

CSCH President's Address 2009

**Faiths of '37: Methodism and Anti-Catholicism
in Rebellion-Era Canada**

TODD WEBB
Laurentian University

At our annual meeting in 2006, Paul Laverdure noted that “[t]raditionally, there have been three ways to deliver a presidential address at the Canadian Society of Church History.” One way was to provide an overview of the state of the field; another involved an excursion into autobiography; and the third option was to offer “a peak at a sliver of a work in progress.”¹ Quite early on, I decided to go with the last of those options, mostly because the field seems to be in good shape to me, and because, like most historians, my day-to-day existence does not lend itself to gripping narrative. So, today I am seizing the opportunity to return to a topic that has interested to me for over a decade now: the Methodist propensity for schism during the early nineteenth century. More specifically, I am going to examine one facet of the grand transatlantic wrangle between the British Wesleyan and Canadian Methodist connexions, beginning with their union in 1833 and ending with the collapse of that union in 1840.

In other places, I have tried to demonstrate that this transoceanic battle was more than a prolonged dispute over church governance. It had a broader cultural dimension. It was about who would define the meaning of “Britishness” in the north Atlantic world.² And that conflict, I am going to argue today, was complicated by an important, but hitherto overlooked

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facet of the transatlantic Methodist *mentalité*: anti-Catholicism. In the years before 1860 anti-Catholicism in British North America was derivative, aping metropolitan and American ideas and practices, as J.R. Miller notes.³ But “derivative” does not necessarily mean “simplistic.” Anti-Catholicism acted as both a divisive and a unifying force among the Methodists in Britain and the Canadas during the nineteenth century: this point has been glossed over not only in Miller’s articles on anti-Catholicism, but also in the work of Goldwin French and Neil Semple.⁴ French and Semple, in fact, treat anti-Catholicism like the skeleton in the denominational closet, not to be rattled at any cost. That makes sense, to a certain extent. The Canadian Methodists’ repeated recourse to the cry of “no popery” was hardly the stuff of a nation-building epic, which was, in many ways, what French and Semple were each attempting to create.⁵

Much of the story of Lower and Upper Canadian Methodism, and its relationship with British Wesleyanism, is incomprehensible, if we ignore anti-Catholicism as a cultural force. Until the mid-1840s, anti-Catholicism helped undermine any efforts to forge a common British culture among the Methodists in Britain and the Canadas. The British Wesleyans and the Canadian Methodists had different conceptions of the meaning and possible uses of anti-Catholicism. For the Canadian Methodists, anti-Catholicism was a weapon to be used against the Church of England; for the British Wesleyans, in contrast, anti-Catholicism was tied to anti-gallicanism and the duty to transform the French Canadians into loyal Protestants and Britons. As I will show, this difference of opinion was brought into sharp relief by the revolutionary crisis of 1837-8.

Prelude to the Rebellions

Before we come to the rebellions of 1837-8, however, we have to fill in some background. It is important to note, first, that anti-Catholicism was bred deep in the bones of Methodism and, second, that, more than anything else, it was disagreement over the issue of church establishment that destroyed the first union between the British Wesleyans and the Canadian Methodists in 1840. To understand these two points is to understand a large part of the early history of Methodism in Lower and Upper Canada.

It was John Wesley who made anti-Catholicism into a cornerstone of Methodist culture. As Henry Rack points out, when it came to hating Catholics, Wesley was not as rabid as many of his fellow English

Protestants; but, given the pervasive anti-Catholicism of English culture during the eighteenth century, that is not saying much. Wesley did not want to drive Catholics out of Britain with fire and sword; he was even willing to acknowledge that Catholics and Protestants shared certain fundamental beliefs. Wesley was still convinced, however, that Papists were there to be converted. When Anglican critics began to accuse the early Methodists of being closet Catholics, he felt compelled to become more strident in his anti-Catholicism. He argued that the Catholic Church was, and always would be, a persecuting denomination that did not deserve toleration. Wesley was also increasingly convinced that Catholics were politically and economically backward; this opinion seems to have been both created and confirmed by his time among the rock-heaving Papists of Ireland. Those Catholics, like Catholics everywhere, were priest-ridden people who would always be poor and who would always be loyal to the Pope in Rome rather than their own king or queen.⁶

How far Wesley was willing to take his anti-Catholicism became clear in 1780 when he came out in support of Lord George Gordon's Protestant Association: a group of zealots who aimed to halt any measure of political relief for Britain's Catholics, no matter how modest. Wesley was in total agreement with the goal of the Protestant Association, writing that Popery, if left unchecked, would "undermine Holiness" and destroy everything that was most valuable in life, including "love of God," "love of one's neighbours" and "justice, mercy, and truth." Even after Gordon unleashed his followers on London, leading to some of the worst rioting of the eighteenth-century, Wesley stuck to his guns. He visited the clearly deranged nobleman in prison and wished him the best.⁷ Wesley had a straightforward defense for all of this: Popery could not be trusted. Nineteenth-century Methodists, on both sides of the Atlantic, took that message and ran with it.

