Shamans, Missionaries and Prophets: Comparative Perspectives on Nineteenth-Century Religious Encounters in British Columbia[1]

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The focus of this paper is the encounter between Christianity and indigenous religions in nineteenth-century British Columbia. Frequently, however, such encounters are approached narrowly, and almost exclusively from the European perspective.[2] Scholars of cultural contact in other contexts have continually emphasized the complexity involved. Terence Turner, a noted anthropologist, writing about the meeting of native South Americans and Europeans suggests that contact is simultaneously event, situation, process and structure.[3] Historians might well apply this wisdom to the Canadian experience. While a number of published pieces examine the Euro-Canadian discourse on the encounter, very little is known about what missions, and Christianity generally, meant to the peoples at whom it was directed. The contributions made by native peoples in mission work have received little attention in church historiography. There is much more to be learned about the intricacies of contact situations and of the cultural interaction which resulted by examining the role native peoples played in Christian missionization.

The objectives of this paper are threefold. First, what is to be learned from approaching church history as a cultural encounter centred around the native role in the meeting? In other words, where does this approach fit into the historical literature and what new questions does it raise concerning the meeting of natives and missionaries? Second, I will briefly explore

two specific roles played by native people in missionization. The figures who feature prominently in this inquiry are the native missionary or catechist and the native prophet. I see these two individuals falling between the extremes of shaman on the indigenous side, and missionary on the Euro-Canadian side. Lastly, the third objective concerns the value of comparative perspectives. Treatment of similar situations in the South Pacific, South America and Africa provide interesting parallels to the Canadian situation. Furthermore, scholars suggest ways in which Canadian historians might portray church history in a native cultural context and move away from missionary biography or interpreting passive roles for native peoples.

Interpreting the Contact Zone

The province of British Columbia stands alone in many respects with more than just the Rockies separating it from the rest of Canada. In terms of its indigenous peoples, few places in North America or South America are so culturally and linguistically diverse. Of the separate eleven aboriginal language families in Canada, seven occur in close proximity in British Columbia – indeed six are found only in British Columbia.[4] In the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century, native societies were irrevocably changed by contact with Europeans. The contact zone was first defined by the highly competitive fur trades both on the coast and in the interior. It greatly disrupted native life. Alcohol and disease had devastating effects on individuals and communities. Dislocation also characterized native societies – encroachment of white settlement, for example, resulted in the massive intrusion of 30,000 outsiders during the gold rush on the Fraser at mid-century.[5] There were political and social upheavals as well: the outlawing of the potlatch, the change from colony of Great Britain to province of Canada, unaddressed land claims, the Indian Act and the reservation system. It was in this context, this world in flux, that the shaman and the missionary met.

What do we know about this encounter? The central thesis of John Webster Grant's *Moon of Wintertime* suggests that aboriginal peoples accepted Christianity at a time when their own "traditional" beliefs were being challenged and fading away in the face of the influence of Euro-Canadian culture.[6] His chapter title for native-missionary relations in British Columbia sums up this perspective: "Taming the Thunderbird."

Robin Fisher uses the model of non-directed/directed cultural change in his *Contact and Conflict* which placed missionaries in the role of calculating destroyers of native cultures and civilization.[7] Indeed, Fisher is typical among those historians of Christian missions who have argued "that a degree of cultural disruption is a prerequisite for missionary success; only in a situation where old ways and values are proving ineffective or are being called into question will new ones be considered."[8] They argue that it was nineteenth-century dislocations, crisis and general decline of native culture that greatly encouraged the swift acceptance of Christianity among British Columbia's native groups. This upheaval of indigenous culture, many claim, explains the overnight conversions of entire villages. As proof, they offer statistics such as "by 1904, 90% of the Indians in the province were nominally Christian. In 1939 the census could number only 28% who still held 'aboriginal beliefs.'"[9]

However, I do not believe a straight-forward "replacement" of native spirituality occurred. What do these statistics really mean? Throughout human history, when confronted with cultural assault, people often turn inward to faith or re-create their religions to adapt to new circumstances. Is there any evidence to suggest native religion was in its "moon of wintertime"? If so called "conversion" to Christianity is proof of this spiritual decline, one must ask, does the acceptance of Christianity by native North Americans replace or preclude native spirituality? Surely one must consider whether an "indigenization" of Christianity occurred? Studies of native-missionary contact on the pacific slope have failed to portray the complex processes at work in Christian proselytizing efforts. Mired in a predominantly Eurocentric perspective, scholars have failed to appreciate this religious contact as a form of cultural encounter with influences flowing *both ways* (from Christianity to native religion, and from native religion to Christianity, at least in the local context). When viewed from the perspective of world history, the encounter is an aspect of western colonialism. Yet Christianity may also be perceived as a *world religion* and thus the mission experience is an historically reoccurring one. The latter approach allows for a departure from portrayals of indigenous peoples as passive victims. Through this perspective, their creative role in the process may be emphasized and it opens up new and profitable avenues for the study of nineteenth-century native-white relations in British Columbia.

