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Missionaries as Newcomers: A Comparative Study of the Northwest Pacific Coast and Central Australia

Peggy Brock

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Résumé de l'article

L'historiographie considère généralement les missionnaires comme une catégorie spéciale de personnes. Contrairement aux personnes déracinées qui s'exilent vers des pays étrangers, les missionnaires sont vus comme des voyageurs qui, au prix d'importants sacrifices personnels, se consacrent à la propagation de la foi chrétienne. Le présent article avance que malgré leur vocation religieuse, les missionnaires passent par les mêmes processus d'adaptation que les nouveaux arrivants qui migrent vers de nouvelles terres et sociétés. Cet article analyse les réactions de missionnaires dans deux milieux différents : le Nord-Ouest de la côte canadienne du Pacifique et le centre de l'Australie. Il conclut que la nature des adaptations que font les missionnaires n'est pas déterminée par leur personnalité ou les politiques des agences qui les emploient, mais plutôt par la société et le milieu d'accueil. Le discours entourant le travail missionnaire du XIXe siècle se fondait sur le postulat que les missionnaires étaient exceptionnels. Un examen détaillé des modes d'établissement missionnaires dans le Nord-Ouest de la côte du Pacifique et l'Australie centrale révèle que les missionnaires partageaient bien des points communs avec les autres migrants se retrouvant dans un nouveau milieu parmi de nouvelles personnes.

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Missionaries as Newcomers: A Comparative Study of the Northwest Pacific Coast and Central Australia

PEGGY BROCK

Abstract

Missionaries have generally been treated as a special category of person. Unlike other people who have uprooted and moved to alien lands and societies, they are thought to do so at great personal sacrifice enabling them to spread the Christian word. This paper argues that despite their religious calling missionaries went through similar processes of adjustment as other newcomers who migrated to new lands and societies. The paper analyses the responses of missionaries in two contrasting environments: the northwest Pacific coast, and central Australia. It concludes that the nature of the adjustments missionaries made as newcomers were not determined by their personalities or the policies of the agencies that employed them as much as they were influenced by the societies and environments in which they found themselves. The rhetoric that surrounded nineteenth-century missionary work was premised on an assumption that missionaries were exceptional. A detailed examination of missionary responses to the Pacific northwest of Canada and central Australia reveals that missionaries had much in common with other people who found themselves in new circumstances, among new peoples, and in new places.

Résumé

L'historiographie considère généralement les missionnaires comme une catégorie spéciale de personnes. Contrairement aux personnes déracinées qui s'exilent vers des pays étrangers, les missionnaires sont vus comme des voyageurs qui, au prix d'importants sacrifices personnels, se consacrent à la propagation de la foi chrétienne. Le présent article avance que malgré leur vocation religieuse, les missionnaires passent par les mêmes processus d'adaptation que les nouveaux arrivants qui migrent vers de nouvelles terres et sociétés. Cet article analyse les réactions de missionnaires dans deux milieux différents : le Nord-Ouest de la côte canadienne du Pacifique et le centre de l'Australie. Il conclut que la nature des adaptations que font les missionnaires n'est pas déterminée par leur personnalité ou les politiques des agences qui les emploient, mais plutôt par la société et le milieu d'accueil. Le discours

entourant le travail missionnaire du XIXe siècle se fondait sur le postulat que les missionnaires étaient exceptionnels. Un examen détaillé des modes d'établissement missionnaires dans le Nord-Ouest de la côte du Pacifique et l'Australie centrale révèle que les missionnaires partageaient bien des points communs avec les autres migrants se retrouvant dans un nouveau milieu parmi de nouvelles personnes.

Missionaries, especially male missionaries, have generally been treated as a special category of person, whether they are regarded as part of a colonizing project, an arm of the evangelical Christian movement around the world, or as cultural brokers between Indigenous peoples and settler societies. Unlike other people who have uprooted and moved to alien lands and societies, missionaries are regarded as having a special calling to establish themselves among peoples whom they want to change fundamentally. They are thought to do so at great personal sacrifice, leaving extended family and friends, and familiar environments, putting themselves and their wives and children at risk to enable them to spread the Christian word.

This paper compares the archival records of two groups of Protestant missionaries who migrated from their homes in Europe to live and work in distant communities and environments. The first case is Church Missionary Society (CMS) missionaries sent from England to the Pacific northwest of Canada in 1857, including the prominent William Duncan. The second case is the German Lutheran missionaries who ventured into central Australia, particularly Adolph Hermann Kempe, who arrived with a small mission party in 1877 at what became Hermannsburg mission, and Carl and Frieda Strehlow, who revived the mission after a hiatus of several years in 1894. While the missionaries who travelled to the Canadian northwest coast and central Australia were sent by different mission societies, their stated aims were similar: to bring the Christian message to these alien peoples in the Indigenous language. As would be the case for other newcomers, the different circumstances these missionaries encountered influenced their experience of a new place and new peoples.

Rather than focusing on these missionaries' callings, I consider the prosaic processes by which missionaries responded, adapted, or failed to adapt to new settings and challenges. As missionaries they wanted to change the people among whom they settled, yet to survive they themselves had to change and adapt both to the communities and the physical environments in which they found themselves. Like many people who leave their homes in response to political or economic troubles, in search of new opportunities, or both, missionaries relocated in an effort to improve and alter their individual circumstances. In her study of over 300 missionaries who went to Papua, Diane Langmore found that their calling was an avenue for upward social mobility.

Many came from poorly educated farming, artisan, or lower-middle class backgrounds (some Anglicans were the exception).[1] They came from religious families, few experiencing the cataclysmic conversion experience frequently portrayed in the Victorian literature on missions. They wanted new opportunities and were attracted by the romanticized reports from missionaries in exotic places.[2] Mission work offered training to some (depending on the Christian denomination), status in their home communities (although not necessarily in the settler societies into which they migrated), and authority over others. Many missionaries did not survive the first few years of adjustment and trauma, either returning home or moving to work within the settler society in the region to which they had migrated. Others adjusted to their new circumstances and became long-term residents in their adopted communities.

