner Brook and Grand Falls, while never becoming Methodist strongholds, did produce large Methodist followings. Their history, however, belongs to another day and Methodism in these areas came from people moving from other centres to labour in the paper mills and the forests.

Another area where Methodism never gained a foothold is the south part of the Avalon peninsula from St. John's south and west to the Burin peninsula. Only on the Burin peninsula of the south coast was there any concentration of Methodists.

The reasons for this may be the fact that these areas were settled mainly by Roman Catholics, and Methodism never attempted to proselytize among the Roman Catholics. Methodism felt that its call was main-

ly to those areas which had no pastoral care. By the middle of the nineteenth century there appears to have developed almost a gentleman's agreement that certain parts of the island would be the responsibility of the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of England or the Methodist Church. A good example is Conception Bay where the whole of the north shore was predominantly Methodist while the south was Church of England. Thus in Newfoundland it is not unusual to find even hundreds of miles of coast line where there is not a Protestant church, and there are villages that are entirely Methodist, Church of England or Roman Catholic.

Most of the opposition to the spread of Methodism came from the Church of England. As Methodism expanded the Church of England became increasingly aware of its obligation to the Protestant people of the island who were considered to be nominally 'churchmen.' Much of the opposition was local and there were no official efforts to make the Church of England the established faith as was the case in Ontario in the early days of the nineteenth century.

In 1845 Anglican Bishop E. Field, after visiting Twillingate, writes of a service he conducted, "it was very gratifying to see among them the grey heads of many respectable old planters, who still know how to use and

value an Apostolic ministry and the church of their fathers."[9]

After the granting of responsible government to Newfoundland in 1832 the population grew rapidly. From 1849 the population of 98,703 nearly doubled to 161,436 by 1874. By 1869 the break down of population showed a trend that was to characterize the Newfoundland scene even until the present day.[10]

The foregoing will serve to indicate some of the individuals, places and factors which marked the establishment of Methodism in Newfoundland. Without this background it would be difficult to understand the task which faced not only Methodism but every church. In dealing with its social impact we shall have to take into account all the historical factors, including the view that Methodism was trespassing on the ecclesiastical territory of another. Before we evaluate the social impact of Methodism in Newfoundland we must understand something of the social philosophy of Methodism in general.

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9. Tocque, P. Newfoundland as it was and as it is in 1877. Toronto: J. B. Magwn, 1878. p. 155.

10. The 1869 census showed the population as follows:

Roman Catholic	61,040
Church of England	55,184
Congregational	338
Methodist	28,900
Others	974

Ibid., p. 257.

B. The social philosophy of Methodism.

Methodism in Newfoundland came to be the religion of the common people and to understand how this came about one has to take a look at the philosophy behind the movement. The groundwork of Methodism in Newfoundland was laid by men who came out of one of the most exciting chapters of religious life in England, that dominated by the Wesleys. John Wesley was the master in the school which produced those who were prepared to face the rigours of Newfoundland, both physical and mental. Those who came out of the great religious movement in England had a philosophy which provided the foundation upon which their labours were built.

> Wesley produced saints, but he made them better citizens as well. He taught them to sing the affirmation of the Protestant faith, but he taught them too, the value of all knowledge. The salvation he proclaimed was a salvation from ignorance as well as from sin. 11

In England, no other period in history saw the common people in such a desperate state. They were the "hewers of wood and drawers of water." They were abused by both the church and the government. When they turned to crime to satisfy their physical needs the law struck

11. Warner, W. J. The Wesleyan Movement in the Industrial Revolution. London: Longman's & Green, 1930. p. 5.

swiftly and completely. Theft of a loaf of bread from a bakery shop could bring the death sentence. Many thousands were transported beyond the seas, from which they never returned.

While Newfoundland was never a penal colony, as some parts of the Empire were, many came there to escape the poverty and persecution; feeling that it were better to die in freedom than in chains.

This was a sad and difficult period. The sentiments expressed by Methodism have comparisons with these of the negroes of the southern United States. Many of the themes the negroes sang about were also the themes of Methodist preaching and teaching; that the glories of eternal life will more than make up for any suffering in this mortal life. Many critics felt that the seriousness of Methodism was a weakness. Those who were outside the influence of Methodism, or unmoved by the wrongs it tried to change, could never understand the driving force behind it. All the negative thinking about Methodism and its founder, is perhaps brought together in a book by a modern writer, Marjorie Bowen. Of John Wesley she says,

> Without humour though not without a dry wit, John Wesley discouraged joy, pleasure, all gay and lovely things; those who could not find happiness in striving after heaven

> might remain miserable. His school system did not allow a second for play, and very few for exercise or repose; there was not a child who came into contact with eighteenth century Methodism who must have been the worse for it. A terrible heritage had Mrs. Susanna Wesley left behind her; her ideas of education were welded in the hands of her son into an evil thing that did unrecorded harm to thousands of children. 12

The above comment may not be without some foundation for the Methodists "looked with suspicion on all amusements and recreation."[13] However it was not so much a case of being against enjoyable pastimes as a case of being in favour of a new way of life which left little time for such pursuits. Methodism would probably have died with John Wesley if it had been based solely on negation. Instead of negation it added a very positive standard to the easy-going indulgent life in which it found itself.

One of the reasons why Methodism was feared in the eighteenth century was that many in authority saw,

> ... that Methodism was destined to lift the poorer classes to higher levels of life. They were right. As Methodist momentum grew in strength the tidal waters flowed into the lowliest of channels. Methodism brought hope and joy of opportunity to the submerged poor. 14

12. Bowen, M. Wrestling Jacob. London: Religious Book Club, 1938. p. 317.
13. Edwards, M. After Wesley. London: The Epworth Press, 1935. p. 129.
14. Wearmouth, R. F. Methodism and the Common People of the 18th Century. London: The Epworth Press, 1945. p. 238.

John Wesley and the Methodist movement which he started felt a special calling to those who were afflicted. It is not surprising that as soon as word was received in England about the plight of the planters in Newfoundland, the Methodists would make every effort to minister to them.

> There are two general types of social philosophy. The one places its emphasis upon environing institutions by the use of which men are to be liberated from present restraints. The other is concerned secondarily with the external circumstances of the environment and places stress upon individual initiative and the psychological conditions which will guarantee that initiative for moral ends. 15

It was this second type of philosophy that Methodism encouraged. Methodism did not promise people that they would be taken out of their towns, houses or jobs and put into others. It never was a case of the poor changing places with the rich. Rather the whole philosophy was based on the need and the ability to improve one's lot within the capability and the limitations of the individual.

Thus one of the first battles that Methodism waged was against ignorance. While its contribution was perhaps indirect, many attempts were made to teach the

15. Warner, W. J. op. cit., p. 57.

people, and many local preachers became teachers as well. "No man in the eighteenth century did so much to create a taste for good reading, and to supply it with books at the lowest prices as John Wesley."[16] No other movement in history did more to distribute literature among the poor, and teach them to read it. Every society became a book store, and every preacher a book agent.

The Methodists were quick to adopt the Sunday School idea started by Robert Raikes. One difference was that the Methodists depended largely on voluntary help while the schools started by Raikes were paid. The Sunday Schools in the Methodist movement became places where children were not only taught religious truths but were taught how to seek them out for themselves.

Methodism covered every facet of human life, and its political philosophy, which for the most part was that of its founder, found ready adherence in a day when the power to rule was the perogative of the few. Wesley advocated autocratic rule; first for a practical reason; that knowledge was essential and only the few

16. Encyclopedia Britannica, 11th edition, Volume 28. p. 530.

had the knowledge. Secondly for a theological reason, which was that the existing powers were divinely ordained. Good government was a sign of man's moral achievement. In spite of this, however, Wesley believed and preached the importance and the freedom of the individual. "Liberty is the right of every human creature as soon as he breathes the vital air; no human law can deprive him of that right which he derives from the law of nature."[17]

Because man was born free, though not with equal opportunity, it was one of the aims of Methodism to increase the opportunity by improving the individual. "In presenting an ideal moral life to the individual ... an ideal said to be too exalted for human attainment ... it undertook to exchange the sense of human impotence for unlimited strength."[18] It was on this reservoir of untapped strength that the whole political philosophy of Methodism concentrated. If the common people were ever to share in the government of the land they must demonstrate the fact that they were capable of making a contribution.

> Men were taught to see that religion was a living-out in the community of the principles

17. Wesley, J. Works. Volume XI. p. 79.
18. Warner, W. J. op. cit., p. 71.

> of Jesus Christ: If Wesley's first word was that men must be saved by faith, his second was that they must be saved to become better members of their community and better workmen. 19

It is a fallacy that Methodism offered to people a 'pie in the sky' philosophy or that it became an opiate to shield them from present ills. Wesley and the movement he started preached the importance of individual responsibility in the here and now.

> Live thou today. Be it thy earnest care to improve the present hour. This is your own; and it is your all. The past is as nothing, as though it had never been. The future is nothing to you. It is not yours; perhaps it will never be .... Therefore, live today. 20

Wesley had very definite ideas about the one who was not prepared to contribute his share to the ongoing of society. Idleness in Methodism was linked with the worst of crimes. The ability to work was a gift of God, it was given to man in trust, and he violated God's law when he failed to use that gift.

> So far am I from either causing or encouraging idleness, that an idle person, known to be such, is not suffered to remain in any of our societies; we drive him out as we would a thief or a murderer. 21

While the Methodists were called to be separate

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19. Matthews, H. F. Methodism and the Education of the People. London: The Epworth Press, 1949. p. 81.
20. Wesley, J. Works. Volume V. p. 392.
21. Ibid., Volume VIII. p. 129.

from the world, this separateness must not interfere with their economic life. Certain liberties could be taken in the name of business that could not be afforded in the social field. Methodists were urged to 'gain all you can' but their moral standing must determine the nature of their business. They must guard against many of the abuses familiar in the business world. All work was a religious obligation.

In addition to gaining all they could Methodists were urged to 'give all you can.' Apart from the normal amenities of life they were urged to use their money for religious purposes. Any who did other than this were,

> ... not only robbing God, but continually embezzleing and wasting their Lord's goods, and by that very means corrupting their souls .... It is like keeping money from the poor to buy poison for ourselves. 22

The Methodists have been critized because they preached that the Christian ethic was conducive to prosperity. This was not because if men were good, Providence would reward them, but a case of simple economics. The Christian by working hard, and living frugally, and not wasting his money on useless things, would be more likely to succeed in business.

Much of the moral degradation of the time of Wesley

22. Wesley, J. Works. Volume V. p. 375.

was brought about by excessive drinking. Methodism attacked this with all its power for it reasoned that those who spent their substance as well as their physical strength in this way could use their money for more commendable purposes.

Thomas Olivers, an apologist writing in 1785, in reply to those who doubted the effect of Methodism said,

> Yet, if any doubt it, let them go to Kingswood and Cornwall; let them go to Whitehaven .... Let them go to Norwich, Bath and Bristol, and they will soon be satisfied that multitudes once dissolute and undependable are now sober, holy Christian men. 23

When Methodism came to Newfoundland at the turn of the nineteenth century, it came not only with a religious philosophy which was concerned with the salvation of the souls of men, but it came with a gospel that was also concerned with the welfare and the progress of man as a social being. Missionaries who had been schooled in the Wesleyan movement in England, brought their ideas with them. There was no aspect of life that was outside of their interest. The social scene in England and that in Newfoundland were very different. England was to become an industrial nation, but Newfoundland for many years to come would have to

23. Warner, W. J. op. cit., p. 150.

depend entirely on the wealth that men could gather from the forest and the ocean. Because of this, many of the theories which worked in England could not work in Newfoundland. While religious leaders were forced to adapt to the local situation, we shall see, as we go on to study in more detail the social impact of Methodism, that the action of the Methodist community was a working out on a new and different scene some of the basic philosophy of the original movement.

It should be noted that the flow of culture and business was from Britain during the period under study. A century was to pass after the first Methodist missionaries came to Newfoundland, before it would be influenced to any great extent by the great continent on the shore of which it was geographically located. The majority of those who were to become leaders in industry, and society in general, were either to come from Britain or be descendants of British forefathers. Unlike New England or even Nova Scotia, its nearest neighbours, Newfoundland was never to experience a cultural flow from other than Britain. There was no legacy, except for place names, left by the French. The break with Newfoundland as far as France was concerned was sharp and complete.

This phenomenon was to be a factor in the impact

of Methodism. Many of the prejudices that had grown up in the British Isles were transported to the new land where they found fertile soil in the illiteracy which was so dominant among the Newfoundland population. Sometimes these prejudices became a hindrance, while at other times they were used for the advancement of the Methodist cause.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODISM AND EDUCATION

It may be truthfully said that any group with the enthusiasm that marked the Methodist church would have an influence on every aspect of the society with which it came in contact. This will be most evident when an institution like Methodism comes into a primitive situation, as was the case of the Methodists in Newfoundland.

> During the eighteenth century religious and educational facilities did not exist for the vast majority of the inhabitants, and it was well on into the nineteenth century before these deficiences were made up. In many settlements the abundance of cheap rum, unsanitary living conditions, inter-marriage, extreme poverty, and the complete absence of law-enforcement agencies, all combined to reduce the population to a state of near-barbarism. 1

The impact of Methodism became widespread and far-reaching, not only in the areas where the Methodists located, but over the whole island where other agencies were goaded into action by a minority group. It was the coming of the Methodists to Newfoundland that made the Church of England conscious of the fact there were people who were calling themselves 'churchmen.' To a

1. Rowe, F. W. The Development of Education in Newfoundland. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1964. p. 201.

lesser degree the Roman Catholic Church realized that Methodism was a force with which to be reckoned. The Methodists never appealed to anyone outside of themselves and were content to take their chances and let their message and action speak for itself.

> In no part of the world has the Methodist Church sought to secure any special advantage from the state. The motto "A fair field, with no favour," has been descriptive of the highest earthly ambition of her sons, few of whom have ever been contented in the absence of the realization of that idea. 2

While it is true that Methodism influenced every aspect of the community its impact was exerted in at least three different areas, each of which overlapped to some extent, but each in turn provided a channel through which that impact could be made.

The three main areas of social impact were:

(A) Education, both secular and religious.

(B) Concern with moral issues, particularily its emphasis on temperance and observance of the Lord's Day.

(C) The church as a social institution within the community.

This chapter will be devoted to the attempts

2. Smith, T. W. History of the Methodist Church in Eastern British America. Volume II. Halifax, Nova Scotia: S. F. Huestis, 1890. p. 412.

Methodism made to affect the course of education. In subsequent chapters we shall go on to discuss its role in the other two areas.

A. Factors governing the development of education in Newfoundland.

A look at Appendix A will show that about the time this study begins there were seventeen schools reported in the island. The description of the way these schools were run and supported would suggest that there was no systematic pattern of education. Most of these schools were run on a private basis and supported for the most part by parents who may not have yet lost sight of the importance of education, even in their primitive mode of life. A report from Grand Bank will give some indication of the type of school which would be in existence at this time.

> An Irishman, some say his name was Roe, others that his name was Tacker, and that they called him "Old Tacker," found his way to Grand Bank soon after 1800. Tradition has it that he was educated for the priesthood of the Roman Catholic Church and discarded through strong drink. He kept a private school in an old house. It is handed down, that he would lecture the scholars, when drunk, on the evils of intemperance .... The parents no doubt supported and tolerated him under the consideration that "half a loaf is better than no bread." 3

3. Lench, C. An Account of the Rise and Progress of Methodism on the Grand Bank and Fortune Circuits. St. John's, Newfoundland: Barnes & Co., 1916. p. 47.

At a time when most of the civilized world was developing systematic education and building universities, the seeds of an educational system were just being sown in Newfoundland. There are several factors which determined the type of system which eventually developed in the island. Among these factors there are three major ones.

(1) Geographical location of the population.

(2) Relation of the various churches to education.

(3) Lack of trained personnel.

1. Geographical location of the population.

At the turn of the nineteenth century there were less than fifty thousand people in Newfoundland. By 1845 the number had grown to one hundred thousand, and in 1890 to two hundred thousand; yet at the turn of the twentieth century, outside of St. John's, there were only four towns with a population of more than three thousand.

This dispersal of the population along the coastline of more than six thousand miles was brought about by:

(a) Government legislation on permanent settlement. It has already been noted that settlement in Newfoundland was discouraged by the ship owners who came out to the fisheries each year. The settlers were

faced with two choices, either to give in to the home government and return to England each autumn, or to move away from the better known and visited parts of the island. It was the latter that many chose, and they settled in the out-of-the-way coves and harbours that dotted the coasts. There they were away from the prying eyes of the navy, pirates, and the long arm of the fishing admirals. It must be noted that the fishing admirals were captains whose main task was to get a ship load of fish. The summers were short and they had no time, or did not care, to hunt out those who were contravening the law. There are only isolated instances where the homes of the settlers were destroyed by those who had been commissioned to do it.

There are two schools of thought on the effectiveness of these repressive measures to disperse the few settlers. It must be recognized that initally these measures may have caused something of a dispersal, but the average planter was concerned primarily with finding a suitable harbour with fish and fuel conveniently located. Knowledge of the harbours and coves of Newfoundland will show that the number of fishing premises any one cove or harbour could accommodate is limited. Many of these had room for only a few families and the latecomers had either to take what was left or move on

to a new location. This matter of convenience then, sent the settlers farther and farther afield along the coast to set up the kind of communities that are characteristic of Newfoundland. We must recognize the fact that these clandestine settlers were not entirely unknown to the merchant ships which annually came from England and other countries. Many of these merchants depended on the shore fishermen to fill the holds of their vessels with produce. Payment for products was given in supplies or pieces of gold; and even today there are pieces of gold in the possession of Newfoundlanders which have been handed down for generations.

(b) Another factor which determined the type of settlement on certain parts of the coast, particularly the north east and the west coasts, was the French question. While the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 gave undisputed possession of Newfoundland to England, the French were given fishing rights to a section of the island extending from Cape St. John on the east coast, around the northern peninsula and along the entire west coast to Cape Ray. The French, though not allowed to build homes and settle were allowed to erect docks, drying platforms and other structures directly associated with the fishery. The French claimed a prior right to

the choice harbours and fishing grounds. Any English settlers who attempted to move into these areas were obstructed by the French and denied the protection of the law by the English. Thus on nearly half of the coast of Newfoundland, until the turn of the twentieth century, the English were either denied the right to settle or were forced to occupy places which were left over from the French. Dr. F. W. Rowe writing on the effects of the French occupation states,

> The effects of French occupation and subsequent incursion were almost identical with those of the struggle between the planters and the mercantile interests. Broadly, they may be listed as:
> (i) The retardation of colonial development on the island generally.
> (ii) An acceleration of the process of dispersal over a long and rugged coastline.
> (iii) A denial to settlements on the French Shore of those amenities and institutions which help to establish a semblance of civilization. Because of French claims this denial was perpetuated long after the rights and need of settlers on the east and southeast parts of the island had been recognized. 4

(c) A third factor governing population distribution was the Roman Catholic - Protestant position and the prejudices brought from the old country. Many of the English coming from England were members of the newly formed Orange Association whose purpose was to

4. Rowe, F. W. op. cit., p. 16.

uphold the Protestant religion and influence. In the Protestant centres in Newfoundland the Orange Lodge ranked second to the church; sometimes it ranked with the church. And so from the turn of the nineteenth century,

> The names Catholic and Protestant were to be adopted as political war cries, arraying the citizens against each other as they belonged to one or the other communion and branding as traitor and apostate the individual in one denomination who should show practical sympathy with the political views held by the majority in the other. 5

Thus it came about that the Roman Catholics settled in separate communities from the Protestants. Where they did share a common harbour they each lived a type of ghetto existence in their locality. Whenever one group found its way into the territory of the other, trouble developed. The classic example is what has become known as 'the Harbour Grace Affray.' The Roman Catholics lived on one side of the town and the Protestants lived on the other. A news item tells what happened;

> The Orangemen walked in procession yesterday, and were fired into at Shipshead by a crowd of people from Riverhead. Three men ... were killed then or during the disturbances that ensued, and it is understood that about

5. Pedley, C. The History of Newfoundland. London: Longman's & Green, 1863. p. 382.

fifteen persons were wounded, some seriously.[6] Until recent times the typical Protestant home in Newfoundland displayed at least two pictures in prominent places; one of King William of Orange, and another of the Harbour Grace Affray.