In theory, then, anti-Catholicism could have been a unifying force in the relationship between the British Wesleyans and the Canadian Methodists during the early nineteenth century; instead it was caught up in the divisive issue of church establishment. Until the mid-1840s, Jabez Bunting and the other leaders of the British Wesleyan connexion were convinced that Anglicanism provided the basis for a national religion, shielding Britain and its colonies from the many horrors of the modern age.⁸ Bunting thus contended that it was the duty of every loyal British subject "to maintain the most friendly feelings" towards the Church of England, and "to discountenance as far as we can . . . that bitter and

unchristian hostility” towards the church establishment “which is now too much in fashion . . .”⁹ The trouble was that Canadian Methodists, like Egerton Ryerson, could not bring themselves to accept this key Buntingite idea. Instead, equally sure of their own British loyalty, the Canadian Methodists fought long and hard for the disestablishment of the Church of England in Upper Canada.¹⁰ Ryerson and his fellow ministers could never forgive the Anglican leader John Strachan for publicly denouncing them as “uneducated itinerant preachers, who, leaving their steady employment, betake themselves to preaching the Gospel from idleness, or a zeal without knowledge, by which they are induced without any preparation, to teach what they do not know, and which, from their pride, they disdain to learn.”¹¹

The fact that the Canadian Methodists turned to the rhetoric of anti-Catholicism in their battle with colonial Anglicanism only complicated an already complex situation. During the early 1830s, the members of the Canada connexion argued that Strachan’s Church of England was effectively in league with Popery; after all, thanks to the Quebec Act of 1774, the British state also recognized Roman Catholicism as an established church in the Canadas. In his role as the editor of the Canadian Methodist newspaper, the *Christian Guardian*, Egerton Ryerson battered away at that point with all the subtlety of a sledgehammer. “What a sorry picture does it present,” an editorial noted in May 1830, “and what a mighty sword of ridicule does it put in the hands of infidelity, to see . . . Episcopalism, and Popery, *piously* countenanced and *established* within the territories of the same kingdom.” If only one of those denominations was supported by the powers that be in Britain “there would have been consistency, if not justice and truth . . .” That, however, was not the case in Lower and Upper Canada. Instead, because “two opposites cannot be right at the same time, the plain inference is, that the divinity of neither is practically believed” by the imperial state.¹² Everyone was coming out of the system of church establishment looking bad. The British government seemed to be verging on complete godlessness and the Church of England was in cahoots with Roman Catholicism to preserve its privileged, but illegitimate, position in the Canadas. Whether this picture of rampant declension was accurate or not, the Canadian Methodists were certainly making use of Methodism’s anti-Catholic heritage in a new and provocative way that was bound to irritate the Buntingites.

The Canadian Methodists’ thoroughly political recourse to anti-Popery did, indeed, clash with the British Wesleyan understanding of anti-

Catholicism. Instead of finding fault with the Church of England, the Buntingites believed, Methodists should be spending their time dealing with the far more serious threat to British North America's position in the British empire: the French and Catholic majority in Lower Canada. From 1814 on, the British Wesleyan missionaries stationed in Montreal, Quebec City and other parts of the colony attempted to do just that. They regularly wrote to the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS) in England, describing "the ignorance, bigotry and prejudice" of the *habitants* and their priests. Everywhere the missionaries went they found priests burning bibles, farmers mumbling prayers they did not understand and "richly ornamented" churches in which "the power of grace [is] unknown." In 1820, the missionary John DePutron summed up the situation: "Popery universally opposed to the light, has wherever it reigns darkness for its concomitant, and I am sorry to say that the state of this Province deplorably confirms the assertion." The only way to save the Canadas from Popery, it seemed, was to establish "a French Mission" in Lower Canada in order to transform the French Canadians into loyal and Protestant Britons.¹³ The WMMS proved keen to support this initiative, promising to send books, money and personnel to Lower Canada.¹⁴ As was often the case with the WMMS, however, there was a yawning chasm between intention and reality. The much-ballyhooed French Mission came to nothing. It probably did not help that only one of the missionaries in the Canadas could speak French.¹⁵ Still, the main point is that a disestablished Church of England had no place in the British Wesleyan dream of a colony free of every vestige of Popery.

