Books for the Instruction of the Nations: Shared Methodist Print Culture in Upper Canada and the Mid-Atlantic States, 1789-1851

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Faculty of Information
Collaborative Program in Book History and Print Culture
University of Toronto

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Abstract

Recent historians who have written about the development of Methodist religious identity in Upper Canada have based their narratives primarily on readings of documents concerned with ecclesiastical polity and colonial politics. This study attempts to complicate these narratives by examining the way religious identity in the province was affected by the cultural production and distribution of books as denominational status objects in a wider North American market before the middle of the nineteenth century. The first chapter examines the rhetorical strategies the Methodist Book Concern developed to protect its domestic market in the United States from the products of competitors by equating patronage with denominational identity. The remaining chapters unfold the influence a protracted consumption of such cultural commodities had on the religious identity of Methodists living in Upper Canada. For more than a decade after the War of 1812, the Methodist Book Concern relied on a corps of Methodist preachers to distribute its commodities north of the border. This
denominational infrastructure conferred the accidental but strategic advantage of concealing the extent of the Concern’s market and its rhetoric from the colony’s increasingly anti-American elite. The Concern’s access to its Upper Canadian market became compromised, however, when Egerton Ryerson initiated a debate over religious equality in the province’s emergent public sphere in the mid-1820s. This inadvertently drew attention to Methodist textual practices in the province that led to later efforts on the part of Upper Canadians to sever the Concern’s access to its market north of the border. When these attempts failed, Canadian Methodists found ways to decouple the material and cultural dimensions of the Concern’s products in order to continue patronizing the Concern without compromising recent gains achieved by strategically refashioning themselves as loyal Wesleyans within the colony’s conservative political environment. The result was the emergence of a stable and enduring transnational market for Methodist printed commodities that both blunted the cultural influence of British Wesleyans and prepared the ground for a later secularization of Methodist publishing into and beyond the middle decades of the nineteenth century.
Acknowledgments

In many ways this part of the dissertation is the most difficult to write. Not because I am reluctant to recognize the many people without whom I could not have continued to progress along this perilous path, but because I know that whatever words I put down on these few pages will inevitably fall far short of fully describing, and therefore suitably acknowledging, their generosity and support.

I could not have imagined a wiser or more generous academic advisor than Patricia Fleming. It was she who first directed me to the Methodists as an eminently practicable object for historical inquiry in view of the habit they acquired from John Wesley for keeping long and detailed records. In addition to giving me my subject, Professor Fleming struck precisely the right balance between encouraging me to construct my own narrative, and gently steering me away from several dangerous research shoals. Though balancing a million other commitments, including bringing the monumental History of the Book in Canada to successful completion, the careful and thorough attention she brought to my work never once faltered.

The final shape of this study also owes much to the intellectually rigorous comments made by Lynne Howarth and Jeannine DeLombard along the way. Though representing divergent disciplinary perspectives, they both helped me to sharpen my theoretical field of analysis while turning out the clearest and most substantial narrative I could. I am also particularly grateful to Alan Galey and Bertrum MacDonald for the insightful suggestions they contributed at the final oral defence. Their comments both strengthened my confidence in the value of this work, and helped me to understand ways its intellectual reach could be further extended.

I owe a special debt of thanks to the staff of the former United Church/Victoria University Archives, especially its former director Sharon Larade and her assistants Julia Holland and Alex Thomson. I very much regret that future researchers will no longer have the privilege of poring over the United Church’s unique documentary heritage while sitting at the oak tables and under the vaulted ceiling of the Victoria
College reading room. I am also grateful to staff at the United Methodist Archives at Drew University for all their assistance while I was working with the papers of Nathan Bangs.

Scholarship is a type of conversation, and I found that links to a vital research community were essential for sustaining my enthusiasm. I am especially grateful to several colleagues in the collaborative program in Book History and Print Culture, as well as at York University, who helped buoy me up on a steady stream of good cheer including Andrea Trevor, Greta Golick, Von Totanes, Janet Friskney, Rob van der Bliek, Catherine Davidson, Janet Webber, and Renate Wickens. I am also deeply indebted to Cynthia Archer and the Joint Committee on Educational Leaves at York University. Without their support in the form of several course releases over a period of four years, this dissertation would have become an unimaginably more protracted affair. Finally, I would like to acknowledge Leslie Howsam for the steadfast interest she took in my work almost from the beginning, and for all the doors she helped to open along the way.

But there is one person who has seen this project in a way that no other could, who has supported it in a way that no other could, and whose tireless generosity ultimately sustained it to the final moments of completion. Widowed countless times as I sequestered myself behind a wall of books and archival photocopies, burdened with reading every word I committed to paper (and there were many more than now remain), and wakened numerous times in the middle of the night when I bolted out of bed to capture a new and fragile idea on paper, my wife Maura has been an unyielding pillar of strength. Her emotional and intellectual contributions to my work surpassed all my expectations. Perhaps to her unspoken horror, I suspect she now knows more about Methodism and Methodist print culture in Upper Canada than all but a tiny handful of specialist scholars. Dedication of that order cannot be recompensed. It can only be recognized. This dissertation is for her.
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### List of Abbreviations

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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| CA           | *Christian Advocate*. NY: Methodist Book Concern, 1826-1827  
*Christian Advocate and Journal*. NY: Methodist Book Concern, 1827-1828  
*Christian Advocate and Journal and Zion’s Herald*. NY: Methodist Book Concern, 1828-1833  
*Christian Advocate and Journal*. NY: Methodist Book Concern, 1833 - |
| CHC          | *Case and His Cotemporaries, or, the Canadian Itinerants’ Memorial by John Carroll*. Toronto: Methodist Conference Office, 1867-1877. 5 vols. |
| CG           | *Christian Guardian*. Toronto: Guardian Office, 1829 - |
| JGC          | *Journals of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*,  
*Journals of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*,  
*Journals of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*,  
| MAC          | *Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Wesleyan-Methodist Church in Canada*, from 1824-1845. Toronto: Anson Green, 1846. |
| MM           | *Methodist Magazine*. New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1818 - |
| MSC          | *Minutes of Several Conversations between the Rev. Mr. Wesley, and others*. London: G. Paramore, 1791 |
| UCA          | United Church Archives, Canada |
Introduction

"A book may derive prestige from the imprint of one publisher, and be quite discredited by the imprint of another house in the same street."

Leopold Wagner, *How to Publish* London, 1898.¹

When the New York Methodist Book Concern burned to the ground in 1836 the loss was so great that it nearly devastated the city’s insurance companies. Although the stock and buildings were valued at some $340,000, less than a tenth of that amount was recovered through formal indemnity.² The rest had to be made up by individual Methodist subscriptions that began pouring in from around the United States and Canada. Financial losses were quickly recovered, new buildings completed by November 1839, and in less than one decade from the date of the original calamity, the value of the Book Concern had climbed to an impressive $750,000.³ The extraordinary willingness of Methodists to contribute such large sums of money, even in the wake of massive financial losses associated with the Panic of 1837, can be partly accounted for by rhetorical strategies John Dickins began to develop shortly after the Concern’s establishment in 1789.⁴

¹ Quoted by Peter McDonald in *British Literary Culture and Publishing Practice, 1880-1914* (11).

² The problems the Methodist Book Concern encountered with New York’s insurance companies were exacerbated by the massive losses associated with a fire that occurred on Ann Street nearly two months earlier. See infra 84-9.

³ Richard Carwardine’s chapter “Trauma in Methodism: Property, Church Schism, and Sectional Polarization in Antebellum America” in Mark Noll’s 2002 *God and Mammon: Protestants, Money, and the Market, 1790-1860* is the only substantial scholarly treatment the fire of 1836 and its implications for Methodist polity and material culture.

⁴ Other religious publishers did not fare nearly as well. In his history of the American Bible Society, for example, Peter Wosh notes, “The Panic of 1837 ushered in the most serious depression in American history, and contributions to philanthropic causes declined dramatically. Between 1836 and 1837 the amount the [American Bible] Society collected for foreign distribution decreased from $13,789.19 to $6,205.09. The following year was worse, and later ABS work in the Near East was characterized by diminishing resources and increasing financial restraints” (172). For more on the deleterious impact of the Panic on the ABS see also 49, 56, and 124.
potential customers in two paragraphs that occupied almost as much space as the items on offer, that proceeds derived from the sale of books were directed entirely back into the larger work of the Methodist Episcopal Church. “As the Profits of these Books are for the general Benefit of the Methodist Societies,” he implored, “it is humbly recommended to the Members of the said Societies, that they will purchase no Books which we publish, of any other person than the aforesaid John Dickins, or the Methodist Ministers and Preachers in the several Circuits, or such Persons as sell them by their Consent.” With this adjuration, Dickins signaled to his potential customers that the Methodist Book Concern was not like other publishers and the books he offered were not like other commodities. By representing the business as an integral part of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Dickins tied the Concern’s welfare to the welfare of the wider Church. And by postulating a connection between his readers’ economic choices and their religious identities, he effectively argued that the purchase of his commodities constituted much more than a commercial transaction. By the time Dickins’s successors lost copyright control over their best-selling hymnal in the 1830s, these rhetorical strategies had become so effective for insulating the Concern’s denominational market from the products of its competitors that the annulment of formal legal protections did little to hinder the pace at which the business continued to expand through the middle decades of the nineteenth century.

The Concern was also conspicuously successful in its efforts to open a market for its commodities in parts of British North America. While serving as editor of the Christian Advocate in the early 1830s, Timothy Merritt published an impassioned call urging his subscribers to increase radically their financial support of the Methodist Episcopal Church’s Publishing Fund so that “Bibles, tracts, and religious books for the instruction of the nations” might pour forth from the Concern’s presses in ever greater profusion for use “at home, as well as in foreign lands” (“The Great Duty of the Methodists to Promote Education” CA 5 Apr 1833: 125). Alluding to all those who

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5 See Pilkington 102 for a facsimile of this catalogue.
6 The Christian Advocate published a lengthy summary of the court proceedings that led to this finding in its 8 February 1833 issue. The circumstances around this will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter (infra. 79ff).
7 See Pilkington 193, 213-214 for more on the publishing fund.
“have so long sat in the region of shadow and death,” Merritt attempted to conjure in the minds of his readers the widest possible field for distribution within and beyond the United States, from North American Native peoples and overseas aboriginal groups, to subjects of His Britannic Majesty with whom the majority of his subscribers shared the continent. And just as Merritt expected his readers to accept without question the unstated premise that the mission of the Methodist Book Concern extended beyond the borders of the United States, so too would they have recalled that Upper Canadian Methodism owed its beginnings to the deliberate and sustained efforts of American Methodist preachers who toiled there as early as the last decade of the eighteenth century. These preachers, whose itinerant ministry was unhindered by the province’s lack of infrastructure in the early decades of settlement, also functioned as denominational colporteurs. This allowed the Concern to open a market for its commodities years ahead of its competitors north of the border—a market that the Concern’s customers in the United States would have been continually reminded of as Upper Canadian preachers reported on their bookselling activities in the Concern’s periodicals, and as the Concern’s agents continued to include in their advertisements and catalogues shipping terms to Upper Canada.

Upper Canada was also an important market for other American publishers. As Fiona Black notes, “By the turn of the nineteenth century, a New York connection was relatively common for Upper and Lower Canadian suppliers of books” (“Importation and Book Availability” 116). Reaction in the province to books and periodicals printed south of the border, however, was distinctly mixed. Many were quite happy to take advantage of the lower prices afforded by American publishers. In 1810, for example, John Beverley Robinson, one of the province’s leading conservatives, remarked in a letter to John Macaulay that, “We have quite a respectable Book-store here from the United States […] I could lay out fifty pounds very much to my satisfaction in it.” (Firth

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8 This is in contrast to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick which were never pursued with much vigour by Americans and were happily ceded to British Methodists in 1800—the same year the General Conference adopted a resolution requiring all itinerants to act as colporteurs on behalf of the Methodist Book Concern (JGC 1.45). Lower Canada, a region where Episcopal Methodism always struggled to find a stable foothold, was similarly turned over to the British Wesleyans in 1820 in exchange for Upper Canada (French 34, Grant “Methodist Origins” 45, Little 8).
York 1793-1815 210n47). Twenty years later, Anna Jameson commented casually and without censure on the widespread availability of American reprints of English publications within Upper Canada while remarking on the “pretty libraries” of both Robinson and his conservative mentor John Strachan (1.189). Indeed, Strachan, who was one of British North America’s most outspoken opponents of American influence in the province as well as Methodism’s chief public antagonist, privately owned a ten-volume edition of the complete works of John Wesley that had been printed in Philadelphia and New York between 1826 and 1827. Most of the province’s popular newspaper reading rooms, moreover, regularly boasted of having on hand Canadian, British, as well as American newspapers. The most famous of these, York’s Commercial News Room, offered in 1833 twenty papers from Canada, fifteen from Britain, and fourteen from the United States (McNairn 145-146). On the other hand, John Carroll describes in some detail how his father complained bitterly about the use of American textbooks in Upper Canadian schools in the years following the War of 1812 (My Boy Life 99-100). John Strachan, moreover, despite his willingness to purchase American-printed books, concluded in an 1819 memoir published under his brother’s name James, that the whole system of education in the United States, including “primary school books […] is pervaded with pernicious politics, breathing hatred to the parent state” (Strachan Visit to the Province of Upper Canada 131; Fahey 84n19). Disdain for the use of American books in Upper Canada reached its apogee under renowned Methodist Egerton Ryerson’s term as Chief Superintendent of Education in the 1840s. During this time both American teachers and American textbooks were officially banned from the province. In a Special Report published in June 1847, Ryerson argued that more “evil” arose from the use of “American School Books” than the employment of “American Teachers” because the former were “with very few exceptions, anti-British, in every sense of the word.” Not

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9 In the same letter Robinson also made the typical British North American complaint that the store’s American editions, though comprising the works of “good authors” were of “wretched” manufactured quality. Similarly, as part a more thoroughgoing disparagement of American literary culture, John Howison noted in his 1820 Sketches of Upper Canada that books produced by New York publishers were “printed in an inferior type, and often abound with typographical errors” (328-9). See also infra 248n287. Needless to say, Americans disagreed with these assessments (Gross “Introduction” 27).