The view of Christianity as a world religion, rather than a uniquely

Eurocentric one, emphasizes the universality of the conversion experience. It also encourages us to ask different questions: how did native peoples use Christianity to deal with the newcomers? Why were native peoples interested in incorporating Christian elements into native religious rituals? How do we interpret native prophet movements which seemingly incorporate Christian elements? What roles did native people play in their own Christianization? The South Pacific, South America and Africa provide valuable models for the Canadian experience. Moreover, these similarities probably were recognized by missionaries and churches at that time. Canada was only one mission field among many. Missionaries themselves sometimes gained experience through mission-work outside of North America. Missionary systems and official approaches to proselytizing were quite often universal rather than culture-specific. Institutional frameworks also existed and reinforced this perspective. For example in Great Britain, the Aborigines Protection Society and missionary organizations such the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and the Church Missionary Society (CMS) had special interest in indigenous peoples the world over.

There is a broader international academic discourse on Christianity in colonial situations from which one might find new approaches with which to focus on the interaction between two cultures in Canada.[10] One concept in this literature which might have particular application in the British Columbian context is the "indigenization" of Christianity.[11] Indigenization is "a process of cultural adaptation, in which the fundamental meanings of a cultural system are retained, at least partially, but are expressed in the symbolic forms of another, non-native culture."[12] I believe it is important to ask, did an indigenization of Christianity occur in British Columbia? What forms did it take? Few Canadian scholars have broached the question particularly for the western regions. In his recent book on Thomas Crosby and the Tsimshian, Clarence Bolt briefly explores processes of conversion, but does not fully investigate the possibility of an indigenous Christianity or even of syncretism.[13] Anthropologist Jean-Guy Goulet and professor of religion Antonio R. Gualtieri have examined the extent to which indigenization, syncretism and religious dualism was and is a reality for the Dene and Inuit of the Western Subarctic and Arctic.[14] Although most of the literature I have come across is anthropological and based largely on ethnographic studies,[15] I think these sorts of questions *can* and *should* be asked by historians.

New Perspectives on Missions

In looking for new perspectives, the native role in Christian missions should be given more emphasis. In some cases, native catechists became important local leaders for the communities in which they lived, and ultimately may have had a more enduring legacy than any itinerant Euro-Canadian missionary. Native oral traditions of conversion will be invaluable for understanding the historical impact on these communities and the continuing legacy of Christianity today. Interdisciplinary approaches seem to be the most promising way of interpreting the complexity of processes at work during these religious encounters. An ethnohistorical reading of the mission experience in particular would be timely. Ethnohistory is an interdisciplinary approach which combines historical and anthropological methodologies to interpret the post-contact relations between indigenous and non-indigenous cultures. In other words, it enables one to use non-written sources such as archaeology, oral traditions and linguistics alongside traditional written sources.[16]

As it is apparent by now, I am not interested in the "successes" or "failures" of individual missions and do not view religious encounters in terms of oppositional pairs: *shaman / missionary* or *native spirituality / Christianity*. Rather, I want to look at points of meeting. The contact zone was characterized by innovation and creativity. In terms of nativewhite relations, concepts of syncretic, convergent and dualistic religious identities tell us much more about how religious culture contact unfolded. By *syncretic religious identities* I mean, the blending of native and Christian beliefs, symbols, rituals and cultural expressions. *Convergent identities* refer to commonalities between religions as certain tenets or practices coincide with one another and are recognized as similar or even identical. Finally, *dualistic identities* are those situations in which native religions and Christianity existed side by side, yet remained separate and distinct from another.[17] This acceptance of both forms of spirituality simultaneously within native communities undoubtedly caused the most consternation among missionaries. By focusing on these classifications which describe the nature of interaction between religions, I hope to avoid the trap of dealing with native religion and Christian missions separately. This idea can be further represented by a simple model:

Traditional Native Religion *Christianity*
Shaman-------------Prophet------------Native Catechist------------Missionary

It does not necessarily represent one form becoming the other, but rather the co-existence of old and new forms of religious expressions. In this case prophets may be closer to native shamans, yet many were affected by their contact with Christianity. Similarly, native catechists trained by missionaries to teach Christianity among their own peoples undoubtedly remain influenced by their original religions. I am not suggesting that any one form is less "pure" or an "eroded" version of the original. Whatever the term "traditional" might mean in this context, religion from both native and European perspectives has always been a rather innovative and dynamic expression of human culture. Both prophets and native catechists can be viewed as mediators between the two religious cultures. By focusing on the religious "middlemen" and "middlewomen," new insights will be added to our understanding of native-missionary relations and of "the event, situation, process and structure" of religious encounters in British Columbia.