Most of the literature on missionaries, needless to say, considers their role as proselytizers and agents of change, rather than individuals who uprooted to make a new life in a foreign land. Feminist historians have gone against this trend in studies of female missionaries and missionary wives. Pat Grimshaw's ground breaking study, *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth Century Hawaii*, was one of the first. Myra Rutherdale and Jan Hare and Jean Barman produced two recent Canadian-based studies of women in the mission field.[3] These women in the mission field tended to write more openly than did male missionaries about their hopes and fears, their nostalgia for home, their hankering for familiar foods, clothes, and household items. They had to face the uncertainties of pregnancy and childbirth without family support, as well as bringing up their children in what they often regarded as dangerous moral and physical environments.[4] Male missionaries reported on their work and the progress they were making, or the hardships which impeded progress, rather than their personal trials and tribulations.[5]

1 Diane Langmore, *Missionary Lives: Papua, 1874–1914* Papua Islands, Monograph Series No. 6 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989), 30.

2 Ibid., 33–4, 37; Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 188, 191.

3 Myra Rutherdale, *Women and the White Man's God: Gender and Race in the Canadian Mission Field* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002); Jan Hare and Jean Barman, *Good Intentions Gone Awry: Emma Crosby and the Methodist Mission on the Northwest Coast* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006); Patricia Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth Century Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989). Also see Hilary Carey, "Companions in the Wilderness? Missionary Wives in Colonial Australia, 1788–1900," *Journal of Religious History* 19, no. 2 (1995).

4 Patricia Grimshaw, "'Christian Woman, Pious Wife, Faithful Mother, Devoted Missionary': Conflicts in the roles of American Missionary women in nineteenth-century Hawaii," *Feminist Studies* 9 no. 3 (1983): 489–521.

5 Langmore, *Missionary Lives*.

Apart from private diaries, the writings of male and female missionaries were produced for an audience at home, whether it was a mission society, a wider public, or family. This readership knew little of the environments in which foreign missions were located, and tended to regard distant places as exotic and uncivilized. Communications from these far-flung stations tended to reinforce this impression as missionaries wrote of making the exotic familiar with their own houses, furniture, gardens, and food. Even where they acknowledged that they were adapting to local circumstances, it was on their terms to further their goals of Christianizing and civilizing the Indigenous people among whom they lived. Missionaries who made too many compromises with the local people, or adapted to their environment by adopting local customs, were distrusted.[6] A veneer of civilization had to be maintained or it was feared they would "go native," as did George Vason, one of the first missionaries sent to the Pacific by the London Missionary Society on the *Duff*. Vason was shipped to Tonga with nine other men in 1797. He became the guest of a high ranking chief and quickly learned the language, and within a few months was living with a Tongan woman, succumbing to local custom, rather than bringing the Indigenous people to Christianity.[7]

In her study of missionary women, Rutherdale compares their writings with the travel writings of nineteenth-century women, an understandable comparison as there is a rich literature on travel writing; but, as she points out, missionaries had to come to terms with their settings and to reflect on the way Aboriginal peoples lived.[8] We might, then, think of missionaries as a particular kind of newcomer. Missionaries shared much in common with other people who moved great distances for considerable periods of time. They were not travelling through to a further destination, but establishing themselves in a foreign place on a long term, if not permanent basis. Considering mission personnel as newcomers rather than travellers, sojourners, or people with a vocation which puts them on a different plane from other mortals, enables us to focus on their adaptations or lack of them to their new environment, rather than their attempts to change that environment. To be sure, this approach goes counter to the way missionaries perceived and presented themselves to the outside world. A comparative approach helps to highlight how missionaries in very different geographic and cultural settings responded in different but equally ordinary ways to the challenges they faced.

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6 Jeffrey Cox, *The British Missionary Enterprise Since 1700* (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), 84.

7 I.C. Campbell, *"Gone native" in Polynesia: Captivity Narratives and Experiences from the South Pacific* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998) 47–8.

8 Rutherdale, *Women and the White Man's God*, 79.

In some respects, the German Lutheran missionaries and the CMS missionaries this paper examines shared similar backgrounds. The class backgrounds of both the German and English male missionaries conform to those in Langmore's study of Papuan missionaries. CMS missionary William Duncan was an illegitimate child who through hard work and self-improvement became a clerk and travelling salesman before training as a missionary. He did not maintain close links with his family even before he left England for British Columbia.[9] A.H. Kempe was the son of a coal miner, who started his working life in the mines before escaping to become an apprentice joiner. He found his religious calling as a young man which drew him to the Hermannsburg Mission House where he trained as a missionary.[10] Carl Strehlow was the seventh son of a Brandenburg school teacher and, thus, better educated than Duncan and Kempe, but had little opportunity to advance himself in provincial Germany.[11]

For all this similarity the Lutheran and Anglican missionaries encountered very different physical environments, Indigenous societies, and colonial governments in the mission field. The northwest coast of Canada has a high rainfall, heavily vegetated with rivers and a coastline abundant with fish and land animals. The coastal region is mountainous and densely vegetated. The rich food resources sustained relatively large populations concentrated in several winter villages on the coast and along riverbanks. Newcomers first came to the coast as fur traders. It was over half a century before the first missionary arrived and formal colonial control was imposed on these competitive, hierarchically organized societies. In contrast, central Australia is arid and flat with a low and erratic rainfall. The riverbeds are dry most years. The Arrernte people of the region moved about in small family groups occasionally coming together for trade, social interactions, and ceremonial activities. They were a mobile people with no permanent houses or villages who had to move over large areas in search of food. Missionaries were among the first permanent newcomer residents on Arrernte land, on their heels followed the pastoralists and police representing the colonial state.