This religious prejudice tended to separate one community from another, or sections of the same community from each other. While the Orange Lodge did a great deal of good in Newfoundland communities, they did serve to keep ancient prejudices alive. Their positive value may be in the fact that they provided a common ground for Methodists and Anglicans to meet, for people were Orangemen first and denominational adherents second. It may be true to say that without the Orange Lodges prejudices between Anglican and Methodist may have developed to acute proportions.

2. Relation of the various churches to education.

A second important factor governing the development of education in Newfoundland was the relation of the various denominations, particularly the assumption by the Church of England that it was the established church and those who were not Roman Catholic were by

6. Evening Telegram. St. John's, Newfoundland, Dec. 27, 1883.

nature of birth 'churchmen.' Very early in the educational history of Newfoundland the conflict between the churches had its influence on the type of educational system which was to develop.

From the beginning it was never enough that a teacher would be academically qualified; he must also be religious in whatever brand of religion the school represented.

> If a teacher is deeply spiritual and religious himself, his personal example will deeply influence those entrusted to his care, even if he should never expound the particular creed which illumines his own life. On the other hand an agnostic or skeptical teacher will likewise greatly influence his students even though he refrain from conscientiously deliberately indoctrinating them in his way of thinking. 7

The earliest schools in Newfoundland were started by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. This society, started in England about the year 1701, was governed by the Church of England, and the missionaries and chaplains sent out to the colonies in this century were for the most part sponsored by the society. Thus the society and its successors in the educational field in Newfoundland felt that it had a prior right to determine the course

7. Frecker, G. A. Education in the Atlantic Provinces. Toronto: W. J. Gage & Co. Ltd., 1956. p. 78.

of education in the colony. While the society,

> was primarily interested in spreading the Gospel rather than in providing educational facilities ... the religious tenets of the church could not be properly appreciated by an ignorant congregation, nor could illiterate adherents participate in a satisfactory way in the religious observances and sacraments. 8

The Society was supposed to have started a school in Bonavista as early as 1722, and another in St. John's in 1744. Dr. F. W. Rowe states in his book already mentioned and quoted above, that the Society established schools in more than twenty settlements, between the years 1766 and 1824.

If the report in Appendix A is correct there is nothing to suggest that these many schools were in operation in Newfoundland by the year 1824. What appears to be the case is that an incumbent missionary would in connection with his ecclesiastical duties conduct classes mainly in reading and writing. This could very well have been part of the Sunday School curriculm. When he moved on to another place or was replaced, the school may not have necessarily been carried on. The facts would seem to indicate that the extent of the Societies' efforts until at least the turn of the century were quite spasmodic, for "When Reverend Mr. Stanser (later

8. Rowe, F. W. op. cit., p. 27.

Bishop) paid his first visit to Newfoundland in 1807 he found that only five clergymen and seven schoolmasters formed the full staff of the island."[9]

The Society for the Propogation of the Gospel was interested in education in Newfoundland, and it must be given credit for the work it did with the resources available. A considerable amount of ground work had apparently been done, for when its efforts were taken over by the Newfoundland School Society, formed in 1824, an ambitious programme of education was already planned, if not in effect.

The Newfoundland School Society was for the most part an Anglican Society for "Rule Two of the Constitution stated that 'the schools established are to be managed by masters and mistresses of the United Church of England and Ireland' ".[10] The course of the Newfoundland School Society was a troubled one, even though by 1846 it reported forty-four schools in as many places. While Anglican sponsored, it tried to operate along undenominational lines, and

> ...so liberal and evangelical was the character claimed for the new society by its first agents and its earlier reports, that the Wesleyan Methodist Society made a small grant from its treasury

9. Rowe, F. W. op. cit., p. 23.
10. Ibid., p. 41.

> towards its support, and several Wesleyan missionaries took a deep interest in its work. 11

The Anglican hierarchy looked with some suspicion on what the Society was trying to accomplish. Bishop Field writing later said "unhappily I cannot act with the Newfoundland School Society, for they will tolerate only 'evangelical' men, and they have decided; I know not by what means, that I am not one."[12]

It was difficult for the Methodists to support the Newfoundland School Society in either thought or deed, when all dissenters were barred from any management of its affairs, and many of the masters were created deacons, and read Anglican prayers on Sunday. The break came when the name of the Society was changed to the Church of England School Society for Newfoundland.

The Newfoundland School Society tried to walk on both sides of the road at the same time, while professing a middle of the road policy.

> Under these circumstances it is not surprising that both Roman Catholic and non-conformists, while appreciating the valuable work that the Society was doing, looked askance at a system which professed a basis of religious neutrality, yet was obviously biased in favour of the Anglican Church. 13

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11. Smith, T. W. op. cit., p. 400.
12. Ibid., p. 400.
13. Rowe, F. W. op. cit., p. 48.

As time went on the Newfoundland School Society like all charitable organizations gave way to more state participation in education. When the Society came to an end in 1923 its work was passed over to the Church of England School Boards, perhaps finally admitting officially what it had tried to avoid for a hundred years.

It should be understood that while the Methodists were emerging as a separate church, the Church of England still laid claim to all who were not Roman Catholic, even though they were following Methodist practices, and by the second quarter of the nineteenth century had established separate churches in many places. An indication of the attitude may be seen in a report from Twillingate: where "an appeal by the young minister (Methodist) to the local magistrate only elicited the taunting reply that the applicant had no authority to preach and must therefore take care of himself."[14] With such a concept held by the majority of Anglicans it may not be altogether true to accuse them of discriminating against the Methodists.

While the history of such an organization as the Newfoundland School Society may not be directly related

14. Smith, T. W. op. cit., p. 370.

to the social impact of Methodism, its relation to the Methodists was to set the stage for legislation which later came into effect and governed education until the present day. The various legislation effecting education will be dealt with in a later section. The above will give an indication of the raw material out of which this legislation came, and remains an important factor in the development of education.

3. Lack of trained personnel.

The lack of trained personnel, like the lack of education itself, has always an important influence on the development of any society, This was particularly true in Newfoundland and the problem of personnel was caused by at least three factors.

(a) Isolation and rigours of life in Newfoundland.

(b) The close relation of education to the churches.

(c) The local attitude toward education.

(a) Those who experienced life in the outports of Newfoundland even twenty five years ago would have some indication of what life was like more than a hundred years ago. It can be safely said that life for the majority of outport dwellers changed little between 1815 and 1925. The settler may have had a few more mechanized instruments for his use but mode of travel and accessibility to his neighbour in the next village was con-

trolled mainly by the elements. The fishermen laboured in practically the same way as his father and grandfather before that. He cut wood from the same forest and hunted in the same areas. It can well be said that a person born in an outport in 1900 and growing up in that locality would by today have experienced two centuries of social development, even though he had lived little more than half a century.

Thus it was that the isolation and the rigours of life in Newfoundland outports appealed to those who were possessed with that rare thirst for adventure regardless of the inconveniences and the hardship. Each passing generation produces a limited number of these, and the generations in question were not exceptions.

A report in the record of proceedings of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, has this to say about the missionary, and what was true of the missionary was true of the teacher, because they were often one and the same.

> The missionary in Newfoundland must have the strength of constitution to support him under a climate as rigorous as that of Iceland; a stomach insensible to the attacks of seasickness; pedestrian powers beyond those of an Irish gossoon; and an ability to rest occasionally on the bed of a fisherman, or the hard board in a woodsman's tilt; With these physical capabilities he must combine a patient temper; an energetic spirit; a faculty

> to adapt his discourse to the lowest grade of intellect. 15

At a time when halls of learning in the British Isles, Canada and New England were clamouring for trained personnel, a situation such as Newfoundland offered would appeal only to the person endued with extra devotion to the welfare of mankind, or to the eccentric of which it could be said "fools rush in where angels fear to tread."

It would be to deny the facts as they are known to suggest that this was not an important factor in securing persons who were willing to staff schools, private or otherwise in the Newfoundland of the nineteenth century. For example, St. John's, perhaps the most inviting of the Newfoundland locations, experienced its difficulties. An unpublished report in the United Church archives in St. John's describes the difficulty experienced in setting up a school. The report (1852) mentions an increasing interest in Methodist day schools, and while there were two schools in small communities near St. John's, the capital itself was experiencing difficulty in securing a teacher. One had been expected from England. A Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, the report

15. Society for the Propogation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. Record of Proceedings, 1842.

goes on to say, finally arrived and started a school on October 18, 1852. Things went very well until 1855 when an outbreak of cholera affected both teacher and pupils, so that the number of pupils was reduced from ninety-one in 1853 to fifty-one in 1855. In 1856 the same report states that the teacher had died and even though two other teachers were secured the school was closed at that date.[16]

It must be noted here that this was not the first attempt at day schools by the Methodists; several other schools were reported in operation around the island. The report, however, will serve to show some of the difficulties encountered in setting up schools. The need for a school, the money to support it and a building to house it, is not enough if there is no teacher. Thus it must be assumed, and the facts go far to prove the assumption, that one of the factors determining personnel was this one of isolation.

(b) A second factor influencing both the number and qualification of personnel was the relation of the schools to the churches. Throughout the nineteenth century the schools were directly related to the churches;

16. Report of Methodist Day Schools, 1840-1857. Unpublished. St. John's, Newfoundland. United Church Archives.

in many cases the missionary was the teacher. "In many communities the church has been the only organized social institution and the local clergyman virtually the only person in the community interested in education."[17] The relation to the churches also acted from the direction of the teacher; the Anglican teacher must be prepared to read prayers in the local church, the Salvation Army teacher must be an officer of the Army, and the Methodist teacher was required to conduct the service in the chapel when the missionary was not there, if a place were fortunate enough to have a missionary.

This sort of arrangement or requirement limited the number of persons who were available to fill the dual role. Furthermore on the local scene it was often thought more important that a teacher be able to conduct a good service than that he be able to teach. This close relationship had its effect from both the direction of the church and the school. The missionary whose task it was to be teacher as well as preacher was often not qualified to be the former; and the teacher who was forced into the role of preacher often rebelled against it. It could probably be proved that the educational

17. MacKay, R. A. Newfoundland, Economic, Diplomatic and Strategic Studies. Oxford University Press, 1946. p. 158.

scene in Newfoundland was often marred by a struggle of the teacher to be a teacher, and the community's demand that he be both teacher and preacher. When one realizes that the colony had to depend for the most part on outside help, it is also not hard to realize that the professional teacher would seek out areas where he could follow his profession without ecclesiastical pressure.

(c) A third factor which limited the number of personnel was the attitude toward education on the local level. It required more practical knowledge than academic training to be a fisherman, and the attitude of many of the settlers to education was that a lot of 'book learning' was of little value in the pursuit of a livelihood from the sea. It was not until 1941 that education in Newfoundland was compulsory up to a certain age. Thus many boys, as soon as they were able, often at the age of eight or nine, were taken out of school, if there were one, and put in the fishing boat. It was enough that he began early to contribute to his support, and there was always Sunday with the church and Sunday School. Perhaps nowhere more than in Newfoundland was it considered that "Man and society have been proved capable of surviving without science. That

man and society can survive without religion is unproved."[18]

The following figures will show, first that Newfoundland lacked educational facitities but secondly that there were many who did not avail themselves of the opportunity to learn.

Year	Population	No. who cannot write.
1891	197,934	94,281
1901	217,037	97,146
1911	238,670	72,808
1921	263,000	42,148[19]

Such statistics, it might be argued, prove that in 1891, for example, nearly half the population were under school age. However the assumption is that the figure given of those who cannot write were those who were old enough to write if they could. Assuming then that this is the case, the figures show that in 1891, nearly half the population could not write. If the figures 94,281 for 1891 represents those old enough to write, the figures are even more drastic. It will be seen that by 1921 while the numbers have improved they show a high percentage of illiteracy. It should be recognized that by the turn of the century there were few if any parts

18. Green, A. W. Sociology: An Analysis of Life in Modern Society. New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., 1964. p. 459.
19. Smallwood, J. R. The New Newfoundland. New York: The MacMillan Co., 1931. p. 125.

of Newfoundland to which the privilege of learning to read was denied. The figures bear out, I think, that some of the illiteracy must have been due to the lack of interest in education, rather than entirely the fault of the educational system.

This phenomenon therefore served to limit the number of teachers which would be produced locally. It was not until the decade 1850-1860 that any organized effort was made to establish collegiate schools. In 1853 the existence of a Wesleyan Training School was recognized in St. John's, for in that year the first state contribution to teacher training provided that a teacher trained in that school would be eligible for certain sums.

In spite of this, however, the number of teachers trained would be limited, and the settlers in the outports would have neither the will nor the means to contribute to the supply of teachers. We must therefore cite as one of the reasons for the lack of trained personnel the attitude toward education held by many people in Newfoundland.

B. Methodism and legislation.

While government legislation is always an important factor governing education, it can be said that the

development of education determined the legislation. It will be necessary to discuss this under a separate heading because for the most part it was the churches which determined the type of legislation which characterized education during the nineteenth century. As we shall see, Methodists played a leading role in the struggle for aid and encouragement of education in Newfoundland.

Before proceeding further it might be well to give some indication of the political philosophy of the Newfoundland missionaries. This is summed up in a letter from the Methodist missionaries, welcoming Sir Charles Hamilton as governor of Newfoundland. The letter is dated July 22, 1818, and while of considerable length much of it is relevant to our discussion. The main part of the letter reads as follows;

> ... of the Society to which we are connected it is a fundamental rule, that in conformity to the Apostolic injunction we should submit ourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake.
> If we might be permitted to indulge in the foolishness of boasting we would say that our conduct has with steady uniformity corresponded with our profession.
> We are willing to hope that our labours have in some measure conduced to the diffusion of religion and moral knowledge, and the consequent establishment of those Protestant principles which form some of the most prominent features of the constitution of our country, and are so carefully guarded by its laws.

> We are expressly prohibited from interfering in political disputes and it is from principle that we carefully avoid them "striving to be quiet and to mind our own business." Indeed when we consider the extent of the scattered population of this island and the comparative scarcity of the means of Protestant instruction; when added to this we recollect that the doctrines which we preach are the fundamental doctrine of the Church of England, and that we believe them to be scriptural and calculated by the divine blessing to make those who practically receive them, good subjects and useful members of society, that in most of our chapels we use either the whole of the justly admired liturgy of the Church of England, or an abridgement of it, we feel assured that we shall experience your Excellency's protection. We trust that we shall never be found undeserving of it. 20

On the following day Governor Hamilton replied as follows,

> While the Methodist missionaries continue to guide themselves by the principles avowed in your letter they will meet every due and proper encouragement in their ministry. 21

We have already seen that Newfoundland was granted representative government in 1832, and the first House of Assembly was opened on January 1, 1833. It was not long before the members of the house were made aware of the need for grants for education. Some discussion took place and in 1836 the first Education Act in the history of Newfoundland was passed when certain sums

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20. Colonial Records. Newfoundland Archives, St. John's Newfoundland, July 22, 1818.
21. Ibid., July 23, 1818.

were granted for the support of the various schools as they were then established. There was no attempt made to divide the grants according to religions. The total amount granted was fifteen hundred pounds. (See Appendix B.)

A breakdown of the Newfoundland population of 1836 shows the relative strength of the three major denominations; Episcopalians 26,740, Roman Catholics 37,718, Dissenters 10,636.[22]

Even though the denominational issue had not yet come to the surface of the political scene, a considerable amount of the controversy was building up which was to plague the House of Assembly for the next forty years. Religion had become so much a part of Newfoundland life that it was impossible to separate it from any issue, particularly education, which was provided, for the most part, by the churches. A report to Parliament of the Protestant School Board in 1855 sums up the thinking that was to influence the legislation that

22. No. of Houses 11,071
Males - under 14 15,766
Males - 14-60 17,386
Males - over 60 910
Females - under 14 14,609
Females - 14-60 15,197
Females - over 60 864
Newfoundland Census. Newfoundland Archives, St. John's Newfoundland, 1836.

followed 1836:

> The Central Commissioners cannot conclude their report before they have put on record their decided opinion that "All education to be availing to its proper and highest ends, must be religious," and they are happy to be able to express that opinion ... which is an exponent of the sentiments and views of so large, respectable and influential a body as the Wesleyan Methodists. 23

In spite of the fact that the 1836 grants helped in a small way to encourage education there was created a dilemma out of which the government found it difficult to get. There was continued pressure from the denominations for more religious participation in education, and this was unavoidable in view of the fact stated, that most schools were religious anyway. In 1838 an amendment to the Education Act, while appearing to give more religious participation, from the government's view, only served to accentuate the struggle. The Amendment stated that,

> All ministers of religion shall have power to visit the schools under the control of the Boards of Education; provided, nevertheless, that no minister shall be permitted to impart any religious instruction in the school or in any way to interfere in the proceedings or management thereof. 24

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23. Journal of the Newfoundland House of Assembly. St. John's, Newfoundland. 1855.
24. Ibid., 1838.

The various petitions and legislation over the next few years will illustrate the extent of the denominational struggle. The Methodists, whose policy was to keep out of politics and mind their own business, were in the front of the battle. They were there because they firmly believed that an issue as important as education was their business and while government support was welcome they felt that government participation should be limited to broad general policies.

In March of 1843 Rev. William Faulkner and other Methodists from Carbonear, which was then the largest community of Methodists in Newfoundland, petitioned the government as follows,

> That in the year 1836 a considerable sum of money was appropriated by a Colonial Act for the establishment of schools, in which an attempt was made to educate children of different and conflicting creeds under one general scheme of intellectual training. That the petitioners must humbly protest against this educational system on broad and fundamental grounds.
> By a division of the grant according to the number of the different religious bodies, a larger amount of good would be realized at a far less expense to the colony, since the money awarded to each would receive proportionate additions from the funds of respective parties, who would moreover when thus rendered independent of each other, carry out their plans with far greater effect. Petitioners therefore pray that the sum which may be voted ... may be divided between the

> different religious bodies according to numbers. 25

The Methodists at this time appeared to be a little confused as to what they really wanted. In the foregoing petition it would appear that they wanted grants to be divided among the three denominations. This is not the case for, as we shall see later, it was the Methodists who objected to a division of the Protestant grant. On the other hand the Methodists were very jealous of the fact that they might, as a denomination, be left either on the outside or absorbed into a general Protestant scheme. Thus five days later the above petitioners sent a further petition to the government objecting to the setting up of a Roman Catholic and a Protestant college in St. John's. Their petition goes in part as follows:

> Your memorialists object to the College Bill on the ground that it provided for the placing in the hands of two great parties unjustifiable extent of power and advantage, calculated to depress and discourage that numerous and influential class of persons who do not belong to the Protestant Episcopalian or Roman Catholic churches. 26

The government was forced to yield to pressure from both the Protestant and Roman Catholic, and in the Session of 1843 the following act, dividing the

25. Journal of the Newfoundland House of Assembly. op. cit. 1843.
26. Ibid., 1843.

grant between Roman Catholic and Protestant was passed. The Act stated,

> Be it therefore enacted ... there be granted ... annually the sum of five thousand one hundred pounds, which said sum of money shall be annually distributed, one part in the support of schools appropriated to the instruction of the children of members of the several Protestant churches, and the remaining part in support of schools appropriated to the instruction of the children of members of the Roman Catholic church. 27

The Act of May 12, 1843 settled one part of the educational question, but served only to arrange the lines of dispute between the Anglicans and the Methodists. It should be noted that a great deal of prejudice had grown up between the Anglican and the Methodists. The Methodists with their evangelistic zeal had made great in-roads into the Anglican population. The Anglicans felt that the Methodists had a questionable right in the island.

An aside here might serve to indicate something of the nature of the struggle between Anglicans and Methodists. It may also serve to show that the impact of the Methodists was not always a positive one.