Encounters with Christianity (from Christianity to Native cultures)

It is clear that in British Columbia native spirituality was neither replaced nor appropriated by Christianity. So the question must be asked: what was the role of native people in the conversion process? The answer may lie with the native catechist and the native prophet. Native catechists and native missionary assistants were absolutely essential to the work of almost every denomination of missionary. They functioned as translators, guides, mediators, preachers and leaders for the various communities in which they served. While the roles played by these individuals have received some attention in other regions and eras in North America,[18] very little note has been given to their role in British Columbia.[19]

So why have native mission workers been largely overlooked by scholars given their inclusion in missionary documents? Indeed, the sources "are willing" to give detailed information on the activities of native workers particularly the roles Europeans or Canadians envisioned native peoples should take in their own conversion.[20] For example, the secretary of the Anglican CMS between 1840 and 1870 openly encouraged the training of Christian native teachers and spoke of "self-reliance rather than

dependence" of native congregations.[21] Whether his instructions were heeded or not, this attitude does suggest at least the possibility of an indigenization of Christianity. Where does the "hagiography" of native catechists fit into the missionary discourse on native Christians? What is the catechist archetype? Furthermore, as others have clearly demonstrated, native missionaries were frequently accommodators, innovators and mediators between cultures in ways unexpected and sometimes disapproved by the churches which sent them.

To give you a taste of the sort of thing I have encountered, I have two examples from published sources on the British Columbia Methodist mission. The first is an autobiography written by a native catechist and missionary who later became the first ordained native Methodist minister in the region: a Tsimshian, William Henry Pierce. The second example is a native catechist, David Sallosalton whom Methodist missionary Thomas Crosby[22] allotted considerable prominence in several of his published works.

William Henry Pierce

William Henry Pierce was born at Fort Rupert in 1856 to a Scottish Hudson Bay Company trader and a Tsimshian woman.[23] His mother died when he was still an infant and he was raised by his maternal grandfather among his mother's people in the Port Simpson area. As a youth, he briefly attended William Duncan's day school, but was withdrawn by his uncle and prepared for initiation into the secret Dog-eater Dancers' society. In other words, he was very much brought up within a traditional Tsimshian culture. He worked briefly for the Hudson Bay Company, but by the 1870s found himself looking for work in Victoria. There he converted to Methodism after hearing Thomas Crosby preach. In Victoria he was influenced by several Euro-Canadian missionaries, receiving private tutelage and periodically working to pay for his education. However, as much as Pierce was taken under the wing of several interested missionaries, he was also responsible for taking his own initiative. While working in the American town of Ludlow (Laidlow), Washington State, he was struck by the degree of alcohol abuse among the hundreds of natives who were employed at the local sawmill. He organized a temperance campaign, and it was at those meetings that a number of future native missionaries were introduced or converted to Christianity including: Philip McKay,

well-known for his work in Alaska; Charles Amos of Kitamaat who was the first one to introduce Christianity to his people; Bella Bella Jack who was the first to take Christian teachings to the Bella Bella; George Tait on the Nass who became a local preacher and one of Rev. A.E. Green's councillors after that mission was first established. "It was while working here that [Pierce] became convinced that [his] life work was to be a missionary among the natives."[24] It is also significant to note that all of these native people were converted to Christianity and mission work by another native person without direct European influence.

In 1877 Pierce began his long career in the missions of British Columbia's north coast as an assistant to Crosby at Fort Simpson. Later that year he embarked on his first solo missionary effort at Port Essington. Pierce was moved around a lot usually asked by Crosby to respond to some "urgent cry" from a native community for a missionary. He went to Alaska for six months, to Lak-al-Zap on the Nass River for two years; he spent 3 months among the Bella Bella, a year among the Bella Coola, then back to the missions to Tsimshians on the Skeena River (Kitseguecla 1886-1893, Kispiox 1895-1909), and briefly aboard the mission-boat "Glad Tidings." He was ordained in 1887, and married a Canadian missionary Miss Hargrave in 1890. Pierce ended his active ministry in Port Essington and retired to Port Rupert. He died in 1948.

It is important to note that Pierce, like many other native mission workers, was often the first Christian teacher into an area. Even before he was ordained, he was responsible for setting up the mission site, organizing the community, teaching, preaching, fundraising for the building of a church and mission house, promoting the building of roads, single-family dwelling, and sometimes industrial enterprises such as the construction of a sawmill or cannery. Euro-Canadian missionaries and ordained ministers were almost always the second wave. Hence understanding the role played by these native missionaries is paramount to comprehending fully the religious encounter between Christian and native beliefs. Thomas Crosby was fond of the phrase, "we left a native worker behind," not always acknowledging the name or the work of the individual. Yet we know how important native translators and local leaders were to the success, and often the physical survival, of the missionaries. In Pierce's autobiography, which he wrote many years after his retirement, he recognized the contributions of native Christian leaders. He was careful to mention them by name. Native people need to be given a more prominent place in the history of

British Columbia's missions.