10 See W48 TRIS 1-10 in Trinity College’s Strachan Collection at the University of Toronto. Volumes 1-3 bear the imprint of D.&S. Neall and W.S. Stockton of Philadelphia while volumes 4-10 are identified as the products of Methodist publishers J. & J. Harper (after 1835 Harper & Brothers) of New York. The title page is signed by John Strachan and dated 1829.

11 See also Parker Beginnings of the Book Trade 16-7.
incidentally, Ryerson went on to suggest that the ban had been instituted, and would remain in force, on the strength of public opinion: “I believe the public sentiment is against its repeal, and in favour of having the youth of the country taught by our fellow-subjects, as well as out of our own books” (Hodgins Documentary History of Education in Upper Canada 7.107-110).

While it may have been possible for the majority of Upper Canadians, including archconservatives like John Strachan and John Beverley Robinson, to go quietly about reading books that issued from American presses with impunity, the same was not true of the province’s Methodists. Whether they chose to maintain or sever those material print connections, they had much more at stake. The Methodist Book Concern’s rhetoric about faithful patronage and all it signified about religious identity had taught its customers in both the United States and Canada to regard it as something more than just another American publisher. Evidence suggests, moreover, that while the colony’s Methodists were content to accept ecclesiastical independence from American Methodism in 1828, many wished to maintain a common market for printed commodities that furthered Methodism’s goals on the continent as a whole. The Concern, for its part, was prepared to pay Upper Canadians annual dividends in recognition of their continued patronage or, failing that, to establish a program of unparalleled discounts. At the same time, popular suspicion about the presence of anti-British sentiments in American books would have made the maintenance of that material print connection particularly fraught for a people whose denomination had first spread to the province from the United States. That origin had long provided the province’s elite with the warrant they needed to discredit Methodists as anti-British and politically disloyal. Everyone from Isaac Brock and Francis Gore to rank-and-file Orangemen condemned Methodists “as disloyal because of their American origin” (Errington 52, Grant Spires 63-64, McInnis 180, Mills 55, Preston 292, Semple 42 Sheppard 25, Wilton 128). John Strachan added his own flourish to the swirling anti-Methodist rhetoric by adding that Methodism’s “close connections with American Conferences” caused it to be “tainted by religious dissent and republicanism” (Mills 52, Westfall 21-28). In the face of all this criticism, particularly after the War of 1812, Upper

12 See also Clark “School Books” 335-342, Brouillette “Books of Instruction” 259-262.
Canadian Methodists began the difficult but politically expedient work of distancing themselves from their American brethren. Beginning with efforts to recruit native preachers to replace those previously assigned from American circuits, Upper Canadians were set off as a separate conference in 1824 and four years later achieved formal ecclesiastical independence from the American Methodist Episcopal Church. While this trajectory of growing autonomy is relatively easy to trace, the effect that these changes in polity had on the province’s Methodist print culture, and those aspects of Methodist religious identity tied to entrenched textual practices, is far less clear.

Although Methodism began as a benign renewal movement within the Church of England, recent historians of American religion agree that its existence on the western side of the Atlantic was fundamentally altered by the Revolutionary War. As Nathan Hatch, and after him John Wigger, David Hempton, and Dee Andrews, have shown, Methodism not only became independent of its British parent as a result of the conflict, but a natural congruence between the new republic’s political ideology and Methodism’s theology around concepts of egalitarianism and voluntarism, helped it to thrive in an era of disestablishment. Its use of itinerant preachers, moreover, meant that Methodists could establish wilderness outposts years and sometimes decades ahead of the clergy belonging to more established churches. Methodism soon became not only the fastest growing denomination in America, but according to recent historians, the quintessential “American religion.” By the end of the nineteenth century, seventy-five percent of the world’s Methodists lived in the United States, making America the undisputed “powerhouse of world Methodism” (Hempton Empire 4, 188; Andrews 5). Several historians, most notably George Rawlyk and Nancy Christie, have attempted to foreground the relationship between Methodism, Americanism, and

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13 See Nathan Hatch’s influential The Democratization of American Christianity, John Wigger’s Taking Heaven by Storm: Methodism and the Rise of Popular Christianity in America, Dee Andrews’s The Methodists and Revolutionary America, and David Hempton’s Methodism: Empire of the Spirit. Although David Hempton does not dispute that political circumstances in America had much to do with Methodism’s success, he does suggest that attributing ecclesial expansion to any one cause results in oversimplification. He writes, for example, that “parallels are frequently drawn between Methodist Arminianism (a free-choice salvation open to all) and the spread of markets and consumerism. Such explanations, because of their conceptual clarity, are often disproportionately influential” (17).

14 Scholars have noted an interesting contradiction between Methodism’s rigid hierarchical structure and its populist theology: “An egalitarian religious message propagated by an inegalitarian institution” (Hempton 101). That this contradiction did not impede Methodism’s growth is largely credited to the genius of its first bishop in America, Francis Asbury (Andrews 206-207).
republicanism in Upper Canada before the War of 1812. Rawlyk even points out that before 1810 American Methodist preachers met with proportionally more success north of the border than they did south of it (Canada Fire 102). And although the vast majority of these preachers eschewed overt references to politics in their sermons and literature, Christie is in agreement with Nathan Hatch that “there existed an intimate and causal relationship between religious expression and political ideology” and that evangelicalism in particular functioned as a “fulcrum of dissent which antecedent political debate” (“Democratic Rage” 14). It is primarily for this reason that the province’s Church of England clergymen, who understood the implicit connection between church and state in their desire for formal establishment, found the presence of American Methodist preachers in the province, however much they confined their sermons strictly to religious topics, so objectionable. The emphasis that Christie and Rawlyk place on the receptiveness of some Upper Canadians to both the overt religious and implicit political ideologies of Methodism finds agreement in the broader social perspective advanced by Jane Errington in The Lion, the Eagle and Upper Canada. In this book Errington describes a province too eclectic in its ideology to be characterized as uniformly anti-American and anti-democratic, marking an important departure from the dominant historiography established by Sydney F. Wise in the 1960s that had earlier depicted Upper Canada as a monolithic ideological bulwark against the republican, egalitarian, and individualistic values of the United States.

Unlike Rawlyk and Christie, whose narratives do not easily permit the privileging of a developmental view of history, most historians of religion in Upper Canada have tended to view the growth of Methodism and its relationship to other denominations teleologically through a nationalistic lens. Their narratives are largely organized around the inevitable emergence of a distinct form of “Canadian” religion ultimately independent from both American and British roots and influences. Chief

15 See especially Rawlyk’s The Canada Fire: Radical Evangelicalism in British North America, 1775-1812, Christie “In These Times of Democratic Rage and Delusion’: Popular Religion and the Challenge to the Established Order, 1760-1815”, and Adamson’s “God’s Continent Divided”.

16 For an accessible summary of the objections the province’s Church of England clergymen made against Methodists see especially the first chapter of Curtis Fahey’s In His Name: The Anglican Experience in Upper Canada, 1791-1854.

among these is William Westfall’s *Two Worlds: The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth Century Ontario* which looks towards the emergence of a “Protestant consensus” as evangelicalism in the province became increasingly institutionalized and more concerned with social respectability and Anglicanism less insistent on deference and its ties to the state. This movement towards the centre, Westfall argues, provided believers with an institutional and intellectual foundation for the establishment of a distinctly national religious character that partially transcended denominational differences and helped to define Canadian identity (11, 49, 110). Methodism functions as the centerpiece of Westfall’s schema by assuming the role of Canada’s national church even though it was not established by law (52). ¹⁸ John Webster Grant’s study *A Profusion of Spires: Religion in Nineteenth-Century Ontario*, though more transatlantic in its bearing, follows much the same trajectory by tracing the eclecticism of religious practices in the early province to arguing that religion in Ontario eventually achieved a distinctly nationalistic character. Even Neil Semple’s magisterial 1996 history of Methodism in Canada, *The Lord’s Dominion: The History of Canadian Methodism*, anticipates, as its title suggests, the eventual emergence of a nationally hegemonic form of Methodism that would heavily influence both national polity and national culture from its base in central Canada. ¹⁹

This dominant historiographical trend has begun to show signs of weakening in the last several years. Two of the most recent studies of Methodism in Canada pointedly eschew a teleological approach in favour of J. A. Pocock’s influential school of “new” British history that urges scholars to view the British metropolis and its colonial possessions as a single analytic field. Focusing their narratives on religious developments in Upper and Lower Canada respectively, Todd Webb and Jack Little describe the rising importance of British influences in general, and the role of British

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¹⁸ Citing Westfall, Christopher Adamson similarly observes, “By 1841 the social and religious attitudes of Strachan and Ryerson, a political priest and a political parson, had begun to converge; and their general willingness to modify the direction of their respective missions helped to stabilize the emerging institutional structure of the province” (446).

¹⁹ Janet Friskney’s 1994 thesis “Towards a Canadian ‘Cultural Mecca’: The Methodist Book and Publishing House’s Pursuit of Book Publishing and Commitment to Canadian Writing, 1829-1926” is similarly teleological in its description of the Methodist Book and Publishing House’s role in supporting the eventual emergence of a distinctly Canadian literature. For more on the place of teleological narratives within Canadian religious historiography “organized around the emergence of a nation-state” more generally, see Nancy Christie “Introduction” 14.
Wesleyans in particular, in shaping the religious character of British North Americans toward the middle decades of the nineteenth century and beyond. Webb’s basic contention is that historians of Canadian Methodism, perhaps most notably Goldwin French in his 1962 study *Parsons and Politics: The Role of the Wesleyan Methodists in Upper Canada and the Maritimes from 1780 to 1855*, have been guilty of viewing British Wesleyanism as a largely conservative monolith that did not evolve in the context of wider developments taking place in Britain. Thanks in part to the work of David Hempton in his 1984 study *Methodism and Politics in British Society, 1750-1850*, the British Methodist scene between 1827 and 1852 is now understood as an age of disunity. Relying heavily on Hempton’s work, Webb considers three events that took place across the Atlantic and their influence on British Wesleyans operating in Upper Canada before mid-century: the Oxford Movement of 1833, the Disruption of the Church of Scotland in 1843, and Sir Robert Peel’s Maynooth Grant of 1845. Importantly for the development of Methodism in Upper Canada, all these events led to a British Wesleyan rejection of the principles of establishment in the 1840s and helped to clear the way for reunification with the province’s Canadian Methodists in 1847.

The stress that modern historians of religion, whether through a developmental lens or not, have consistently placed on the ideological and political dimensions of Upper Canadian Methodism has tended to obscure the material concerns that external and internal factors provoked over Methodism’s print culture and its influence on religious identity within that denomination. In particular, existing Canadian religious historiography has failed to acknowledge the existence of, much less account for, a remarkably durable transnational market for Methodist printed commodities centered in New York that survived largely intact well into the middle decades of the nineteenth century. This neglect of religious print culture is in marked contrast to recent developments in the study of religion in the United States as well as, to a lesser extent, emergent trends in Canadian social and political historiography. Jeffery McNairn’s *The Capacity of Judge: Public Opinion and Deliberative Democracy in Upper Canada, 1791-1854*


21 French touches only once, and that briefly, on divisions within British Wesleyanism (250).
and Carol Wilton’s *Popular Politics and Political Culture in Upper Canada, 1800-1850* are both good examples of recent studies that attempt to describe in some measure the role that print played in shaping the colony’s wider sociopolitical life.\(^{22}\) McNairn’s study stands out in particular for offering the most thorough assessment to date of an emergent Habermasian public sphere in Upper Canada where, despite a political environment that was elitist, violent, and partisan, “public opinion” evolved into a new form of cultural authority as voluntary organizations and colonial newspapers became arenas for the adjudication of public disputes (65).\(^{23}\) McNairn’s narrative thus continues the break Jane Errington and others began with Sydney Wise’s earlier historiography by viewing developments in Upper Canada as outgrowths of a Kantian enlightenment rather than as a uniformly conservative reaction against the French and American revolutions (10). But despite what is an otherwise extraordinarily able analysis of Upper Canada’s public sphere throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, McNairn has surprisingly little to say about the role religious actors played in laying its foundation. While admitting that “there was a multifaceted connection between the public sphere and religious ideas and institutions” (14), he offers no elaboration on the nature of these connections apart from observing that the colony’s religious denominations were unequally disposed to certain principles that Habermas identified as necessary to sustain a functioning public sphere including voluntarism, egalitarianism, and rationalism. In his analysis of the role played by voluntary associations in shaping public opinion, for example, McNairn discusses Freemasonry, debating societies, mechanics’ institutes, agricultural societies, and newspaper reading rooms, but makes no mention of those denominations that insisted on the principle of religious voluntarism (63-115). Similarly, while Carol Wilton acknowledges an early parallel between Upper Canada’s reform movement and the Methodist threat to traditional religious authority in print, she tacitly dismisses the Methodist contribution to the colonial public sphere as marginal by allowing Methodism to fall out of view almost

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\(^{22}\) These studies are less attentive to the influence sociopolitical developments had on the colonial print trades. Michael Warner was one of the first to point out the importance of articulating the mutual influence of print culture on social developments and social developments on print culture when he observed the tendency of many scholars, particularly since the appearance of Elizabeth Eisenstein’s 1979 *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, to emphasize a strictly unidirectional current of influence—sometimes even to the point of arguing a form of technological determinism (*Letters of the Republic* 4-7).