The Rebellions of 1837-8

The rebellions of 1837-8 brought these two conceptions of anti-Catholicism into jarring conflict. The British Wesleyans, both in the Canadas and the home country, saw the rebellions as an opportunity to topple Roman Catholicism and assimilate the French Canadians. The Canadian Methodists, in contrast, saw the rebellions as an opportunity to demonstrate their loyalty to Britain, while also redoubling their assault on the established church in Upper Canada, drawing, once again, on the rhetoric of anti-Catholicism in their efforts. In 1840, this clash of opinions helped destroy the union that had been established between the British Wesleyans and the Canadian Methodists seven years earlier.

As the political crisis in the Canadas deepened in 1836 and 1837, the

British Wesleyan missionaries came to the conclusion that all their nightmares about the corrosive effects of Popery were coming true. In Upper Canada, the usually level-headed Joseph Stinson warned that “[t]he country is full of radicalism & the Roman Catholics are now becoming the most violent opponents of Government.”¹⁶ Things were no better in Lower Canada. There the missionaries gave in to both anti-Catholic hysteria and a particularly virulent form of anti-gallicanism: two prejudices that often went hand-in-hand in times of crisis among the British.¹⁷ William Lord, writing to Egerton Ryerson in May 1836, was particularly forthright, arguing that the government in Lower Canada needed to give “the English party” free reign: it should “not hesitate respecting the adoption of the strongest measures” to restore public tranquility. “The feudal system must be broken up,” Lord concluded, “& the French language must cease.”¹⁸ William Croscombe agreed with his fellow missionary. Vigorous measures aimed at the French Canadians were the only way to stop a Protestant exodus from Lower Canada that, apparently, was well underway in the autumn of 1836. Even the direct intervention of the imperial government in the form of the Russell Resolutions, however, had no impact on the deteriorating situation. French Canadians continued to attack their British neighbors. “It is deeply to be lamented” Croscombe wrote in August 1837, “that the Papineau faction should be permitted . . . to inflict so much distress on the English inhabitants of Lower Canada – for no other offense than their being Loyal to their King and Country.”¹⁹

The outbreak of rebellion in 1837 confirmed the missionaries’ view of the religious and ethnic peril they were confronting, particularly in Lower Canada. Robert Lusher, stationed in Montreal, at the epicenter of the unfolding revolutionary crisis, set the tone early on. “We are surrounded with rebellion,” he wrote in late November 1837, “and are every hour threatened with burning, massacre etc..” He had it on the best authority that the *habitants* “have been preparing for some time for a general attack upon the English inhabitants.”²⁰ Three weeks later, Lusher and another missionary, Edmund Botterell, were convinced that rumor had become fact. The rebels, after all, had already “committed the greatest excesses and perpetrated the greatest cruelties among the British settlers, threatening them with death if they did not fly from their dwellings or unite with them.”²¹ Even the defeat of the last rebel force at St. Eustache brought no relief to men caught up in the hurly-burly of the insurrection. At the end of December 1837, Lusher was convinced that “had the Rebels succeeded in capturing Montreal there would have been an indiscriminate

and general Massacre of the British inhabitants.”²²

The missionaries viewed the rebellions of 1838 from a similarly lurid perspective. There were, once again, fears that the *habitants*, having risen up, would kill any British subjects who fell into their hands, including the politician Edward Ellice and his family, who were actually captured by rebels at Beauharnois.²³ At St. Armands, in February 1838, the minister William Squire was close to panic, writing “at present we are in a state of great excitement; Messenger succeeds to Messenger announcing our danger; and probably . . . we may be massacred, or homeless.”²⁴ Plainly, something had to be done to restore order in Lower Canada.

If the French Canadians were the cause of the disorder in Lower Canada, then the destruction of French Canada was the only possible solution. For the British Wesleyans that meant an advance on two fronts: religious and ethnic, anti-Catholic and anti-French. It helped that the Catholic Church and the rebel leadership had already begun the work of undermining Popery. That, at least, was how things looked to Robert Lusher and Edmund Botterell in December 1837. They were convinced that Catholicism was collapsing all around them, fatally weakened, ironically, by the loyalty of many parish priests to the colonial state and the atheistic zeal of the rebel leadership. The former had lost the support of the rebel *habitants*; the latter had instructed the *habitants* to “disregard and insult their priests . . .”²⁵ In Montreal, the wealthy layman William Lunn suggested a way to take advantage of this situation. The WMMS should revive the French Canadian mission. It could aim either to reform “the French Church” or to establish “a pure Church amongst the Canadians, who are deplorably ignorant, blind and prejudiced.” For Lunn this was more than an opportunity; it was a necessity. “God . . . gave us this Province for wise purposes,” he wrote, “& if we do not discharge our duty towards it, you know well what is likely to be the consequences” – the triumph of Catholicism and the dismemberment of the British Empire in North America.²⁶