David Sallosalton

One of the few individual native workers Crosby did mention, particularly in his published works, was a Coast Salish youth named David Sallosalton. Born in 1853, Sallosalton grew to be the ideal native catechist in Crosby's eyes. Crosby devoted considerable attention to him in his autobiographical *Among the An-ko-me-nums* and published a separate booklet exclusively on Sallosalton, a veritable hagiographic biography.[25] Although Crosby is able to convey a sense of Sallosalton's true character in these two works – his unflinching faith, his commitment to Christianity and proselytization, and his flare for oratory – on one level, David Sallosalton represents a native catechist archetype. Sadly, Sallosalton died young at the age of 19 in 1873 of an illness. However, brief as Sallosalton's life was, certain elements of Crosby's "story" of the catechist's life are stock characteristics of how Euro-Canadians portrayed and perhaps viewed their native counterparts. I hope to do similar comparisons with other portrayals of native workers in order to understand more of what function Euro-Canadian missionaries and other officials viewed native peoples performing in mission-work. The central question that must be asked, is what was the Euro-Canadian perspective on native participation in Christianity?

Crosby begins by offering the reader a typical description of the so-called "uncivilized" native lifestyle with careful attention to dress and manners which were especially unusual or considered "barbaric" to Euro-Canadians (for example, head-flattening, shamanism and accusations of cannibalism). Crosby claims that a ten-year-old native boy called Sa-ta-na approached him asking to live with the missionary in order to avoid having to follow "Indian old ways." This is the first characteristic element of the "ideal" native catechist: total rejection of "Indian ways." On his deathbed, surrounded by family members pleading to take him to be healed by a native medicine man or woman, David Sallosalton refused their requests. He remained steadfastly devoted to the ways of Christianity.

For nearly a decade, this baptized native boy, David Sallosalton, travelled with Thomas Crosby and other Methodist missionaries working as translator, exhorter, and then as a class leader. He assisted Rev. Edward White at the Chilliwack revivals preaching with considerable zeal and talent to natives and non-natives alike.[26] Crosby describes Sallosalton's

encounters with a native "witch-doctor" and a Roman Catholic priest, portraying them as confrontational showdowns in which he demonstrates his superior beliefs and unwavering piety.[27] These "showdowns" are stock elements in missionary biographical literature, which suggests that Crosby sees his native assistant as a counterpart rather than an adjunct. In many respects, David Sallosalton represents the "all or nothing" view of religious contact. Religious dualism or syncretism has not been recognized. Religious convergence is seen as the means to "win souls," not mediate belief systems. In many a missionary's eyes, a native was a Christian or a "heathen." The two terms were mutually exclusive. For many native communities, however, quite the opposite seems to have been the case. They had no problem with considering themselves "good Christians" while still upholding much older, and still relevant indigenous beliefs; many continue to do so today.

Prophets and Prophet Movements (from Native cultures to Christianity)

If it is unclear just what role native people were playing in Christianization, it is even more uncertain what contributions were being made by native peoples outside the mission field. Perhaps, the Protestant and evangelical revivals of the late-nineteenth century which missionaries like Thomas Crosby attributed to the appeal of their superior faith, were due in part to the familiarity of the message. It offered power. It offered a way into the "white" world – and some native people had had access to it for a number of years. Native prophets, I will argue, also played an important role in nineteenth-century religious encounters in British Columbia.

According to Anthony Wallace, a leading anthropologist in this field, prophets often arise in societies experiencing disorientation resulting from abnormal levels of stress or deprivation.[28] These prophets promote a revival, renewal and a reworking of traditional or new cultural responses as a means to cope with the crisis. The results have often been labelled as revitalization movements or crisis cults. Responses may be political, social, religious, military, nativistic, apocalyptic or syncretic; or they can be, and often are a combination of several of these. Both secular and religious forms of these movements are common around the world and throughout history.[29] They are one means by which a society innovates its culture and are generally believed by scholars to emerge from basic aspects of human nature.

To describe this more simply: these movements are centred around a prophet who emerges in a society experiencing stress or crisis. This individual usually claims to have died, or at least has physically withdrawn from society for a short period. The prophet claims to have journeyed to the spirit world and received a message from "the Great Spirit." This is quite often put in terms of Christian mythology – a visit to Heaven and Hell, and a message from God. What makes this type of journey distinct from a vision quest or the dreaming of an animal helper, is the nature of vision itself and the action required of it. The message which the prophet brings back is an explanation for all that is wrong in the society, and contains information on how to rectify the cause of the breakdown. Followers modify and reject or accept their new society and a new relationship with the supernatural is established.