\(^{23}\) Habermas’s theory of the public sphere in relation to religious and political developments in Upper Canada will be discussed in detail in this study’s third chapter (*infra. 148ff.*).
entirely after she recounts Egerton Ryerson’s defection from William Lyon Mackenzie’s brand of reformism in 1833 (155).

Unlike their Canadian counterparts, scholars of religious history in the United States have written far more extensively about the role print culture played in shaping religious developments throughout the colonial and early nationalist periods of American history. Nathan Hatch laid much of the groundwork for this development in his 1989 paradigmatic study of religion in the new republic *The Democratization of American Christianity*. Specifically, Hatch argues that America’s burgeoning market for religious books and periodicals played a pivotal role in fostering a widespread ideological shift among readers that in turn provoked a major expansion among evangelical churches south of the border. He accounts for Methodism’s unique success in the years following the Revolutionary War, moreover, by noting that the members of this denomination, “were the most conscientious about implementing these strategies, giving each circuit rider the charge to serve as both preacher and bookseller” (142). Frank Lambert’s studies *Inventing the Great Awakening* and “Pedlar in Divinity” draw similar connections between evangelical revivalism and print culture in the colonial period by describing how George Whitefield and other preachers used commercial strategies to create the impression that a spiritual dispensation unprecedented since the Reformation was underway across the American colonies. Lambert argues that much of this would have been impossible without the existence of an emergent Habermasian public sphere concerned, unlike its British counterpart, with debating religion rather than politics (“Pedlar in Divinity” 170-172). R. Laurence Moore further argues that the development of commercial strategies for the commodification of religion in print were instrumental not merely in multiplying evangelical churches across America, but even in exercising a pervasive cultural influence over wider social developments “that did

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24 Calvin Hollett is the only recent historian of Canadian Methodism to openly acknowledge a debt to historiographical developments in the study of religion in the United States. In particular, he singles out Nathan Hatch’s *The Democratization of American Christianity* for its unyielding emphasis on “Methodism as a popular revolt against the New England Protestant elites” (5). It is perhaps for this reason that his own narrative shows a unique, albeit limited, attentiveness to the role print culture in shaping the character of Newfoundland Methodism. In his fourth chapter, for example, Hollett attempts to set limits on the claims of earlier historians about the cultural uniqueness of Methodism in that region by foregrounding the extent to which British Wesleyan books and periodicals were distributed across the island (103-110).

25 See also David D. Hall’s “Politics of Reading and Writing in Eighteenth-Century America” *Cultures of Print* 151, “Introduction” *Colonial Book in the Atlantic World* 10.
not emanate from the clerical camp or have its approval” (Selling God 17). Peter Wosh and David Nord extend this argument another step by each arguing that a rapidly expanding domestic market for ever cheaper Bibles, tracts, and Sunday school literature spurred the innovation and adoption of ever more efficient production facilities and distribution networks.26 Nord in particular refers to this burgeoning of the press under pressure from the American Bible Society, the American Tract Society, and the American Sunday School Union as the first emergence of a “mass media” in America. And in the most thorough and comprehensive treatment of American evangelical print culture yet to emerge, Candy Brown expands on these topics within a framework that explores evolving tensions at the intersection of market forces and doctrinal concerns in her 2004 The Word in the World: Evangelical Writing, Publishing, and Reading in America, 1789-1880. Although Brown pays little attention to transnational aspects of evangelical print culture, her narrative touches on a number of topics that are directly relevant to this study, particularly the way denominational publishers sought to distinguish themselves from competitors by fueling religious rivalries in order to consolidate and extend their markets in the United States (141-153).

In some ways this study resumes where Brown and most other historians of American religion leave off: at the border separating the United States from the rest of British North America. Methodism, tied to its textual practices in a way that was intensive even by the standards of other eighteenth and nineteenth-century evangelicals, could not possibly have come to Upper Canada without importing its print culture. Ready access to books, tracts, and periodicals was as important to the success of the work as charismatic preaching, decentralized leadership, and an egalitarian theology. In market terms, when Wesley mandated reading, he created a powerful and durable stimulus to demand for printed commodities within his movement that helped the Methodist Book Concern to become the largest publisher in the world by the 1860s. This dissertation analyzes transnational aspects of nineteenth-century Methodist print culture in North America from a Canadian perspective by

addressing how the Methodist Book Concern built a homogeneous market for its commodities in Upper Canada; the strategies it and the wider Methodist Episcopal Church used to maintain access to that market in the face of rising national antipathies, establishmentarianism, and even military belligerence; and how the durability of this material print connection affected the religious identity of Upper Canadian Methodists. A focus on these questions will enable this study to reach past the foundational anxieties of religious nationalism that have occupied so much of Canadian historiography and to uncover a religious culture defined as much by material concerns as by its ecclesiastical polity.

The work of Pierre Bourdieu will figure prominently in this analysis. His elaborate and highly developed theory of the field of cultural production, with its emphasis on the contribution not only of authors but also other agents such as editors, publishers, reviewers, booksellers, and teachers, to the social construction of textual meaning has obvious attractions for historians of material and print culture. Developed in reaction to the problems he associated with New Criticism’s absolutization of the text, on the one hand, and the social reductionism of Marxist critics on the other, Bourdieu’s field of cultural production functions as an arena in which agents such as authors, publishers, booksellers, and so forth, contend and collude in the material as well as the symbolic production of goods within a field whose structures and hierarchies are to a greater or lesser degree its own (20-37, 177-181). The material production of a book involves the impression of inked type on sheets of paper. The process of symbolic production invests those printed pages with a cultural value incommensurate with the value of its material construction. A book’s symbolic value, which allows it to be sold at a profit in the market for printed commodities, flows from the reputation of its author, the marketing strategies of its publisher, the influence of a favourable review, or any combination of these and other factors (76-77). Each field, moreover, exists within a broader power field that exercises its own influence over the structures and hierarchies governing material and symbolic production through its superior economic and political capital (37-61, 162-4). The degree of autonomy that each field is able to achieve from the power field is determined by its ability to translate or
“refract” the demands of that broader field into its own logic (115-6, 164). Peter McDonald adopts this framework in his 1997 study *British Literary Culture and Publishing Practice, 1880-1914* to lend an additional dimension to Robert Darnton’s highly influential “communications circuit” and thereby enrich his analysis of the publishing careers of Joseph Conrad, Arnold Bennett, and Arthur Conan Doyle. McDonald contends that the weakness of Darnton’s model, while acknowledging it offers a view of the whole field of cultural production in relation to its constituent parts, is that it takes a purely functionalist approach to the role of authors, publishers, readers, and other agents along the circuit. More specifically, while Darnton’s model accounts for the production, circulation, and consumption of *material* goods, his approach makes no provision for the *status* or *symbolic value* such agents confer upon those goods along the way. “Publishers,” as McDonald points out, “not only issue books, they invest them with prestige” (11). Like the majority of literary critics and cultural historians who have adopted Bourdieu’s theory of the field of cultural production, McDonald concentrates his narrative primarily on elaborating the role commercial publishers played in advancing the literary careers of specific secular writers as professional authors.

Bourdieu’s abstractions about the field of cultural production come into clear focus in his own analysis of the nineteenth-century French literary field. Although he relies heavily on concepts contained in Max Weber’s sociology of religion, Bourdieu does not characterize that field as being marked by anxieties between religious and secular agents, as cultural historians including Candy Brown and David Nord have done with respect to the United States, but between what he calls commercial and cultural agents. Commercial publishers, as Bourdieu describes them, are typically very

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27 Bourdieu’s theory of the literary field, its internal structure, and its relationship to the broader power field is elaborated in the first three essays contained in *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*.


29 See also Paul Delany’s 2002 *Literature, Money and the Market from Trollope to Amis* and Francis O’Gorman’s 2007 *Victorian Literature and Finance*.

30 For a visual representation of that field see *The Field of Cultural Production* 49.

31 See *The Field of Cultural Production* 181-3.
large organizations that are oriented toward mass markets and strive to generate economic profits. Cultural publishers, on the other hand, employ fewer people and concentrate on building symbolic profit among audiences of elite readers who in many instances may be writers themselves. Equally interested in generating capital that can be reinvested in the market, both kinds of publishers, operating in different sectors of the same field, invest their products with status to increase the value of their goods beyond the raw material components that went into their production (97, 115, 128-9, 169). They perform this, to use Bourdieu’s term, “consecrating” function, conferring prestige on the texts and authors they publish, by drawing on stores of cultural capital previously amassed from the growing reputations, commercial or symbolic, of the authors they have already published. Each publisher’s cultural capital, measured in economic or symbolic terms, is increased, together with its ability to confer status on future authors, only if its existing catalogue of authors succeed in the market according to the terms that market embodies (97-101). Finally, although striving to achieve different ends, Bourdieu indicates that the authors with whom these publishers work, whether commercial or cultural, are, though they may disavow it, “deeply self-interested, calculating, obsessed with money and ready to do anything to succeed” (79).

So, even while they are obliged to contend with them, publishers remain invariably dependent on the success of authors to guarantee their store of cultural capital and therefore their market survival. Thus while Bourdieu’s theory accords publishers a far more consequential role than most, his model ultimately situates the author at the centre of the structure as the field’s chief producer (76-77).

The interpretive power of Bourdieu’s theory is not without limits when applied to North American evangelical print culture in the nineteenth century. Although North America’s denominational publishers had to meet the same economic demands associated with producing material commodities—purchasing presses, setting type, folding and sewing gatherings, storing books, and so forth—the field in which the Methodist Book Concern operated was marked by structural differences in the way authors perceived themselves as agents, how publishers and authors defined their relationships, and, perhaps most importantly, the means by which denominational

32 Bourdieu himself cautions against a wholesale adoption of modernist definitions of the field’s agents, especially authors, in periods before the second half of the nineteenth century (162).
publishers generated the cultural capital needed to consecrate printed commodities as status objects within the market. With few exceptions, the Methodist Book Concern relegated the role of authors, whether American or British, living or dead, Methodist or non-Methodist, to a place of secondary importance next to the production and distribution infrastructure it operated in the name of the denomination as a whole. The Methodist Book Concern was able to establish this alternative structure more easily than commercial publishers partly because the vast majority of texts within its field had been written by evangelicals who did not struggle, unlike their secular counterparts, to bring the process of textual circulation under their control. As Candy Brown notes, “Evangelicals, presuming the shared ownership of texts by the Christian community, were relatively slow to follow suit by copyrighting their materials. Some evangelicals continued to debate the legitimacy of copyright through the end of the [nineteenth] century” (179). This sense of shared ownership is what enabled Wesley, a century earlier, to abridge and republish devotional works expressly for the use of his own followers mostly with impunity. Evangelical authors understood that the purpose of their texts was not to bring them celebrity or affluence but, like sermons, to foster spiritual wellbeing. Although it would be naïve to suggest that evangelical writers were entirely disinterested—their works, after all, were not usually published anonymously—they were obliged to operate within the structure of a field that had been defined largely by wider religious and publishing concerns and to accept what rewards that structure afforded them both here and in the hereafter. Thus the symbolic capital that the Methodist Book Concern needed to invest its printed commodities with a cultural value incommensurate with the material costs of their production was derived only incidentally from the reputation of the authors it published. Its chief source for such capital was the rhetorical connection it proposed between itself and the

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33 Although uniquely North American Methodist voices did emerge beginning in the 1820s, that uniqueness played a small part in the Concern’s overall marketing strategy. See Noll’s America’s God for a discussion of the way Wilbur Fisk Americanized Scottish commonsense moral reasoning and Timothy Merritt and George Peck used their writings to link republicanism to the holiness movement (346-364).