Given these differences, it is no surprise that the German Lutheran and CMS missionaries had very different first meetings with the societies they sought to convert. Duncan chose to start his work at the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) trading post at Fort Simpson, just south of the Alaskan border, a coastal

9 Jean Usher, *William Duncan of Metlakatla: A Victorian Missionary of British Columbia* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, National Museum of Man Publications in History, 5, 1974), viii, 3–4; Peter Murray, *The Devil and Mr Duncan: A History of the Two Metlakatlas* (Victoria, B.C.: Sono Nis Press, 1985), 18.

10 A.H. Kempe, *From Joiner's Bench to Pulpit*, ed. P.A. Scherer (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1973), 7–8.

11 Barry Hill, *Broken Song: T.G.H. Strehlow and Aboriginal Possession* (Milson's Point, NSW: Knopf), 58.

region heavily populated by several thousand people despite high death rates from epidemics of smallpox and other introduced diseases. Fort Simpson was the focus of a lively trade in pelts for the European and Chinese markets. While Duncan was the first missionary to settle on the northern coast, he was not the first newcomer on the coast where the fur trade had thrived for over half a century. He travelled by ship from England and after an uncomfortable voyage arrived in the township of Victoria where he remained for three months, lodging with the Rev. Edward Cridge, who was to become a loyal friend. His entry into colonial society was easy. He had influential friends and ready entrée into the local hierarchy right up to the governor. When he finally reached his destination at Fort Simpson, he was welcomed into the HBC Fort by William McNeill, the chief trader, and was accommodated and fed free of charge. While Duncan found his outward journey uncomfortable and proceeded north against the advice of Governor James Douglas, who warned him of high levels of violence at Fort Simpson, his travels from his homeland to his destination were trouble-free compared to those of the first Lutheran missionaries to central Australia.

Kempe, with fellow graduate W.F. Schwarz of the Hermannsburg theological college, were designated to go to Australia to set up a new mission. They quickly sought out wives and after becoming engaged they left their fiancées, embarking on a ship at Hamburg for London in July 1875. They arrived in Adelaide, South Australia the following September. A month later they set out from the Barossa Valley in southern South Australia on a cross-country journey that would take them 20 months. This journey was a severe test for anyone. The two missionaries were accompanied by several laymen, including a shepherd and a wagon driver. They travelled in a heavy German horse-drawn wagon filled with food supplies for the party and their four horses. Along the route they acquired nearly 5,000 sheep, 37 horses, and 20 cattle for the mission site. Shortage of food and water due to drought slowed them down, eventually forcing them to stop for over ten months at Dalhousie Springs, until heavy rains generated enough feed for the livestock, which enabled the party to continue on its way. They arrived at the site designated by the South Australian government as a mission reserve in June 1877. Kempe and Schwarz had spent two years travelling from Hermannsburg in Germany to Hermannsburg in central Australia. When they arrived at their destination they immediately set about building sheep yards and a fowl shed to protect the stock from the wild dingoes, before they could start building shelters for themselves and put a roof over their heads for the first time since leaving the Barossa Valley.[12] Kempe's and Schwarz's fiancées soon followed them in the company of a third missionary couple, the Schulzes.

12 Kempe, 9–12; E. Leske, ed., *Hermannsburg: A Vision and a Mission* (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1986), 9–13.

In a memoir written as an old man, Kempe recalled his arrival in central Australia:

> The native people among whom we were to work left us in peace for the time being. So books, pen and paper could also have a spell …. We made use of axe, saw and hammer.[13]

While the missionaries knew the Arrernte people lived in the region, none were at first visible. Rather than leaving the missionaries in peace, they avoided them, no doubt observing them from afar. There were no villages which could be approached by the newcomers, who determined they needed to build a settlement and then attract people to it. Duncan, on the other hand, lived in a fortified structure, separated from the local Tsimshian by a high palisade fence. The HBC carefully regulated contact between Tsimshian and the inhabitants of the fort who were vastly outnumbered. A trade in alcohol and firearms helped create a volatile situation. For the first few years at Fort Simpson Duncan lived in an enclave of Europeans, Metis, Sandwich Islanders (Hawaiians), and the Native partners of some of these men.

Duncan's first months on the northwest coast were governed by fear and trepidation, not only because of the high levels of violence, but because the Tsimshian and their neighbours had customs which he found abhorrent and frightening, "I confess the sight of cluster after cluster of these half naked and painted savages round their fires was to my unaccustomed eyes very alarming. But the reception I met with everywhere was really wonderful & encouraging."[14] Here Duncan rather uncharacteristically acknowledges that his uneasiness was caused by his lack of familiarity and understanding of the people, rather than perceived their savagery and uncivilized ways. In the first weeks and months at Fort Simpson, Duncan observed the Tsimshian in their own milieu at a distance, while receiving deputations, who both welcomed and appraised him, trying to ascertain what he might do for them: would he pay them to send their children to school or could he heal the sick or provide them with medicine? Some tried to ingratiate themselves with letters of recommendation from HBC officials, presumably hopeful that Duncan might offer trading opportunities.[15] Duncan's responses to these approaches were, not surprisingly, naïve and uninformed as he tried to convey his true purpose to uncomprehending locals whose

13 Kempe, 12.

14 University of British Columbia Library (hereafter UBCL), William Duncan Diary (hereafter WDD), microform, 14 January 1858. This apprehension was felt by many missionaries, including David Livingstone. See Andrew Porter, *Religion versus Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion*, 1700–1914 (Manchester: Manchester University Press), 163.