There exist very few studies specifically on prophet movements in British Columbia. One notable exception is Leslie Spier's, *The Prophet Dance of the Northwest and Its Derivatives: The Source of the Ghost Dance*,[30] which although an older work caught up in the nebulous debate over the pre-contact or post-contact origins of prophet movements, does pay particular attention to the integration of Christian elements into native religion. There are also at least two studies which focus on the prophet dance as it appears in individual native groups: Wayne Suttle's study on the prophet dance among the Coast Salish, and Robin Ridington's continuing interest in Dunne-za (Beaver) prophets.[31] With these exceptions, almost all of the research on British Columbia prophet movements is centred around the Plateau culture area or stems from an interest in American-based movements. This is rather ironic, as many sources on British Columbia during the nineteenth century are littered with references to prophet movements. Most frequently they are mentioned as curiosities often associated with conversion to Christianity. Usually the debate over the origins of such movements tries to determine whether the phenomena was pre-contact or post-contact. From early on, scholars have chosen to write about prophets in British Columbia from an interest in similar movements in the American Northwest or the ghost dance(s) of the 1890s. Spier's study on the prophet dance, various works on the Smohalla cult (a prophet movement along the Columbia River circa 1870s with decidedly nativistic, anti-white features), and several monographs on the origins of the Shaker church (an institutionalized prophet movement originating in the southern Puget sound region in the 1880s), fall into this category. The

influence of these movements often extended into British Columbia, and were sometimes very long-lasting. The belief in prophets and the use of prophecy continues today in many native communities. Although prophets played many different roles and may be interpreted in a variety of ways, one model useful to my examination is to view prophets as one of two religious mediators.[32]

Bini, the Prophet

One example for which there is some information concerns a mid-century prophet known as Bini.[33] As with many nineteenth-century prophets, documentary references to Bini are usually brief and few and far between.[34] Most are derived from oral sources collected by ethnographers early in the twentieth century. There is some mention of this individual by missionaries as well, in particular, Roman Catholic Oblate father, Adrien Gabriel Morice.[35] Many narratives of Bini differ, even contradict one another. However, there are a number of commonalties. Bini is usually identified as being a Carrier (now known as Wet'suwet'en) from the Bulkley River area. During the nineteenth century, Bini taught a syncretic form of religion, which he claimed to have learned after having died and visited heaven. All versions indicate that it was before the introduction of Christian missions into the colony although several accounts insist that Bini lived to see the coming of the white missionaries.[36] Regardless of when Bini was actually around, it is clear that this prophet movement had considerable influence among a wide variety of native groups. In other words, oral history adds credence to the existence of this cross-cultural prophet movement.[37]

Common elements in versions of the Bini narrative include his death and subsequent resurrection, an ascent to heaven and a meeting with a strange people dressed in white who resembled ghosts known as the Sky people. Upon his revival, Bini is said to have acted differently and spoke a strange language, which had to be interpreted by an assistant who is sometimes identified as his nephew. Bini travelled widely among many native groups, preaching what the Sky people had taught him using many obvious Christian elements: the sign of the cross, special songs and dances, use of a wooden cross, forms of baptism, confession, the concept of penance and the "Five Commandments." In many versions, miracles are attributed to him and almost all refer to confrontations with native

shamans. He predicted the coming of the "Sky people" who were said to dwell in the east and the south. Bini also anticipated the arrival of European trade goods, horses, disease and newcomers who would also teach this new religion.

Many scholars who study Bini and similar prophet movements which obviously combine native and Christian elements are preoccupied with just "where" the prophet might have learned Christian ideas. It is very likely Bini knew of Europeans and their goods through native trading networks. Did Bini encounter pious fur traders or Christianized Iroquois coureur-de-bois? Did he have contact with missionized native groups, or perhaps with the Russian missionaries who had been in Alaska since the late-eighteenth century? Others dismiss the historical validity of these types of prophets entirely by suggesting that they are biased by hindsight because they were told by informants only after extensive Christianization. They project present realities into the past. This argument claims prophet traditions act as a sort of reverse myth.[38] Myths usually make sense of the present by relating it to the past. Prophecy, on the other hand, anchors the present in the future. When a society where usual modes of explaining the present situation are being challenged people often look to the future as a means of coping. But because the future is unknown, prophets are seldom taken seriously by historians. Diamond Jenness, for example, summarily dismisses the historical value of oral traditions about prophets, saying:

> The Indians of the British Columbia coast and hinterland . . . have so interwoven fact and fancy in their legends that, unless we can confirm them from other sources, we cannot trust them even for the events of the early-nineteenth century. The many conflicting accounts given of Bini's career strikingly illustrate this 'romanticism' in traditional lore."[39]

He calls for comparison with written texts, such as Morice's account, and with other oral versions. Ultimately he concludes the "discrepancies and impossibilities in these biographies of the same reformer . . . show how little we can rely on Carrier traditions for reconstructing their earlier history."[40]

I would agree with this assessment only so far as to recognize that oral traditions cannot be sifted for "facts," or indeed, handled as if they were written documentary evidence. Nonetheless, it is very significant that

native informants told versions of the Bini prophet which always closely connected him to Christianity or some kind of syncretic melding of native and Christian beliefs. It suggests that native groups have never viewed themselves as passive recipients of Christianity. It also suggests that native peoples rarely accepted Christianity as an "all or nothing" proposition.