On March 15, 1821, Messers J. Burt and J. Leigh, Anglican ministers in Carbonear wrote to Governor Sir

27. Journal of the Newfoundland House of Assembly. op. cit., 1843.

Charles Hamilton, concerning the fact that a public cemetery at Carbonear in which "All dead persons of whatever sect or denomination have been interred without any let or hindrances or denial from any person or persons," until the year 1821.[28] In that year the burial of an Anglican was prevented unless the body was first carried into the Methodist chapel. The incumbent Methodist missionary stood in the gate of the yard to prevent entry. The Anglican missionary conceded to the wishes and the burial took place according to Methodist rites. The letter was sent to the Governor because it was felt that by this means "the Dissenters wish ... to force persons to go to the meeting house, which is using unjust influence over the minds of the ignorant to strengthen this opinion."[29]

On March 22, 1821, Governor Hamilton wrote to the Methodist missionary asking for an explanation:

> I did not expect that in this enlightened age, the ministers of any sect, in this part of the British dominions, would have opposed the burial of one of its subjects, whatever may be his rights, faith or sect; I had indeed hoped that such intolerance had been extinct, and I cannot persuade myself that such a spirit has biased your conduct however difficult it may be to put a favourable construction in it. 30

28. Colonial Records. op. cit., 1821.
29. Ibid., 1821.
30. Ibid., 1821.

From further correspondence it appeared that the Methodists had purchased a burial ground adjoining the public cemetery and by virtue of this were claiming ecclesiastical control over the whole which was apparently served by the same entrance. The controversial cemetery is today thought of as Methodist and this might explain why there are no Anglican tombstones in Carbonear dating before the year 1821, when there were certainly Anglicans buried there. These and other numerous incidents served to provide the background against which the struggle for separate Protestant grants was waged.

Feelings were mixed in the Anglican camp, and some of the outport clergy were against a division of the grant. The hierarchy in St. John's were in favour and in 1850 a petition from the Anglican Bishop and others to the government requested:

> that a proportionate part of the yearly grant for education, according to population, may be awarded for the support of schools in connection with the Church of England, and under the direction of the clergy and other members of that church only. 31

The Methodists were against a further division of the grant and were content with a general Protestant

31. Journal of the Newfoundland House of Assembly. op. cit., 1850.

system of education. At the Methodist Conference of Newfoundland in 1850 a resolution was drawn up and presented to the government in 1851. This petition is important because it set forth the views of the Methodist Church on the question of denominationalism. This has remained the view for the most part to the present day. The petition lengthy though it is, is given in full:

> The petition of the members of the Wesleyan Methodist Church and congregations and other inhabitants of Newfoundland: humbly showeth as the law which makes provision for the support of elementary schools expire at the end of one year, from the time of its enactment, your petitioners are led to apprehend that renewed efforts will be made to effect a further division of sums granted for the support of Protestant schools.
> That from all the information which your petitioners can obtain from others as well as from their personal knowledge, they feel confident that any further division of the amount appropriated to the support of Protestant schools is quite unnecessary, inasmuch as the law which has been in beneficial operation for nearly eight years, cannot be reasonably objected to by any Protestant in the land, especially as in the organization of the district boards the various classes of Protestants are fully represented and have control. Your petitioners would most respectfully submit that further to divide the said grant would render these schools discouragingly inefficient and in many instances defeat the benevolent ideas of your honourable house, and in the event of such division each Protestant denomination would feel bound to do all in their power to impart religious and secular instruction to the children of their own people there would thus be created a number of petty and rival schools;

> some of which would necessarily be of an inferior character, these evils, so greatly deplored would probably be most rife when the people have been least instructed and when social harmony is essential to social progress and prosperity.
> Your petitioners do then most respectfully pray that in any measure which may be submitted to Your Honourable House to make provision for the support of elementary schools, any proposition for the further division of the grant among Protestants may not be entertained and also that a sum more adequate to the wants of the increasing population of the colony may be placed at the disposal of the respective Boards of Education whereby they might be enabled to build suitable school houses and to afford a remunerative salary to competent teachers. 32

Even though the Methodists were against division of the grant, it would appear that it realized the battle was lost. They did not waste time and had made every effort to prepare for the day when they must handle their own cause. The setting up of the Methodist School Society in 1851 was to balance their position against the Newfoundland School Society. The opening of the Wesleyan Normal School, already mentioned, in 1852, was a further effort to supply their own teachers.

The controversy was to continue for more than twenty years, both inside and outside of the government. All attempts to find an alternative to separation met with

32. Minutes of the Methodist Conference, 1850 and Journal of the Newfoundland House of Assembly, 1851. St. John's, Newfoundland.

failure. Those who favoured separate grants blamed the present system for all the weaknesses in the educational field. Those who were against it felt that the situation would be even worse than it was. The whole controversy tended to create a certain apathy toward education.

Finally in 1874 the decision was made and the Act of that year stated after the allocation was made for education that " the said sum so appropriated by this section for Protestant educational purposes shall be apportioned among the several Protestant denominations according to population.[33] The Act was passed on April 29, 1874 and was to come into effect on July 1, 1875, after a census had been taken. (See Appendix C.) The property held by the Protestant Schools was to go to the group having the majority, with the minority compensated for the difference.

The grants which had been divided into two were now divided into five. In 1892 a sixth was added when the Salvation Army emerged as a denomination. Until 1892, because there were few Presbyterians and fewer Congregationalists, the three major denominations, the

33. Journal of the Newfoundland House of Assembly. op. cit., 1874.

Roman Catholic, the Anglican and the Methodist dominated the picture. After 1892 the Salvation Army was to make inroads into the Methodists. William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army had been a Methodist, and separated to lead his movement in a situation similar to that experienced by the Wesleys. Methodism, both in England and Newfoundland, had lost some of its evangelical fervor and the many Methodists who longed for the old days of excited meetings found an outlet in the Salvation Army.

It is not our purpose to follow the various legislation which came about and at least encouraged education in the colony. It is enough that we have seen emerge a system that was to plague education to the present day. The Act of 1874 created a system that in some cases may have been the only one which would have worked but in other cases was the least suited to the Newfoundland situation. Its less than two hundred thousand population were scattered along six thousand miles of coastline in scores of villages, some of which had only a few families. It was not unusual to find a community of twenty families supporting two or more schools. Only the fact that people had tended to congregate in villages according to denomination served to

enable the system to work at all.

In 1905 one of the great Methodist leaders of education, Dr. Levi Curtis, said of this system:

> It is impossible not to entertain the opinion that the educational outlook would be more hopeful had we a different system. The fact is we have in Newfoundland denominationalism run to weeds .... From the standpoint of educational efficiency can anything be more absurd? And yet this is the foundation upon which Newfoundland is trying to erect an educational structure in the twentieth century. The weakness resulting from these manifold divisions is felt to some extent throughout the entire system .... Needless to say, hundreds of children ... are doomed to comparative ignorance. 34

C. Methodism and education on the local scene.

The Methodist efforts for a general Protestant system of education appeared to have failed. The greatest impact of an organization is not always evident in the halls of government or in general policy, but is more likely to be seen on the local level. It is this we shall discuss in the following section. It will be stressed that in spite of the controversies going on on the national level, the efforts of the Methodist organization were not curtailed in the least. It will be necessary to go back to the time when our period of study begins and look in greater detail at the real

34. Rowe, F. W. The History of Education in Newfoundland. Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1952. p. 94.

point of impact.

"When the nineteenth century dawned Methodism in Newfoundland was represented by one lone sentinel, the Rev. William Bulpitt stationed at Carbonear."[35] The setting up of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in England in 1813, gave an impetus to Methodist missionary activity in many parts of the world including Newfoundland. By 1817 the picture had changed considerably and the following missionaries were stationed as follows,

St. John's	Rev. George Cubit.
Carbonear	Rev. John Walsh.
Harbour Grace	Rev. Ninion Barr.
Blackhead	Rev. John Pickavant.
Western Bay	Rev. John Haigh.
Lower Island Cove and Old Perlican	Rev. John Bell.
Port de Grave	Rev. Jmes Hickson.
Trinity	Rev. William Ellis.
Bonavista	Rev. Thomas Hickson.
Fortune	Rev. Richard Knight.
Hant's Harbour	Rev. John Lewis.[36]

35. Lench, C. The Story of Methodism in the Bonavista District. St. John's, Newfoundland: Robinson & Co., 1919. p. 40.
36. Station Sheet. Newfoundland District of the English Wesleyan Methodist Church, 1817. United Church Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

In 1855 the Methodist church in Newfoundland became a district of the Wesleyan-Methodist connexion or church of Eastern British America. By this time other places with resident missionaries were added to the list for 1817, places which became centres of Methodism such as Twillingate, Burin and Grand Bank. At the same time missions were extended to the north side of Bonavista Bay, Notre Dame Bay, the West coast and Labrador. By 1855, Methodism had spread into the general areas which were to mark the fields of labour for the rest of the century. (See Appendices E to I.)

The history of education in Newfoundland on the local level has to be gleaned out of the few existing records of the church. Until recent times there was no report to a central body on the work of the schools. When we realize that education was part and parcel of the church and the church's mission was to evangelize, reports of the day school activity would be a minor part of annual reports.

It is traditionally held that the first Methodist school in Newfoundland was started by John Hoskins about 1780. This is not altogether true. John Hoskins was an Anglican, but had come under the influence of John Wesley and it could probably be said that his emphasis would be along Methodist lines. His school

at Old Perlican was more of a private venture and can hardly be said to be the first Methodist school in Newfoundland.

The earliest reports of schools organized by the Methodists appear in the district minutes of 1824. In that year three schools were reported and were located at Bay Roberts, Blackhead and Portugal Cove. This was the year that the Newfoundland School Society was formed, and while, as we have stated above, the Methodists encouraged the Society, it appears that they were making their own plans in the educational field. Cupids lays claim to having the first Methodist school, for in a report of 1844 reference is made to those who have graduated from a school, inferring that by 1844 a school was working with a second generation.

It must be assumed that there were several isolated schools started possibly by the missionary or his wife, as soon as Methodism became organized. However the year mentioned, 1824, appears to be the first year that any organized system was in operation. By 1844, twenty years after this, reports showed a marked improvement. An unpublished report in the archives of the United Church in St. John's shows schools were operating in St. John's, Old Perlican, Carbonear, Fortune and other places. The report states that the legislature

gave a grant to the school in St. John's including one hundred and six pounds to the missionary for the purpose of building a school.[37]

As we have already stated above, the controversy over denominational education served to create a measure of lethargy among the people involved, yet great steps were made as the above figures show. When the Protestant grant was divided in 1874, even though not completely favoured by the Methodists, it did give them free reign in their own house. The Wesleyan Academy had been opened in 1859 and while an elementary school for St. John's students, it did give teachers training on a level as high as any obtainable in the island.

The course of the Methodist Church in Newfoundland

37. By the year 1852 the report of the Methodist day school is an integral part of the annual reports to the district meeting. The record for that year shows the following schools in operation, with the number of pupils enroled.

Carbonear	165
Blackhead	81
Old Perlican	30
Port de Grave	52
Brigus	55
Trinity Bay	36
Bonavista	42
Grand Bank	no enrolment given
Twillingate	" " "
Burin	" " "

The report also states that there were many places from which no return was received.
Annual Report to Methodist District Meeting, 1852. United Church Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

reached its zenith in the latter half of the nineteenth century:

> The census show considerable changes in the relative strength of the different religious bodies between 1857 and 1945. The Anglicans fell slowly and steadily from 35.6 per cent to 31.3 per cent, while the Catholics dropped from 45.8 per cent to 32.9 per cent .... The Methodists steadily grew from 16.3 per cent in 1857 to 28.2 per cent in 1921; the creation of the United Church was followed by a drop to 24.9 per cent in 1945. 38

It is not necessary to recount the many individual efforts on behalf of education by the Methodists. Statistics will show that the Methodist population continued to grow. "The population of Newfoundland for the period 1884 to 1921 increased from 197,589 to 263,033 or 32.12 per cent. Of this increase the Roman Catholic Church showed an increase from 75,330 to 86,576 or 13 per cent. The Church of England from 69,646 to 84,665 or 21.56 per cent. The Methodist Church from 48,943 to 74,205 or 51.01 per cent.[39]

When church union came about in 1925 the Methodists brought into that union nearly a hundred thousand members

38. Parker, J. Newfoundland - Tenth Province of Canada. London: Lincolns-Prager, 1951. p. 16.
39. These figures are from the Newfoundland Census 1884-1921. I am indebted to Mr. H. N. Burt, former archivist of the United Church in Newfoundland and a series of articles in the Evening Telegram, St. John's, Newfoundland. September, 1964, for the percentage breakdown.

and adherents located on seventy nine circuits with over two hundred and fifty places being served. The records show that in 1922 there were two hundred and fifty seven Sunday Schools reported. (See Appendix D) It is safe to assume that wherever there was a Sunday School, by the turn of the century there was some form of day school. In many parts of the island the day school building often became the church on Sundays and important occasions, as when the missionary paid a mid-week call. Where funds permitted, the church property always had room for the school and the typical picture in the Newfoundland village is the church and school together in the choicest and most obvious place.

> Their invaluable work with young people in Sunday School and day schools gave the Methodists a leading role in the island's social and cultural development. These contributions coupled with their broadmindedness and foresight in helping to build an educational system made the Methodist, not only the third largest, but one of the most progressive and most dynamic religious denomination in Newfoundland. 40

D. Strength and weakness of the denominational system.

We have seen something of the forces which brought about the system of education as practiced in Newfoundland. We have also seen something of the part played

40. Parsons, J. The Origin and Growth of Newfoundland Methodism, 1765-1855. St. John's, Newfoundland: Master's Thesis, Unpublished, Memorial University. p. 109.

by the churches in the development of education in general. It remains then to conclude this chapter with a comment on the strength, if such there be, and weakness, as undoubtedly there is, of this system, and the extent to which Methodism took advantage of a unique situation to exert an impact upon the life and work of its people.

One of the weaknesses in this system has already been mentioned, and that is as pointed out by Dr. L. Curtis 'Denominationalism run to weeds.' It spread the resources of the land, never great at any time, over too wide an area. Schools of only a few children, and supported by a few poor fishermen, could never hope to provide the level of education that would raise their pupils much above complete illiteracy. If they succeeded in learning to read and write they did well. All of this tended to have its impact upon the life and welfare of the population. Every nation has its depressed areas but where this situation is repeated in seventy to ninety per cent of the land its inevitable effect is disastrous. No country can realize its full potential unless opportunity is given for that potential to be realized. It must be said that the denominational system of education left countless numbers of individuals to a life of illiteracy, which could have been

avoided. It must be remembered, that the factors involved in Newfoundland were such that no system of education could hope to do a complete job.

The unique position of the island and its people was such that apart from its negative aspects, education did provide the churches with a great opportunity to minister directly to the social needs of the people. The missionary, in the case of the Methodists, was invariably the chief administrator of education in the community. In the matter of securing government assistance he was the liason between people and government. If the day school succeeded the minister and the church received due credit and as a result the church benefitted. The government might send out inspectors once or twice a year, but the real inspector was the missionary. The schools were part of his parish and no minister of the Methodist Church would think of visiting a community without paying a visit to the school. In the small community he would probably know who the children were and as often happened he took the opportunity of impressing upon them the need to attend the services of the church on Sunday. The children in the school were the same ones that he would meet in a Sunday School class. Thus, because the minister, and the church which he represented, played a major role in education,

it followed that the message of the church would often have a captive audience. In fact the church wove itself through the whole pattern of community life.

Methodism has been critized because it has been called a religion for adults.

> Some eighteenth century satirists thought of the Methodist preacher as a member of the lower class, illiterate but still clever enough to make an easy living. He misquoted and misinterpreted passages from the Bible and delivered them with such force and vehemence that he frightened the crowd into conversion. 41

The Newfoundland community of the nineteenth century did not provide very good territory for 'fleecing,' however it must be said that much of Methodism did appeal to the adult. Its message was based mainly on the concept of the lost sinner and it is difficult to get children enthusiastic over being lost sinners. It may be said, then, that while the Wesleyan Church in England had an educational programme for the children, it was through the day schools that Methodism came close to them. Without this contact the work done by the Sunday Schools may have had to be rethought. It will be enough to point out here, and we shall have occasion to refer to it later, that Methodist Sunday

41. Lyles, A. M. Methodism Mocked. London: The Epworth Press, 1960. p. 81.

Schools were usually poorly run, understaffed and well attended. It was the usual practice for the class meeting to be held at the same time as Sunday School and many who never thought of helping in the Sunday School would never miss the weekly class get-together.

Thus the day schools became the point of contact and the gospel was liberally sprinkled through the curriculm in perhaps a language that children could understand. On every level of church government the welfare of the day schools was a priority subject. Some remarks of the President of Conference in an annual address to the conference will perhaps sum up the Methodist view on education:

> The returns from some districts manifest a spirit of indifference on the part of parents to the interest of their children. Excuses for non-attendance at day schools are both numerous and frivolous, and meanwhile the mind remains a dark void instead of being allowed to develop in that knowledge so essential in these days. We trust, dear people. that you will take this matter seriously to heart, and cooperate with us in giving to this subject the attention which its importance demands. 42

42. Minutes of Newfoundland Methodist Conference, 1886. United Church Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODISM AND MORALITY

Up to now our study has been concerned with some of the wider aspects of Methodism. It may be true that Methodist interest in education had a secondary motive, that of creating a literate people, so that they might be more easily communicated to by both the spoken and the written word. It is also true that the end results are not always those desired. It may be possible, even by devout Christian teachers, to develop the mental potential of the individual, but it does not follow that he becomes religious. Apart from all that Methodism did in the field of education it must be recognized that "Methodism has always insisted not only on education and legislation, but before all and above all, on regeneration."[1]

As shall be observed later, the missionaries who came to Newfoundland at the beginning of the nineteenth century faced a very real challenge. Perhaps to no modern people could the ancient biblical comment be

1. Nichols, J. W. A Century of Methodism in Newfoundland, 1815-1915. St. John's, Newfoundland: Dicks and Co., 1916. p. 18.

more aptly applied than here, that "In those days ... every man did that which was right in his own eyes."[2] Two or three generations of isolation and privation had left the people dependent entirely on their basic concept of human action. It is inevitable therefore that Methodism, which from the beginning came with a doctrine and a gospel which gave the common man, the poor and the outcast, back his worth, would find ample opportunity in the Newfoundland of 1815. Methodism has been described as a drug and an opiate, "very far from being an anodyne, the urgent and compelling message of the Methodist was a summons to put spiritual sloth aside and accept duties and responsibilities."[3]

The receding tide of each summer's operation had left in its wake a number of those who had chosen by force of circumstances or thirst for adventure to remain on these forbidding shores. Generation after generation had on the one hand made each one aware of his need for survival as an individual, but on the other hand had swallowed him up in a form of society where human dignity and honour came low on the social scale. As it did in England so it did in Newfoundland, "Methodism

2. Judges 21: 25.
3. Wearmouth, R. F. Methodism and the Common People of the 18th Century. London: The Epworth Press, 1945. p. 221.

opened to the lower orders the opportunities to engage in social enterprises and practice the social virtues."[4]

Superstition had virtually become a religion and death was an ever present spectre. The occupational hazards of a work that pitted man against the Atlantic or turned him loose in a trackless wilderness took a wretched toll. Added to this were diseases of every kind that annually cut a murderous swath through the children of the population. Such a morbid concept of life prevailed that a century and a half has not been enough to erase it. In a letter to Lawrence Coughlan, just before our study begins, we hear the word of one who has not been well for a while, he writes "This makes me think that I shall soon be set at liberty from this house of clay and delivered from the cumbersome clod that now bows down my spirit with anguish."[5]

Permeating the folklore and the literature of Newfoundland is this obsession with death and tragedy. Now it is true that a little country which has experienced as much wholesale and individual tragedy as Newfoundland would inevitably reflect it in its culture. There

4. Wearmouth, R. F. op. cit. p. 229.
5. Coughlan, L. An Account of the Work of God in Newfoundland. London: W. Gilbert, 1776. p. 89.

are those who say that Methodism, cultivated that attitude, that it taught people to forget the present world and centre their thoughts on things eternal. It is true of Methodism as of any religion that it is "primarily oriented to the adult phase of life and the problems of meaning involved in its basic limitations, thus including the finiteness of life's devotion and the meaning of death."[6] However, the record of Methodism shows that it, as much as any other church in the island, tried to lay hold of the immediate problems which faced the population.

This chapter will be devoted to a study of the conditions which contributed to a lowered moral calibre and the efforts and the success of the Methodist church in Newfoundland in combating it. As we go along we may find that there were some quixotic tilting at windmills, and some putting of bridges across streams which were not even there; but on the whole a very real effort was made by the Methodist leaders to combat immorality as it was interpreted by them. It may seem to us, from the vantage point of history, that Methodism spent a lot of effort on unimportant issues; but issues which are

6. Parsons, T. Structure and Process in Modern Societies. Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1960. p. 303.

unimportant today may have been real one hundred years ago. For example, the Methodist concern over the corrupting influence of Sunday trains and ships may appear somewhat ridiculous to us today who may consider the interruption of such services as unchristian.