With the stakes so high, the missionaries and other leading laymen in Montreal hastily piled onto Lunn’s bandwagon. “Popery has in this rebellion rec[eive]d a blow from which it will never recover,” they argued in letter after letter to the WMMS.²⁷ In the course of the rebellions, Joseph Stinson reported, loyal troops had broken open the cabinets of Catholic priests, exposing their “immoral conduct . . . so much so that in some neighborhoods their religious influence is nearly destroyed & they are no longer looked upon as pious and zealous ministers of Christ, but as men

who . . . practice the most abominable licentiousness.” Thanks to the rebellions, there was a real chance of transforming defeated Catholics into convinced anti-Catholics as a first step on the road to spiritual salvation and political loyalty. A Swiss couple, Louis Roussy and Henriette Odin Feller, had already begun that process at Grand Ligue.²⁸ For their part, the Montreal laity believed that the WMMS should establish its own French Canadian missions at St. Charles and St. Eustache, the sites of two crushing rebel defeats in 1837.²⁹ In that way, Robert Lusher explained, “Methodism under the divine blessing will extend its conservative as well as its spiritual influence” in Lower Canada.³⁰

The British Wesleyans in the Canadas had even more decided opinions about the problem of French Canadian nationalism. As usual, William Lunn was both clear-headed and brutal, arguing at the end of the first rebellion in 1837 that “[n]o doubt the Canadians would again revolt, if they could see a good prospect of success.” The solution, however, was simplicity itself. “If the [Imperial] Government make this at once an *English Province*,” Lunn wrote, “we shall in all probability, have peace and prosperity, and the two races will, in some years, amalgamate. The French . . . will, in every respect, be much improved. The Country will be greatly benefited. Conciliation having produced its fruit, rebellion – it must of course be given up.”³¹ This would have been music to the ears of Lord Durham, whose arrival the missionaries looked forward to in the spring of 1838 with a combination of hope and trepidation. His lordship would need to make a difficult but necessary choice, William Squire wrote; “the Country should be given up to the French Canadians to be a French republic; or they must be placed in a minority in the Legislative departments . . .” That was the only way “to keep down the spirit of French nationality, which is at present our curse . . .” “[A] system of conciliation,” Squire added, “will never do this.”³² There was no room for compromise in the minds of the British Wesleyan missionaries and laymen like William Lunn. The French Canadian sense of self needed to be torn up by the roots. The fact that Lord Durham, in his *Report*, agreed wholeheartedly with this view of the situation in Lower Canada could only have lent added weight to the opinions of the British Wesleyan community.³³

That community’s efforts to transform French Canada were given further support by the home connexion. Among the Wesleyans in Britain, it only made sense that a rebellion in the Canadas would be the work of French Catholics – after all, they had been resisting conversion since the

1810s. That, at any rate, was the image of the uprising that the connexional leadership presented in the church's official organ, the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*. In January 1838, it reported that "distressing intelligence has just been received, that the French Papists of Lower Canada have erected the standard of rebellion against the Queen's Government . . ." ³⁴ The editor made no mention of the uprising in Upper Canada, despite the fact that the Buntingites certainly knew about William Lyon Mackenzie's march down Yonge Street and the rebel occupation of Navy Island. ³⁵ Such information, however, did not fit with the image that the connexional leadership had already developed about the crisis in the Canadas. A month later, the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* noted that "ample details have been received in this country respecting the rebellion which the Papists of Lower Canada have raised against the Queen's Government . . ." This rebellion was utterly inexplicable, the editor added, "the party with whom the war originated having, according to their own confessions, been treated with great kindness . . . and [having] received the most substantial benefits from their connexion with Great Britain." These "Papists of Lower Canada" may have received support from "a knot of democratic politicians in the House of Commons," but there was nothing to fear from Upper Canada. "The settlers of Upper Canada are mostly English," the editor declared, "and have no common feeling with the insurgents of the lower province, who are of French extraction." ³⁶ A combination of sectarianism and xenophobia had triumphed over reality among the Wesleyans in Britain.

This was a problem, since the Canadian Methodists in Upper Canada flatly contradicted the British Wesleyan view of the rebellions. The leadership of the Canada Conference, caught up in its ongoing assault on the church establishment, had little time for the anti-gallicanism of their British brethren; and the British Wesleyans had no stomach at all for what they saw as the political waywardness of the Canadian Methodists. At the end of 1838, the Montreal laity fired the first shot in a connexional battle that helped destroy the British Wesleyan-Canadian Methodist union two years later. William Lunn organized a boycott of the *Christian Guardian* among his fellow laymen, arguing that that newspaper was regularly dealing in "disloyal sentiments." ³⁷ Egerton Ryerson replied to that charge in a manner that illustrated the breach that differing conceptions of anti-Catholicism had opened up between the Canadian Methodists and the British Wesleyans. Ryerson certainly had no love for the French Canadians. He had been "the first," he claimed, "to excite in the Colonial Office