On the one hand, native catechists, operating within the framework of missions and the institutional structure of the church, were the religious mediators facilitating conversion yet acting as the go-betweens for the two cultures. Prophets, on the other hand, were "power-brokers." They appropriated ideas. They incorporated and adapted teachings. They fit obvious Christian elements into a native spiritual context. Most writers view these types of prophet movements as a "readjustment" of native spirituality caused by the encounter with Christianity, an erosion of the former native relationship with the supernatural, and blending of two belief systems. However, I suggest we should also interpret this phenomenon, particularly in the local context, as a religious encounter which saw Christianity conforming to native religion. At times, it was the European religion which experienced the "adjustment" and "erosion."

New Religious Identities: Translations of Christianity and Discourse of Religions

It is obvious that labels like "traditional" native religion or Christianity do not get at the heart of the dynamics of religious encounters in nineteenth-century British Columbia. Religious change, both native and non-native, and the points of contact between the different belief systems sparked creative processes. In conclusion, I will briefly summarize the main points made in this paper: firstly, native people were not passive recipients of Christianity. They should be included in church historiography as active participants. We must continue to find ways to portray church history in a native cultural context, and to find alternatives to missionary biography which so often allots the secondary position in missionization. Secondly, natives had an important role in mission work. They were preachers, mediators, innovators, power brokers and opposers. Many played a vital role in spreading Christianity. Their histories are not only worth telling, but we *need* to know more about their contributions to understand fully the nature of religious interaction in nineteenth-century British Columbia. And thirdly, we have to remember that Christianity was

accepted on native terms. British Columbia's native peoples made their own choices; they had their own agendas. Some borrowed ideas, some used Christian teachings according to their own needs, some adapted European religion and placed it within a native cultural context. Others rejected and resisted Christianity entirely. And many accepted it whole heartily. Acceptance, however, did not necessarily mean replacing older, indigenous beliefs. Nineteenth-century religious encounters in British Columbia were more than merely the meeting of the shaman and the missionary.

Endnotes

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2. The nature of religious native-white relations seems to be evoking a renewed interest among Canadian scholars. As I have already suggested, these encounters have often been addressed rather narrowly. The most common approaches are missionary biographies (see, for example, Jean Usher, *William Duncan of Metlakatla: A Victorian Missionary in BC* [Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1974]; David Mulhall, *Will to Power: The Missionary Career of Father Morice* [Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986]; Clarence Bolt, *Thomas Crosby and the Tsimshian: Small Shoes for Feet Too Large* [Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1992]), histories of a single church or denomination in a particular region (for example, Margaret Whitehead, *The Cariboo Mission: A History of the Oblates* [Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1981]; Frank A. Peake, *The Anglican Church in British Columbia* [Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1959]; Palmer Patterson III, *Mission on the Nass: The Evangelization of the Nishga (1860-1887)* (Waterloo: Eulachon Press, 1982]), and ethnographic studies of the decline of traditional native religion within a single tribe or culture group (for example, Diamond Jenness, *The Faith of a Coast Salish Indian* [Victoria: BC Provincial Museum, 1955]; Robin Ridington, *Swan People: A Study of the Dunne-za Prophet Dance* [Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1978]; John James Collins, *Native American Religions: A Geographical Survey* [Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991]). For the most part, this religious interaction has also remained apart from mainstream Canadian religious or church history, in the same way native history is often regarded as separate from Canadian historiography. Recently, however, new approaches have begun to yield fuller and more inclusive interpretations of these encounters. It is

encouraging, as anthropologist John Barker has noted how "scholars have . . . [now] begun to study mission influences on native settlement patterns, religious ideas, gender, feasts, religious movements, and land claims" (John Barker, "Bibliography of Missionary Activities and Religious Change in Northwest Coast Societies," *Northwest Anthropological Research Notes* 22, No. 1 [Spring 1988]: 13).

3. Terence Turner, "Ethno-Ethnohistory: Myth and History in Native South American Representations of Contact with Western Society," in *Rethinking History and Myth: South American Perspectives on the Past*, ed. Jonathan D. Hill (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 240-241.

4. Laurence C. Thompson and M. Dale Kinkade, "Languages," in *Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 7, Northwest Coast*, ed. Wayne Suttles (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1990), 30-51; Marlita A. Reddy, ed., *Statistical Record of Native North Americans* (Detroit: Gale Research Inc., 1993).

5. Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 62.

6. However, as much as Grant describes the "taming" of native beliefs, he is also careful to examine native participation in this process.

7. Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1977).

8. Robin Fisher, "Missions of the Indians of British Columbia," in *Early Indian Village Churches: Wooden Frontier Architecture in British Columbia*, eds., John Veilette and Gary White (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1977), 3.

9. Wilson Duff, *The Indian History of British Columbia, Vol. 1, The Impact of the White Man*, Anthropology in British Columbia, Memoir No. 5 (Victoria: Provincial Museum of British Columbia, 1977), 87. The Department of Indian Affairs census of 1900 which reported of the nearly 25,000 estimated natives in British Columbia, 19,504 were called Christian. Only 2,696 remained "pagan," while 2,900 were of unknown religious affiliation (Department of Indian Affairs, Annual Report [1900], cited by Fisher, "Missions of the Indians in British Columbia," 10).