15 UCBL, WDD, 16 October, 10 November, and 17 November 1857.

experience of newcomers had not gone much beyond trade. He was shaken by the rapid escalation of violence which he did not understand. A few days after his arrival a man was killed by the gates of the Fort:

> The particulars of the foul deed are as follows. The head chief was the murderer being irritated by some other chiefs while partly intoxicated he vented his rage upon the first stranger that came in his way & after shooting him, ordered two of his men to finish the horrible deed. Their victim was a Queen Charlotte Islander [Haida] — …. The murderer in order to extenuate his crime gave out that a Queen Charlotte Islander of the same tribe as the murdered man, had shot a brother of his about ten years ago.[16]

Duncan was also affronted by the winter ceremonies of the Tsimshian which he glimpsed from his safe haven, particularly the "secret society" ceremonies which acted out cannibalistic and dog-eating rituals.[17]

Duncan arrived on the coast with the arrogant conviction that the Tsimshian and their neighbours were morally and culturally inferior, and that he would have to challenge and change them. He assumed that the Tsimshian shared these characteristics with all people who were not European and Christian. Nevertheless, the first task he set for himself was to learn Sm'algyax, the Tsimshian language. As he gained confidence both in his knowledge of Sm'algyax and his ability to cope with the alien environment and people, he felt he had to assert his values and ways against theirs. The best known of these encounters was an incident that occurred soon after Duncan opened his school outside the fort walls in November 1858. It was recounted many times in nineteenth century and in more recent accounts of Duncan.[18] The head chief of the Tsimshian, Ligeex, asked Duncan to close down the school for a month during the ceremonial season, and, particularly, during the ceremony in which Ligeex's daughter was initiated into a Tsimshian secret society. The 27 year old Duncan refused. The tensions escalated. Ligeex stormed into Duncan's classroom berating all present. In spite of Duncan's representation of Ligeex as drunk, furious, and out of control, Ligeex was still willing to compromise asking Duncan to

16 Ibid., 7 October 1857.

17 Murray, *The Devil and Mr. Duncan*, 43–4.

18 Eugene Stock, *Metlakahtla and the North Pacific Mission of the Church Missionary Society*, 2nd ed. (London: Church Missionary Society, 1881), 28; George T.B. Davis, *Metlakatla: A True Narrative of the Red Man* (Chicago: The Ram's Horn Company, 1904), 38–9; Henry S. Wellcome, *The Story of Metlakahtla*, 2nd ed. (New York: Saxon and Co., 1887), 13; John W. Arctander, *The Apostle of Alaska: The Story of William Duncan of Metlakahtla* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1909), 133–4. Recent accounts include Murray, 48, and Susan Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing: Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 96.

close the school for four days, after which he and his people would attend the school. But again Duncan would not comply.[19]

The following year as the ceremonial season was about to begin a slightly older and wiser Duncan decided to close his school, "By going on I should only widen the breach already made between me & the Medicine parties."[20] Two years among the Tsimshian had modified Duncan's prejudices and, while he was still deeply disturbed by many of their activities and beliefs, he was able to communicate with them as intelligent equals. He realized that as they were not antagonistic towards him, he should not be towards them: "[T]hey must not or cannot cast off at once *their* customs & adopt *mine*, but they will leave mine to spread amongst them. They use the word *spread* to express the idea."[21] In spite of frequent loneliness and depression, Duncan had learned much from his sojourn on the coast: "I can truely [sic] say that these two past years have been fraught with good for my soul. They have not been the happiest years of my life, but they have been the richest to my Spiritual interests."[22]

By 1862, Duncan was deep in discussion with the Tsimshian over his plans to establish a mission at a new location, where Duncan would have more control and Tsimshian Christians would not be subject to the taunts and pressures from their non-Christian kin. The Tsimshian advised him to establish a mission at the village sites they had inhabited before they moved to Fort Simpson. Duncan only felt confident to make the move once he had garnered support from the community. There are many other examples in Duncan's diary of his acceptance of and adaptation to Tsimshian ways. At the first Christian marriage ceremony of a Tsimshian couple over which Duncan officiated, he was delighted to find the family had refashioned their feasting to a Christian ritual. The house was decorated with evergreens and a feast set out for 50 high status guests. They ate rice, molasses, and berries and drank tea. Through the celebrations Duncan, who was taken by surprise by the festivities, "was busy thinking over the speech I should make as I saw it would be a good opportunity." He knew by now that the Tsimshian valued strong speeches and a declamatory style, and seized the opportunity to adapt his proselytizing to their standards.

Three years after Duncan's arrival on the northwest coast, the CMS sent the Rev. and Mrs. Lewen Tugwell, to assist him.[23] In contrast to Duncan, this couple never adapted to the wet environment or the people of the region. As work began on the Metlakatla site, the Tugwells retired to their tent to shelter

19 UBCL, WDD, 20 November 1858.
20 Ibid., 21 November 1859.
21 Ibid., 20 November 1859.
22 Ibid.
23 Murray, *The Devil and Mr. Duncan*, 61.

from the persistent rain.[24] In July 1861, Tugwell baptized the first Tsimshian Christians at Fort Simpson, but by October he and his wife were on their way back to England.[25] They were replaced by a much more robust lay missionary, an Irishman, Robert Cunningham. He proved to be an inappropriate choice for a missionary, but a very successful immigrant on the northwest coast. He had the underprivileged upbringing of many missionaries, but not the commitment to spiritual fulfilment. He was followed by a missionary from a much more privileged background, Robert Doolan. While Cunningham had lost a few teeth as a prize fighter Doolan was a Cambridge graduate.[26] Soon after arriving at Metlakatla, Cunningham established a relationship with a Tsimshian woman, Elizabeth Ryan. During Duncan's absence from the mission Doolan married them. But marriage did not prevent Cunningham from having many other liaisons with Tsimshian women. Duncan deeply disapproved of his activities and Cunningham left the mission for a job with the HBC, later going into competition with the HBC as a trader and storeowner, expanding his business operations to canneries as fishing became industrialized on the coast.

A couple of weeks after he arrived at Metlakatla, Doolan was sent to the Nass River with Cunningham to set up a mission among the Nisga'a.[27] In spite of this abrupt introduction to missionary work Doolan lived among the Nisga'a in an existing Nisga'a village hosted by a Nisga'a chief. In 1867, he was joined by another CMS missionary Robert Tomlinson and together they established a new mission village at the mouth of the Nass River. Doolan returned to England later that year, while Tomlinson remained in British Columbia for the rest of his life. The CMS missionaries who followed Duncan to the northwest coast had many difficulties to overcome, but they also had Duncan's experience and knowledge to build on.