34 The two instances where he was prosecuted for such actions occurred when he reprinted copyrighted works belonging to secular publishers. The first action was brought against Wesley for publishing Young’s Night Thoughts in an anthology two years after it first appeared in 1742. In 1745 Wesley settled by paying £50 to Robert Dodsley, the copyright holder (Shepherd 87-88). Wesley was also charged with violating the copyright of works by Elizabeth Rowe in the same year (Abelove 86). Wesley’s mistake in both cases had been to assume that the laws regulating textual practice in one field would be similarly applicable in another.
wider spiritual mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church. By equating patronage with denominational identity, it set itself apart from commercial publishers by establishing the principle that the symbolic value of a printed commodity depended more on its imprint than it did on its author. *All* books sold by the Concern, because they had been carefully selected and edited by the elite members of the denomination were, like Scripture, useful “for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (cf. 2 Tm 3.16). *Only* those books sold by the Concern, however, conferred economic benefits on the Methodist Episcopal Church as a whole. The “symbolic profit” of a good book was not fame or fortune for the author, or even the publisher, but eternal salvation for the reader in the context of a materially strengthened church. Unlike sermons, printed texts were also commodities that served as status objects of denominational allegiance by connecting the interests of the church with the needs of readers as consumers. The fact that the Concern’s achievement of massive economic success in the decades following a major expansion in the 1820s was rhetorically characterized as incidental helped further to entrench a structure of cultural production in which it, not authors, became the dominant centripetal force drawing together the interests of all the field’s agents: writers, distributors, booksellers, and readers.

In spite of these structural differences between the field of cultural production Bourdieu describes and the one that North American denominational publishers operated within before the second half of the nineteenth century, the chief concepts that form his theory of a field of cultural production, its relationship to a broader power field, the construction of material and symbolic goods, and the consecrating function of publishers, remain powerful interpretive tools for understanding the relationship between the Methodist Book Concern and its transnational markets. Keeping in view the unique role played by the Methodist Book Concern as North America’s dominant denominational publisher and its role in producing both material and symbolic goods, this study will treat the publisher, rather than the author, as chief legislator within its cultural field.35 It is hoped that this analytical emphasis on the institution, as a reflection

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35 A shift in legislative power from the author to the publisher, Bourdieu writes, occurs with the emergence of “large collection production units.” Although Bourdieu cites television, radio, and journalism as his chief examples, denominational publishers who claimed, as did the Methodist Book
of the structure of the field itself, will help to foreground the anxieties around religious identity and denominational membership that emerged in Upper Canada when the Methodist Book Concern extended its market and the structure of its literary field north of the border into an environment dominated by a power field most unlike the one in which it was established by John Dickins. Ironically, the more successful the Concern became at stressing rhetorical linkages between patronage with denominational identity in the United States, the more compromised and complicated the symbolic status of its goods became for Methodists in Upper Canada.

Like other studies of Canadian Methodism, this dissertation relies heavily on materials held by the United Church Archives including the conference minutes of the various Methodist denominations operating in the province during the period of this study; journals of the New York Annual Conference and the Methodist Episcopal Church’s quadrennial conferences; the Journal of the Proceedings of the Canadian Methodist Book Committee; and materials relating to the Upper Canada Academy and Victoria College. As Upper Canadian Methodists became aware of the growing public scrutiny their publications were receiving in the province, records of proceedings in manuscript and published minutes began to diverge. Such disagreements typically entail the omission of references to American Methodism in one form or another. For this reason, manuscript records have been consulted wherever available and divergences are noted when significant. The papers of Egerton Ryerson—the founding editor of the Christian Guardian and a man who exerted a profound influence over the development of public education throughout Canada as the president of Victoria College and later Upper Canada’s first Superintendent of Education—are also a particularly rich source of information. In addition, the smaller collections of Matthew Richey, sometime editor of the Montreal and later Toronto Wesleyan; Thomas Webster, founder of the province’s Canada Christian Advocate, and denominational elder William Concern, to represent and speak for the interests of the whole church, constituted a similarly large production unit. Bourdieu describes the effect such organizations have on the relative prominence of individual authors: “Intellectual labour carried out collectively within technically and socially differentiated production units, can no longer surround itself with the charismatic aura attaching to traditional independent production” (130-1).
Case, have some relevance to the present study. The papers of Nathan Bangs, an early Upper Canadian itinerant and senior book agent of the Methodist Book Concern between 1820 and 1828, have also been consulted at the Methodist Archives at Drew University in New Jersey. The denominational periodicals these men were involved in founding or publishing also provide a vital public record of the interdenominational tensions and disagreements that arose around North America’s transnational Methodist print culture. Chief among these are the New York Methodist Magazine and Christian Advocate founded in 1818 and 1826, and the Christian Guardian founded in York (Toronto) in 1829. Unlike modern historians, nineteenth-century historians of Methodism tended to pay considerable attention to material concerns. The multi-volume histories of Methodism in America written by Nathan Bangs and Abel Stevens, John Carroll’s highly anecdotal history of Methodism in Upper Canada, Case and His Cotemporaries, George Playter’s single-volume history of Methodism in Canada to 1828, and Ryerson’s Canadian Methodism: Its Epochs and Characteristics, are among the most frequently cited sources. Denominational publishers’ catalogues issued in London, New York, and Toronto; Sunday school and circulating library catalogues; and bookseller’s catalogues also contain important information about the material aspects of Methodist print culture that can be found nowhere else including the price of books and periodicals, their formats and binding, and often the rhetoric these institutions employed around their sale and promotion.

Sources that allow the researcher to move past the views of Methodism’s elite to interrogate the beliefs and practices of the denomination’s average members are scarce. To uncover direct evidence of the extent to which the Concern’s rhetoric—crafted by the elite for the purpose of denominational consolidation—penetrated to the lower ranks of Methodism, this study makes extensive use of a number of published memoirs, particularly those written by Nathan Bangs, Anson Green, John Carroll, and Egerton Ryerson. These documents recount not only the theological and political beliefs these men held, but also the way they used books and participated in the Concern’s market after their conversions. And yet, since the majority of those who published memoirs of this kind went on to become members of the elite themselves, it seems at least probable that their later experiences may have coloured their remembrances of earlier times. To circumvent difficulties of this kind, social historians often turn to the periodical press to access the views of the lower and middling members of reading communities. Yet even
this strategy has limitations. Editors, for example, who are themselves members of the elite, typically exercise total control over whose letters appear in the pages of their publications. Thus it is perhaps not surprising that the bulk of correspondence published in Methodist periodicals active during the period of this study appears often to have been written by those with at least some claim to an official role. Where this was not the case letters often appeared under pseudonyms in order presumably to conceal the identity and status of the author. Fortunately, complications arising from the use of documentary evidence of this kind are in some measure mitigated by the indirect but persuasive evidence one finds imbedded in the contours of the market itself. The enormous success the Methodist Book Concern achieved is perhaps the greatest proof that the insulating rhetorical strategies developed by its agents were indeed understood and heeded by average Methodists who read the catalogues, the periodicals, and the minutes in which these linkages were continually pressed. The enormous financial support that Methodists across North America offered in the wake of the Concern’s destruction in February 1836, moreover, speaks powerfully to the beliefs they must have held about the nature of their responsibilities to the denominational publisher.

The first chapter of this dissertation lays the groundwork for subsequent chapters by considering the strategies Wesley used as an editor, abridger, and publisher of texts to fashion a public self, to generate cultural capital, and to invest a growing number of titles with symbolic value in a transatlantic market for religious printed commodities before and after the Revolutionary War. This chapter also traces the Methodist Book Concern’s development of independent rhetorical strategies, in the face of Wesley’s declining cultural capital in America, for equating patronage with denominational identity in an effort to insulate its rapidly expanding market from the products of competitors in an environment that offered inadequate legal protections. These strategies helped the Methodist Book Concern to become one of the largest publishers in the world by the middle of the nineteenth century. They also complicated the Concern’s access to the Upper Canadian market as the province’s Methodists struggled to reconcile tensions between their position in a conservative political environment dominated by tropes of loyalty, and as patrons of a publisher whose rhetorical strategies interpreted all commercial transactions as symbolic acts of denominational support for an American religious institution.
The second chapter charts the growth of the market for Methodist books in Upper Canada between the last decade of the eighteenth century, when Methodist preachers first arrived in the province, and the organization of Upper Canadian Methodism into a separate ecclesiastical entity in 1828. As Methodist itinerant preachers began to form small societies of believers throughout the province’s thinly settled wilderness, they simultaneously opened a denominationally insular market for the Methodist Book Concern’s products. As Upper Canada’s postwar political climate became increasingly dominated by conservatives who shared the anti-American prejudices of the colonial administration, however, the ongoing cultural production of the Concern’s commodities became increasingly fraught. Unlike Methodism in the United States, where race played a key role in precipitating denominational schism in everything from the establishment of the African Methodist Episcopal Church under Richard Allen in 1816, to the calamitous division of the Methodist Episcopal Church into northern and southern segments in 1844 over the right of bishops to own slaves, the axis of cultural power in Upper Canada revolved primarily around issues connected to national identity. When John Strachan, the British Wesleyans, and later splinter factions composed of their own disgruntled coreligionists, sought a pretext for attacking the colony’s Methodists, they resorted not to racial but political slurs, accusing them of practicing closet republicanism and labouring under the yoke of a foreign episcopacy. Thus putative loyalty to the crown, not the of colour one’s skin, formed the basis on which social power was distributed among religions in the colony (Semple 123-125).36

Problems associated with the growing incompatibility of the denomination’s rhetoric and the colony’s developing ideology, however, were greatly reduced by the Concern’s continued reliance on a denominational infrastructure to supply its market throughout these years. Although pioneered for more practical reasons in the United

36 This seems to have been the consequence of two circumstances. First, slavery was abolished relatively early in Upper Canada. In 1794, the Simcoe administration passed legislation that, while allowing slaves already in the colony to remain in that state until the end of their lives, prohibited anyone from importing new slaves or enslaving the children born to existing female slaves beyond the age of twenty five (Craig Upper Canada 31). Second, the relatively few black Methodists who made their home in the colony tended to form their own independent congregations. Although these congregations grew substantially as black Methodists continued to flee slavery by crossing the border, they succeeded in remaining highly insular in part by importing their own bishops from the United States. After the conclusion of the Civil War, moreover, the “vast majority” of these Methodists returned permanently to the United States (Semple 126).
States, this method of distribution conferred an accidental but critical strategic advantage north of the border by shielding Upper Canadian Methodists from much of the criticism they would otherwise have attracted for continuing to patronize an American publisher whose commodities were offered within a rhetorical framework that connected patronage to membership in a foreign church. Had members of the colonial elite known the extent of the Concern’s market, particularly in the 1820s when Church of England officials felt ever less confident that Anglicanism would inevitably displace its religious competitors given enough time, they would doubtless have denounced it as yet another example of the way Americans continued to exert a dangerous influence over the province’s largest “dissenting” denomination. But the Concern’s market could not remain hidden from wider view forever.

Chapter three considers the emergence of fresh tensions as a secondary public market for Methodist texts emerged when a new generation of Methodists, led by Egerton Ryerson, worked to resituate the movement more favourably in the eyes of a wider reading public. A major step in the bifurcation of the market for Methodist texts took place when Ryerson confronted directly Methodism’s detractors in the colonial press. By entering the province’s emergent public sphere, Ryerson inadvertently placed additional pressure on the Concern’s Upper Canadian market by inviting members of the public to scrutinize the practices—especially the textual practices—of the province’s Methodists. At the same time, Upper Canadian Methodists had already begun to publish a limited number of items on local presses to protect their missionary interests among several Native groups in Upper Canada. The Concern’s imprint coupled with its increasingly pervasive rhetorical strategies that continued to help Methodist preachers to sell books, tracts, and periodicals in the Upper Canadian backwoods in a denominationally sequestered market, would diminish the symbolic status of these local public texts and undermine the substance of the arguments they contained. Thus the bifurcation of the market into denominational and public audiences fostered a new attentiveness among Methodists to the ways in which the cultural production of printed commodities could lead to serious objections on the part of a wider audience of Upper Canadian readers. In the following years, Upper Canadian Methodists became ever more convinced that their denomination would never occupy a permanent place of social respectability within the colony unless they found a way to sever not only their
ecclesiastical ties to the American Methodist Episcopal Church, but their economic and cultural dependency on the Methodist Book Concern as well.

Achieving an independent Methodist polity, as protracted and litigious a process as that turned out to be, proved comparatively straightforward next to sorting through the complexities involved in breaking the Concern’s tenacious hold on its Upper Canadian market. While the ecclesiastical independence Methodists in Upper Canada achieved in 1828 has received a great deal of scholarly attention, the subsequent struggle for cultural independence embodied in efforts to obtain a cash settlement from the Methodist Book Concern at the General Conference of 1832, and again in 1836, has been all but ignored by recent historians. The energy with which Upper Canadians pursued their financial claim against the Concern, on the grounds that the Concern was not like other publishers but an integral part of the Methodist Episcopal Church from which they had separated, had significant implications, in the context of the Concern’s rhetorical strategies, for religious identity in Upper Canada. Shortly after assuming his role as founding editor of the *Christian Guardian* in late 1829, Ryerson began to advertise and sell Methodist books at the *Guardian* office, placing not only texts produced locally for a public audience, but also printed commodities that continued to be imported in large quantities from the Methodist Book Concern in New York, within reach of the wider and nonpartisan Upper Canadian public. In order not to imperil the denomination’s continued political progress, another source for Methodist literature had to be found. The fourth chapter of this dissertation unfolds the struggle of Upper Canadians to sever the Concern’s access to its market and the efforts made by Canadian preachers to begin filling their saddlebags with printed commodities that were not only inexpensive, but sufficiently benign from a cultural perspective to withstand the scrutiny of the open market. These efforts were complicated by the unwelcome arrival of British Wesleyan missionaries whose conservatism set them in a natural alliance with the colony’s anti-American elite. The willingness of the Wesleyans to denounce Canadian Methodists as disloyal republicans, further eroded what little confidence Canadians had that aspects of the Concern’s cultural production could remain hidden from the wider public. In response to these threats, Ryerson attempted to refashion Canadian Methodists as loyal Wesleyans by leading negotiations to merge the two bodies between 1832 and 1833. But by unilaterally altering the religious identity of Upper Canadians in this way, Ryerson inadvertently dealt a fatal blow to the financial
claims Canadians had earlier hoped to win against the Concern. When the London Book Room’s books and periodicals proved difficult to acquire and too expensive to sell, Canadian Methodist religious identity promised to split along polity and print culture lines: despite the fact that Canadians remained members of the British Wesleyan Conference, the practical incentives for renewing their patronage of the New York Methodist Book Concern once again threatened to endanger the enhanced social status their newfound identity had just begun to yield.