History, however, never reveals to us what would have been if its course had flowed in another direction. In time, no doubt, the Anglican or the Roman Catholic church may have moved into the areas cultivated by the Methodists. Perhaps Newfoundland may have had to wait until relatively modern days and the emergence of some of the sects which characterize Christianity today. That Methodism was there when it was most needed goes without question and we shall therefore proceed on this basis and attempt to investigate some of the efforts the Methodist Church made to improve the morale of Newfoundland.

Economic and living conditions in Newfoundland in 1815.

It has been stated that "religion has three universal functions: to rationalize and make bearable individual suffering in the known world; to enhance self-importance; and to knit the social values of a society into a cohesive whole."[7] Each of these functions

7. Green, A. W. Sociology: An Analysis of Life in Modern Society. New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., 1964. p. 449.

bear upon the social. In the first case we may think of individual suffering as comprising not only the pain and tragedy of life but the efforts man must make, and the conditions under which he must labour, to wrest a living for himself and those for whom he is responsible. In the second case unless man can be taught that he is important as an individual his concern for the welfare and the cultivation of that individual may be considerably curtailed. Finally in the third case there is a relation between all the values in life. Man's work and play, his education and religion, his comfort in life and his appreciation of that which may not be bread must be brought together to make up the society of which he is a unit.

Let us look therefore at some of the raw material with which the Methodist missionaries had to work and something of the background on which they attempted to paint a new and different picture.

When Lawrence Coughlan went to Newfoundland in 1765 the condition of the people were described as deplorable, "The Sabbath was unknown, there was no person to celebrate marriage, and marriage was lightly regarded; while oppression, violence, profanity and licentiousness were practiced without any check."[8]

8. Townsend, W. S. and others, A New History of Methodism. Volume II. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1909. p. 206.

Sixty five years later it would appear that little had changed. The population of 1830 was described as "waifs and strays, evildoers and vagabonds."[9]

It is certainly a fallacy to conclude that the whole population of Newfoundland at the turn of the nineteenth century were little different than the inmates of a penal colony. While much of what has been said may be true in particular situations, it is safe to assume that there must have been many law-abiding respectable citizens in the island. Following are two views which we may be able to compare against first hand accounts:

> The inhabitants were perfect savages, stranger to all good order, government and religion; averse to and unfit for labour .... It was a common thing for men and women to live together without marriage and to change partners at pleasure, and the problems were not lessened when common fishermen took it upon themselves to baptize and to marry. 10

In contrast to this we have a view, while acknowledging certain weaknesses, strikes a positive note. This is a comment on Newfoundland in the nineteenth century:

> The moral tone of the colony was adversely affected by the large consumption of rum

9. McLintock, A. H. The Establishment of Constitutional Government in Newfoundland. 1783-1832. London: Longman's Green & Co., 1941. p. 9.
10. Kerr, W. B. Newfoundland in the Period before the American Revolution. The Pennysylvania Magazine, January, 1941. p. 61.

> and other liquors. A harsh environment forced the inhabitants to become ingenious, self-reliant and industrious. A livelihood and basic necessities for life itself were more immediate concerns of the islanders. Medical care, education and spiritual welfare were important only after problems of survival had been met. 11

While these two views have something in common they do differ as to the character of the population. For a more authentic description of conditions of Newfoundland about the time our study begins, let us take a brief look at some firsthand accounts. It was the practice of Methodist missionaries to write a journal of their labours and of these there are three, at least, in existence. One by Lawrence Coughlan, the authenticity of which is doubtful. It is not within the scope of this study to elaborate on this controversial subject and also because of the fact that Coughlan's Journal covers a generation before our study begins. A second journal is by William Thoresby who returned to England in 1800 from a stay in Newfoundland. Thoresby's Journal of which only about three are known to exist appears to be the most dependable in view of other outside sources. The third journal is that of William Marshall which

11. Christenson, R. The Establishment of the S.P.G. Mission in Newfoundland, 1703-1783. The Historical magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church, June, 1951. p. 209.

exists in the original in the United Church Archives in St. John's, Newfoundland. This covers a tour he made on the south and the west coasts of Newfoundland in 1839.

Something of the conditions which these two works describe, particularly that of Thoresby, may be said to be reasonably representative of the Newfoundland scene when Methodism was organized in the island in 1815.

Thoresby's description of his own experience with the elements will give an indication of the lot of the people of Newfoundland and the conditions under which they lived. One of his journeys is described thus:

> I parted with my friends in this harbour in peace, and several men rowed me ten miles in a skiff; they had to beat through much ice and the frost was very severe. I lay with seven great coats around me at the bottom of the boat, and it was with difficulty that I escaped being burnt with the frost; but I bless God I was not. 12

Thoresby in another part of his journal describes the type of people he met:

> The men that live in Newfoundland are in general a hardy race, for many of their houses or tilts are not proof against wind or weather, numbers of them are open on every side. Several times this winter I have been snowed upon, both as I sat in the house and lay in bed. In some of their houses you might see the men and women, boys and girls, sheep and hogs, hens and ducks,

12. Thoresby, W. A Narrative of God's Love to William Thoresby. Redruth: J. Bennett, 1801. p. 53.

> dogs and cats, scrambling in every direction to catch a bit of anything eatable. Though it is so in many houses it is not the case with everyone. My heart has been pained many times on their account. 13

In Chapter II reference was made to the class of society which had developed in Newfoundland. We saw that of the three levels of society there was only one, the merchants, who may have been able to enjoy a measure of economic security. The merchant usually owned the best house in the village, while around him like serfs lived the villagers in their huts and hovels. The nineteenth century was several decades old before a varied society, such as marked the ports of England and New England, began to develop. Once occupation was permitted in the island and free enterprise could be engaged in, different classes such as clerks, masters of vessels and teachers began to emerge. On the whole, however, at the turn of the century there were only the three classes described in Chapter II. Class two and three would comprise more than ninety five per cent of the population.

Thoresby, whom we have already quoted describes employment in the villages:

The people in this country are diversely

13. Thoresby, W. op. cit., p. 77.

> employed in the winter season which generally lasts six months in the year. Several go with their sledges upon the snow into the woods, to cut down fuel to burn, and it is well there is plenty of firewood otherwise they would all be froze to death. At other times they go in search of wild beasts and when one is caught they esteem it a good prize. At other times they go to the top of the cliffs or rocks in pursuit of the wild fowl that come near the shore, and frequently shoot them .... The wild Indians to the north would sometimes kill a man or two. In many parts the people are busy in making punts and skiffs of various sizes, and likewise making nets and sails, masts, oars and many of their crafts of all sorts. The latter end of March and the beginning of April a great many of the men and boys go upon the ice to catch seals, and they frequently meet with success, but, it is dangerous beyond description. In May, June, July, August, September, and part of October they are busy fishing cod. The value of Newfoundland consists in the trade for fish of which there is such plenty on the coasts of Newfoundland, that the world might be supplied from it; all sorts being taken in immense quantities, but the principle fishery is of cod. 14

In the above quotation Thoresby has covered the whole scope of the labour of the Newfoundland settler at the turn of the nineteenth century. This sort of activity and the course they must follow to gain a livelihood would have its effect on the moral character of its people. Here we interpret morality in its wider sense, that of character of disposition and the individual recognition of values.

14. Thoresby, W. op. cit., p. 69.

The influence of economic factors on morality.

Economic factors would influence morality in at least three ways.

1. The constant flirting with death in daily labour, as we have already inferred, would destroy initiative. The future was insecure and unless men have a secure future they lose interest in the present. Death at sea or in any daily pursuit left wife and children completely at the mercy of the community which had none of the complex schemes of social welfare that characterize modern society. Injury was always very close and the lack of medical care often enlarged the simple bone fracture into a lifetime of crippled inactivity. In the grim age of which we speak, the person who did not work did not eat. A disabled bread-winner left his family at the mercy of compassionate neighbours, who may have been pressed for survival themselves. History does not record the number of victims who were left to struggle for survival only. There is no doubt that neighbours and friends did what their meagre means could afford. Perhaps this is why the average Newfoundlander is inherently friendly and hospitable.

It may be safe to say that there is not a seaport in Newfoundland which has not experienced the loss of one or more of its population by drowning or exposure.

In so many communities time is often referred to as the 'spring of the disaster' or the year of the 'Trinity Bay Disaster.'

> As was to be expected when so many ships and men were engaged in such a hazardous undertaking as the seal fishery in the frozen north, tragedy and disaster struck many times, chief among which were the 'Greenland Disaster' in 1898 when forty eight members of the crew of the 'S. S. Greenland' perished on the icefields; the 'Newfoundland Disaster' of 1914 when seventy seven of the crew of the 'S. S. Newfoundland' were lost when overtaken by a blizzard whilst on the ice; and when the whole crew of one hundred and seventy three men went down with the 'S. S. Southern Cross' when she sank while returning ... with a load of seals in 1914. 15

2. A second influence was created by the fact that much of the cod fishery was carried on by men who had to leave the community. The 'Grand Bank' fishery would involve only men who spent much time away from home. The 'Labrador and French Shore Fishery' often involved whole families who were transported to the north each spring and returned in the autumn. The seal fishery also involved many men who left families, if only for a short time. For example in 1853 nearly fifteen thousand men went to the icefields.

In parts of the island, the lengthening

15. Fox, A. The Newfoundland Sealfishery. St. John's, Newfoundland: The Evening Telegram, April 1, 1966.

> days of departing February warned the minister to prepare the 'Sealers Sermon' and reminded the fishermen to make ready for the pursuit on the ice of his hazardous and cruel calling; and the bright days of early summer saw many who has been engaged leave, often with their families ... till the shadows of approaching winter should hasten their return. To the thoughtful pastor, the sight of the vessels crowded with their human freight was a sadly suggesting one. To him it meant, at home, shrunken congregations, shattered classes, weakened Sunday Schools; while in reference to those about to sail, it led to fears of sudden death in the pursuit of a perilous employment or of moral danger on the crowded vessel or busy shore. 16

It must be recognized too that Newfoundland being a maritime country and doing all its trade by sea would provide opportunity for many to follow the way of the sea as masters of vessels or crews. This is what developed, and as the century passed more and more ships slid down the ways and opened up still more opportunities. With the advent of steam larger ships were built in England and Scotland and staffed by Newfoundlanders. In 1853 nearly four hundred ships prosecuted the seal fishery. While some of these ships would take the fishermen and his family to the Labrador fishery in the summer, many of these ships were specially built for the rugged icefields, and when the season was over became transports

16. Smith, T. W. History of the Methodist Church in Eastern British America, Volume II. Halifax, Nova Scotia: S. F. Huestis, 1890. p. 51.

of supplies and fishery products.

The total picture added up to a considerable upsetting of regular and ordered community life. On the one hand, men who spent long periods of time away from home were more liable to become victims of drinking and loose morals. On the other hand, families which were being constantly uprooted and moved to temporary and inadequate accommodations would develop a lassitude toward some of the finer points of individual and community living.

There is no record to suggest that any effort was made to provide a chaplaincy service to men who went to the icefields or the families by the hundreds that went to the northern fishery. This may have been due for the most part to the lack of ministers available for such a position. It was seldom, in the case of the northern fishery, that a family located in a port where there was a resident missionary. Thus for a great part of the year the men of the community, and for a lesser time whole families were deprived of any organized worship or religious training.

In spite of the fact that this so-called 'floating' population did not have the services of a minister, their religious awareness was not completely allowed to die. There were few ships which sailed for world ports, the

icefields or to the north that did not have within its number someone who had come under the influence of Methodism. It often developed therefore that Sunday in a Labrador fishing port, saw little boats heading toward a central vessel where some devoted layman had chosen, quite on his own, to provide a service of worship in his simple and homespun way.

While the sort of life described above would have a detrimental effect, spiritually, on a great many of the people, it did provide a phenomenon which is characteristic of Newfoundland alone. This was the development of a considerable number of laymen as lay-readers. Perhaps in no other part of what came to be Canada has this developed to the extent that it did in Newfoundland. By the end of the nineteenth century every Methodist community had one and often several devoted laymen, who could take a sermon of John Wesley or C. H. Spurgeon and around it build a creditable service of worship. Along with what might be called a regular service there developed the class meeting and the after-meeting, often led and encouraged by these lay-readers.

More will be said about these different meetings in another chapter. It is enough to note here that large numbers of people left to their own initiative

produced a type of worship and religion that is found only in areas with similar environment. It perhaps speaks for the effectiveness of the Methodist mission, that even though it could not provide the missionary it often provided the ministry in the soul of a layman. As we have stated, the pattern of living was the least conducive to building a religious community life, yet the fact that so much was done at all speaks well for Methodism.

Once Methodism gained a foothold in the communities its advance was phenomenal. This was because it offered a type of religious expression that the fisherman and the sailor could take with him. It did not depend on altars, vestments or large cathedrals for effective expression. It perhaps more than any other faith in the reformed tradition demonstrated the reality of the priesthood of all believers.

3. A third factor influencing morality was the attitude to natural resources and an occupation that was involved primarily in the destruction of life. "The Newfoundlander has never been taught to value the resources of the land .... The Newfoundlander is accustomed to destroy."[17] If the Newfoundlander of the

17. Paton, J. L. Newfoundlanders. International Magazine, Volume XIII, No. 3. p. 404.

nineteenth century saw a tree he would cut it down, if he saw a bird or an animal he would kill it. One has only to travel around the island to see how the timber resources have been scalped from the coasts, in most cases as far inland as the settler could conveniently go. Each succeeding generation was forced to go farther afield for timber, until it was either out of reach or all destroyed. Only where the ruggedness of the land protected the timber does it now come down to the ocean. In areas such as the peninsula between Conception and Trinity Bays, and the Avalon Peninsula which were first settled, there is hardly an acre of commercial timber left. Areas from which, one hundred years ago, men cut masts for their ships, now present only barren rocks, from which even the soil has gone, destroying forever any hope of re-forestation. That today there are paper mills feeding off Newfoundland forests is due simply to the fact that the forests are those out of reach of the coastline settlers.

Perhaps we cannot blame the settler, because he had no other choice if he were to survive. The fact that there was no attempt at conservation by those in government added to the general destruction. With the coming of the railroad, fire was added as a further agent of destruction. It was not until this century that forest

fire prevention developed to an effective degree. Until the turn of the twentieth century no one thought of conservation. In the early part of the century when the man who first set up forest fire prevention in Newfoundland appealed to the government for help, a leading political figure replied that there was not a million dollars worth of merchantable timber in Newfoundland.[18] Within twenty five years there were two large paper mills operating on the island.

One of the most revolting practices of the early settler was the attack on the forests that he could not use for fuel or building. Usually in the early spring, while there was enough snow to travel, and the sap was running in the trees, the settler would go as far inland as possible and strip the trees of their bark. The birch would be used for lighting fires and insulation, the spruce and fir for coverings, for natural tanning of animal skins, and by the thousands to cover the holds of vessels as a barrier against moisture. This revolting practice left literally millions of trees of the best timber in the country to rot in the forests. Stripped of its bark the tree became wilted in a season and virtually an incendiary bomb to the first flash of

18. From a personal interview.

lightning.

Added to the above the fisherman by virtue of his calling was forced to destroy life. Apart from the fish he caught, once a year many of the settlers engaged in the annual massacre of seals on the ice floes. Whether it was sea birds for food or skins of animals for export the settler was always engaged in the destruction of life. This is not to suggest that it could have been otherwise. For as long as man is a meat eater, as long as he wears the skins of animals for protection, and oils the wheels of industry with the fat of beasts some creatures will have to die.

The above method of earning a livelihood tends to produce an individual insensitive to suffering, whether in man or in animal. It may be difficult to prove conclusively such a thesis, but it must of necessity follow that a certain degree of sadism is required, and this in turn must show in everyday life. It is wrong to suggest that the Newfoundlander is sadistic, but his calling undoubtedly provided a psychological background against which some of the cultural and religious attributes appeared incongruous. Some of the moral conditions with which Methodism had to contend may be attributed to this background.

Moral conditions in Newfoundland when Methodism came.

Up to this point we have made many references to the economic condition of Newfoundland at the turn of the nineteenth century. There can be no doubt that there was abject poverty in many places; that life was hard and difficult and continues so to the present day. Poverty and hardship have always gone hand in hand with immorality. Men are basically good and only turn to crime and wickedness when force of circumstances makes them. The exception to this may be those whose action are the major concern of the police of the modern city; people who have turned to crime as a way of life. Here, however, we are dealing with a different type of action, when ordinary people in primitive villages, and under primitive conditions, degenerate into wickedness the cause must be laid, not to the innate nature of man, but to the conditions under which men are forced to live.

We have already referred to the Journal of William Marshall. In 1839 Reverend William Marshall, a Methodist missionary was sent on a tour of parts of the island. The entry in his journal for August 30, 1839 states,

> This evening arrived at Port aux Basques and was kindly received by Mr. Warren MacNeil. I made many enquiries of him in reference to the population of St. Georges and Bay of Islands. The account he gives

> of those places is truly affecting. He stated to me that he had been in different countries and had seen the most depraved and wicked characters to be found in these countries, but he had never seen or heard of any such wickedness as was practiced in the Bay of Islands. I had seen a statement of Mr. Wise in reference to them and had thought that his statements were exaggerated, but Mr. MacNeil assured me that they were not, from what he had seen himself. 19

It may not be good judgement to conclude that the conditions found by William Marshall in the Bay of Islands was true of every community in Newfoundland. It may be safe to assume that every community contained more than its share of this element. A phenomenon which existed in Newfoundland until at least the middle of this century must have been more pronounced a century ago, and that is, that certain communities had a reputation for lawlessness and crime. In relatively modern Newfoundland there may be found communities existing but few miles from each other where conditions differed as much as from age to age. In the one community all sorts of wickedness were practiced; immorality, promiscuousness, stealing, and in general every sort of law breaking. The other community would be an example of proper living and respectable citizenry.

19. Marshall, W. Journal of William Marshall who laboured in Newfoundland 1839-1845. United Church Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland. Unpublished.

It is safe to conclude that such conditions existed to a greater extent in the early days of Methodism. As time went on and Methodism, or some other church began to exert its influence, the number of these communities decreased and the lawless element in every community became less. The record today shows that crime in Newfoundland is as low or lower than in any part of Canada. That this is so must, in a large measure, be contributed to the work of the churches, with the Methodists doing their fair share.

Contributing to the moral atmosphere of the whole of Newfoundland was the easy ascess to liquor of all kinds. As will be observed in our next section, temperance became one of the rallying calls of the Methodists.

There are many factors which contributed to the consumption of liquor in Newfoundland. One factor was the closeness to the shipping cross-roads of the world, and another its closeness, both in distance and in its trade, with the West Indies. The West Indies was one of the main buyers of Newfoundland salted cod, and the main export of that area was rum and molasses. The rum came in by ship load and was sold by the pail in the local stores in any part of the island. The easy ascess to molasses, while a basic food commodity in the New-

foundland household of the nineteenth century, also provided an ample supply of raw material for the illicit liquor producer. It is safe to say that every community in Newfoundland, large or small, had its share of illicit liquor producers. A third reason was that early in the nineteenth century it was found that the Newfoundland climate was ideal for the aging of most wines and liquors, and as a result St. John's became a great warehouse for the aging of liquor on its way to world markets. If a country is to play host to large quantities of liquor it is only reasonable to expect that a certain amount would be released for local consumption. All the facts bear out the conclusion that whatever the population of Newfoundland may have lacked it did not lack a supply of liquor. This became a cancer which ate at the very foundation of family life, both economically and morally. To the early Methodist missionary liquor became the dragon that he must at all cost slay. It is not surprising that so much effort was expended to combat this.