Kempe, Schwarz, and their party were faced with different challenges from Duncan. Beyond their shared goal of imparting the Christian gospel to the heathen, their experiences as newcomer missionaries had little in common with the Yorkshireman's. From the moment they arrived in central Australia the Lutherans had to establish a working sheep station (ranch), not only to help support the mission financially, but also to provide food for their community and the people they hoped to attract to it. Kempe, Schwarz, and subsequent missionaries, including Carl Strehlow, had no experience of farming in Germany, let alone maintaining stock in the hot, arid interior of Australia. They did have the assistance of laymen with experience farming in more temperate southern Australia, but, ultimately, the German-born and bred missionaries

24 Ibid., 64.

25 Ibid., 67.

26 Ibid., 79.

27 E. Palmer Patterson, "Nishga Perceptions of their First resident Missionary, the Reverend R.R.A. Doolan, 1864–67," *Anthropologica* 30 (1988): 121; Murray, 91.

were responsible for the running of the station. While Duncan had around 2,000 people just beyond the palisade from his living quarters in the fort, during the winter months before they dispersed to their fishing grounds, the Lutherans did not have a single Arrernte visitor until late August 1877, almost three months after they arrived. At first, only men ventured near the mission. It would be many more months before the missionaries prevailed on people to stop at the tiny settlement. It was, therefore, impossible to observe, let alone evangelize the Arrernte.

The first Arrernte to come by the mission settlement were awed by the permanent buildings, the largest structures they had ever encountered, the missionaries' clothing and their cloven-hoofed animals.[28] For the first few years the Arrernte passed through the mission for short visits, leaving the Lutherans to battle the elements rather than familiarizing themselves with the culture of the people they hoped to influence. They were not confronted with Arrernte ceremonies, as Duncan had been by Tsimshian rituals, as they occurred away from the mission.

Kempe tried to persuade the first male visitors to help him learn the Arrernte language. He recalled:

> But no one can really imagine how difficult it is in the initial stages to reach the point where it is possible to proclaim even the basic truths of Christianity to the heathen — and this especially in view of the fact that no white people had ever been there before us and that we often had to drag every single word out of them. To this must be added the disinclination on the part of these folk to converse with us or to answer our questions.[29]

While Duncan struggled with Sm'algyax his situation was easier than Kempe's. He was able to find teachers with a smattering of English who were used to communicating with outsiders in the trade jargon, Chinook.[30] Kempe needed to acquire the Arrernte language for basic communication purposes. He had a sounder background in language acquisition than Duncan as the training of pastors at Hermannsburg was steeped in philology.[31] In 1880, the Lutherans built a school room-cum-church which did not cause the ruptures Duncan's school

28 "Moses Tjalkabota" in *From Mission to Church. 1877–2002 Finke River Mission*, P.A. Albrecht (Adelaide: Finke River Mission, 2002), Appendix 2. Tjalkabota dictated this account to the missionary F.W. Albrecht when he was an old man.

29 Kempe, 13.

30 UBCL, WDD, February 1858, "Language."

31 Kempe later wrote a 50-page Arrernte grammar and dictionary which was revised and extended by Carl Strehlow. H. Kempe, "A Grammar and Vocabulary of the Language Spoken by the Aborigines of the Macdonnel Ranges, South Australia," read to the Royal Society of South Australia, 2 December 1890.

building at Fort Simpson had.[32] Nevertheless, the older Arrernte men were deeply unsettled by what took place in the building.[33]

Unlike Duncan who remained single all his life, the Lutheran missionaries had wives, and soon children. Despite their family environment, the isolation and loneliness of the mission site took its toll. Unfortunately, there are no day-by-day accounts of the hardships encountered over this period or the missionaries' responses. We do, however, know the outcome, which was the abandonment of the mission station in the early 1890s. In the late 1880s, a typhoid epidemic struck both Arrernte and mission personnel. Several members of Kempe's family became sick and one of his sons died. Then Kempe himself became ill, as did missionary Schulze and his son.[34]

Duncan not only survived a smallpox epidemic in British Columbia in 1862, but benefited from it as it drove many Tsimshian from Fort Simpson to Duncan's newly established mission at Metlakatla. For the Lutherans the typhoid epidemic was the last straw. Their attempts to grow vegetables and fruit were stymied by droughts, the summer heat, or the winter night frosts. They could not live off the land, and could not make the land produce the foods with which they were familiar. The trip south took many months, so their only contact with their own countrymen was by post which was irregular and slow. They had no medical assistance and if the supplies from the south were delayed they faced possible starvation.

The Schwarz family was the first to leave Hermannsburg in 1889. They were followed by the Schulzes in 1891. At the end of that year Kempe's wife, Dorothea, died after giving birth to their fifth child. He left the baby with a lay missionary, C.H. Eggers and his wife, and, hardly able to walk himself, made the arduous journey south with his other children. The Eggers family were the last of this generation of Lutherans to leave Hermannsburg in 1893.[35] While these German missionaries were defeated by the Australian interior, they remained in Australia as pastors to congregations in the south of the country. In 1894, the Australian-based Immanuel Synod took over the running of the mission and called Carl Strehlow as missionary. Strehlow was a graduate of the Lutheran seminary at Neuendettelsau in Germany. On arrival in Australia in 1892, he had been sent to Killalpaninna as assistant missionary, an even drier, though marginally less remote and isolated, mission south of Hermannsburg, which had been established in 1867.

32 Leske, 15–6, 19.

33 "Moses Tjalkabota," 258.

34 Kempe, *From Joiner's Bench*, 18. The Schulzes arrived at Hermannsburg in 1880 from Germany accompanying Kempe's and Schwarz's fiancées.