in England determination to protect British interests in Lower Canada against French ambitions & prejudices.” That was not to say, however, that he was of “the high church school in politics” or part of the “school of Bloodshed and French extermination” that appeared to be all the rage among the British Wesleyan laity of Montreal. “I . . . think,” Ryerson continued, “that there still remains another basis of Scripture, Justice & Humanity on which may rest the principles of a loyalty that will sacrifice life itself in maintenance of British Supremacy . . .” Men like William Lunn, in contrast, were merely the practitioners of “ultra syncophantic partizanship” and that made them into the true threat to the British Empire in North America.³⁸

As he came out swinging against British Wesleyan anti-Catholicism, Ryerson was likely working from the assumption that the Canadian Methodists had, in fact, demonstrated their loyalty to Britain during the rebellions. To a great extent, that assumption was correct. As Mackenzie and his followers marched down Yonge Street and later occupied Navy Island, the *Christian Guardian* attempted to rally Canadians of every class to the standard of empire.³⁹ It also took some well-aimed shots at any Americans who might be tempted to join the rebel leader in his efforts to ‘liberate’ the Canadas. Such ragamuffins “had better go and wear in the south the laurels which they have won from effeminate and disorganized bands of *Mexicans*. The united yeomanry of *Upper Canada* are made of other materials” – a comment that demonstrated that the Canadian Methodists could be every bit as xenophobic as their British brethren in times of crisis.⁴⁰ At the Battle of the Windmill in November 1838, the *Christian Guardian* pointed out, a “very fair proportion of those who rushed forward in the hour of danger for the defence of their country were members of the Methodist Church, or under Methodist influence . . .”⁴¹ Among those brave and loyal Methodist soldiers was Private Allan McIntosh, who, in later years, became both a circuit rider and Upper Canada’s version of Johnny Appleseed, sowing the countryside with God’s word and his family’s version of the apple tree.⁴² With press and people like that on their side, the Canadian Methodists had every reason to cry up their attachment to the colonial and imperial governments.

Secure in their own sense of political loyalty, the Canadian Methodists also felt free to return to their campaign against the church establishment, drawing, once again, on the language of anti-Catholicism to support their arguments. Egerton Ryerson took the lead from the editorial desk of the *Christian Guardian*. More bluntly than he ever had

before the rebellions, Ryerson attempted to draw a direct line connecting colonial Anglicanism and Popery. He pointed out that “the Heads of the Episcopal Church” in Upper Canada “actually boast of having not only supported bills and appropriations for Roman Catholic Schools, but even grants for the salaries of Roman Catholic Clergy . . .” “[A]nd then,” Ryerson crowed, “they turn around” and urge “us . . . to support their absurd pretensions to” establishment status “as the only ‘security for the permanence and purity of the Protestant faith!’”⁴³ The Church of England was nothing more than “diluted popery, under the garb of Protestantism.”⁴⁴ This kind of thinking was not confined to Ryerson. When the British Wesleyan missionary William Harvard wrote a letter to the *Christian Guardian*, trying to define “*Canadian loyalty*” in a narrow, pro-establishment fashion, a local preacher turned the same anti-Catholic rhetoric against him. That local preacher “termed my letter a Bull,” a surprised Harvard reported to the WMMS. He said “that I was acting like a Pope,” that this was “no original idea” of his and that he “could say more” if he “chose to do . . .”⁴⁵

The British Wesleyans, both in the colony and the home country, took that threat seriously. Thanks to the union of 1833, the anti-Catholic rhetoric of the Canadian Methodists threatened to disrupt the Wesleyans own image as loyal Britons. They could not be seen to support an attack on colonial Anglicanism, while arguing in favour of a church establishment in Britain. As the missionary Joseph Stinson put it, “that policy which is right in one part of the Empire cannot be wrong in another part of the Empire . . .” If Jabez Bunting and his supporters wanted to maintain “their own consistency & sacred honour,” Stinson continued, “they must either dissolve the *nominal* union which now exists or bring the Canadian [Methodist] Preachers as completely under their control” as possible, forcing Ryerson and his friends to accept the metropolitan conception of anti-Catholicism, as well as other Buntingite opinions and policies.⁴⁶ In 1840, the Buntingites took Stinson’s first option and dissolved the union between the British Wesleyan and Canadian Methodist connexions. Anti-Catholicism had, indeed, proven to be a divisive force in transatlantic Methodism.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I want to suggest that this discussion of the Methodist experience of the rebellions of 1837-8 points to the need to reexamine