In the face of the General Conference’s persistent refusal to authorize a settlement or give up access to the Concern’s market north of the border, Canadians were left to suffer significant financial losses by refusing to participate in that market, or to find a new way to decouple aspects of material and cultural production in their own colonial setting. The final chapter considers several developments that resulted from an agreement reached with the General Conference in 1836 that permitted Upper Canadians to renew their commercial relationship with the Concern while setting to one side those rhetorical linkages between patronage and religious identity that continued to define Methodism’s denominational market in the United States. To effect this change Upper Canadian Methodists reclaimed control of both the Toronto Book Room and the Christian Guardian. With a ready supply of printed commodities that no longer threatened to undermine their status a loyal colonists, and with a more moderate reformism taking root after the Rebellion of 1837, Canadian Methodists became increasingly ambivalent about the ongoing value of the union. Although the unilateral dissolution of the union by the British Conference in 1840 temporarily threatened to undermine the commercial relationship between the Methodist Book Concern and the Toronto Book Room once again, by the time the union was reestablished in 1847, the cultural unmaking of the Concern’s products in Upper Canada had become so normalized that the Canadian book steward, far from attempting to diminish his reliance on the Concern as in 1832, actually moved to negotiate even steeper discounts in New York. British Wesleyans, for their part, were left with no choice but to accept that, while they might be united with the Canadians in polity, the colony’s Methodist print culture would remain decidedly North American in orientation.

Whether emphasizing early connections between religious developments in the United States and British North America, the eventual emergence of distinctly
nationalistic forms of religion, or the growing hegemony of British influences over these forms, historians of Canadian religion have contributed to the development of a master narrative that uniformly describes a steady and irrevocable decline in the relationship between Upper Canadian and American Methodists after the War of 1812. There is little in modern historiography in particular to suggest that these connections remained meaningful in any significant way after Canadian Methodists achieved formal ecclesiastical independence from the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1828. And yet North American Methodism’s transnational market for printed religious commodities proved to be more durable than any of the numerous ecclesiastical bonds Canadian Methodists formed with other Methodist and Wesleyan bodies throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. By broadening the focus of my narrative to consider developments in print culture as well as polity, I hope to foreground important ways in which these interpenetrating realities combined to produce an evolving religious identity among colonial Methodists that—at the intersection of overlapping imagined communities defined by politics, polity, and print—was both more complex and more contested than has been fully understood.
Chapter 1
Methodist publishing and religious identity in Britain and America

In July 1789, John Wesley wrote to John Dickins to confer his official blessing on the formal establishment of Methodist publishing in the United States (Wesley Letters 8.153). Two months earlier, the Methodist conference in New York had appointed Dickins, one of America’s best educated and ablest Methodist administrators, to serve as its first book steward (Wigger 179, Pilkington 80). Wesley’s assent to the appointment of an American book steward with independent publishing authority did not come about easily. As David Hempton notes, “one of the most striking features of Methodism is the extent to which Wesley tried to secure control over the discourse of the movement by remorselessly selecting, editing, publishing and disseminating print” (Empire 58). Not only did Wesley select, edit, and publish “remorselessly,” he also forbade others in his movement from doing the same. The resolutions of the first Methodist conference of 1744 banned lay preachers from “introducing” hymns of their own composing while later minutes expanded that prohibition by adding explicit directives to “9. Sing no hymns of your own composing” and “10. Print nothing without my [Wesley’s] approbation” (MSC 25; Shepherd 71, 253). These injunctions remained in effect until Wesley’s death in 1791. From the time Wesley sent his first preachers to America in 1769, through the advent of nonimportation pacts and embargos preceding and accompanying the Revolutionary War, and even beyond the establishment of an independent Methodist Episcopal Church in 1784, Wesley insisted, with very few exceptions, that all printed materials for distribution in America be imported from the London Book Room. Ironically, this insistence contributed to the eventual decline of Wesley’s transatlantic standing and ultimately led to his name being stricken from the American conference minutes of 1787. In this powerfully symbolic act, Methodists in

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37 The Virginia conference also named Philip Cox book steward in 1789. Cox was subordinate to Dickins, however, and his title was changed in 1790 to “travelling book steward” (Pilkington 86). No further appointments of this sort were made until the role of assistant book steward was created in 1808.
the new United States freed themselves at once from Wesley’s authority in polity and print culture. “From that time,” wrote Jesse Lee, American Methodism’s first historian, “we began to print more of our own books in the United States than we had ever done before” (129). Against such a backdrop, it is difficult to see Wesley’s letter to Dickins as anything more than a grudging acknowledgement of the inevitable. What Wesley and his contemporaries could not see, however, was that it also marked the first in a long series of steps that would see Dickins’s business grow to become, under patronage of the Methodist Episcopal Church, one of the world’s largest and most financially successful publishers by the middle decades of the nineteenth century.

It is widely acknowledged that throughout the antebellum period America’s commercial markets underwent a rapid expansion precipitated by the development of new methods for manufacturing and distributing goods. As historians of the book have argued, an important part of this market expansion entailed an equally dramatic increase in the number of books, newspapers, and other printed commodities available to consumers after the Revolutionary War. As the volume of print increased, and the cost of purchasing printed commodities decreased, literacy rates rose and readers had new opportunities to choose between an ever widening variety of texts. Historians of religion have argued that these market forces also affected America’s religious denominations by providing a structural advantage to preachers and churches willing to compete for converts in “a religious free market” (Wigger 5, 79; Hatch 3-17; Carwardine “Charles Sellers’s ‘Antinomians’” 82-8). As part of a larger argument that religion is itself a type of cultural commodity that competes in the social arena with a

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39 An earlier generation of scholars concluded that the rapid expansion in the availability and affordability of reading materials during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was accompanied by a “reading revolution” that saw a general shift from the intensive reading of few texts to the extensive reading of many texts. David Hall was one of the first to express dissatisfaction with this term (“Introduction” *Cultures of Print* 11). Since that time, many others, including Robert Gross, David Nord, and Candy Brown, have expressed similar reservations. Nevertheless, most scholars continue to agree that these decades constitute a period of critically important expansion, however texts may have been used by individual readers, in the printing and publishing infrastructure in the new republic (Gross “Reading” 532-3; Nord *Faith* 166 n8; Brown 116-7, 127-133).

host of alternative cultural commodities, R. Laurence Moore observes that religious publishers in America set about commodifying their texts, including the Bible, as they “solidified a new base for religious authority in the United States that depended heavily on market strategies” (Selling God 15, 17). More recently, David Nord has argued that religious publishers, unlike their commercial counterparts, were suspicious of these market forces, fearful of seductive secular publications, and found ways to circumvent the market by distributing their commodities regardless of the reader’s ability to pay. Nord supports his argument by pointing to the strategies developed to fund the production and distribution of free religious literature by the nineteenth century’s largest national and interdenominational publishers in the United States including the American Tract Society, the American Sunday School Union, and, to a lesser extent, the American Bible Society.41

Although Nord acknowledges that denominational publishers played some role in this work, it would be a distortion to say that the Methodist Book Concern operated on a similar economic model. In spite of the fact that the Concern occasionally gave away tracts and even collections of books to those unable to afford them, the vast majority of its printed commodities were available only to those readers willing to pay.42 Far from relying on the Methodist Episcopal Church to underwrite costs associated with producing and distributing free literature throughout America, the Methodist Book Concern operated on a model designed to generate profits to fund the Church’s other philanthropic and missionary activities. This model, first developed in response to pressures placed on American Methodists by John Wesley, soon evolved into an elaborate rhetorical strategy for investing printed commodities with symbolic status calculated to insulate its denominational market from the products of other religious and trade publishers. The first part of this chapter traces the development of


42 The most significant exception to this policy affected the distribution of Sunday school books and resulted in the establishment of a separate Publishing Fund, later known as the Charter Fund, in 1828 (Pilkington 193-4).
the textual strategies Wesley used to cast himself as chief producer, interpreter, and consecrator of texts among Methodist readers in Britain and later America. This will include an analysis of how Wesley’s activities as an author, editor, and publisher allowed him to fashion a public self that both enhanced his authority as a religious figure and generated the cultural capital he needed to regulate effectively his movement’s structural development and control its print culture. The second part of this chapter will consider the way Wesley’s cultural capital declined in America as a result of the Revolutionary War, and how American Methodists adapted and transformed his market strategies in the new republic by establishing rhetorical linkages between patronage of the Methodist Book Concern and denominational membership in the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Bourdieu’s theories of cultural production will never be far from the surface of this analysis. According to these theories, there is an important distinction to be made between the material production of a book, and its symbolic or cultural production. The former concerns the physical construction of a book through, among other things, the impression of type on pages, while the latter speaks to the cultural processes by which authors, publishers, and others invest that material commodity with status in the market. As the following will show, when Methodists in the United States (and Upper Canada) purchased books and periodicals from the Methodist Book Concern, they were conditioned to interpret such commercial transactions as acts of denominational solidarity. Thus books were more than vehicles for conveying information. They also functioned, by means of the consecrating rhetoric developed by the Concern’s book agents, as potent denominational status objects with the power to make claims on the religious identities of their owners. Although this strategy allowed American Methodists to achieve enormous success in forging a market circumscribed by denominational interests, the pervasive strength of the rhetorical connection between church and publisher on which that success rested served to complicate and eventually diminish the status of the Concern’s commodities in Upper Canada. The reasons for this cannot be fully understood without first exploring how these strategies were developed and deployed in Britain and later the United States.

In his unconventional and largely unsympathetic biography of John Wesley, Henry Abelove wryly notes several of the ways his subject used material culture to set
himself apart from, and often above, the vast majority of his followers. Fastidious about his appearance, Wesley displayed his superiority by wearing silk stockings, silk gloves, and in the cold weather a full-length brocaded cloak. When he appeared in public to preach, whether behind a pulpit or in the middle of a field, he did so in his clerical gown, cassock, and bands to signify his status as a professional gentleman and a Church of England clergyman (7). These material strategies are homologous to a set of equally pervasive rhetorical strategies Wesley developed to fashion a public self in his journals, abridgements, catalogues, and prefaces. Because Wesley had no juridical authority to prohibit the reading of some books while mandating the reading of others, he was obliged to appeal to his auditors and readers as a religious figure whose authority was derived from a set of cultural practices—often reflected in print—that shored up his position at the centre of his movement. Thus his imprimatur was cultural in the sense that it did not rely on the force of law, but rather a matrix of voluntary beliefs he inculcated in his followers. As readers became more familiar with this public self, Wesley’s cultural capital grew until the mere appearance of his name on a text—whether as its author, editor, abridger, interpreter, or simply publisher—invested it with enough symbolic status to set it apart from the printed commodities of his competitors. Though he learned to become extraordinarily adept in the use of these strategies, Wesley did not arrive at them by inspiration alone. Without the example of his fellow preacher George Whitefield, it is doubtful that Wesley’s impact in the market for religious texts would have been nearly as great as it was.43

Frank Lambert’s study “Pedlar in Divinity”: George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals traces how Whitefield used the press, particularly newspaper advertisements and published journals, to fashion a public self and further his ministry by bracketing his public appearances with printed redactions in which he argued that a spiritual dispensation unseen since the Reformation was underway.44 Although it would be difficult to overstate the extent of Wesley’s influence over Whitefield’s early spiritual

43 Michael Warner traces a similar development in America in the career of Benjamin Franklin who, in his various guises in print, B. Franklin, Richard Saunders, Silence Dogood and Homo Trium Literarum, also used the press to fashion a public persona that advanced the interests of his printing network and his political career (73-96). See also James Green “English Books” 270-1.