Not only the Methodist but the other churches in the island felt the challenge of this abuse. Archdeacon Wix of the Anglican church while visiting a lonely parishioner in his tilt and finding him very poor mainly through the use of alcohol, has this entry

in his journal,

> It will give some idea of the prevailing use of spirits in this island, and of the consequent discouragement which the minister is doomed to experience; if I mention that, notwithstanding all which I had said against the use of this intoxicant stimulant, in all which he had heartily acquiesced, and bringing the test of his own melancholy experience, had declared voluntarily, that he had left it off, he yet offered to myself, on my rising from my knees, what is called "a morning" from a little keg, which he drew from under his straw bed; and on my reminding him, when about to help himself, that he had engaged to break off this habit, he excused himself by saying he made reservation for the use of the remaining contents of the keg. 20

Methodism has often been accused of being narrow-minded in its attitude to alcohol, as well as to some of the other things it considered moral evils. However, when it was seen that this contributed to the moral degeneration of the people it was useless to treat the symptoms and leave the causes untouched.

Archdeacon Wix in another part of his journal recognized the fact that the people of Newfoundland were of good and stable stock, but force of circumstances as well as uninhibited use of alcohol had made a people of whom he said, "The habitual conversation of the people is of the most disgusting character; profanity is the

20. Wix, E. Six Months of a Newfoundland Missionary's Journal, February to August, 1835. Cornhill: Smith, Elder & Co., 1836. p. 31.

dialect, decency and delicacy are rare exceptions.[21]

Methodist action to combat immorality.

We have outlined above some of the immoral conditions which Methodism faced in the Newfoundland of the nineteenth century. We shall devote the concluding section of this chapter to some of the action which the Methodists took in an effort to control every type of immoral conduct. The action is found mainly in resolutions and petitions arising out of the district meetings of the church. These meetings became the forum where policy was hammered out. The working out of it on the local scene was determined by the effectiveness of the missionary. Human nature being what it is, some would have more success than others. The efforts of the Methodist Church as a body falls into several categories, some of which may be more relevant to the moral problems than others.

1. Temperance. One of the main channels of evangelism of the Methodist Church was its programme of temperance. From the early days of Methodism an unceasing battle was waged against all forms of intoxicating liquor. The policy of the church was summed up in an address to the Methodist Conference in 1882, which said in part,

> It is a source of deep gratitude and satisfaction to us, that our church is free

21. Wix, E. op. cit., p. 172.

> from the crime of fostering or farming upon liquor traffic. Methodism and rum are foes irreconcilable, eternal. May God keep us pure and purify the universal church in this particular. 22

While the Methodist Church saw and rebelled against liquor in all its forms, it appears that it was not until about 1880 that it really became a burning issue. Prior to that, the records made passing reference to this matter but after 1880 the whole church seemed to be armed for a conflict against alcohol and no quarter was to be given until its use was banished completely. The signing of a pledge of total abstinence came about as a result of a resolution in 1883. It is not to suggest that this was the first time such a method was used. Pledge signing in the Methodist Church in England had been encouraged from the days of the Wesleys.

> The vigour of Wesley's protest against the trade in alcohol was not sustained so strongly after his death. Gradually Methodism lost the lead in the denunciation of the traffic. It is true that the Conference of 1836 bewailed the sin of intemperance, but in 1841 Wesleyan chapels were forbidden to allow their premises to be used for teetotal meetings. When a temperance declaration was drawn up in 1848 it had the signature of only forty-eight Wesleyan ministers. It was not until 1873, when a committee was set up to promote

22. Minutes of the Newfoundland District of the Methodist Church, 1882. United Church Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

> temperance legislation, that the work of Wesley was continued with vigour. 23

It took a few years for this renewed emphasis to reach Newfoundland, and as a result in 1883 the following resolution was presented to the Newfoundland District:

> It was recommended that in all Sunday Schools of our church, every effort be made to inculcate in the minds of the young people principles of total abstinence from all intoxicant liquors or injurious practices, and that for this purpose a form of pledge shall be provided, which shall embrace abstinence from the use of tobacco, as well as from all intoxicating drinks and the avoidance of all bad words and bad books. 24

Practically every evil in society was attributed to alcohol, and while other things such as smoking and swearing, as mentioned in the above resolution, were included in the censure, it was the liquor traffic that invited the full force of the wrath of the church. Each year brought renewed emphasis on the need for nothing short of total prohibition. In 1885 the most effective tool of the church came into being, the formation of the Methodist Temperance Society. The resolution bringing this into being recommended, "that a Methodist total abstinence society having special reference to the bringing about of laws prohibiting the sale, manufacture and

23. Edwards, M. After Wesley. London: The Epworth Press, 1935. p. 135.
24. Minutes of the Newfoundland District of the Methodist Church, 1883. op. cit.

importation of spirituous liquors, be formed, and that such a society to be strictly under the control of the church, to be supported voluntarily and to be utilized for the improvement of our people and that the society have branches on all the circuits and missions as far as is practicable."[25]

As a result of this resolution temperance societies sprang up throughout the whole of the church. Wherever there was a group of Methodists there invariably resulted a society. Membership in the Methodist Church required total abstinence, and one of the surest ways to maintain that membership was to be a member of the temperance society. Every community of any size organized meetings, forums, and debates about the evil of alcohol. History will never know how many worms were sacrificed to illustrate the effect of alcohol on a living creature. It was typical for a temperance speaker to begin his discourse by dropping a worm into a glass of alcohol. As his audience watched the worm wriggle and die the speaker went on to expound the effects of demon rum.

Each year at the District Meeting the issue was

25. Minutes of the Newfoundland District of the Methodist Church, 1885. op. cit.

taken up and given a new impetus. By 1895 the Methodist Church went on record as follows, "As a church we again deliver our unqualified protest against the liquor traffic, in all its varied forms, and call upon all who name the name of Christ to depart from this evil and to do all that lieth in their power to deliver others from it."[26]

After 1890 the Methodist Church was joined by the Salvation Army in its fight against alcohol. While it is safe to say that the Methodist and the Salvation Army often clashed over issues, they were at least united on this point. While the Anglican and the Roman Catholic churches were aware of the abuses from the liquor traffic there was no concerted effort on their part to induce such a measure as prohibition.

The battle continued in the courts of the church and in the communities, until finally in 1917 prohibition laws were passed making alcohol procurable only on a doctor's prescription. For the record it could be said that the Methodists, who were the chief exponents of prohibition, were successful in their war against liquor. As in every such situation the last state became worse than the first. The way was open for all sorts of illicit distilling and smuggling.

26. Minutes of the Newfoundland District of the Methodist Church, 1895. op. cit.

The French islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon off the south coast of the island became a loading port for all sorts of boats whose captains were prepared to face prosecution for the monetary returns that their cargo could bring. Ships sailing from any port in the world could safely remain outside the three mile limit and under cover of darkness transfer its cargo to small boats that could hide in the many unprotected coves and inlets.

The abuses which developed were such that in a few years the Act was amended and to all intents and purposes prohibition ended in 1925. Again this is not to suggest that Methodism failed in its temperance programme. Even though prohibition came to an end, more effective controls made the sale of alcohol more in keeping with the island's economy. In the meantime it had so far succeeded in the education of its people that if figures were available they would show that there are fewer drinkers among Newfoundland Methodists than among any other similar group on the continent.

On the question of the use of tobacco it became largely a local issue. While the church as a whole discouraged the use of it the only resolution that dealt specifically with it was made in 1896. At other times it was included in the larger issue of alcohol. In

1896 a resolution was made, "with a view to prevent the baneful effects of tobacco on the youth of our colony, we recommend that legislative enactment enforce a measure prohibiting the sale of tobacco, cigars or cigarettes to youth under seventeen years of age."[27]

On the local level it was a different matter. No true Methodist was expected to use tobacco. If he did the chances were that he was a second rate Christian. No minister of the Methodist Church was allowed to smoke or use tobacco, if not by decree then by public opinion. During the nineteenth century the pipe-smoking cleric was invariably an Anglican or a Roman Catholic. Ancient prejudices die hard, and even today congregations which are basically Methodist frown upon the use of tobacco by its clergy.

2. The observance of the Lord's Day. Second only to its temperance program was the Methodist emphasis on the observance of Sunday. Boats were supposed to remain at anchor, the tools of daily labour were to be laid down, hunting, fishing and sport, were forbidden. School books were to be put away and in the more conservative households the Sunday dinner was prepared on Saturday and the Sunday dishes were left until Monday. Only one

27. Minutes of the Newfoundland District of the Methodist Church, 1896. op. cit.

boat was expected to move, and that was the one that carried the missionary on his rounds.

In addition to the observance of Sunday as it was interpreted on the local level, the church at large through its annual conferences made it quite clear to the people how the Sabbath was to be observed. Speaking to the District Meeting of 1886 the president in his address had these comments to make on its observance:

> On Mount Sinai the command was given, remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy, and it is still binding upon this generation. Do not spend the day in indolence, or in paying complimentary visits to your neighbours and friends. Remember that indolence is not rest, neither is pleasure in this particular, law. 28

The Methodist reasons for observance of the Lord's Day were both theological and practical. That it was one of the ten commandments was enough to bind every good Methodist to making it a day of holy exercise. That the Bible also stated that it should be a day of rest was enough that the Methodists desired this day not only for themselves but for others. It was to them a gift of God to mankind and no power on earth had the right to deny it to any of God's children. They felt

28. Minutes of the Newfoundland District of the Methodist Church, 1886. op. cit.

it their sacred duty that they should preserve the day for everyone.

With this in mind they repeatedly made resolutions and recommendations in the general conferences in an attempt to gain public and government support for their views. Two such resolutions will serve to illustrate the kind of effort made by the church in Newfoundland. In 1895 the following resolution was passed:

> Whereas the Conference has learned that mails arriving on Sunday have been sorted on that day, thereby depriving postal officials of their needed rest and attendance upon their religious duties, it is hereby resolved that the Governor in Council be requested that said practices be discontinued. 29

A second resolution illustrates the extent and the coverage which the Methodists felt the observance of the Lord's Day involved. In 1900 the following resolution was passed.

> That this Conference place on record its deep and sincere regret that the Lord's Day is so increasingly desecrated in this island, by the running of ordinary trains, of excursion trains, of street cars in the city of St. John's, and also various departments of public service, that we respectfully recommend and urge upon the legislature the great importance of placing upon the statute books such laws as will secure to the public the proper observance of the Sabbath. 30

Quite apart from religious reasons the Methodists were anxious for other reasons that laws be passed

29. Minutes of the Newfoundland District of the Methodist Church, 1895. op. cit.
30. Ibid., 1900.

governing activity on the Lord's Day. If the Methodists happened to share their community with the Roman Catholics, whose concept of Sunday was different from theirs, they were left at an unfair advantage in the prosecution of their trade. If the weather or the season necessitated the setting of fishing nets on Sunday the Roman Catholics, whose religion did not forbid work on Sunday, had the advantage over their Methodist neighbours who had to wait until the clock struck midnight on Sunday.

The coming of automation and an industrial age made many of the demands of the Methodists impractical. Nevertheless it did instil in the mind of its people a respect for Sunday which has remained until today. It allowed them time for spiritual exercise and created in even the most agnostic a respect for something outside of himself. Sunday became an institution and in the communities where there were few other social activities the churches came to be well attended. All the week the villager worked like a slave, but on Sunday he became a man again. During the week he may have had to move on his own social level but on Sunday he rubbed shoulders with the rest of the community. On Sunday the merchant and the fisherman, the planter and the shareman shared a common concern. They were all worth the same

before the God they worshipped who was no respector of persons.

Without this respite from the drudgery and loneliness of his occupation, life for the villager would have been sordid indeed. Much of the credit for making Sunday what it was, particularly in the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, must be given to the Methodist Church and those who proclaimed its particular message. For us who live in this day it is difficult to appreciate what one day in seven meant to the lonely villager in the Newfoundland outport.

3. The Methodist emphasis on the place of the family.

In the theology of Methodism there was little place for the growing mind of the child. Its attitude was typical nineteenth century, that children must be 'seen and not heard.' On the other hand it may be said that it was the religion of the family. The family as a group were welcome and usually present in the house of worship. Apart from the day school there was the Sunday School which early became a part of the Methodist programme. It is doubtful however that Methodist Sunday Schools were geared to the mind of the growing child. For the most part in the local church they were thought of as a necessary encumbrance. The Sunday Schools were often staffed by people who were considered

just a little lower on the religious scale. This is not to suggest that most of the Sunday School staff were not devoted Christians. They were perhaps the only people in the church who saw their Christian responsibility reaching outside of their own religious concern.

The difficulty lay not in being unaware of the need for family religion, but rather in the assumption that Christians were not grown but converted. The idea that a child born in a Christian home could grow up in the Christian faith was never considered. There was no act of confirmation in the Methodist church in Newfoundland, and a person was only considered a member when he was so called 'converted.' Few Methodist leaders ever thought that there might be a situation where conversion was not necessary.

Sometimes what the church at large advocated and what was practiced were not the same. That the church was aware of the importance of the family is borne out in the following statement from the president's address to the District Meeting of 1901:

> The family is the most important institution in society. The unit of society is found not in the individual but in the household. As rivers have their sources in rills and rivulets, so nations and churches have their rise in the family. Irreligion in the family means irreligion in the church and moral declension in the nation. It follows that the most important office in society is the parental

> office. No weight of responsibility is so great as that which rests upon parents. 31

While there were weaknesses in the Methodist system of child nurture, its weakness may be in too much religion in some areas, and not enough in others. We must not overlook the fact that the worship service was an exercise for the whole family. Only time will reveal whether the modern method of Sunday School at the same hour as worship services will produce more Christians than a system where nothing must compete with the regular hour of worship. For better or for worse the Methodist system exposed the family as a unit to the impact of gospel preaching.

In addition to the emphasis upon worship in the local sanctuary as a family, we must not overlook the emphasis on worship within the family. The family altar was a very real and important part of Methodist practice. In practically every devout Methodist home 'family prayers' was the order of the day. Many homes were composed of grandparents, parents and children, and it usually fell to the lot of the patriarch to direct this particular act. Rev. J. S. Peach had these comments to make,

> Let the flame on the domestic altar never grow dim. Beneath the mingled fires of

31. Minutes of the Newfoundland District of the Methodist Church, 1901. op. cit.

> divine and human affection let your anxious hearts increasingly exhale their prayers to the skies. You will find it greatly to your advantage brethren, to avail yourselves wisely of the aid of the sabbath sanctuary, but especially of the Sabbath School. These should be regarded by you as auxiliaries and not as substitutes for your parental duties. 32

The individual's place in the Methodist Church was often determined by his public confessions and public display of piety. That there was a danger of being one thing to the public and something else to the family became a very real concern of Methodist leaders. It is perhaps human nature to put the best side out when exposed to public view. Methodists leaders were anxious that religious piety be part of every side of life. On this matter we have the President of Conference admonishing his hearers:

> That family religion be a part of your home life, and regard its blessings as the richest blessings you can hand down to your children. That piety which is only presented to the public and unknown in the home is such to bring dishonour to the church, and disaster to the faith of the children, therefore "show piety at home." 33

Domestic breakdown was very rare in the Newfoundland Methodist community of the nineteenth century. Much of this however must be contributed to the concept of

32. Minutes of the Newfoundland District of the Methodist Church, 1883. op. cit.
33. Ibid., 1895.

man-woman relationship of that time. The woman was the servant of the home and the man the dominant partner. Furthermore there were few avenues of escape from an unhappy home. While this is true it would be to underestimate the impact of Methodism to suggest that it did not have its calming influence on the domestic scene.

4. Miscellaneous issues of Methodist concern. There was no area of human life which lay outside of the concern of the church. There were certain issues which have today become a part of social life that were major concerns of Methodism. In a report to the Conference in 1905 we find the following:

> Our land is still polluted with sin. Dancing, card-playing, blasphemy, drunkeness, corruption and licentiousness are not banished from our shores. Sabbath desecration, dishonesty, mammon worship are still to be found in our midst and the armies of Satan are still strong in numbers and boldness. 34

We have already discussed in detail Methodist action to combat drunkeness, Sabbath breaking and the need for family solidarity which could include licentiousness. The other evils are concerns of the church in any generation except dancing and card playing. These last two issues appeared to be of particular concern to the Methodists. Dancing and card playing were considered to be

34. Minutes of the Newfoundland District of the Methodist Church, 1905. op. cit.

two great social evils. In the Methodist Church such was strictly forbidden and no Methodist building was ever to be used for such practices. The Methodist adherent who liked to dance had to do so in a hall belonging to the Roman Catholics or Anglicans. Card playing was usually carried on indiscreetly in homes where people were prepared to flirt with eternal damnation. Many a Methodist preacher spun out his ministry fighting against these two evils.

Time has changed the concept as to the evil of these things, but as late as 1922 a report to the Conference stated,

> We disclaim the right to bind the conscience of our people and do not question of the goodness of those whose opinion differs from ours, but we believe that there is in practically all dancing dangerous excitement to undue sexual feelings. 35

Two reasons could be given for Methodist aversion to dancing and card playing. One is that in the mind of many people they were acts associated with the world, and Methodist preaching encouraged a separation from so-called 'worldly things.' Card playing in particular was associated with gambling, although there is no record of any attempt to deal with gambling, which must have

35. Minutes of the Newfoundland District of the Methodist Church, 1922. op. cit.

been part of the Newfoundland scene. A second reason was that both these pastimes were engaged in by both the Anglican and the Roman Catholic, and anything they did was to be avoided by the Methodist.

There is an inherent desire in all people for this sort of pastime, and the Methodists practically invented a kind of card game where the only difference was the kind of spots on the cards. On the question of dancing many people found an outlet for this desire in the toe-tapping, foot-stamping, hand-clapping exercises of the revival meetings. When the Salvation Army came along with their band music and lively tunes they appealed to a segment of the people, who found an emotional outlet in this sort of religious expression. So it came about in the communities of the nineteenth century that the Anglicans had their Saturday night dances, the Methodists had their Sunday night revival services. We can only conclude that it satisfied some of the same basic desires.

There was one other moral issue that appeared in the records and against which the Methodists took action. In 1910 the following resolution was passed by the Conference,

> In view of the fact that there is in existence an organized system known as the White Slave Traffic, whose definite object is to lure and entrap young women to

> their ruin, we urge that all ministers take occasion to publicly warn our congregations of this diabolical traffic. 36

This issue was also raised in the two succeeding years but was never raised after 1912. It is difficult to say what the Methodists were concerned about here. There is no outside evidence that such a traffic ever existed. The only conclusion we can make is that around the end of the nineteenth century many families emigrated to Canada and the United State. During the last decade of the nineteenth century the population of Newfoundland increased only a little more than two per cent. Natural increase and other factors were almost completely offset by the lure of ready employment on the mainland. Following the many families which moved away there inevitably went numbers of young women who also sought opportunities provided in the affluent society of the United States and Canada. This exodus of young people particularly young women must have disturbed the leaders of the church. They realized the dangers waiting for the unwary female, and the factors which encouraged them to go. While there is no evidence to support this theory I think it is the only explanation of what Methodist leaders called White Slave Traffic.

36. Minutes of the Newfoundland District of the Methodist Church, 1910. op. cit.

The only reason for mentioning this here is to illustrate how close Methodism was to the life of the common people, and how sensitive it was to issues which would be inducive to evil.

The general policy of the Methodist Church in Newfoundland on all issues involving the morality of its people certainly gave the local missionary carte blanche to deal with every situation which arose. It stands to reason that some missionaries would be more vigilant than others. Some would be more broadminded and would interpret certain actions in a manner perhaps ahead of their time. On the whole, however, we see the missionary and the church which he represented exerting a great influence on the life of the typical community.

Some indication of the vehemence of the early Methodist missionaries may be found in an incident involving Lawrence Coughlan. Even though this is prior to our period of study it is unlikely that this sort of action died with Coughlan. On August 26, 1771 a petition was filed in court against Lawrence Coughlan which stated that the petitioner had been insulted by him. The petition stated that:

> The first salutation your petitioner received from said Lawrence Coughlan was, "you dirty low liv'd scoundrel. You Rascall, you villian, you scum of the earth,

are you not ashamed to be walking with another man's wife." 37

History has never recorded the many similar incidents which must have taken place in the story of Methodism. What history does record is that Methodism spoke out strongly on every moral issue, and in spite of, perhaps, some unnecessary emphasis, we must give to it some of the credit for bringing a people out of a state of near barbarism into a deeply religious and for the most part law abiding country.

In our next chapter we shall go on to describe life in the typical Newfoundland community and see in closer detail the impact of the Methodist Church and its philosophy upon the lives of the people.