several issues. We should certainly take a closer look at the interface of sectarianism and politics in rebellion-era Canada. Sectarianism had a part to play in determining the Methodist role in, and response to, the uprisings in Lower and Upper Canada; and there is evidence to suggest that a hatred of the religious “other” was a more general force shaping the events of 1837-8.⁴⁷ Both rebel and pro-government newspapers accused one another of turning Protestant against Catholic. In November 1837, for instance, a correspondent in William Lyon Mackenzie’s *The Constitution* argued that “the Colonial tyrants” of Toronto and Quebec City were attempting to transfer the religious divisions of Ireland to the Canadas, in order to divide the Irish immigrant population and to keep down “equal rights and liberal institutions . . .”⁴⁸ At the same time, the *Quebec Gazette* and the *Montreal Gazette* charged the rebel leadership with cynically manipulating religion – primarily by quoting thoroughly anti-Catholic imperial policies from the early nineteenth century that “*have never been executed and no longer exist!*” – in an effort to turn the *habitants* against the colonial government.⁴⁹ It will require further research to determine whether these allegations reflected a sectarian reality, but the Methodist case seems to indicate that this smoke was the result of a genuine fire.

More broadly, my analysis of Methodism and the rebellions calls into question Linda Colley’s argument, in *Britons: Forging the Nation*, that the combination of anti-Catholicism and anti-gallicanism created a unified and highly conservative British culture among the English and Scots beginning in the mid-1700s.⁵⁰ As I have demonstrated elsewhere, the Methodists in Lower and Upper Canada shared in that process after 1840.⁵¹ But how does the Methodist experience in the Canadas before 1840 fit into Colley’s thesis? The simple answer is that it does not. Instead, differing conceptions of anti-Catholicism and its connection to anti-gallicanism among the British Wesleyans and Canadian Methodists helped shatter any chance of cultural unity across the north Atlantic.⁵² The Canadian Methodists went into the schism of 1840 firmly convinced that they were the true Britons and that they had proven their loyalist credentials during the rebellions of 1837-8. The British Wesleyans, whether in Britain or the colonies, were equally convinced that their Canadian brethren, in using the rhetoric of anti-Catholicism to attack the church establishment, were erring badly. They were leaving the real threat to the empire untouched: the French Canadians. Eventually, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the British Wesleyans and the Canadian Methodists did join forces in an effort to convert the French Catholics of Lower Canada. In the

meantime, however, the French Canadians, by virtue of their existence alone, had played a role in halting the movement towards transatlantic unity among one of the most aggressively evangelical denominations of the nineteenth century. It was a subtle form of vengeance.

Endnotes

1. Paul Laverdure, "Religion and Public History," *Historical Papers: Canadian Society of Church History* (2006), 158.
2. This is the argument I have made in two articles: Todd Webb, "Making Neo-Britons: The Transatlantic Relationship between Wesleyan Methodists in Britain and the Canadas, 1815-1828," *British Journal of Canadian Studies* 18, no. 1 (2005): 1-25; and Todd Webb "How the Canadian Methodists Became British: Unity, Schism and Transatlantic Identity, 1827-1854," in *Transatlantic Subjects: Ideas, Institutions, and Social Experience in Post-Revolutionary British North America*, ed. Nancy Christie (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), 159-98.
3. J.R. Miller, "Bigotry in the North Atlantic Triangle: Irish, British and American influences on Canadian Anti-Catholicism, 1850-1900," *Studies in Religion / Sciences Religieuses* 16, no. 3 (1987): 290-1.
4. J.R. Miller, "Anti-Catholic Thought in Victorian Canada," *Canadian Historical Review* 66, no. 4 (1985): 474-94; J.R. Miller, "Anti-Catholicism in Canada: From the British Conquest to the Great War," in *Creed and Culture: The Place of English-Speaking Catholics in Canadian Society, 1750-1930*, eds. Terrence Murphy and Gerald Stortz (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 25-48.
5. Goldwin French, *Parson and Politics: The role of the Wesleyan Methodists in Upper Canada and the Maritimes from 1780 to 1855* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1962), 225, 227, 248, 250, 278; and Neil Semple, *The Lord's Dominion: The History of Canadian Methodism* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 98-99. In contrast, historians of nineteenth-century British Wesleyanism have readily acknowledged the importance of anti-Catholicism in the process of denominational and cultural formation (see David Hempton, *Methodism and Politics in British Society, 1750-1850* [London: Century Hutchinson Ltd., 1987], 42-3).
6. Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*, 3rd edition (London: Epworth Press, 2002), 309-11; Hempton, *Methodism and Politics*, 34-9; and Irene Whalen, *The Bible War in Ireland: The "Second Reformation" and the Polarization of Protestant-Catholic*