44 Lambert widens his analysis of the role print played in fostering a cohesive inter-colonial and transatlantic revival during the 1730s and 1740s to include additional preachers and religious denominations in his 1999 study Inventing the “Great Awakening.”
formation, and although Wesley borrowed, and perhaps even helped to develop, some of Whitefield’s textual strategies, Lambert comments only briefly on their relationship. Wesley and Whitefield first crossed paths in the months following Whitefield’s arrival as a student servitor at Pembroke College in 1732. At the time Wesley was well established by comparison. Ten years older than Whitefield, he had completed his own degree in 1724, was elected a Fellow of Lincoln College in 1726, and two years later had been ordained a clergyman in the Church of England. By 1733 Whitefield was, with Wesley, a regular member of a society of evangelicals known as the Holy Club that Wesley’s younger brother Charles, together with a few other Oxford undergraduates, had established in 1729. Whitefield began a systematic program of study under John Wesley’s supervision that “led to his conversion and shaped his sense of calling” (Lambert Pedlar 18, Inventing 93). Although its members engaged in a variety of charitable activities, including the distribution of bibles, prayer books, and Richard Allestree’s The Whole Duty of Man, to prisoners and the poor, the Club attracted negative attention in some quarters and its members were derisively called “methodists” for their methodical adherence to unusually strict forms of piety (Andrews 16-7, Burton 73, Heitzenrater 41). The father of William Morgan, a former member of the Holy Club, even went so far as to blame the death of his son on the rigorous discipline and asceticism maintained by the group (Burton 78-9, Heitzenrater 46-8). The Club survived these attacks and Whitefield, considerably beneath the Wesley brothers in social standing, was eventually convinced by the example and encouragement of his fellow members to pursue ordination. In 1736, Whitefield graduated from Pembroke College and was ordained a deacon. Whitefield’s mother, like Wesley’s, was delighted at her son’s vocation—though more for social than religious reasons (Andrews 24-5).

Wesley, meanwhile, was caught up with his own drama. Shortly after the death of his father Samuel, Wesley and his brother Charles, who was ordained in September 1735, set sail for Savannah as missionaries under the auspices of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. Although the mission was not a success, Wesley wrote to Whitefield to invite him to cross the Atlantic to help in his ministry before he was prematurely forced to leave Georgia in December 1737 (Andrews 18-19, Heitzenrater 58-73). His ship arrived in Deal harbour just as George Whitefield’s was about to set sail. Not surprisingly, Wesley had decided in the meantime that Whitefield should not make the journey. Although the latter had probably become accustomed to
Wesley’s paternalism at Oxford, in this instance the young deacon refused to follow his counsel. God, not Wesley, had called him to Georgia and Whitefield intended to answer that call (Heitzenrater 74). Just as important to his decision as his pretensions to a divine call was the fact that William Seward, a stockjobber converted under Whitefield’s preaching, had run several advertisements in the Daily Advertiser, beginning on 19 September 1737, proclaiming Whitefield’s courageous mission to the public. The text of this first advertisement informed readers that the “Rev. Mr. Whitefield, a young Gentleman of distinguish’d piety, very eminent in his Profession, and a considerable fortune, will go voluntarily to preach the Gospel in Georgia” (Lambert Pedlar 53, 61; Inventing 100-1). Wesley’s and Whitefield’s printer at the time, the evangelical convert James Hutton, remarked that Seward’s advertisements had led to a precipitous rise in Whitefield’s reputation throughout England. This construction of a public self using print, the portrayal of Whitefield as a devoted preacher who was sacrificing his own interests, both professional and personal, to travel to Georgia, turned the tables on Wesley during his absence. Three years earlier, before his failed Georgia mission, Wesley had been the more prominent figure in Oxford. Now he found his reputation eclipsed by a younger, less educated, less socially accomplished, deacon who had, as yet, done very little real spadework by comparison.

In spite of the Wesley brothers’ opinion that the use of newspaper advertisements to puff one’s ministry was “tasteless,” Whitefield took Seward to America as his “chief reporter and press agent” to oversee a deployment of the same advertising strategy that had worked so well in England (Lambert Pedlar 54, 57). During his absence, Whitefield kept a journal of his activities on and off ship which he sent in manuscript back to James Hutton for private distribution among his friends (“Preface” iii). Whitefield’s popularity was increased even further when a copy of this manuscript fell into the hands of rival printer Thomas Cooper. Cooper immediately set about printing it as an inexpensive thirty-three page pamphlet with the price of six pence printed on the title page. Not surprisingly, James Hutton felt cheated by Cooper and, after consulting with several unnamed friends of Whitefield still in England, decided to proceed with an edition of his own in August 1738. Hutton eventually gained control over the text by offering Cooper a cash payment in exchange for the remainder of his copies (Lambert Pedlar 77-8). Although Hutton did not arrive at his decision to publish that summer alone, Lambert does not speculate about who Whitefield’s encouraging
“friends” may have been. Seward would seem the most likely candidate except for the fact that he was with Whitefield in America. Instead, circumstantial evidence points toward the involvement of the Wesleys in this momentous decision. Despite Whitefield’s refusal to follow John Wesley’s earlier advice to cancel his trip to Georgia, their major disagreement over the doctrine of predestination had yet to take place.

Hutton, for his part, was well acquainted with the Wesleys and had recently published, among other things, John Wesley’s *A Collection of Forms and Prayer for Every Day of the Week*. Finally, and perhaps most persuasively, the second and third parts of Whitefield’s journals, both published by Hutton and sold at the *Bible & Sun*, include two dedicatory poems to George Whitefield authored by Charles Wesley. Like the text of the journals themselves, these benedictions contribute to Whitefield’s public image as a selfless preacher called by God to heroic acts of piety. A few stanzas from the third journal will suffice to make the point:

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BROTHER in Christ, and well belov’d,
Attend, and add thy Pray’r to mine;
As Aaron call’d, yet inly mov’d,
To minister to Things divine.

Faithful, and often own’d of God,
Vessel of Grace, by Jesus us’d;
Stir up the Gift on thee bestow’d,
The Gift by hallow’d Hands transfus’d.

Fully thy heavenly Mission prove,
And make thy own Election sure;
Rooted in Faith, and Hope, and Love,
Active to work, and firm t’endure. (iii)
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Whatever involvement the Wesleys may have had in coaxing these authorized editions of Whitefield’s journals to market, they constituted a major rhetorical advance over Seward’s earlier newspaper advertisements. Already known to the public, Whitefield’s journals allowed him to interpret the events of his private life and ministry to a wider

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45 Hutton wrote, “Had I (to whom alone Mr. W. gave Authority to print, what his Friends should think proper) been advised to publish this Journal, all Names would certainly have been left out, with those less material Circumstances which manifest the Persons: And it was at the earnest Sollicitation [sic] of several of Mr. W’s Friends that I determined to print the whole, lest something should be trump’d up for a Voyage from London to Gibraltar”
reading public in a sustained narrative that, written in the first person, would increase the reader’s sense of intimacy. Between 1738 and 1741, Whitefield published seven separate journals in dozens of separate impressions (Lambert *Pedlar* 78). The Wesley brothers must certainly have watched as Whitefield’s popularity and cultural capital rose ever higher, as readers imbibed what for Whitefield must have soon become a deliberate act of self fashioning for public consumption. And yet, although he became his own publisher when Hutton refused to print any more Methodist literature after embracing Moravianism in 1741, Whitefield’s considerable energies were never systematically channeled into the market for print (Lambert *Pedlar* 88-9; *Inventing* 94, 99). Wesley, on the other hand, was obsessed with publishing and soon set about beating Whitefield at his own game.46

Wesley’s first publication, *A Collection of Forms and Prayer for Every Day of the Week*, appeared anonymously in 1733. The following year his name appeared in print for the first time, not on a text he authored, but on the title page of an edition of *A Treatise on Christian Prudence* “Extracted from Mr. NORRIS. / By JOHN WESLEY, M.A. / Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxon.” The rendering of his own name in large type across two separate lines is suggestive of Wesley’s cultural intention to appropriate this text as its editor and publisher. Wesley always maintained that his aim in publishing extractions or abridgements of this sort was to simplify texts for wider audiences and render them less expensive by making them shorter. But his publishing strategies did more than open up wider markets for inexpensive printed commodities. As Wesley’s name became at least as closely associated with these texts as the names of the original authors—a process hastened by his frequent omission of the names of the original authors altogether—his own stores of cultural capital began to grow.47 By continually reinvesting that capital back into the market for printed commodities in later years, Wesley was able to expand his catalogue dramatically, take on larger and larger

46 “Unlike Whitefield,” Dee Andrews notes, “Wesley primed his followers’ appetite for preacher’s lives, accounts of travel to the margins of Christendom, and ‘remarkable’ conversions with a steady stream of popular publications. Volumes of sermons, letters, controversial tracts, Christian histories, magazines, popular treatises, advice books, and hymnbooks poured forth from the presses of the Wesleys’ publishers” (27).

47 Henry Abelove remarks, “Not once did Wesley reprint anything by any author without either redoing it or removing the author’s name from the title page. Often he did both” (85).
publishing projects, and make the consumption of print central to Methodist practices of piety (Burton 248-9).

Much of this seems to have come naturally to the young clergymen. As early as 1730, Wesley had already begun to show a natural inclination to function as an interpreter and consecrator of texts written by others in his ministrations as a member of the Holy Club. In addition to lending small sums of money to free debtors from confinement, purchase clothing, or pay for medical care, Wesley and his cohorts also attempted to convince the objects of their charity of the “Necessity of being Scholars” while advising them about what books to read; giving them free copies of bibles, prayer books, and devotional literature; and, just as importantly, following up to make sure those books had been read and properly understood (xi-xii, Burton 79-80). A year after the appearance of Norris’s Treatise, Wesley published his second abridgement, an edition of Thomas à Kempis’s perennially popular The Christian’s Pattern; or, a Treatise of the Imitation of Christ. In addition to including his own name in large type on the title page as he had done previously, Wesley further underscored the importance of his role as editor and cultural authority by including a lengthy preface in which he provided a description of the text and guidance to the reader on its correct interpretation.

By the time Wesley’s dispute with Whitefield over predestination became public in 1739, he had added to his abridgements of Norris and Kempis only a small handful of additional sermons and a collection of letters written by his father to Nathaniel Hoole entitled Advice to a Young Clergyman (Andrews 24-31, Burton 248-50). However much they may have hinted at greater things to come, these texts as yet provided Wesley with only a trickle of cultural capital when laid against the cataract of public interest that Whitefield’s enormously popular journals had generated. The latter taught readers to value Whitefield’s public self as they negotiated intimately hagiographic narratives describing his struggles crossing the Atlantic, his work distributing books to the poor, his dedication to sheltering orphaned children, and his capacity to draw enormous crowds of people to Christ wherever he went. Although evidence of Wesley’s involvement in encouraging Hutton to publish Whitefield’s first journal is

48 Whitefield also made frequent reference in his journals to distributing literature. Unlike Wesley, however, he rarely mentioned helping those readers to understand what they read.
circumstantial, subsequent developments show that he was not inattentive to the cultural benefits such publications yielded. In 1740, Wesley followed Whitefield’s example by publishing the first installment of his own journal using Bristol printers Samuel and Felix Farley. In a subtle suggestion that he did so in order to counter Whitefield’s popularity, while generating some of his own cultural capital, Wesley included on the title page a scripture verse often cited in arguments with Calvinists: “What shall we say then?—That Israel which follow’d after the Law of Righteousness, hath not attained to the Law of Righteousness.—Wherefore? Because they sought it not by Faith, but as it were by the Works of the Law” (Rm. 9.30-1).49

Vicki Tolar Burton, in her 2008 study Spiritual Literacy in John Wesley’s Methodism, provides the fullest scholarly treatment to date of the rhetorical purpose Wesley’s journals were calculated to serve as public documents. Although Wesley had kept a diary since 1725 for the “shaping, monitoring, and evaluating his inner life,” Wesley’s published journals served a very different public end as apologetic and self-fashioning documents (Burton 75). Published journals allowed Wesley, as they had Whitefield before him, to assign meaning to the events of his life in an intimate and extended narrative, address the chorus of complaints his unorthodox ministry invited, and open a space for him to praise those individuals he deemed exemplars of holy living (Burton 103). Importantly, Wesley also used his journals, like Whitefield, to construct a public self characterized by traits of piety, sincerity, tirelessness, and orthodoxy. In his preface to the first published journal, Wesley excuses himself, exactly as Whitefield had done before him, for troubling the world “with any of my little Affairs.” The preface of Wesley’s second journal draws a rhetorical connection between the slanders made against him and the slanders made against Christ:

1. That Men revile me and say all Manner of Evil against me, that I am become as it were a Monster unto many, that the Zealous of almost every Denomination cry out, Away with such a Fellow from the Earth: This gives me, with regard to myself, no Degree of Uneasiness. For I know the Scripture must be fulfill’d. If

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49 See An Extract of the Rev. Mr. John Wesley’s Journal From his Embarking for Georgia To his Return to London. Bristol: Printed by S. and F. Farley, [1740]. For more on Wesley and his lifelong dispute with Calvinists over the relationship between faith and works see Hempton Methodism and Politics 31ff.
they have call’d the Master of the House Beelzebub, how much more him of his Household? But it does give me a Concern, with regard to those, who by this Artifice of the Devil, are prevented from hearing that Word, which is able to save their Souls.

2. For the sake of these, and indeed of all who desire to hear the Truth of those Things which have been so variously related, I have been induc’d to publish this farther Account: And I doubt not but it will even hence appear, to all candid and impartial Judges, That I have hitherto liv’d in all good Conscience toward God. (ii-iv) 

A close reading of these two paragraphs reveal much about Wesley’s textual strategies and the rhetorical function he expected his journal to serve. He begins with an acknowledgement that in some quarters his reputation is a poor one. By the end of the second paragraph, however, he has positioned himself as one who lives “in all good Conscience toward God.” The calumnies of his detractors he would, he claims, silently bear if they harmed only him. But they also harm members of his intended audience by depriving them not only of the Gospel, but also an opportunity to “hear the Truth”—the truth about Christ as well as the truth about Wesley. As Burton observes of the journals as a whole, “Wesley was clearly trying to create for himself and his friends an ethos of unimpeachable virtue” (80). To the extent that he was successful, Wesley’s self-fashioned image enhanced his reputation and contributed to his cultural capital.