10. Few seem to have drawn on this larger context for studies on British Columbia missions, whereas the literature on native North American prophet movements draws heavily on an international and multi-disciplinary literature.

11. Greg Dening, "Priests and Prophets," chapter in *Islands and Beaches: Discourse on a Silent Land, Marquesas 1774-1880* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1980); Jonathan D. Hill, ed., *Rethinking History and Myth: Indigenous Perspectives on the Past* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988); John Barker, ed., *Christianity in Oceania: Ethnographic Perspectives* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1990); Geoffrey White, *Identity Through History: Living Stories in A Solomon Island Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge U Press, 1991); Jean and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa*, Vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Robert W. Hefner, ed., *Conversion to Christianity: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Transformation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

12. Citing Antonio R. Gualtieri, "Indigenization of Christianity and Syncretism among the Indians and Inuit of the Western Arctic," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 12, No. 1 (1980): 57, as paraphrased in Sergei Kan, "Russian Orthodox Brotherhoods Among the Tlingit: Missionary Goals and Native Response," *Ethnohistory* 32, No. 3 (1985): 196.

13. Bolt, *Thomas Crosby and the Tsimshian*. See my review of Bolt in *The Graduate* (UBC) XVII, No. 4 (April 1993).

14. Jean-Guy Goulet, "Religious Dualism Among Athapaskan Catholics," *Canadian Journal of Anthropology* 3, No. 1 (Fall 1982): 1-18; and Antonio R. Gualtieri, "Indigenization of Christianity and Syncretism Among Indians and Inuit of the Western Arctic," 47-57.

15. Perhaps it has just been my choice of books. In his introduction to *Christianity in Oceania*, John Barker suggests quite the opposite for South Pacific studies: "several anthropologists have called for studies of 'missionization' in recent years and some have published innovative ethnohistorical studies of conversion in a number of societies. But few have attempted ethnographic appraisals of Christianity as it is currently experienced and practised in Pacific societies" (1).

16. Several scholars (Bruce Trigger, James Axtell, Francis Jennings) have promoted the use of ethnohistory in the study of native-white relations. Much of the discussion on ethnohistory appears in the journal by the same name.

17. Goulet argues "that two religious systems, one aboriginal, the other Christian, are generally socially available and meaningful to aboriginals" ("Religious Dualism Among Athapaskan Catholics," 1-18). However, much of his research (as is the case with similar explorations by anthropologists) is based on ethnographic descriptions and a cultural analysis of events experienced by

living Athapaskans where clarification and uncovering of religious expression or belief may be made directly with the individuals involved. I will attempt a similar inquiry from written documents, which poses a particular problem since most are derived from the "outsider" perspective alone.

18. The work of James Axtell and Robert F. Berkhofer Jr. writing about missions in the eastern United States come to mind, although a few ordained native Canadian missionaries have received biographical attention: e.g., Katherine Pettipas, ed., *Diary of the Reverend Henry Budd, 1870-1875* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Record Society, 1974); Donald B. Smith, *Sacred Feathers – The Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby) and the Mississauga Indians* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987). For an examination of how native individuals differed in their approaches and attitudes towards mission-work see Nora Jaffary, "'The labours of native missionaries': Peter Jones, Allan Salt, Peter Jacobs, and George Copway – Methodist Missionaries in Nineteenth-Century Ontario," unpublished paper, University of Toronto, 1993.

19. Hilary Eileen Rumley, "Reactions to Contact and Colonization: An Interpretation of Religious and Social Change Among Indians of British Columbia," M.A. Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1973; Clarence Bolt, "The Conversion of the Post Simpson Tsimshian: Indian Control or Missionary Manipulation?" *BC Studies* 57 (Spring 1983): 38-56; Andrew Rettig, "A Nativistic Movement at Metlakatla," *BC Studies* 46 (Summer 1980): 28-39; Oliver R. Howard, "Fire in the Belly: A Brief Introduction to a few of the Methodist Men and Women who presented the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Natives of British Columbia," *Papers of the Canadian Methodist Historical Society* 8 (1990): 223-243.

20. In her thesis on the mission work of the Church Missionary Society at Red River, historian Winona Stevenson explored the contributions of native catechists in Western Canada. Her conclusions suggest avenues of possible inquiry for the British Columbia region. For example, the CMS at Red River was driven to utilize native workers for practical financial considerations than a desire to develop a native ministry. She also found that missionaries of Metis or "country-born" heritage were more likely to be posted as assistants to Euro-Canadian missionaries, whereas "Indian catechists" were often sent alone to establish a mission station in the field. Could similar observations be made about British Columbia's missionization? My ongoing research aims, in part, to address the inadequate recognition of these native catechists in church historiography (see Winona L. Stevenson, "The Church Missionary Society Red River Mission and the Emergence of a Native Ministry 1820-1860, with a Case Study of Charles Pratt of Touchwood Hill," M.A. Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1988; Winona L. Stevenson, "'Our

Man in the Field': The Status and Role of a CMS Native Catechist in Rupert's Land," *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society* 33 [April 1991]: 65-78).