- Relations, 1800-1840* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 6-8.
7. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 311-12. The quotations are from *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, ed. J. Emory (New York, 1856), 5:803-16, in Eugene C. Black, *The Association: British Extraparliamentary Organization, 1769-1793* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 157.
 8. Hempton, *Methodism and Politics*, 185-6.
 9. Jabez Bunting to James Kendall, 24 April 1834, in *Early Victorian Methodism: The correspondence of Jabez Bunting, 1830-1858*, ed. W.R. Ward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 59-60.
 10. For the issues at stake in this confrontation see William Westfall, *Two Worlds: The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 24-7.
 11. John Strachan, *A Sermon Preached at York, Upper Canada, Third of July, 1825, on the Death of the Late Lord Bishop of Quebec* (Kingston: Macfarlane, 1826); in *John Strachan: Documents and Opinions*, ed. J.L.H. Henderson (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, Ltd., 1969), 92.
 12. *Christian Guardian*, 29 May 1830, 218-19. Emphasis in original. The editorial was reprinted from an English newspaper: the *Christian Guardian and Church of England Magazine*. In his introductory comments, Ryerson slyly noted “[f]or the allusions to popery, we do not feel ourselves responsible – they are only assertions. We merely give them as the opinion of a noted and extensively patronized *Episcopal Journal*. Of the justness and propriety of the observations made, our readers will judge for themselves.”
 13. John DePutron to Joseph Taylor, November 1816, Box 2, File 23, #26, Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society Correspondence (hereafter WMMS-C), United Church Archives, Toronto, Ontario (hereafter UCA); John DePutron to Joseph Taylor, 1 August 1820, Box 4, File 39, #8, WMMS-C, UCA; John DePutron to Joseph Taylor, 30 May 1819, Box 4, File 39, #[?], WMMS-C, UCA. See also John DePutron to George Marsden, 20 October 1817, Box 2, File 27, #13, WMMS-C, UCA; Robert Lusher to Joseph Taylor, 12 July 1819, Box 3, File 35, #17, WMMS-C, UCA; and *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, December 1828, 817-18.
 14. The Missionary Society's ongoing interest in the French mission can be traced through Minutes of the General Committee of the WMMS, 18 April 1817, Reel 1, WMMS-C, UCA; Joseph Taylor to John DePutron, 1 April 1819, Outgoing Correspondence, WMMS-C, UCA; and Joseph Taylor to John DePutron, 10 September 1819, Outgoing Correspondence, WMMS-C, UCA.

15. Robert Lusher to the General Secretaries of the WMMS, 2 November 1818, Box 3, File 30, #23, WMMS-C, UCA; John DePutron to Joseph Taylor, 20 January 1819, Box 3, File 35, #5, WMMS-C, UCA; and Richard Williams to Joseph Taylor, 10 May 1823, Box 7, File 52, #24, WMMS-C, UCA.
16. Joseph Stinson to Robert Alder, 22 April 1836, Box 21, File 135, #3, WMMS-C, UCA.
17. Linda Colley, "Britishness and Otherness: An Argument," *Journal of British Studies* 31 (October 1992): 316-23.
18. William Lord to Egerton Ryerson, 31 May 1836, Box 1, File 22, Egerton Ryerson papers, UCA.
19. William Croscombe to Robert Alder, 29 October 1836, Box 20, File 129, #1, WMMS-C, UCA; and William Croscombe to Robert Alder, 10 August 1837, Box 21, File 137, #19, WMMS-C, UCA.
20. Robert Lusher to Robert Alder, 20 November 1837, Box 21, File 137, #26, WMMS-C, UCA.
21. Robert Lusher and Edmund Botterell to the General Secretaries of the WMMS, 12 December 1837, Box 21, File 137, #28, WMMS-C, UCA. In this instance, the missionaries were not exaggerating (see Allan Greer, *The Patriots and the People: The Rebellion of 1837 in Rural Lower Canada* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996], 183-8).
22. Robert Lusher to Robert Alder, 27 December 1837, Box 21, File 137, #30, WMMS-C, UCA.
23. See for example Robert Cooney to John Mathewson, 6 November 1838, Portraits and Letters of the Ministers of St. James, Montreal, UCA; and Robert Lusher to the General Secretaries of the WMMS, 15 November 1838, Box 22, File 145, #30, WMMS-C, UCA. Edward Ellice's wife, Jane Ellice, wrote a fascinating account of her time in captivity; at certain points, her narrative describes the same anti-gallicanism and anti-Catholicism found in the letters of the British Wesleyan missionaries and laity (see *The Diary of Jane Ellice*, ed. Patricia Godsell [Toronto: Oberon Press, 1975], especially 133 and 135).
24. William Squire to J.B. Selley, 24 February 1838, Portraits and Letters of the Ministers of St. James, Montreal, UCA.
25. Robert Lusher and Edmund Botterell to the General Secretaries of the WMMS, 12 December 1837, Box 21, File 137, #28, WMMS-C, UCA.