37. From a typescript of documents from the court at Harbour Grace. Gosling Memorial Library, St. John's, Newfoundland.

CHAPTER FIVE

METHODISM IN THE COMMUNITY

Little has been written about life in the Newfoundland community of the nineteenth century. Events of great importance are often given only passing notice. For example, it is difficult to read in a historical note on the loss of a sealing ship with more than a hundred men, the stories of personal hardship which it must have entailed for the families left behind. In the folk songs of Newfoundland may be found some of the tragic sentiments of the people. In our last chapter some of the economic factors involved served to illustrate the rugged existence which many villagers were forced to live. Added to this, one must realize that many Newfoundland communities were cut off from the rest of the island for six months of the year. The villager on the coast annually watched the 'coastal steamer' break its way through the newly forming ice floes, and hurry on its way to less rigid areas. He knew that as the ship gave its three long blasts on its whistle it was farewell until spring had opened up the sea lanes again. The villager also knew that his only contact now was over trackless hills and valleys where the hand

of man had not yet laid down its ribbons of concrete. With our modern means of travel and communication it is difficult to realize the thoughts of the villager as he watched his contact with the outside world fade over the horizon for nearly half a year.

The villager turned to his own community and his own resources to maintain him through the long winter days and nights ahead. Central in the community was the church. It would be in these months of isolation that it would exert its greatest influence; for with the coming of summer, community life would become disorganized as the people went their way to the many areas of labour.

It is against this background that we shall consider the impact of Methodism on the community. Were one to write on the Newfoundland scene today he would be dealing with an entirely different situation. Since World War II, like many other North American areas, Newfoundland has advanced in inter-communication and living conditions a great deal more than the years would suggest. It should be remembered that life throughout the nineteenth century remained relatively static for the greater part of the island. The industrial revolution of the nineteenth century had little or no effect

on Newfoundland, except that it provided a few mechanized tools for the workman in the community and in world trade. Perhaps the most singular invention to improve the lot of the island fisherman was that of the internal combustion engine. This eventually gave him unprecedented power over the elements, but up to the time our study ends it was only a novelty enjoyed by a few. The second important invention was that of radio and it is worthy of note that the pioneer in radio stations in Newfoundland was Wesley Methodist Church in St. John's which began broadcasting on July 20, 1924.[1]

Its Station V.O.W.R. is still owned and operated by Wesley United Church. While there were few radios among the people, most communities boasted of at least one, usually owned by the local merchant. The store of the merchant became an institution in itself, for it was there the men of the village gathered in the late afternoon of a winter's day to exchange views, discuss their problems, and, when radio arrived, to hear the latest news.

Life in the Newfoundland community. In our closing

1. Thomson, E. Article in Evening Telegram, St. John's, Newfoundland. September 4, 1964.

section we propose to show that it was during the long winter months that the church exerted its major influence. We have already made it clear what the occupation of the villager was during the summer months. Once the winter season came and the ocean was closed and the codfish gone to winter feeding grounds the average villager turned to his own initiative to keep himself reasonably comfortable and employed.

For reasons already given it will be difficult to annotate what we shall say in this chapter. Most of it will have to be based on personal experience of one who has grown up in a typical Newfoundland community, and served on student mission fields at a time when Newfoundland was still relatively unchanged from the nineteenth century.

Chief among pursuits of the villager during the winter was the task of supplying fuel for his home fires, various timber for the building of boats, and repairing and building his fishing premises. Daily, when weather permitted he took his sled and with a dog-team, in a few places a horse, and in other places only his own strength, went to the forest to secure the type of timber for his particular use. When darkness came he sat at home and made nets for the next fishing season, or boots for his family. A common type of footwear was boots from seal skins which the fisherman had prepared

from his previous season's catch.

The women folk of the home daily would have to fill the water barrel from the community well, and get a supply of vegetables from the cellar. Cellars were usually small rooms buried deeply enough in the ground to keep out the frost. In it the villager put his supply of potatoes and other products which he had dug from a nearby garden patch. The housewife must trim the oil lamps which were in general use. Then in her spare time she made clothing for the family, or rugs for the floors. Few Newfoundland homes had basements and the cold floors were usually covered with a layer of rugs which the housewife had made.

Early in the nineteenth century the open fireplace was replaced by the large iron stove which served to cook and to heat. A good supply of wood must be brought indoors to supply that stove until the next day. The chore of bringing in the wood usually fell to the lot of the older children.

The lot of those who lived in the lumbering communities were similar to the fisherman. Often the lumberman took his family into the forests, where they lived comfortably but crudely in temporary huts built from the forest around them. This type of life affected relatively a few people. In the larger towns, of which there

were few, life took on a pattern little different from the villages. Towns like St. John's, where trade was the main industry, would spend the winter consolidating the season's efforts and preparing for business in a new season. Only rarely is the harbour of St. John's closed so it would, throughout the winter, play host to a variety of shipping. Stocks would have to be replenished from world markets and the season's catch would have to be prepared and shipped to different parts of the world. On the whole business slowed and the townfolk, like the villagers, though less isolated, would find the winters gave him an opportunity for other things than the pursuit of a 'living.'

It would be expected that this sort of life would produce a type of person who was cold and insensitive. Rather it produced a type of people who were only too aware of their weakness in the face of the elements with which they must contend. One writer has this to say of Newfoundlanders,

> These men strike me as big children, moved by fairy tales and often superstitions, misled by politicians who make promises, ready for what they call the 'giving out' when elections come on, and led by the nose by designing men, just because they have no guile in them, but too much of that charity which believed all things. 2

2. Paton, J. L. International Affairs Magazine, Volume XIII, No. 3. p. 397.

The church in the community. In the typical Newfoundland community the church was the most important institution. In most communities the Orange Lodge was a force, but it depended for the most part on the church and was always thought of as a tool of the church. In few places were there hospitals, and the nineteenth century had gone before many places outside of St. John's could boast of one. The church and its missionary became the centre around which the community revolved.

The place of the church in the community may be understood by looking at some of the practices and services which it carried on. The church and the religion it taught touched every facet of human life. The President of Conference speaking to the delegates assembled would make no reservation in admonishing the people through his listeners, to "Let your religion be applied to every transaction in business, and all the circumstances of life. Souls are injured and the credit of religion impuned by the inconsistency of many who make a profession of religion."[3]

For the Methodist Church, Sunday being what it was must be devoted entirely to religious exercise. Whether

3. Minutes of the Newfoundland District of the Methodist Church, 1905. United Church Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

by the missionary or the lay-reader the first service was conducted at the traditional hour of eleven in the morning. To this service went the most faithful and the children. Age was no deterrent if the particular child could be kept quiet for an hour. In the afternoon the class meeting was held. It was a mark of being a true Methodist if one chose to attend this service. There was no limit on its duration. It was usually led by the class-leader appointed for such a duty. It consisted of many prayers and individual testimonies in which the individual shared with others his weaknesses, his temptations, and his successes in the spiritual life. The prayers and testimonies were interspersed with a variety of catchy choruses of which the Methodists had many. These choruses, some from the hymns of the Wesleys, spoke for the most part of life that was hard and sorrowful, and an eternal reward that was the prize of the faithful. This sort of religious exercise created a type of selfish Christian. There is no doubt that each was sincere in his own understanding, but it relegated religion to a system of reward and punishment, and an 'I am happy in Jesus' attitude to the rest of the world. People testified to the fact that they had come to the place where they were willing to give up sin and follow Christ. Forgiveness was not a continuing fact, but represented

a transition from an evil life to a life of perfection, a life without sin. Any sin on the part of the Christian resulted in a 'fall from grace.' Thus in the Methodist community and churches there was a continuing need for personal evangelism because people were always 'backsliding.' Many who repented in the winter found that by the end of the summer they had 'fallen back.'

The value of the class meeting may have been questioned by both laymen and clergy. In 1886 we have the District Meeting being told,

> The class meeting stands out prominently amongst the institutions of our church. It is impossible to conceive the benefits which have been conferred upon our Israel by the means of grace it has provided. We deeply regret that there should be a desire on the part of some to remove this ancient landmark or to disregard it as a test of membership. This seems to indicate decline in the spiritual life and a lowered tone of piety. Remove it and the life of our church is in danger at once. 4

At the same time as the class meeting was taking place in the church or in a home, the Sunday School met, usually in the building shared by the day school. It should be pointed out here that with the denominational system of education the school building became a sort of Methodist Community Hall. In it were held many types

4. Minutes of the Newfoundland District of the Methodist Church, 1886. op. cit.

of religious services and social events. In very few Newfoundland communities was there accommodation for Christian Education activity built under the roof of the main sanctuary.

A look at Sunday School statistics in Appendix D will indicate the growth of the Sunday Schools from 1857 to 1922. From a total of thirty schools with 2,036 pupils in 1857 it rose to two hundred and fifty seven schools and 26,174 pupils in 1922. The 2,267 teachers in these schools were not professional teachers or theologians, but they represented a deep reservoir of devotion and faith that made its mark on the Newfoundland Methodist community. The reports in Appendix D also show the number of volumes in the libraries throughout the island. These libraries were part of the Sunday Schools and represented for many children the only source of reading outside of the books from the day schools. Very few communities boasted of a public library, and the value of this must have been tremendous. Part of the Methodist system was a regular distribution of books. At each District Meeting a report was heard from the appointed colporteur whose task it was to travel throughout the land selling books. The greatest number of books was reported in 1913, when the number given was 9,379. Reverend J. Millington speaking to the District Meeting

in 1885 had the following to say to both ministers and people,

> from our Methodist publishing house are issued many valuable books which you would do well to purchase and peruse as you have opportunity. While you naturally desire to acquire general knowledge and to become acquainted with the current literature of the day or such of it as is healthy and constructive, we would ask you not to neglect the standard works of our church, nor our weekly and monthly publications. In all of them you will find much valuable information calculated both to instruct your minds and to strengthen your spiritual life. 5

Sunday in the Methodist community meant an early 'supper.' The evening meal was always 'supper' and the noon meal 'dinner' regardless of the type of meal. On Sunday evening the service was usually at six thirty, and followed the traditional pattern of the preaching service. The 'Word' was the central theme and all other parts of the service were incidental to the sermon. This service was attended by the majority of the church community. Anyone able to attend was there. The service lasted about an hour and was followed by the 'after-service.' Everyone was invited to remain for that service which was for the most part an evangelistic one. It featured various prayers, testimonies, choruses, all

5. Minutes of the Newfoundland District of the Methodist Church, 1885. op. cit.

designed to break down the resistance of the blackest sinner, and repeated altar calls for 'sinners to repent.' There was no time limit on this service and it went on as long as the spirit moved or until everyone had said the last word. In times of revival it was not unusual for the 'after-meeting' to go on until after midnight. When the service finally broke up the devout wended their way home through the frosty night still singing the songs of the faith.

Once the busy summer season was over the time had arrived for the week-night services. At least one evening was taken up in this manner but in the more organized churches Wednesday and Friday evenings were traditional for these services or 'prayer meetins' as they were called.

In 1886 this advice was given,

> The week-night services will be found exceedingly valuable and refreshing to the weary soul amidst the daily cares and anxieties of life. Do not despise these prayer-meetings. Eternity alone will reveal how many received their first impression for good while godly men and women were pleading for the salvation of precious souls. 6

Those services followed in brief outline the regular Sunday evening service. There was a short homily

6. Minutes of the Newfoundland District of the Methodist Church, 1886. op. cit.

and a few hymns and the service became another evangelistic campaign for lost souls. Often the soul searchers were rewarded as men or women found their way to the 'penitent form.' (Rail or platform in front of the pulpit at which worshippers knelt for Holy Communion or in the act of repentance.) Again the length of the service depended on the response. No minister or lay reader would ever think of closing a service as long as there was one sinner who indicated need of salvation.

By the time the month of March arrived it was time to arrange some special evangelistic services. A week or two was good for a beginning. These were enhanced if a visiting minister could take part. So for one, two or as many weeks as the spirit moved the special evangelistic services were held, each evening except Saturday. Finally, with the supply of sinners exhausted and the long spring evenings coming on, the week-night services were discontinued until the hot days of summer produced a supply of 'back-sliders' for the cycle to begin in another season.

And thus the seasons passed, but summer Sundays were still set aside for a full programme of worship. Many special occasions provided an opportunity for a particular religious emphasis. Every funeral in the Methodist community was an opportunity for a full gospel

sermon, and few Methodist preachers would let its occasion pass without getting the maximum benefit from it. Few preachers would hesitate to make a judgement upon the life of the disceased if the circumstances merited it. The funeral sermon would serve either as a solemn warning or a call to imitate the righteous deed. The missionary did not hesitate to write into the record his judgement. For example in the record of burials for the Twillingate Circuit these entries may be found.

> This young man (age 21) while coming out of the woods with his horse and slide capsized the load upon him face downward in the snow, where he must have died in a very few minutes. He was very wicked and had often been reproved. He was at the chapel the previous Sabbath when he behaved unproperly. 7

Another entry records the burial of a man who was drowned,

> Drowned on the Sabbath. He was a poor backslider. His last state was worse than the first. 8

Sometimes the judgement was more positive as in the case of this man who,

> was the first to open his house for preaching in Bluff Head. Converted to God under Rev. Wm. Marshall. For 26 years walked consistently. Like a shock of corn he was fully ripe for the kingdom. His end was most triumphant. 9

The above will indicate how much the life of the

7. Register of Burials. Twillingate Circuit, March 2, 1860.
8. Ibid. August 29, 1864.
9. Ibid. December 27, 1867.

community was involved in the church. We would not suggest that the pattern described was true of every community. In some communities the emphasis was less, in others more. In many small communities the leadership was not available, and the visits of the missionary few. All of this would have an effect on the general pattern of the life of the church.

When Methodism spoke, it spoke to the individual. It saw him at his worst and tried to make him worthy of eternity. On many its message had little effect, but for more it moulded and changed their character.

> All growth of personality in the members of community involves a correspondent change in relations to one another, in the social structure, in the customs, institutions, and associations of community. 10

By producing a different kind of individual Methodism produced a different kind of community. Always present were the dangers on land and sea. Religion did not guard the individual against disease and he must still work hard to make a living, but Methodism gave him a vision which became a reality. It was a vision of man, not in relation to nature or the cruel land on which he lived, but in terms of God. This concept of life enabled

10. Maciver, R. M. Community: A Sociological Study. London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd., 1924. p. 417.

the villager to forget his labours which gave him a warm sense of fellowship.

If the church had not done this he would never have had it. A century and a half was to pass from the time of the first Methodist missionary in Newfoundland until the day that the Newfoundlander could feel part of the total community. Not that the church has been replaced, but the modern Newfoundland has more opportunity for the villager to move out of his community and share in a collective social programme. Apart from his religious exercises much of the villager's social life was bound to the church. In his village there were no theatres, his only entertainment in this manner was a play or concert put on by a church group; there were no restaurants to which he could take his family, but the church women put on the occasional dinner to which he went; there was little if any organized sport for him, but once a year the church, the school or the Orange Lodge, put on a field day. With the Newfoundlander conversation became an art, and he liked to discuss issues, so the church set up debating societies. The best known of these societies is the Methodist College Literary Institute formed in 1866 for the purpose of lectures and debates during the leisure seasons of winter and summer.

> On Thursday evening April 1, 1875, the President, Mr. H. J. B. Woods, in his remarks said that the Institute was the offspring of the church 11

The role of the missionary in the community. We should not end this chapter without saying something about the role of the missionary in the community. Even though by 1925 there were only seventy ordained ministers and probationers serving the Methodist cause in Newfoundland, each one of them like his counterpart in the Roman Catholic or Anglican church played a unique role.

In the early days of Methodism the missionary went into a community and took his chances at finding accommodation. Often he shared the humble abode of a villager who probably counted it an honour to share his meagre lot with a servant of God. As time went on and circuits were organized the missionary enjoyed a measure of home life with friends or in his own small house which the faithful had built for him. Eventually as missionaries arrived on the circuits with families more substantial dwellings were found for them. No matter what the conditions were at the headquarters of the circuit, the missionary must face all the rigours of travel, both summer and winter, to visit the outlying places. This

11. Fox, A. Notes on the Methodist College Literary Institute, M.C.L.I. records. St. John's, Newfoundland.

often involved scores of miles in open boats and over uncharted hills on snowshoes. Services were often conducted in unheated buildings and under the worst of conditions. William Thoresby describes one of his experiences.

> In the forenoon I read prayers and preached in the church. Though I had two pairs of worsted gloves on my hands, two pairs of stockings and a pair of buskins on my legs, it was with difficulty that I escaped being bit with the frost. After preaching I baptized three children, and then kept a love feast. The water for the feast was taken hot to the church in a teakettle, yet it froze as I took it round to the people, such a scene I never beheld before, we were almost froze while assembled together. 12

The missionary came to be respected by his people, not only for the position he held but, because he was always prepared to share their lot. Whether it was their lonely cottage, meagre meal, or storm-tossed boat, the missionary seldom asked more for himself then others had.

In his capacity as missionary he filled many more roles than that of preacher or teacher. Because he was often the best, sometimes the only, educated person in the village he became an interpreter of news, a writer of letters and general counsellor. He was often called

12. Thoresby, W. A Narrative of God's Love to William Thoresby. Redruth: J. Bennett, 1801. p. 66.

upon to render first aid to the injured, consolation to the dying, and solace to the bereaved. He was often the only liason between the villagers and the governing powers. He represented them as a welfare officer, he interpreted laws to them, made wills and filled out forms. He was the person most trusted in the whole community, and to him the people came when they needed help. In time of distress when relief was necessary he became the dispenser of such relief as the means of the church at large and such friends could provide.

During the early days of Methodism, and even until nearly the end of the nineteenth century, these intrepid missionaries came from England. Of fifty three ministers serving the Newfoundland Conference in 1885 only three of them were native Newfoundlanders. By 1925 the picture had changed and of the seventy ministers in Newfoundland fifty of them were native sons.[13] This last fact suggests that Methodist efforts were beginning to bear fruit by being able to provide leadership from the native population.

No matter what sort of doctrine a church supports, no matter what its general policies are, it has to depend on the individual to preach and to introduce them.

13. Burt, H. N. The Evening Telegram. St. John's, Newfoundland. September 16, 1964.

The cause of Methodism at times may have been hampered by the limited number of missionaries, but it never lacked the quality. The very fact that many men remained in Newfoundland after a reasonable period of service would witness to their religious devotion. One such will serve as an example, Reverend Adam Nightingale,

> Rev. Adam Nightingale has now (1864) spent forty two years on the Newfoundland mission, which includes the whole of his missionary life.
> He has borne the burden in the heat of the day, he has travelled its wastes and its wilderness when horses were not used, and when roads were unknown; he has had to ford streams, and drag his weary limbs over its extensive marshes to take his refreshment by the purling brook in the woods, or untie his nunny-bag on its bleak and snowclad barrens; and more than once, made his bed in the snow and passed a long and dreary night in the midst of a Newfoundland winter. 14

To sum up we must acknowledge that the most tangible impact of Methodism was worked out on the local scene of the little villages which dot the coast of Newfoundland. There in countless instances of heroism and devotion the missionary with his faithful flock built up an institution that became a bulwark against the evil and the degradation that isolation brings. In numerous communities the villagers put the best that they could provide into their churches. Today as they have for

14. Burt, H. N. op. cit. September 12, 1964.

decades they stand as living memorials to the faith of those who were prepared to face privation and even death for the sake of the gospel.

Perhaps it is an anti-climax to suggest that the Methodists faced considerable opposition and were often misunderstood. We have stated elsewhere in this work that the Methodists for the most part were not aggressive as far as other churches were concerned. They came at a time when there was a genuine need, and they filled that need. The enthusiasm of their preachers and their form of religious expression was welcomed by a people who had never known the security and the stability of an established church. The nature and the mentality of the Newfoundland folk was such that Methodism appealed to them. This is brought out by the appearance in the twentieth century of various groups and sects which preach a type of gospel that characterized Methodism in its early days. These groups have been able to succeed because the people are still pioneers at heart, and the frontier type of religious emphasis has still its appeal.

In many seaports the lights of the church often provided a beacon to the mariner trying to find the harbour. No other situation better illustrates what

the church became to the Newfoundland villager. For him the light of the gospel always burned in the church, seldom if ever was it allowed to go out.

CHAPTER SIX

ST. JOHN'S AND SOME CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Throughout this study we have intimated that Methodism in Newfoundland was the religion of the 'outports.' It is necessary now to say something about Methodism in St. John's and why it was that more than half a century of Methodism was to pass before it became a strong influence in the capital city.