21. For good discussions of how Venn's policies were utilized by missionaries to natives in Canada, see David A. Nock, "Wilson, Venn, and the Church Missionary Society: A Policy of Cultural Synthesis," in *A Victorian Missionary and Canadian Indian Policy: Cultural Synthesis vs. Cultural Replacement* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, for the Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion, 1988), 33-66; and Jean Usher, "Apostles and Aborigines: The Social Theory of the Church Missionary Society," *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 7 (April 1971): 28-52.

22. Crosby is probably the best known of the Methodist missionaries of the B.C. region. Crosby worked extensively among the Coast Salish in the 1860s before moving to the North Coast in 1874 where he served until his retirement in 1897.

23. William Henry Pierce, *From Potlatch to Pulpit: Being the Autobiography of the Rev. William Henry Pierce, Native Missionary to the Indian Tribes of the Northwest Coast of British Columbia*, ed., Rev. J.P. Hicks (Vancouver: Vancouver Bindery Ltd., 1933), 8. For brief biographical sketches of Pierce (and other native missionaries) see Howard, "Fire in the Belly," 229-230.

24. Pierce, *From Potlatch to Pulpit*, 16.

25. Thomas Crosby, *David Sallosalton* (Toronto: William Briggs, n.d.); Thomas Crosby, *Among the An-ko-me-nums or Flathead Tribes of Indians of the Pacific Coast* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1907), 209-223.

26. Crosby includes a brief account of Sallosalton's sermon and audience reaction in *Among the An-ko-me-nums*, 210-213.

27. Crosby, *Among the An-ko-me-nums*, 215-217.

28. Anthony Wallace, "Revitalization Movements" *American Anthropologist* LVIII (1956); abridged version in William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, eds., *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*, 4th ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), 422.

29. In the course of my review of the historiography on revitalization movements many questions about the importance of notions of time and culture, and the significance of contact itself illuminated the differences in how anthropologists, historians and ethnohistorians handle the topic. Anthropologists (certainly the most prolific writers on revitalization movements) emphasize the form and process of prophesy, i.e., narrative structures or the now dated

concept of acculturation. Historians are more attentive to the specific circumstances, i.e., the historical context out of which these movements arise. Ethnohistorians, combining ethnological and historical sources and methods to explain change in native cultures, have contributed new perspectives on prophesy. Similarly, recent research by sociologists and work being done with folklore analysis, oral history and on prophets/witches in other cultures (e.g., Africa, Melanesia) serves to further our understanding of this phenomenon.

30. Leslie Spier, *The Prophet Dance of the Northwest and Its Derivatives: The Source of the Ghost Dance* (Menasha, WI: George Banta Publishing, 1935).

31. Wayne Suttles, "The Plateau Prophet Dance among the Coast Salish," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 13, No. 4 (Winter 1957): 352-396; Robin Ridington, *The Swan People: A Study of the Dunne-za Prophet Dance* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1978), along with more recent works, *Trail to Heaven: Knowledge and Narrative in a Northern Native Community* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1988), and *Little Bit Know Something: Stories in a Language of Anthropology* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1990).

32. I want to make it very clear that my interpretation of prophets as connected to the religious encounters between Christian missionaries and native spirituality is only *one* among many. Prophets played, and continue to play, many different roles, and I by no means intend my perspective to be all inclusive. Rather, the view of prophets as one of two religious mediators is exclusive; it is a model useful to my research and not intended to be universal or definitive.

33. Also called Beni, Beeney, Peni, the Bulkley River Prophet or the Carrier Prophet.

34. Marius Barbeau, *Indian Days in the Canadian Rockies* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1923), 17-58; Spier, *The Prophet Dance of the Northwest*, 62-631; Diamond Jenness, *The Carrier Indians of the Bulkley River: Their Social and Religious Life*, Anthropological Paper No. 25 from the Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 133 (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1943), 547-559; Jay Miller, "Tsimshian Religion in Historical Perspective: Shamans, Prophets and Christ," in *The Tsimshian and Their Neighbours of the North Pacific Coast*, eds., Jay Miller and Carol M. Eastman (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 137-147.

35. A.G. Morice, *The History of the Northern Interior of British Columbia* (Smithers, BC: Interior Stationary Ltd., 1978), 239-240.

36. It is unclear exactly when during the nineteenth century this took place because Bini had a number of disciples and imitators who took his name. Some suggest Bini gained influence around 1800, although between the 1820s to the 1840s seems most likely. Several accounts pinpoint his final death in the 1870s.

37. Bini was known as far north as Haines Alaska, as far south as Vancouver Island, and as far east as the plains over the Rockies (Barbeau, *Indian Days*, 42; and Jay Miller, “Tsimshian Religion in Historical Perspective,” 142).

38. Percy S. Cohen, “Theories of Myth,” *Man* 4, No. 3 (1969): 351-352.

39. Jenness, *The Carrier Indians of the Bulkley River*, 553.

40. Jenness, *The Carrier Indians of the Bulkey River*, 557.