26. William Lunn to the General Secretaries of the WMMS, 21 December 1837, Box 21, File 137, #29, WMMS-C, UCA.
27. Robert Lusher to Robert Alder, 27 December 1837, Box 21, File 137, #30, WMMS-C, UCA. See also William Lunn to the General Secretaries of the WMMS, 13 January 1838, Box 22, File 145, #1, WMMS-C, UCA; and Robert Lusher to Robert Alder, 15 January 1838, Box 22, File 145, #7, WMMS-C, UCA.
28. Joseph Stinson to Robert Alder, 18 February 1839, Box 23, File 159, #11, WMMS-C, UCA. See also Gilles Chaussé, "French Canada from the Conquest to 1840," in *A Concise History of Christianity in Canada*, eds. Terrence Murphy and Roberto Perin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 96-7, 105-6.
29. William Lunn to the General Secretaries of the WMMS, 13 January 1838, Box 22, File 145, #1, WMMS-C, UCA.
30. Robert Lusher to Robert Alder, 23 February 1838, Box 22, File 145, #4, WMMS-C, UCA.
31. William Lunn to the General Secretaries of the WMMS, 21 December 1837, Box 21, File 137, #29, WMMS-C, UCA. Emphasis in original.
32. William Squire to Robert Alder, 3 May 1838, Box 22, File 145, #13, WMMS-C, UCA.
33. *Lord Durham's Report: An Abridgement of Report on the Affairs of British North America by Lord Durham*, new edition, ed. Gerald M. Craig (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 13, 14-15, 144-51, 158-60.
34. *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, January 1838, 70.
35. See for example Joseph Stinson to Robert Alder, 8 December 1837, Box 21, File 143, #5, WMMS-C, UCA; William Martin Harvard to Robert Alder, 15 December 1837, Box 21, File 143, #6, WMMS-C, UCA; Robert Lusher to Robert Alder, 15 January 1838, Box 22, File 145, #7, WMMS-C, UCA.
36. *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, February 1838, 152-3.
37. Matthew Richey to Egerton Ryerson, 2 January 1839, Box 2, File 38, Egerton Ryerson papers, UCA.
38. Egerton Ryerson to William Lunn and James Ferrier, 7 January 1839, Box 2, File 38, Egerton Ryerson papers, UCA.

39. *Christian Guardian*, 13 December 1837, 22; and *Christian Guardian*, 10 January 1838, 38.
40. *Christian Guardian*, 20 December 1837, 26. Emphasis in original.
41. *Christian Guardian*, 19 December 1838, 26.
42. For the career of Allan MacIntosh see Donald E. Graves, *Guns Across the River: The Battle of the Windmill, 1838* (Toronto: Robin Brass Studio, 2001), 204-5.
43. *Christian Guardian*, 16 May 1838, 109.
44. *Christian Guardian*, 31 October 1838, 206. Ryerson was referring to high-church Anglicanism, in particular, in this article.
45. William Martin Harvard to Robert Alder, 25 April 1838, Box 22, File 151, #9, WMMS-C, UCA. Emphasis in original.
46. Joseph Stinson to Thomas Jackson, 9 December 1839, Box 23, File 159, #26, WMMS-C, UCA. Emphasis in original. I have discussed the other issues that led to the collapse of the 1833 union in Webb, "How the Canadian Methodists Became British," 161-71.
47. Here I am taking issue with Allan Greer who argues that "there is little evidence of conflict on religious grounds between the French Canadians and the Protestant English-speakers" of Lower Canada during the rebellion era. Like other historians of the rebellions in Lower Canada, Greer concentrates on the clash within the French-Canadian community between the Catholic Church and the rebels following Bishop Jean-Jacques Lartigue's *mandement* of October 1837 (Greer, *Patriots and the People*, 159, 233-9; and Fernand Ouellet, *Lower Canada, 1791-1840: Social Change and Nationalism*, trans. Patricia Claxton [Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1980], 298-301).
48. *The Constitution*, 22 November 1837, 1.
49. *Montreal Gazette*, 2 November 1837, 3, quoting the *Quebec Gazette*. Emphasis in original.
50. Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 11-54.
51. Webb, "How the Canadian Methodists Became British," 178-86.
52. This picture of the British Wesleyan-Canadian Methodist relationship complements the argument made by two of Colley's critics (see Tony Claydon and Ian McBride, "The trials of the chosen people: recent interpretations of protestantism and national identity in Britain and Ireland," in

Protestantism and National Identity: Britain and Ireland, c. 1650 - c. 1850, eds. Tony Claydon and Ian McBride [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998], 16-17, 25-6).