35 Leske, 20–1.

Strehlow had to rebuild the dilapidated Hermannsburg station. He was soon joined by another missionary Johann Bogner and his wife Marie. In mid-1895, Strehlow went to Adelaide to meet his German fiancée Frieda and bring her back to Hermannsburg.[36] Surviving correspondence, particularly from the two women, gives a vivid account of the hardships with which they had to contend.[37] The women's letters were addressed to the wife of pastor G.A. Rechner, the chairman of the Mission Committee (later the Finke River Mission Board) in Adelaide, a woman they hardly knew, but who was their only lifeline to the Lutheran community in the south on whom they depended for supplies and sympathy. Both Frieda Strehlow and Marie Bogner survived numerous pregnancies while suffering a range of health problems due to the heat, diet, and isolation.

Their letters reiterate the same concerns over and over. The heat, which in summer could reach 111 Fahrenheit (44 Celsius) in the shade, the wind storms, the health of their families, the gardens in which they attempted to grow familiar vegetables, and their requests for cloth, toys, and other goods to be sent to them from Adelaide. Lack of familiar foods was a major preoccupation. Frieda Strehlow missed potatoes, apples, pork (pigs would not survive the hot, dry conditions), herring, and "butterbrot" (bread and butter with sausage, cheese, pickled cucumbers, etc.). She and Marie Bogner gave reports on their gardens where they attempted to grow vegetables, such as cabbages, cauliflower, cucumbers, turnips, and watermelons. They also kept fowls for eggs to vary their diet of beef. But too often the droughts defeated their enterprise and the vegetables and poultry died.[38] Supplies from Adelaide were sporadic and unpredictable. In February 1898, Frieda wrote that they were out of provisions. She was feeding her baby on gruel. She did not have any shoes for him so he could not walk outside. The beef from their own stock was so dry she could not obtain enough fat to make candles or soap. All she had left was a stump of a candle and half a bottle of petroleum. She wondered what she would burn when that ran out.[39] Never do these women consider using indigenous products or asking the Arrernte to show them how to find or process their foods. They never mention kangaroo meat or any of the other animals on which the Arrernte traditionally relied. Some of their illnesses were due to poor nutrition, such as mouth ulcers and even scurvy.[40] Arrernte women helped Frieda and Marie with their domestic duties and looked after their children, but they kept a social distance

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36 Ibid., 24.

37 Hermannsburg correspondence, Lutheran Archives, Adelaide, South Australia (hereafter LA).

38 Ibid., Frieda Strehlow to Frau Pastor Rechner, 10 July 1897, 26 February 1898, 14 April 1898, 3 September1898; Marie Bogner to Frau Pastor Rechner, 10 June 1898, 30 October 1898. These letters were written in German. See also Hill, 66–7.

39 Ibid., Frieda Strehlow to Frau Pastor Rechner, 26 February 1898.

40 Leske, 17.

from them.[41] Frieda Strehlow lived at Hermannsburg for 27 years, but her world did not extend beyond the mission station on which she lived and laboured, nor into the world of the Arrernte among whom she lived.

The Strehlow's distance from both the Arrernte and the Australian settler society is illustrated by their visit to Germany in 1910, where they left all their children except the youngest, Theodor, to be educated and boarded with relatives.[42] Not only did Strehlow want to ensure his children did not grow up among the Arrernte, but neither did he trust the educational system in Adelaide. Strehlow, who died in 1922 of dropsy while trying to seek medical treatment in the south, never saw his five oldest children again. His wife was not able to return to Germany for 20 years by which time her children were adults.[43] While Strehlow was a much more successful missionary than Kempe, he never seemed to be reconciled to his adopted home land in contrast to the first generation of Hermannsburg missionaries. His intellectual life and his family life remained in Germany. It is likely that had he survived, he and his wife would have returned to Germany with their youngest son.

Carl Strehlow was a gifted linguist who compiled an Arrernte dictionary, building on Kempe's work, and who wrote a school primer and translated many hymns and parts of the Old Testament into Arrernte.[44] He strongly disapproved of Arrernte culture and beliefs, yet assiduously studied them, writing a seven-volume account of the Arrernte, *Die Aranda- und Loritja-Stämme in Zentral-Australien*, published between 1907 and 1920 in Germany.[45] Despite living among the Arrernte he kept his social distance, gaining his knowledge by sitting down with the old men in his house and learning from them, rather than participating in or observing ceremonies.[46] Strehlow was an uncompromising immigrant who lived in Australia, dealt with the government and other author-

41 Hill, 65–6.

42 Ibid., 69. Theodor, known as T.G.H. Strehlow, stayed in Australia. When his father died in 1922, mother and son went south to Adelaide. T.G.H. Strehlow became a renowned scholar of the Arrernte language and culture.

43 Ibid.

44 "Carl Strehlow," *Australian Dictionary of Biography* online <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A120138b.htm?hilite=strehlow>, (viewed 3 April 2009).

45 Carl Strehlow, *Die Aranda-und Loritja-Stämme in Zentral-Australien* (Frankfurt: Städtisches Völker-Museum, 1907–1920). To this day there is no published English translation of this mammoth work. Also see Anna Kenny, "From missionary to frontier scholar: an introduction to Carl Strehlow's masterpiece, *Die Aranda-and Loritja-Stämme in Zentral-Australien* (1901–1909)" (Ph.D. diss., Sydney University, 2008).