Although the earliest editions of Wesley’s published journals did not sell as well as Whitefield’s, each of the first two going through only a single impression before the end of 1740, their low price, the plainness of their style, and Wesley’s own genius for organization, eventually transformed them into enduring popular commodities in Britain and America (Burton 94).

As Wesley’s movement grew, and his powers of cultural production became more entrenched, it became clear that a warehouse and an infrastructure for the distribution of books and pamphlets would be necessary. Just before he published his first journal, Wesley relocated the headquarters of his movement from Fetter Lane to the site of a former royal foundry for cannon, and constructed large premises to house meeting rooms, a school, guest rooms, a stable, coach house, as well as living quarters.

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50 See An Extract of the Rev. Mr. John Wesley’s Journal From February 1 1737-8. To his Return from Germany. London: Printed by W. Strahan, 1740.
for himself (Heitzenrater 109-110). The Foundry, as it became known, also served as the site of Wesley’s first Book Room and became “the model for other preaching-houses [which] all contained shelves for the books, pamphlets, and tracts” (Cumbers 16). As Methodist preaching houses began to dot the British countryside in the following decades, they became a convenient means for supplying a small army of preachers, who also functioned as colporteurs, with inexpensive literature that continually reinforced Wesley’s role as interpreter and publisher of texts within the movement. When laying down a rule for all his preachers, moreover, Wesley insisted they “Read the most useful Books and that regularly and constantly. Steadily spend all the Morning in this Employ, or at least, five hours in four and twenty.” Those disinclined to the practice of reading were advised to “[…] Contract a taste for it by use, or return to your trade.” To those preachers too poor to purchase their own books Wesley’s promised to “give each of you as fast as you will read them, books to the value of five pounds.” Preachers were also adjured to “6. To take care that every Society is supplied with Books: particularly with Kempis, Instructions for Children, and the Primitive Physic, which ought to be in every House: O why is not this regarded?” (MSC 21, 22, 28; Burton 235; Shepherd 83). By legislating that all his followers, preachers and auditors alike, read, Wesley created a powerful market demand for printed commodities within his movement—a demand that his own position in the field of cultural production as author, editor, and publisher was calculated to meet. Although Wesley’s purest intention by occupying all these positions simultaneously may have been, as he observed in his journal, to render texts “more useful to all and more intelligible to ordinary readers” (5.296), the continued reinvestment of his growing cultural capital back into the market by appropriating, printing, and distributing an expanding list of titles, inevitably helped to consolidate that market while also generating enormous amounts of money.

Perhaps it is no coincidence that Wesley’s first printed catalogue, consisting of ten separate items, appeared on the final page of the first printed edition of his self-fashioning journal in 1740. All titles, the catalogue begins, “Lately Publish’d, By the Rev. Mr. John and Charles Wesleys [sic] are available for purchase at Wesley’s Foundry, at James Hutton’s shop, and at a Mr. Lewis’s shop in Bartholomew-Close.” The first two items listed are collections of hymns compiled by Wesley and his brother, followed by the first two volumes of Wesley’s journals, an anthology of prayers compiled by Wesley, two original sermons by Wesley, and new abridgements of works by William
Law, August Hermann Francke, and a variety of homilies penned by Church of England clergymen, also edited by Wesley. Missing are the earlier editions of Wesley’s abridgements of Norris, Kempis, and his father’s Advice to a Young Clergyman. This might be taken as some indication of Wesley’s early success in the market. In any event, the only commonality shared by all the texts in Wesley’s first catalogue, apart from their religious character, is Wesley’s own cultural imprimatur as author, editor, abridger, and publisher. Steadily those readers who made up his market began to perceive Wesley’s abridgements not as diminished copies of the originals, but as less expensive equivalents that carried the added attraction of Wesley’s blessing as chief cultural legislator within his movement. Thus “Once a text had been collected or extracted,” Vicki Burton observes, “ownership of the text as intellectual property seemed unimportant to Wesley” (247). As the claims of the original authors receded in importance, Wesley’s powers of cultural production grew so pronounced that by the mid-1740s his imprimatur came to rival, and in some instances surpass, the cultural distinction conferred on a printed text by its original author’s name. His 1743 edition of William Law’s Practical Treatise on Christian Perfection, for example, omits authorial attribution entirely, simply reading: “Extracted from a late Author/By JOHN WESLEY, M.A.” The title page of his 1744 edition of Law’s Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life, priced at two shillings, is laid out in exactly the same manner.51

That same year Wesley also published a four-volume collection of poetry in which he included abridgements of the works of dozens of prominent English poets without troubling to mention any of their names (Shepherd 89). A catalogue inserted in the third volume of this set suggests that by this time Wesley was directing the bulk of his literary energies toward producing abridgements rather than original works. In addition to the same mix of hymns, sermons, and journals in his first catalogue, this catalogue also includes new abridgements of titles by John Bunyan, Thomas à Kempis,

51 First published in 1728, Law’s Serious Call was a sensation in its time, affecting not only evangelicals such as the Wesleys and Whitefield, but also the (at the time) irreligious Samuel Johnson who suffered so severe and prolonged a spiritual depression after reading it that modern biographers have anachronistically applied the term “nervous breakdown” to convey a sense to the modern reader of its profound impact. See Meyers’s 2008 biography Samuel Johnson: The Struggle 41, 43-4.
Jonathan Edwards, and Jean Baptiste Saint-Jure (also known as Monsieur de Renty). Not surprisingly, Wesley’s name appears on each title page in a place of equal prominence with the name of the original author. In the following years, moreover, as Wesley’s cultural appropriation of texts came to mean more to readers than the circumstances of their composition, Wesley began to omit the names of original authors with increasing frequency. When he opened Kingswood School in 1748, for example, he compiled every textbook in the curriculum by abstracting material from dozens of authors without acknowledgment (Matthews 25). The commercial success Wesley continued to enjoy in light of such practices points to the mutually reinforcing character of his religious movement and his market for printed commodities. By conditioning his followers in printed sermons, journals, prefaces, and polity documents to place the highest of premiums on the cultural value his imprimatur conferred on a text, his editions became prized above those of other publishers, and his own position at the centre of his movement’s field of cultural production ever more secure.

The scope of Wesley’s next major publishing project—one that Frank Lambert calls a “Reader’s Digest of theology for the masses”—suggests that he was both aware of his growing cultural capital and anxious to test its limits in the market. “Never before,” Lambert observes, “had anyone attempted on such a grand scale to acquaint men and women in the lower and middling social orders with ‘a galaxy of the noblest men the Christian church had ever had’” (Inventing 99). To carry off such a project Wesley risked more than cultural capital alone. As the set’s publisher he also bore the bulk of the financial risk. To test the waters, Felix Farley printed the first and last of the projected fifty-volume set in 1749. Consisting of abridgements selected and introduced by Wesley, these volumes appeared in duodecimo format under the title A Christian Library. Consisting Of Extracts from the Abridgements of The Choicest Pieces of Practical Divinity, Which have been publish’d in the English Tongue. Wesley’s own name, of course, also featured prominently on the title pages. When it was completed six years later, it

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52 Wesley’s early penchant for abridging and publishing Catholic authors, including Thomas a Kempis, Jean Baptiste Saint-Jure, Francis de Sales, and Francis Fenelon contributed in part to early accusations that Methodists were closet Roman Catholic and Jacobite sympathizers. This suspicion led George Lavington, Bishop of Exeter, to publish Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared. Ironically, this also led to accusations of disloyalty of the same kind faced by Methodist itinerants in Upper Canada, particularly after the War of 1812. See Hempton Methodism and Politics 31-43 for a discussion of these accusations and their legacy throughout the nineteenth century.
contained twenty thousand pages which contained Wesley’s abridgements of some 120 works by 88 different authors. Despite its size, its small format helped to make it both portable and affordable. Wesley also bolstered its success in the market by requiring that his preachers read from it daily while travelling on horseback. As he had done so often elsewhere, Wesley used the preface to reinforce his powers of cultural production by establishing himself as an authoritative interpreter of the best religious texts:

3. Hence we have in English as great a variety of books, on every branch of Religion, as is to be found, (I believe it may be said) in any language under Heaven. And this variety has been abundantly increas’d, particularly in the present age, by numerous translations from all languages, antient as well as modern. So that were a man to spend fourscore years, with the most indefatigable application, he could go but a little way, toward reading over what has been publish’d in our own tongue, within these last hundred and fifty-years.

4. But this very plenty creates difficulty. One who desired to make the best of a short life, is lost among five hundred folios, and knows not where to begin. He cannot read all, and would willingly read those only that will best reward his labour. But who will point out these? Who will give him a clew, whereby he may guide himself thro this labyrinth? (1.ii)

Who, indeed, but Wesley himself? And yet, although no one could deny that he had read almost everything he could get his hands on with “the most indefatigable application” since his Oxford days, by 1749 Wesley knew that he remained far too young to have devoted even the futile “fourscore years” necessary to make a start “toward reading over what ha[d] been publish’d.” Practical objections of this kind, however, evaporated in the intensity of Wesley’s rhetoric. After all, Wesley was not putting forward his flesh-and-blood self, but his print-fashioned public self to act as unerring interpreter and guide “thro this labyrinth.”

It would be easy to take Wesley’s claim that he lost £200 in this venture as evidence that he had at last overreached himself. But it is important not to confuse

53 After the initial two volumes Farley printed eleven more in 1751 (2-12), seven in 1752 (13-19), fourteen in 1753 (20-33), eight in 1754 (34-41), and eight in 1755 (42-49). Before the Farley edition was complete, Bristol printer William Pine began to publish a second edition in 1751 that he completed in 1760. A third edition soon issued from the shop of the Burlington printer Isaac Collins.
financial losses with the loss of cultural capital. After all, Wesley was in a position to mandate the reading of the *Christian Library* among his followers, who, perhaps for reasons of expense, may have shared volumes among themselves rather than purchase individual copies for private use. Poor sales of the *Christian Library*, then, do not necessarily indicate that Wesley’s public self was substantially diminished by this loss. Indeed, these financial losses were accompanied by no discernable pause in the rate at which he continued to publish new material. A catalogue of Wesley’s books published in a 1758 edition of *A Preservative Against Unsettled Notions in Religion* contains a list of 154 separate items, including more abridgements, collections of tracts sold in bulk lots of one hundred, all the textbooks in use at Kingswood School, an additional section for young readers, as well as Wesley’s own *Complete English Dictionary* first published in 1753—two years before the first volume of Johnson’s much larger and more expensive *Dictionary* appeared. By 1789, the same year Wesley offered his grudging approval to John Dickins as America’s first book steward, the catalogue of London Book Room titles published in the December issue of Wesley’s *Arminian Magazine* numbered 265 separate items, including Wesley’s antirevolutionary *Calm Address to our American Colonies* as well as engraved and “Mezzotinto” prints of Wesley himself. According to Vicki Burton, by the time of Wesley’s death in 1791, his press “was the owner of approximately 351 titles and 254,512 book volumes worth nearly £4,000, as recorded in the inventory taken at the Book Room” (235). Henry Abelove has calculated that, even using the most conservative figures available, Wesley’s annual income from the sale of books and periodicals equaled that of at least eight, and perhaps as many as eighteen, Church of England bishoprics combined (9).

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54 A catalogue of Wesley’s books published in an 1758 edition of *A Preservative Against Unsettled Notions in Religion* indicates that volumes of the *Christian Library* were sold either singly or as a set at a price of 2s 6d per volume.

55 Wesley required his preachers to rise at four, “to read in order, with much Prayer, first the Christian Library, and the other Books which we have published in prose and verse, and then those which we recommend in the Rules of Kingswood School (MSC 21).

56 Textual practices, according to Wesley’s *Dictionary*, are the essential characteristics that define a Methodist as “one who lives according to the method laid down in the bible” (87).

57 See Appendix B of Burton’s study for a transcription of Wesley’s book inventory taken in April 1791 (315-339).
Wesley’s tireless exertions on behalf of Methodism, his fastidious oversight of its polity, and his unyielding control of its print culture, meant that the decades following his death were particularly hard ones for British Methodists. Although Methodism continued to attract followers throughout these years, the movement was beset by serious financial difficulties. Senior preachers vied for position, accusations of financial misconduct proliferated, and doctrinal controversy erupted. The 1795 Plan of Pacification, narrowly adopted as a compromise between those who wished to administer the sacrament in Wesleyan chapels and those who wished to remain entirely within the Church of England, almost split the movement. David Hempton calls it remarkable that this dispute did not “produce a major secession” (Methodism and Politics 64). But schism soon followed regardless. Irish preacher Alexander Kilham’s crusade for lay rights resulted in a flurry of charges that the Methodist leadership was corrupt, that the Book Committee in particular was complicit in this corruption, and that Methodist preachers were behaving like “begging friars” and “whining canting Jesuits” (Hempton “A Tale of Preachers” 125). Although Kilham’s formal expulsion from Conference in 1796 helped to consolidate the majority of Methodists in their conservatism, the following year Kilham formed his own Methodist New Connection and drew away about 5% of Britain’s Methodists (Hempton Methodism and Politics 67-73). Meanwhile, difficulties with an increasingly besieged and defensive Church of England continued in the decades following Kilham’s secession as a struggle took place over the role that revivalism should play in efforts to attract new followers, what limits should be set on its use, and even how the first American revivalist preacher, “Crazy” Lorenzo Dow, should be contained after he arrived in Liverpool in 1805 (Hempton Methodism and Politics 94, Hatch 50).59

However important it may have been to solve problems touching directly on doctrine and polity, the ongoing cultivation of Wesley’s enormous residual cultural capital was at least as consequential to the future welfare of Methodism. Without it, British Methodists would have no practicable way to continue generating the financial

58 Two exceptions to this general expansion came in the years 1800 and 1801 when a decline of .99% and 2% in membership was recorded. These two years, though unaccompanied by major controversy or the emergence of new secessionist movements, were the two worst for British Methodists before the mid-nineteenth century (Hempton Methodism and Politics 74).