> Prior to the conference year 1879-80 Methodists in St. John's and the adjacent settlements of Pouch Cove, Bauline, Portugal Cove and Topsail, constituted but one circuit, with one Official Board, a senior minister, with two junior assistants. 1

The pioneer congregation in St. John's was the present Gower Street United Church. The first chapel was built there in 1815 and became the headquarters of the circuit comprising the places listed above, along with Torbay, Quidi Vidi and Petty Harbour. By 1829 the total membership of the circuit was only ninety.[2] By 1854 membership had grown to two hundred and twenty and plans were being made for a new church. This was opened

1. From an article in the Evening Telegram. St. John's, Newfoundland. September 4, 1964.
2. Pitt, D. G. The Evening Telegram. September 4, 1964.

in 1858 on the site where the present church stands.[3]

The Methodist cause in St. John's and area began to expand rapidly after 1860. In 1873 George Street Church was opened in the west end of St. John's.[4] By 1889 George Street Church boasted four Sunday Schools with more than one thousand scholars.[5] In 1879 Pouch Cove separated from the parent body at Gower Street and became an independent circuit.[6] In 1882 a new church on Cochrane Street was opened.[7] Wesley Church, the fourth sizable congregation of Methodists in St. John's is a relatively new cause. In 1884 a church known as the Alexander Street Church was built. This was replaced in 1907 by a new building which came to be known as Wesley Methodist Church.[8]

Wesley Methodist Church holds a unique place in Newfoundland, being the only Methodist or United Church in Canada to own and operate a radio station. Under the pastorate of Reverend Joseph G. Joyce: "... an experiment was made by hooking up telephones between Wesley United (Methodist) Church and the homes of several aged members

3. Pitt, D. G. op. cit.
4. Abbott, C. The Evening Telegram. September 4, 1964.
5. Ibid.
6. Pitt, D. G. op. cit.
7. Ibid.
8. The Evening Telegram. op. cit.

of the congregation so as to enable them to enjoy the service. This humble beginning, restricted to a handful of listeners, was such a success that Rev. Joyce decided to proceed with his plan."[9]

The dream of the late Mr. Joyce was the operation of a radio station from Wesley Church. This came about on July 20, 1924 when the voice of Wesley Radio went out to all who had the means of receiving it.[10] Its original strength of one hundred watts had a limited range. This was increased to five hundred in 1927, and Wesley Church became by far the best known and best loved church in Newfoundland. Apart from the broadcast of the regular Sunday evening service from Wesley Church the facilities were extended to other churches. A regular feature became the broadcasts of reports from the hospitals in St. John's. Thus to many lonely villagers the voice of Wesley Radio became not only an opportunity to share in the worship of a congregation but a link with those whom ill health had taken to a distant community.

We must cite as one of the main reasons why Methodism had a relatively late start in St. John's, the need

9. Thomson, Eric. The Evening Telegram. St. John's, Newfoundland. September 4, 1964.
10. Ibid.

which the first Methodist missionaries to come to Newfoundland saw in the places outside of St. John's. In the early days of the nineteenth century St. John's was almost an Anglican and a Roman Catholic stronghold. The population of St. John's was made up mainly of civil servants, business men and the military, all of which may have retained a closer tie to England than the planters around the coast. As time went on people from the outports moved in to settle in St. John's and they brought Methodism with them. This went far to strengthen the cause of Methodism which was a weak one until the middle of the nineteenth century.

The Methodist Church in the second half of the nineteenth century expanded from a membership of three hundred and one on the St. John's circuit in 1855[11] to four of the largest congregations in the island by the turn of the century, Gower Street, Cochrane Street, George Street and Wesley.

It is not within the scope of our study to single out the work of Methodism in St. John's. This could be a study in itself. The practices in the capital city would follow in a general way the practices in any part of the island. Because St. John's was the centre of

11. Pitt, D. G. op. cit.

industry, it had a continued relationship with other parts of the world, and the feeling of isolation would not be so prevalent there. Early in the nineteenth century it had the facilities to provide for its people many of the things which the 'outports' lacked. All of this would determine the social impact of all the churches, including the Methodist.

It remains for us, therefore, to conclude our study with some final observations. While the nineteenth century and the twenty five years of the twentieth century, which our study covers, were indeed exciting and founding years for Methodism, they were really only formative years which set the stage for even greater advances and a greater impact in the years that followed church union. These years set the stage for the short but important history of what has been termed the 'United Church Navy.' In 1964 Dr. A. S. Butt, superintendent of Home Missions for the Newfoundland Conference wrote,

> Marine work within the Newfoundland Conference has almost disappeared. For more than thirty years, a gallant little fleet of boats, often referred to as the United Church Navy, and captained by able seamen who filled the double role of missionary and skipper, served the outlying areas along the Newfoundland and Labrador coasts. No boat that plied in Newfoundland waters was awaited with more anticipation or received a warmer welcome than the United Church mission boat. This work had its tragic as well as its romantic side and on two occasions, at least, the stormy waters of the

> Atlantic claimed the lives of three ministers, one of them the Superintendent of Missions. Yet it was with mixed feelings that the United Church people of Newfoundland, especially those who had been served by those boats, saw one of the most colourful chapters in the church's history come to a close. 12

The years 1815 to 1925 also set the stage for the founding of a central organization for social work in St. John's, the establishment of 'Emmanuel House,' in 1938. It became "the home of the central organization of social work for the United Church community in the city and combines with it a 'home away from home' for girls coming as strangers from the outports to work or to equip themselves for their chosen careers."[13]

In spite of the denominational struggles of the mid-nineteenth century the years also set the stage for a more effective system of education. Even though Newfoundland still operates under a denominational system, many efforts such as regional, central and amalgamated schools are being constructed to give a better system of education. Mr. C. L. Roberts, Superintendent of United Church Schools in Newfoundland is quoted as saying,

> The United Church of Canada has traditionally favoured a Newfoundland public school

12. Butt, A. S. The Evening Telegram. St. John's, Newfoundland. September 4, 1964.
13. Burry, Stella A. The Evening Telegram. September 4, 1964.

> system of education established on a non-denominational basis. The United Church would support legislation bringing such a school system into being, and, would co-operate in any necessary transfer of school property, now held in the name of the United Church, or, its school boards, to public school boards ....
> for obvious reasons the United Church, though favouring a non-denominational system of education for Newfoundland, will not vacate the educational field, or refrain from accepting its legal and moral responsibility in Newfoundland education while we have by law a denominational system. 14

We have dealt at some length with the part played by Methodism in its attempts to influence government legislation, not only in education but on moral issues as well. Faced with pressure exerted by other denominations it was duty bound to guard jealously its own position. Like every other free country Newfoundland could never hope to boast of a united effort on the part of the churches. The position of Methodism forced it into taking issues where the situation demanded it.

We have seen in our chapter on education how the Methodists, at first joined forces with the Anglicans to secure separate Protestant and Roman Catholic grants, and then contended with the Anglicans over further division of the Protestant grant. When the decision

14. Rowe, F. W. The Development of Education in Newfoundland. Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1964. p. 101.

was finally made in 1874 the Methodists were forced to handle their own cause. Methodists like the Anglicans and Roman Catholics tended to concentrate their efforts in particular centres. Of the Methodists Dr. F. W. Rowe says,

> It has long been accepted by discerning persons of all faiths that the contribution made by these Methodist centres to the educational, professional and business life of Newfoundland was far in excess of what could have been expected in relation to their population. 15

The churches, including the Methodist, in Newfoundland may have been blamed for some of the political malpractices in its history. The Newfoundland Royal Commission which reported in 1933 on the political situation in Newfoundland, and which was instrumental in the creation of the Commission of Government 1934-1949 had the following to say about the churches.

> It might have been expected that the influence of the churches, so strong in Newfoundland, would have acted as a check to political malpractices. It is clear from our investigations that this is not the case, and we have reluctantly come to the conclusion that the denominational divisions, of which the people are daily reminded, so far from exercising a beneficent influence in the direction of cleaner politics, have failed to check, if indeed they have not contributed to the general demoralization, for members of successive

15. Rowe, F. W. op. cit. p. 203.

> adminstrations have been led consciously, or sub-consciously, to place the interests of particular sections of the church before the good of the country as a whole; and the desire to serve those interests, and to promote the welfare of individual members of the same denomination, has conduced to a disregard of the proprieties which would never have reached such proportions had Newfoundland been united in one religious community, or if sectarianism had not assumed such political influence. 16

That the churches would exert an influence is inevitable in view of the fact, as we have otherwise stated, the church so often was the only organized institution in the community. That Newfoundland politics would have been spared individual and denominational favouritism in particular situations is too much tc hope for even in the middle of the twentieth century. Furthermore we would contend that a united religious community may have contributed to greater political malpractices. It was, perhaps more than any thing else, the divisions among the churches which provided a check and balance in political manouvering.

In chapter four it was observed how Methodism left no stone unturned to impart a high standard of ethics and morality to those who came within its scope. Some of the methods used and the demands made may have on

16. Sissons, C. B. The Church and State in Canadian Education. Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1959. p. 404.

occasions created a narrow-minded form of piety, which did not always contribute to the well-being of the whole community. It often happened that the Methodist developed a kind of 'holier than thou' attitude to other religions in the community.

We have also seen that the important point of impact was within the community and among the people. Much of this was brought about by the devotion of the men who came from England to labour among the Newfoundland people. They were not always great theologians or scholars, but they were dedicated to a cause in which they wholeheartedly believed. Like their founder John Wesley they believed,

> As St. Paul had taught that a minister might "understand all mysteries and all knowledge" and might "speak with the tongues of men and of angels" but if he had not charity - that love to God and man which constitutes the substance of personal religion - he would be so far as success in the great work of saving sinners is concerned, but "as sounding brass or a tingling cymbal." 17

In concluding this study we would cite at least three reasons why Methodism was successful. That it was successful, as a denomination, in terms of the number of people which came within its scope, may be seen in

17. Tefft, B. F. Methodism Successful. New York: Derby & Jackson, 1860. p. 398.

the figures in Appendix C. In 1857 there were 20,229 who listed themselves as Methodists. The number grew each year until by 1921 it had more than trebled to 74,205. None of the other denominations in the island showed a relative increase.

1. The first reason is that Methodism made personal religion the central principle. Within its own ranks the requirements of full membership were such that when the Methodist Church came into union in 1925 less than one seventh of its people were listed as full members.[18] As we have stated in Chapter Five, if one became a full member it did not follow that he would always continue as such, if his actions did not merit it. It was never a case of once a member always a member. This rigid requirement of membership necessitated a continual witness of that membership.

The itinerant method of the missionary was always bringing a new emphasis to the Methodist community. Missionaries stayed but a short time in the same place. While this may have interfered with continuity of effort it did provide a new witness to the faith.

2. A second reason is that Methodism concentrated on

18. Burt, H. N. The Evening Telegram. St. John's, Newfoundland. September 16, 1964.

the poor. By so doing it appealed to the majority of the Newfoundland population. Methodism succeeded

> not by aiming its influence toward the high and great, but by concentrating its energies upon the welfare and elevation of the poor. The law of its progress has been to work from the bottom of the world upward. 19

3. A third reason, though not necessarily a final reason was the simplicity of its message and practice. It went to people with a simple gospel of 'repent and believe.' It may be presumptuous to say that it "recovered the ideal of original Christianity."[20] It did, however, preach a simple gospel message untrammeled by complicated theological theories. As we have already stated it preached a faith that the lonely villager could take with him, and practice in isolated tent or on the deck of his ship. The means of the people often could only provide a rustic kitchen for a place of worship. When churches were built they were simple and adorned only by the efforts of the local craftsman. Methodism was firmly established before any of the more elaborate churches were built.

In ritual the Methodist required only the individual enthusiasm of the worshipper. There was no set patterns of worship, no elaborate choral responses which required

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19. Tefft, B. F. op. cit. p. 483.
20. Ibid., p. 295.

the trained choir. Worship was simple and homespun, and even the most illiterate could find a place in it.

It is only when one begins to study the story of Methodism in Newfoundland does he realize the paucity of material on the subject. So much of the story has never been written and now perhaps it is too late to hope that it will ever be. In histories of the Canadian Church the cause in Newfoundland is given but passing notice. Part of this is due to the fact that Newfoundland was not part of Canada until 1949, and the work in Newfoundland never really became part of English church history. I would not suggest that I have exhausted the material that may be available in such a study. I have tried to keep as close to the local scene as possible because that is where the social impact of Methodism was felt. I hope that what I have done may encourage someone to search further for more of the pertinent information on the colourful story of Methodism in Newfoundland.

EXTENT OF RELIGIOUS SERVICES - 1816

District	Ministers of each religion in district	Places of worship	Number of schools	Source of funds
St. John's	1 Protestant 3 Dissenting ministers 1 Catholic Bishop 3 Fathers	1 Protestant Church 1 Catholic Church 1 Catholic Chapel at Petty Harbour 2 Meeting Houses - St. John's and Portugal Cove.	1 Charity School by subscription, Master and Mistress Protestant. 3 Protestant schools.	One by subscription others paid by parents.
Bay Bulls	Visited by Catholic priests	1 Roman Catholic building	none	none
Ferryland	1 Roman Catholic priest	1 Roman Catholic	none	none
Placentia	1 Roman Catholic priest	1 Protestant 1 Roman Catholic	none	none
Burin	1 Protestant minister Roman Catholic visits twice yearly.	None. Court House used by Protestants on Sundays.	1 at Burin. Scholars admitted without distinction.	

EXTENT OF RELIGIOUS SERVICES - 1816 (continued)

District	Ministers of each religion in district	Places of worship	Number of schools	Source of funds
Fortune Bay	none	None except in private houses.	one	Voluntary pay by parents.
Trinity Bay	1 of established church.	7 Protestant	1 Protestant	none
Conception Bay	1 Church of England 3 Roman Catholic 6 Methodist	4 Protestant 4 Roman Catholic 7 Methodist	8 Protestant and Roman Catholic mixed. Protestant masters.	3 get support from S.P.G. Others paid by parents.
Bonavista	1 Church of England reader. 1 Methodist 1 Roman Catholic	1 Roman Catholic 1 Protestant 1 Methodist	1 Roman Catholic 1 Protestant	none
Fogo	1 Protestant Visited by Roman Catholic.	2 Protestant 1 Dissenting meeting house.	none	none
Trepassey	1 Roman Catholic	1 Roman Catholic	1 Roman Catholic	Subscription

Newfoundland Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

Appendix B

Grants to Common Schools, 1836.

District of St. John's	200	pounds
Conception Bay	400	pounds
Placentia - St.Mary's	200	pounds
Ferryland	125	pounds
Burin	100	pounds
Fortune Bay	125	pounds
Trinity Bay	125	pounds
Bonavista	100	pounds
Fogo - Twillingate	125	pounds

Journal of the Newfoundland House of Assembly, 1836. Newfoundland Archives, St. John's , Newfoundland.

RELIGIOUS CENSUS 1857-1921

	1857	1869	1874	1884	1891	1901	1911	1921
Roman Catholic	56,859	61,040	64,317	75,254	72,696	75,989	81,177	86,576
Anglican	44,285	55,184	59,561	69,673	70,311	73,011	78,616	84,665
Methodist	20,229	28,990	35,702	48,767	53,276	61,388	68,042	74,205
Salvation Army					2,092	6,594	10,141	13,023
Pentecostal								3,721
Presbyterian	838	974	1,168	1,495	1,449	1,497	1,876	
Congregational	347	338	461	768	782	954	1,013	

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Appendix D

Sunday School Statistics.

Year	No. of schools	Teachers	Scholars	Volumes in library
1857	30	206	2,036	
1858	34	257	2,297	
1859	33	295	2,644	
1860	33	275	2,497	
1861	39	280	2,440	
1862	39	308	2,779	
1863	46	329	2,912	
1864	48	348	2,928	
1882	121	905	7,147	
1883	122	932	7,772	
1884	122	937	8,309	
1885	138	1,045	9,315	4,435
1886	130	1,031	9,124	4,366
1887	143	1,123	9,419	3,914
1888	140	1,107	9,557	4,708
1890	153	1,130	9,725	5,033
1891	151	1,195	10,115	5,558
1892	165	1,270	11,077	5,796
1893	176	1,325	11,539	5,531
1894	172	1,332	11,584	5,918

Appendix D (cont'd)

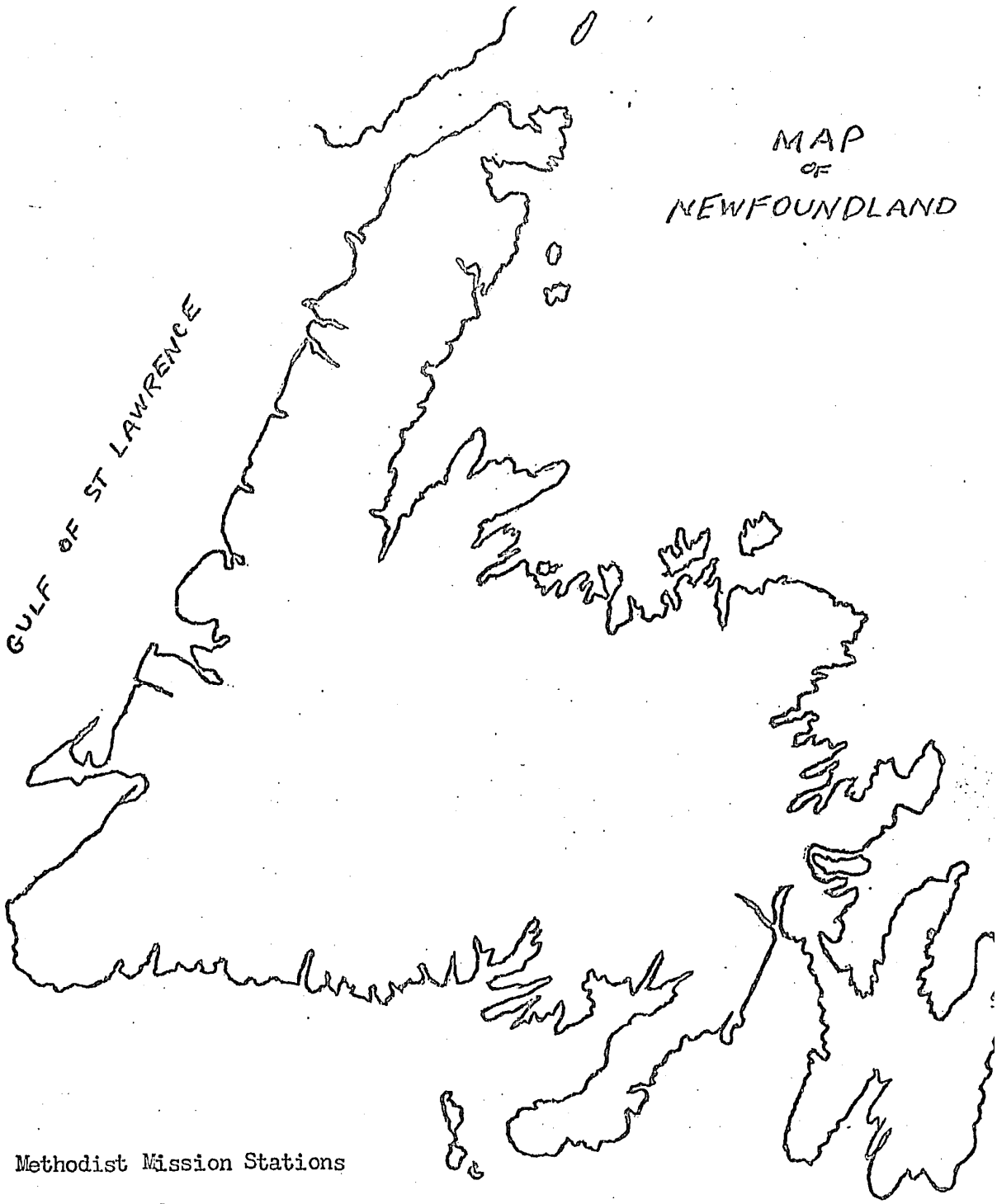
Year	No. of schools	Teachers	Scholars	Volumes in library
1895	182	1,436	12,226	5,768
1896	184	1,461	12,483	7,638
1897	201	1,562	12,885	7,662
1898	197	1,582	13,230	7,331
1899	191	1,566	13,861	7,259
1900	211	1,660	14,664	8,034
1901	204	1,720	14,791	8,611
1902	220	1,727	15,209	8,760
1903	213	1,703	14,914	7,959
1904	210	1,736	15,028	8,324
1905	210	1,767	15,559	8,689
1906	231	1,897	16,101	9,116
1907	248	1,940	17,102	8,034
1908	235	1,966	17,761	9,153
1910	245	1,998	18,341	8,446
1912	248	2,100	20,465	8,863
1913	247	2,150	20,907	9,379
1914	261	2,225	22,585	9,378
1915	266	2,300	23,143	9,179
1916	258	2,314	23,454	9,267
1917	258	2,279	25,680	8,941