46 Strehlow's methodology has been strongly criticized, particularly in the controversy which arose over his work and that of Baldwin Spencer. Spencer witnessed Arrernte ceremonies, but he did not understand the language. Christine Stevens, *White Man's Dreaming: Killalpaninna Mission 1866–1915* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994), 220, 225; T.G.H. Strehlow, *Central Australian Religion: Personal Monototemism in Polytotemic Community* (Bedford Park, SA: Australian Association for the Study of Religions, 1978), 7–10.

ities, but whose intellectual life continued to be grounded in Germany where his ethnological work was published and he sent Aboriginal artefacts to museums. He worked among the Arrernte, learned their language, studied their religious life at arms' length, and kept most of his family safe from their influence. However, his youngest son, who lived at Hermannsburg until the age of 14, inherited his father's interest in philology and ethnology. His childhood knowledge of the Arrernte language formed the basis of his lifelong study of Arrernte culture.[47]

While Duncan had to contend with high levels of violence among the Tsimshian, Haida, Nisga'a, and Tlinget, the central Australian missionaries soon found themselves embroiled in settler violence towards Aborigines. Within a couple of years of the establishment of Hermannsburg mission, it was surrounded by cattle stations. Kempe and Schwarz quickly became aware of attacks against Aborigines by the pastoralists, their employees, and the police as Arrernte and neighbouring peoples sought refuge from the violence on the mission. Schwarz spoke publicly about the violence while on a visit to Adelaide, which resulted in an investigation of Hermannsburg, rather than an inquiry into the violence perpetrated against Aborigines.[48] Two Lutheran members of the South Australian parliament successfully lobbied the government to broaden the investigation enabling the church to be represented. But the German Lutheran missionaries did not have the same political clout as William Duncan had in his early days in British Columbia.[49] They straddled three milieus: the German Lutheran society from which they came, the Anglo-Australian settler society, and the Arrernte. They continued to be marginal to settler society because they were missionaries and seen as a threat to the interests of the pastoralists, and because they were German.

The Lutheran missionaries in central Australia, while geographically isolated, always had a small mission community about them. They had their wives, children, and colleagues. This situation could be a mixed blessing as over the years there were tensions between mission personnel, which sometimes made working relationships unsustainable. On the whole, however, they supported each other and worked together. The women also relied heavily on each other for company and support. As with the Lutheran community in southern Australia, particularly in the Barossa Valley where German continued to be the first language for generations, the Hermannsburg missionaries remained German immigrants in Anglo-Australia. They spoke German to each other, held their own church services in German, and wrote their reports to the mission board in German (reports to the government were written in English). The

47 See Hill for a biography of T.G.H. Strehlow.

48 Kempe, *From Joiner's Bench*, 15–16.

49 Usher, 42, 54.

women hankered after German foods and festivities. None of this is surprising as all the women and most of the men had travelled directly from Germany to their posting in central Australia. They had never interacted with the wider Australian settler society. For the years they were on the mission, they had more contact with the Arrernte than they did with Anglo-Australians. The men had to deal with Australian government officials, local police, and pastoralists; but the women had very little contact with the world outside the mission.

William Duncan's situation was a contrast in so many ways. He was not as geographically isolated as the Lutherans. He lived in an established trading post for the first four years on the northwest coast. He was unmarried. He had the company of other newcomers who provided him with food and shelter. His physical conditions were much more comfortable than those at Hermannsburg. His isolation was an existential loneliness. None of the people around him shared his moral universe or empathized with his aims. In his diary, he revealed his frequent sense of depression and feelings of inadequacy.[50] On Christmas Eve 1858, he wrote:

> Here I am alone. They are dancing in the hall of the Fort & outside occasionally I hear the Indians roaring out their heathen songs. All is darkness around & at present I have a sad sense of dense darkness within. Blessed Jesus help me & send down Thy Holy Spirit to enlighten us all.[51]

However, Duncan was part of the main colonial society. He had the support of the governor, the HBC, and the established church of the colony. He disapproved of the trade in alcohol associated with the fur trade; but the trading post ensured he had a pool of possible converts. He was not competing with fur traders for labour or land as the Hermannsburg missionaries were with pastoralists. When Duncan left the trading post to set up his own mission community, he had to do it in cooperation with the Tsimshian which required compromises with their hierarchical system of chiefs. The Lutherans ignored the Arrernte kinship networks and worked assiduously at disrupting the authority of the elders who were the most resistant to the introduction of Christianity. With the support of the Tsimshian, Duncan ran successful business enterprises entering the fur trade, building a sawmill, and later a cannery all of which depended not only on Tsimshian labour but also on business contacts in Victoria.

The Lutherans in central Australia were never able to establish a self-supporting community. Their attempts to run a profitable pastoral station were defeated by the terrain and weather and, maybe, by their own ineptitude and

50 WDD, 30 November 1858, 18 June 1859, 24 November 1859.
51 Ibid., 24 December 1858.

inexperience. They were always dependent on funds from the mission society and the government to sustain them. As Arrernte settled at the mission station, they lost their ability to sustain themselves and became dependent mendicants in contrast to the Tsimshian who continued to be economically independent, either working on their own behalf or in the industries that Duncan established. Through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the missionaries at Hermannsburg remained an inward looking, unassimilated community, which made few compromises with the Arrernte and did not have the opportunity or the interest to assimilate into the wider Australian society. The difficult conditions and isolation of Hermannsburg reinforced their inclinations to rely on each other rather than participate in the colonial society.

If the British Anglican missionaries in Canada's north coast and the German Lutheran missionaries to central Australia each faced the prosaic challenges of relocation, what accounts for the very different trajectories their mission work took? During his first years on the northwest coast, Duncan faced the existential terrors of loneliness and lack of understanding and sympathy from those around him. The Lutherans had families and fellow missionaries to support them, their loneliness was the loneliness of distance — distance from their homeland in Germany and the knowledge they were weeks and even months away from assistance and supplies. Duncan was surrounded by people, including the 2,000 Tsimshian and other aboriginal fur traders outside the HBC palisade fence. Kempe, Schwarz, and their companions felt they had arrived in an empty land. Duncan feared the violence of the dense masses of people attracted to the trading post. In central Australia the fear was that the Arrernte would avoid the mission station and ignore the missionaries. However, once the Arrernte began visiting the station, the missionaries were able to impose certain conditions of behaviour in exchange for food. In the long term the Lutherans made fewer compromises with the Arrernte, than Duncan and the other Anglican and Methodist missionaries made with the Tsimshian and Nisga'a.