Appendix D (cont'd)

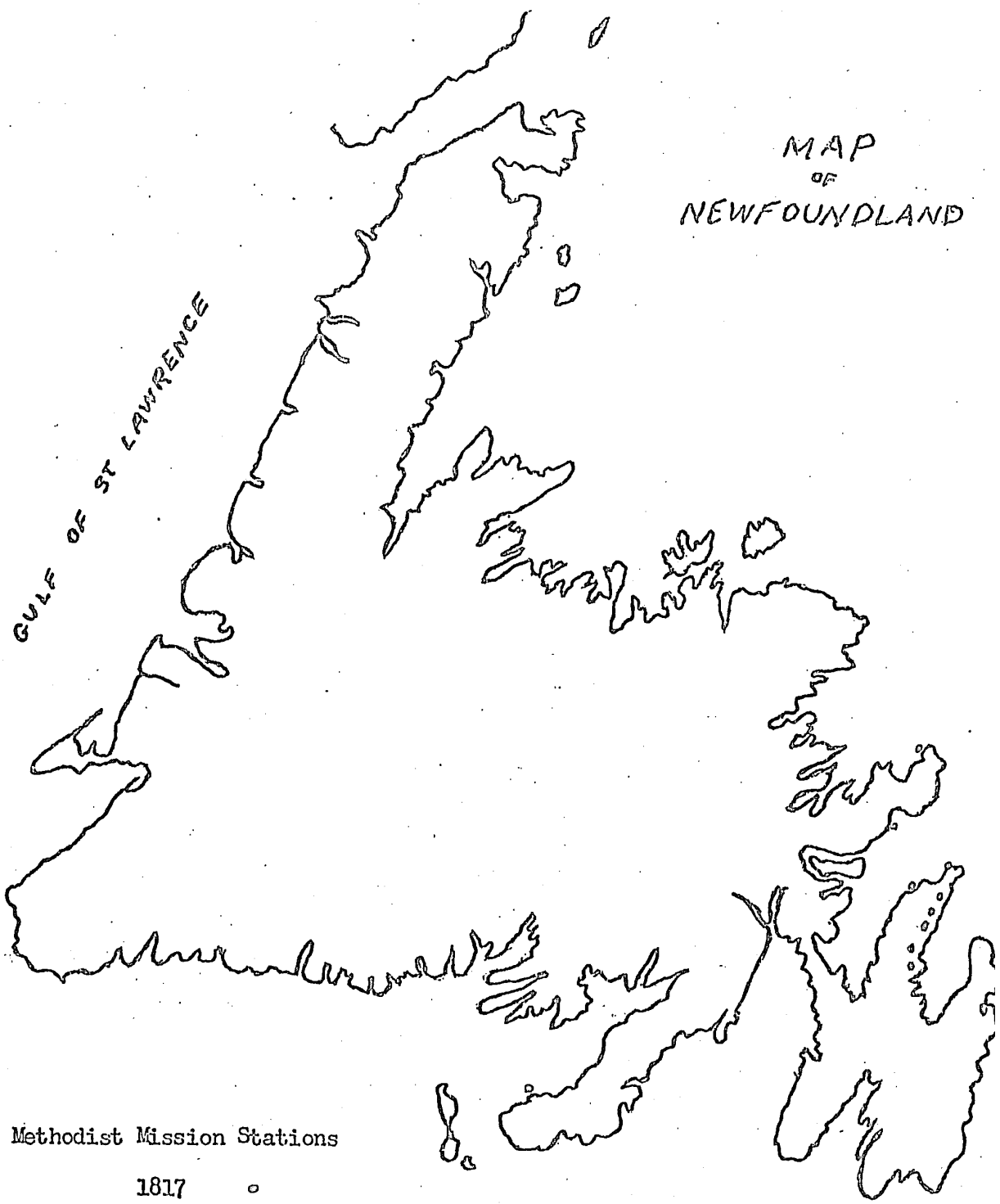
Year	No. of schools	Teachers	Scholars	Volumes in library
1918	251	2,261	23,494	8,985
1919	242	2,154	22,586	7,221
1920	259	2,256	24,831	5,942
1922	257	2,267	26,174	5,143

From Methodist Conference Records, United Church Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

APPENDIX E.


MAP
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND
GULF OF ST LAWRENCE
Methodist Mission Stations
1800

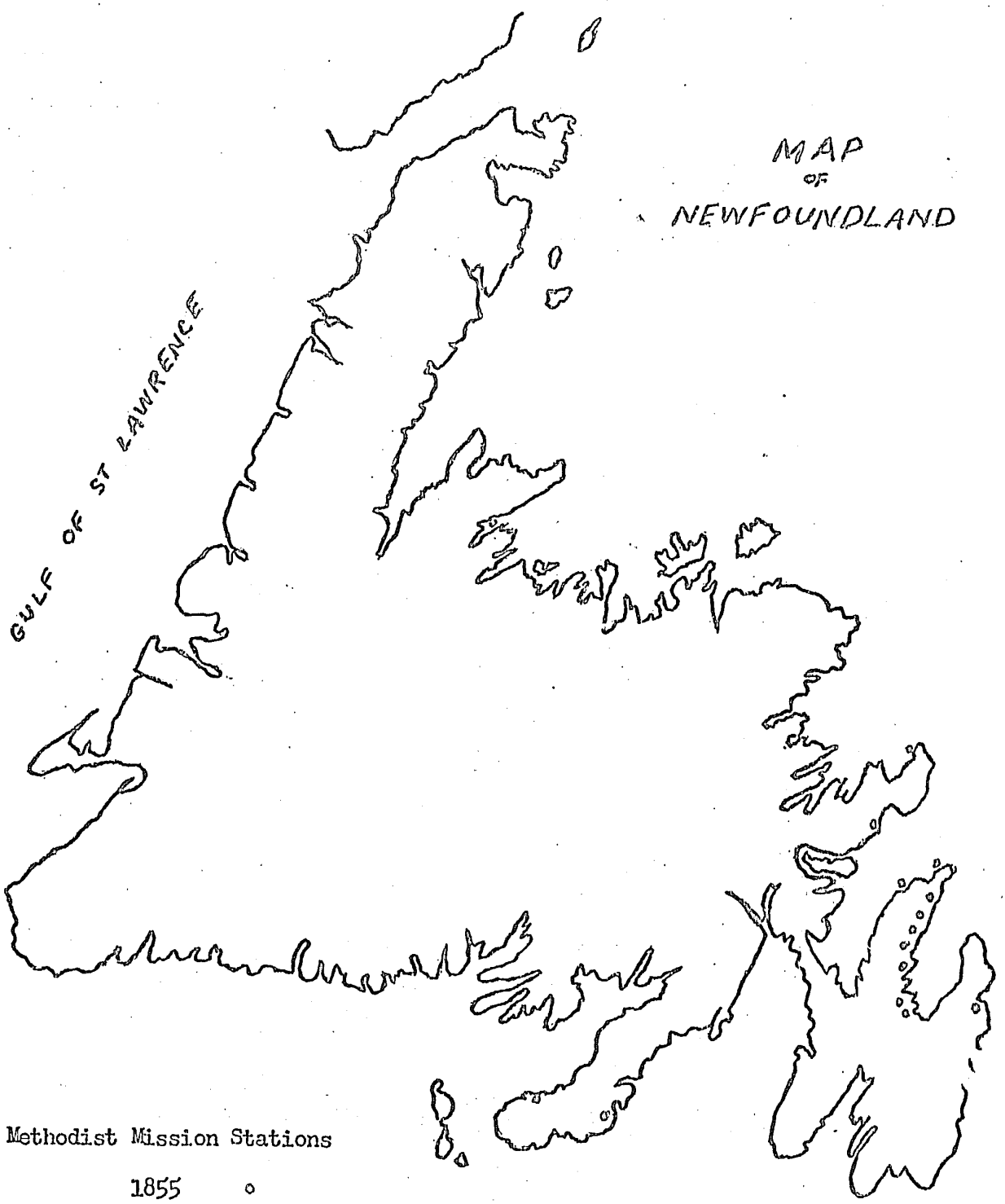
APPENDIX F.



Methodist Mission Stations

1817 o

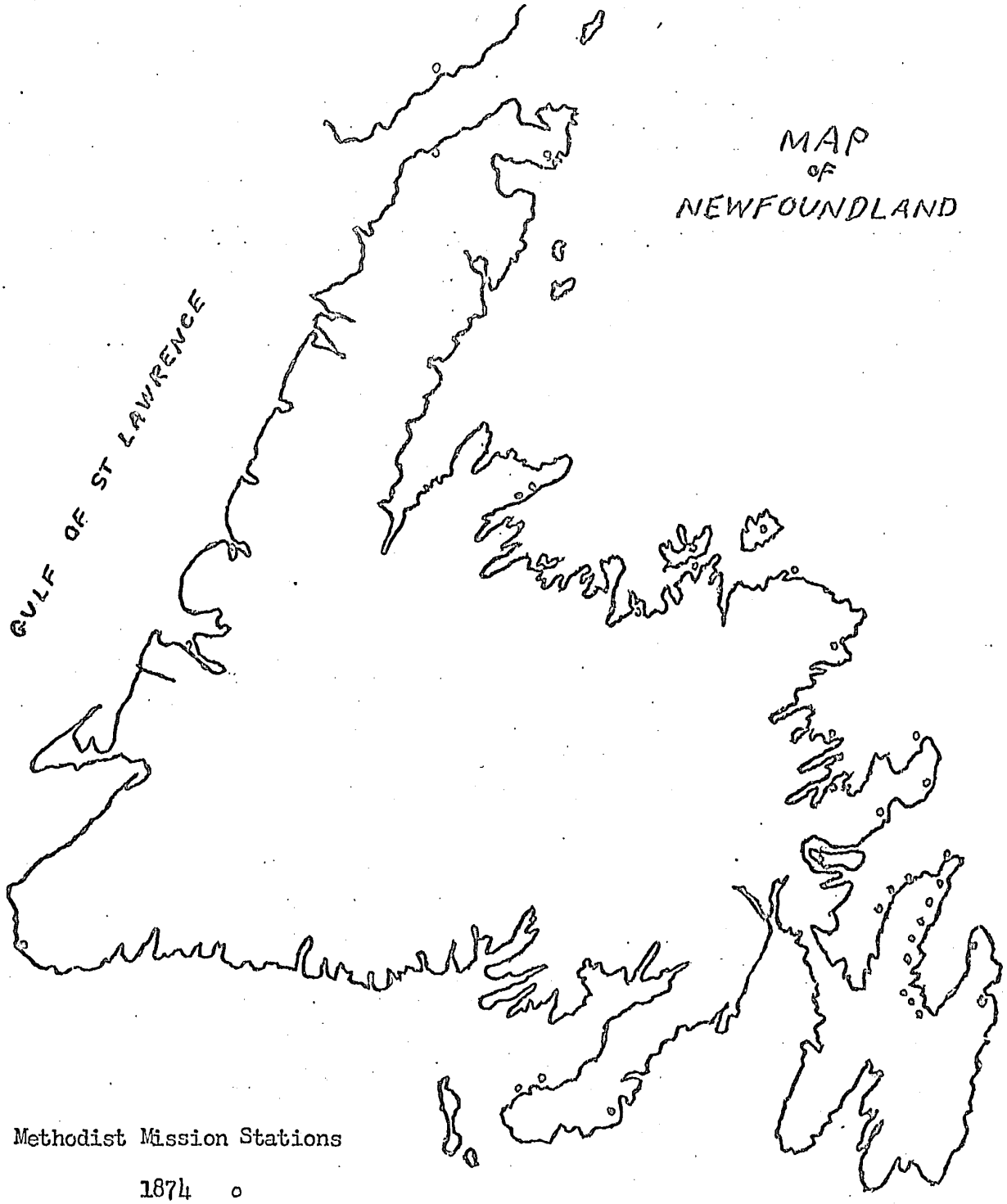
APPENDIX G.



Methodist Mission Stations

1855 o

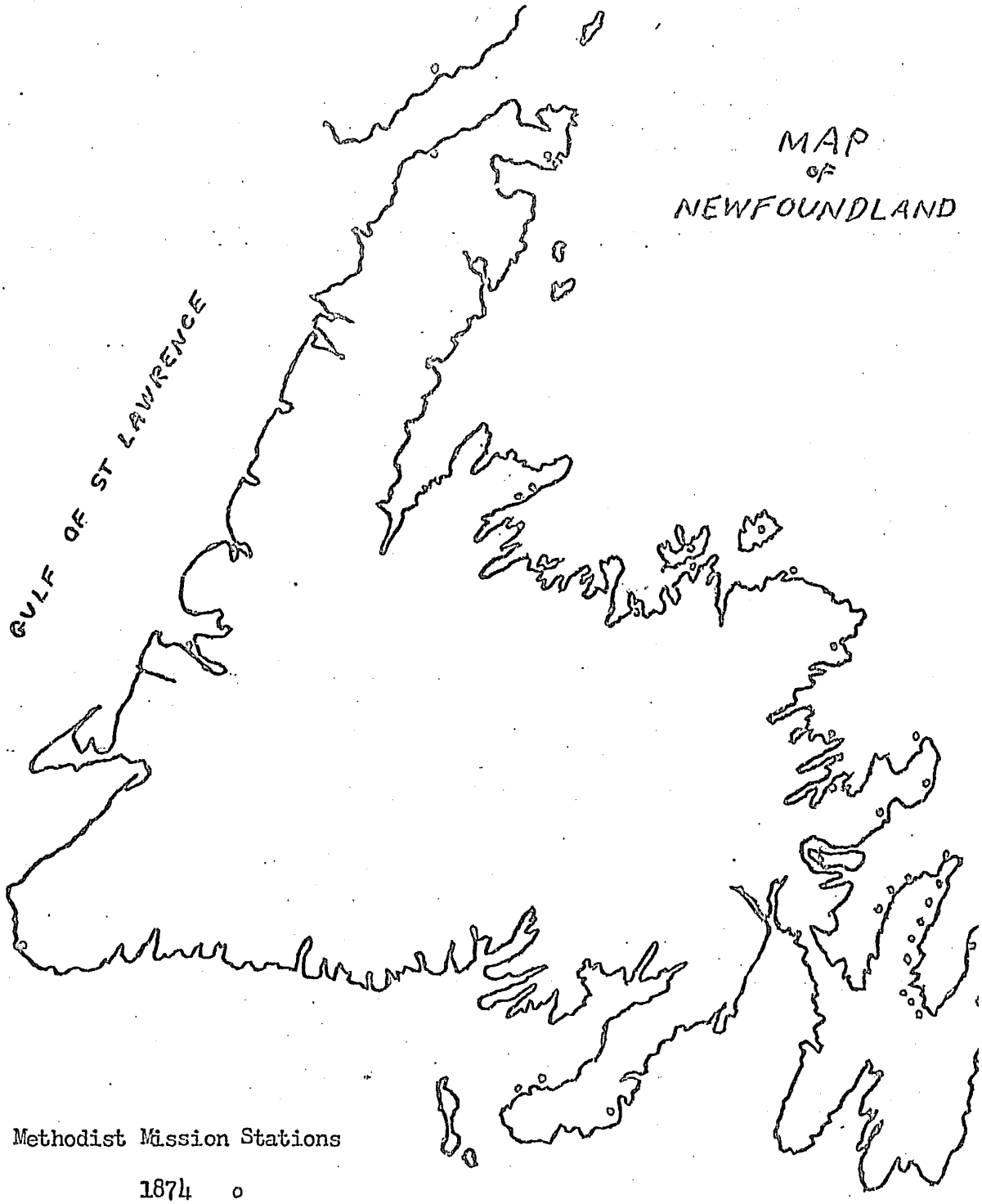
APPENDIX H.



Methodist Mission Stations

1874 o

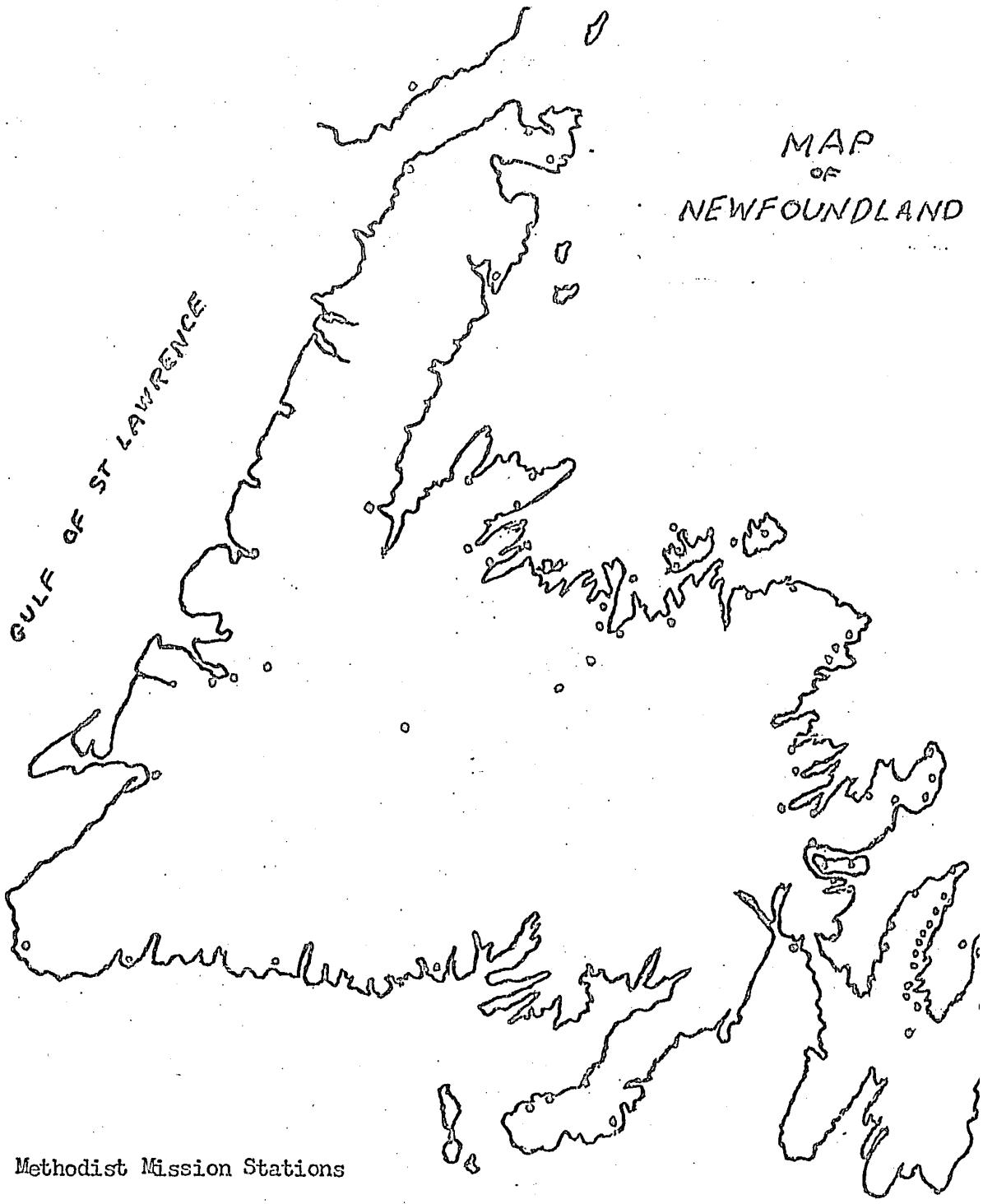
APPENDIX H.



Methodist Mission Stations

1874 o

APPENDIX I.



Methodist Mission Stations

1925

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