William Duncan did not travel to British Columbia with a more open mind than Kempe or Carl Strehlow when they embarked on their long distance journeys, but he encountered a very different Indigenous society and colonial situation among the Tsimshian than the Lutherans did at Hermannsburg. Duncan could not live among the Tsimshian without making compromises, acknowledging their political and social hierarchy, the pattern of their ceremonial life, the food they ate and the furs they traded. He learnt early on that confrontation with those who held power among the Tsimshian was counter-productive in certain circumstances, while in others, such as dealing with drunkenness and the alcohol trade, it could be effective. He lived his life from the age of 27 among the Tsimshian, alienated from his English family and with no family of his own in North America. The Tsimshian followed him because he imposed his will in a manner they tolerated and he became a strong advocate for them.

The first and second generation of German Lutherans in central Australia had to establish themselves in a deeply alien environment where material and political support was months away. Their compromises were with the environment rather than the Aboriginal people to whom they could not adapt, even had they been willing to do so. They never considered an itinerant mission, and when people came on the mission they did it on the missionaries' terms, although they could not force the Arrernte to stay. While Duncan supported the Tsimshian food production system, the Lutherans disrupted the Arrernte system by offering them food rations and encouraging them to settle in one place where it was difficult for them to maintain themselves by their own resources. The Germans, who had barely made contact with Anglo-Australia before travelling to the interior, remained a largely unassimilated group even after they left Hermannsburg. The first generation of missionaries, including Kempe, Schwarz, and Schulze, became pastors to Lutheran communities in South Australia. Carl Strehlow died prematurely in his mission job. His widow worked as a matron at a Lutheran boarding school before returning to Germany and the five children she had left there.[52]

Comparing these two cases reveals something significant about the nature of missionary work. However convinced of their duty to convert those they regarded as heathen, missionaries did not live in a religious bubble which protected them from the prosaic challenges of daily life, including those produced by relocating to new places. While the CMS missionaries to the northwest of Canada and the German Lutheran missionaries to central Australia were similar, the way they went about achieving those goals depended on local circumstances, to which they had to adjust and adapt. The character and success of these adjustments were determined less by missionary personalities or church policy and more by environmental factors, the colonial situation, and the nature of the Indigenous communities among whom they lived. The experiences of missionaries that followed in their paths confirm this reality. The responses of missionaries who followed Duncan to the northwest pacific coast were similar to Duncan's, whether they were Anglicans or Methodists. Thomas Crosby, the Methodist missionary who in 1874 filled the vacuum at Fort Simpson created by Duncan's move to Metlakatla, had to make similar compromises to Duncan. The Tsimshian wanted a missionary who would assist them to modernize, and Crosby obliged. The Anglicans who followed Duncan to the coast used Metlakatla as a model for the missions they established on the Nass River among the Nisga'a and later on the Skeena River. They used Duncan's example because it worked.[53]

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52 Hill, *Broken Song*, 101, 116–18.

53 E. Palmer Patterson, *Mission on the Nass: The Evangelisation of the Nishga 1860–90* (Waterloo, Ont.: Eulachon Press, 1982); William Henry Collison, *In the Wake of the War Canoe*, ed. Charles Lilliard (Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1981); Thomas Crosby, *Up and Down the North Pacific Coast by Canoe and Mission Ship* (Toronto: The Missionary Society of the

The missionaries who ventured into central Australia after 20 months of drought-disrupted overland travel were confronted by a dry, hot, sparsely populated land to which they brought cattle, sheep, and horses which disturbed Arrernte food gathering activities. While Duncan had to acclimatize to almost perpetual rain, the Lutherans found there was rarely enough and the Finke River by which they established their mission was usually dry. Duncan did not need to import food to survive. The HBC staff had established gardens to grow basic vegetables, and fish, game, and berries were plentiful. Maintaining his day-to-day existence was not a concern for Duncan. The missionaries in central Australia faced the real danger of nutritional deficiencies and occasionally starvation when their gardens failed and their stock died. In these circumstances, they felt responsible not only for their own survival but the survival of the Arrernte and neighbouring peoples.

Like many people who moved great distances, these missionaries were confronted by unfamiliar conditions and had to make rapid adjustments to survive both physically and psychologically. Some, such as the first wave of Lutheran missionaries at Hermannsburg, were unable or unwilling to make the changes necessary to adapt to their new and difficult circumstances. The Tugwells, who joined Duncan in the early 1860s, quickly returned to Britain. Most, however, overcame their initial dread and misery to establish a lasting commitment to their new homes. The nature, scale, and success of the adjustments missionaries made were not determined by missionary personalities or the policies of the agencies that employed them as much as they were influenced by the societies and environments in which they found themselves. The rhetoric that surrounded nineteenth-century missionary work presumed that missionaries were exceptional and extraordinary. A detailed examination of missionary responses to the Pacific northwest of Canada and central Australia reveals the very opposite: whatever their differences, missionaries had much in common with other people who found themselves in new circumstances, among new peoples, and in new places.

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PEGGY BROCK is Professor of Colonial and Indigenous History at Edith Cowan University in Perth, Western Australia. She has written extensively on the interactions between Indigenous peoples and missionaries, including the edited book, *Indigenous Peoples and Religious Change* (Brill, 2005). Most recently she has written a book on the Tsimshian in British Columbia, *The Many Voyages of Arthur Wellington Clah: Encounters with Colonialism on the Northwest Pacific Coast* (forthcoming).

Methodist Church, 1914); Murray, *The Devil and Mr. Duncan*; Clarence Bolt, *Thomas Crosby and the Tsimshian: Small Shoes for Feet too Large* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1992); and Neylan, *The Heavens*.

PEGGY BROCK est professeure d'histoire coloniale et aborigène à l'Université Edith-Cowan de Perth, en Australie-Occidentale. Elle a beaucoup écrit sur les interactions entre les peuples aborigènes et les missionnaires, entre autres un livre en codirection intitulé *Indigenous Peoples and Religious Change* (Brill, 2005). Plus récemment, elle a écrit un ouvrage sur les Tsimshian de Colombie-Britannique, *The Many Voyages of Arthur Wellington Clah: Encounters with Colonialism on the Northwest Pacific Coast* (à paraître).