59 For more on Dow’s controversial ministry in America see Hatch 36-7, 130-3.
capital they needed to maintain their place in the market. As the gradual growth in size and diversity of Wesley’s catalogues over the previous fifty years attested, his successes did not flow in the first instance from simply the mechanical ability to publish commodities on a large enough scale to lower the material costs of production, but from his power to invest those commodities with symbolic status using his cultural capital as an editor and guide to stimulate market demand. Like any other publisher, moreover, the more successful Wesley became at reinvesting his cultural capital in the market, the greater his powers of cultural production became. Even from beyond the grave, Wesley’s silent imprimatur on the title pages of his works and abridgements promised to yield the same benefits provided his reputation as a religious leader remained undiminished. Thus it is not surprising that the publication of Wesley’s official biography became a chief locus of dispute among his followers after 1791. Just as Wesley’s physicians had tended his body, so his posthumous biographers now had charge of that public self Wesley had so carefully constructed in journals, prefaces, and other publications in earlier decades. Unlike Wesley’s body, however, his public self remained a living text that could be further enhanced or injured at their hands. Either way the consequences of this commodification of Wesley’s reputation in print would have long term consequences for both the religious movement and the publishing infrastructure he left behind.

Within fifteen years of Wesley’s death three biographies, all hagiographical in tone, were listed for purchase in the London Book Room’s official catalogue: John Whitehead’s “Sermon on Wesley’s Death,” an anonymous “Account of Mr. Wesley’s Sickness and Death”, probably also by Whitehead, and Thomas Coke’s and Henry Moore’s much more popular Life of Mr. Wesley. Ironically, John Whitehead, a physician and sometime Methodist preacher, had attended both Charles and John Wesley at their deathbeds and preached the latter’s funeral sermon at the City-Road Chapel. Whitehead was also the executor of Wesley’s will and had received the latter’s blessing to write his official biography (Stevenson 377-8). But by the time Whitehead’s authorized biography appeared in two volumes between 1793 and 1796 under the imposing title The Life of the Rev. John Wesley: Collected from his Private Papers and Printed Works, and Written at the Request of his Executors, it had already been scooped by Thomas Coke’s and Henry Moore’s Life of Mr. Wesley. Printed in London numerous times throughout 1792 and available at “all the Methodist Preaching-Houses in Town and
Country,“ the work drew Whitehead’s ire and occasioned a published letter of protest authored by the official biographer and John Annesley Colet in 1792. Interestingly, Colet had also published a short thirty-two page biography of Wesley in 1791, almost before Wesley’s body was cold, under the title An Impartial Review of the Life and Writings, Public and Private Character, of the Late Rev. Mr. John Wesley. Interspersed with a Variety of Curious, Entertaining, and Authentic, Anecdotes. To Which will be Added, a Copy of his Last Will and Testament, with Strictures and Remarks. Colet’s title suggests that he was probably given access to at least some of Wesley’s papers by Whitehead. Although Colet’s short biography and Whitehead’s subsequent two-volume work were not in any way hostile to the interests of Methodism, Coke’s and Moore’s biography seems to have been the clear and enduring favourite from the time of its first appearance. In the Book Room’s 1805 catalogue, for example, the Coke and Moore biography is headed with the injunction “Should not every Methodist possess a Life of Mr. Wesley, and do we not by this very low price put it into their power?” Because this is in fact the only biography offered for sale, what is really meant here is not “a Life of Mr. Wesley” but “the Life of Mr. Wesley.”

The composition of the London Book Room’s catalogues after Wesley’s death demonstrates the extent to which British Methodists continued to rely on their founder’s cultural capital throughout the following decades. Their reluctance to stray very far from those items that Wesley had either written, abridged, or approved, is easy to discern. A catalogue published by the Book Room in 1805, for example, lists 256 separate bibliographic items among which 88 are identifiable as Wesley’s original works. These include Wesley’s popular journal in five volumes, two of his histories of Methodism, and his complete biblical commentaries. Added to these are fifteen separate collections of hymns by Wesley and his brother Charles, organized along various theological themes and collected under the heading “Poetical” works. Materiality is also an important indicator of status and Wesley’s annotated New Testament, in 24s, is offered in calf alongside a less expensive New Testament in sheep without Wesley’s annotations. In addition to these offerings, there are a further 26 works written by authors that had been abridged and published by Wesley, both in the Christian Library

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60 Whitehead was interpreted by some as critical of the Methodist hierarchy (Osgood 326).
and as separate works, including texts by Joseph Alleine, Richard Baxter, John Bunyan, Jonathan Edwards, Thomas à Kempis, William Law, John Milton, John Norris, Henry Scougal, Isaac Watts, and Edward Young. Methodist authors that Wesley approved, published, and invested with symbolic status during his own lifetime, including John Fletcher,61 Joseph Benson,62 and Thomas Coke,63 round out the vast majority of the offerings. These texts, whether authored, abridged, or simply published by Wesley, continued to draw much of their symbolic value from their status as objects of Wesley’s consecrating influence. More than a generation later, many of these same texts continued to dominate the Book Room’s catalogues.64 In the spring of 1850, almost sixty years after Wesley’s death, long-serving Methodist book steward John Mason issued a large catalogue of 24 pages comprising separate sections for periodicals, hymnbooks, books, pamphlets, engravings, and juvenile titles. Although in the intervening years a handful of new British Methodist authors had risen to prominence, most notably Richard Watson and Adam Clarke, Wesley’s own works and the works of those authors he abridged or published during his lifetime continued to occupy a dominant place in John Mason’s catalogues even at this late date. Thus the Book Room remained at the

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61 Described by one critic as “the most charming of all Wesley’s followers” (Shepherd 177), his Checks to Antinomianism appears over and over again in catalogues, booksellers’ lists, and courses of study on both sides of the Atlantic. Wesley began exchanging letters with Fletcher in 1755 and met him after his ordination in 1757. Fletcher was eventually designated by Wesley as his official successor and was appointed to the presidency of Lady Huntingdon’s unofficial Methodist college at Trevecca in 1768. Lady Huntingdon, together with George Whitefield, led the Calvinist arm of Methodism that coexisted with Wesley’s Arminian Methodism in relative peace until Wesley published his now famous anti-Calvinist Minutes in 1770. In that year Fletcher chose sides and left Trevecca to ally himself with Wesleyan Methodism (Vulliamy 256, 298-301). Fletcher’s influential Checks to Antinomianism first appeared as a result of this controversy in series of letters between 1771 and 1773 (Shepherd 178). Although Fletcher was the younger of the two men, Wesley eventually had the unhappy chore of preaching his funeral sermon when he died of consumption in 1785.

62 Joseph Benson, like Fletcher, was also involved with Lady Huntingdon’s school at Trevecca and resigned as headmaster when the “Calvinist controversy” erupted. As an analysis of subsequent catalogues will show, Benson’s works also retained a degree of elevated status within transatlantic Methodist textual communities for decades to come. Benson continued to publish popular works after Wesley’s death. Shepherd describes him as “one of the soundest Biblical scholars of his day” (144-5). That Benson’s sermons were offered separately or bound in lettered calf (49)—a distinction shared only with Wesley in this catalogue (8,9) and obviously calculated to put them within reach of poor and rich alike—is a clear indication of his status even at this early date.

63 In addition to being Wesley’s most popular biographer, Thomas Coke occupied a prominent place of authority in the Methodist hierarchy in Britain and America. In 1786 he also published An Address to the Pious and Benevolent, Proposing an Annual Subscription of Missionaries that resulted in his receiving the epithet “Father of Methodist Missions” (Cracknell and White 69, Thomas 143).

64 See, for example, John Mason’s 1838 Valuable Books Published by J. Mason, 14, City-Road; and sold at 66, Paternoster-Row (Methodist Archives Drew University).
center of British Methodist cultural production throughout the first half of the
nineteenth century by continuing to rely almost exclusively on Wesley’s residual
cultural capital rather than by developing new market strategies to ensure the sale of its
printed commodities.⁶⁵

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The situation in America by the middle of the nineteenth century was quite
different. Next to John Mason’s 1850 catalogue of 24 pages the Methodist Book Concern
could lay its own 185 page *Classification and Descriptive Catalogue of Books and Tracts,*
*published for the Methodist Episcopal Church* published in 1851. As Candy Brown notes,
the success of the Concern in the American market for religious books and periodicals
was unprecedented: “Judged by financial criteria, the New York Book Concern, by far
the largest Methodist publishing house, succeeded well beyond any other
denominational publisher. According to Book Concern statistics, in the forty years
before 1848, 650,000 Methodists purchased $600,000 in books” (53). According to
Nathan Hatch, by the middle decades of the nineteenth century the Methodist Book
Concern had grown not only to surpass the London Book Room in reach and influence,
but every other publishing competitor whether commercial, denominational, or
interdenominational, to become “the largest publishing house in the world” (204). With
more than a dozen power presses; an in-house bindery; stereotyping equipment; four
successful periodicals including the *Christian Advocate,* one of the largest circulating
weeklies in the world; virtually no debt; and a distribution system that extended up to
and even beyond the limits of white settlement in North America, its continental
dominance was assured. The Concern’s enormous success reflected not only the
institutional growth of Methodism in America, which surpassed its British counterpart
in absolute numbers within the first few years of the nineteenth century, but also the
efficacy of an innovative rhetorical strategy for setting the products of the Methodist
Book Concern apart from those of other commercial and religious publishers and

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⁶⁵ For more on the London Book Room’s general lack of progress in the decades following Wesley’s death
see Matthews’s *Methodism and the Education of the People* 172-3.
insulating its denominational market far more effectively than emergent copyright laws in the United States promised to do.\textsuperscript{66}

The root cause of the eventual disparity between the London Book Room and the New York Methodist Book Concern can be traced, in part, to the fact that Wesley’s death in 1791 was less consequential for Methodists in America than in Britain. David Hempton notes that in Britain, “Methodism’s self-image became more fragile when Wesley’s guiding hand was removed after a half-century of pragmatism and unresolved problems” (Methodism and Politics 58). After Wesley’s death, these Methodists were left to determine how their movement would be governed, in what form their relationship to the Church of England would continue, how an expanding corps of preachers would be financed, and on what terms the production of Methodist literature would continue. Before the final decade of the eighteenth century all these questions had already been answered in America. By 1784, Francis Asbury had succeeded Wesley as the undisputed leader of American Methodists and a system of annual, and, after 1790, quadrennial conferences for governance had been established; the Revolutionary War had made questions around an ongoing connection with the Church of England irrelevant; and preachers were given a fixed salary rather than, as in Britain, compensated for expenses in a way that invited abuses.\textsuperscript{67} Just as importantly, in

\textsuperscript{66} For a chart of Methodism’s membership statistics in the United States, Britain, and Ireland see Hempton Empire 216. By 1805 the total number of Methodists in America (119,945) surpassed those in Britain (108,662) for the first time. It has gone unremarked by Methodist historians that the precipitous rise in Methodist membership in America directly coincided with an aggressive expansion in the rate of denominational publishing under Ezekiel Cooper during these years. Meredith McGill provides a useful overview of the different assumptions behind copyright law in Britain and America during the first half of the nineteenth century in the first chapter of her 2003 study American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1834-1853 (45-75). It is enough, for the purposes of the present argument, that the Concern’s agents (like most other publishers before 1820) rarely sought formal legal remedies when its titles were pirated by others. Literary scholars and historians of the book have had some difficulty accounting for the widespread reluctance of American authors to exercise their legal rights in the early republic. The Concern’s reasons are more obvious. Because the 1790 Federal Copyright Act afforded no protection to publishers for editions of works authored by British writers—texts that dominated the Concern’s catalogue throughout the first half of the nineteenth century—the courts offered no remedy for piracy. See Amory and Hall “Afterword” 477-8 and Davidson Revolution and the Word 35-6.

\textsuperscript{67} The system of compensation had worked well for Wesley but, as Methodist preachers became more socially ambitious, jealousy was engendered and a form of anti-clericalism began to grow up. This was exploited by, among others, by secessionist Alexander Kilham (Hempton Methodism and Politics 71, Hatch 91). Hempton writes elsewhere that “among Methodists there seems to be no American equivalent of the sheer volume of suspicion, criticism, and unwillingness to contribute [financially] that infected a sizeable proportion of the Methodist community in England in the period of 1780-1830.” Among the reasons for this Hempton cites the absence of established churches in the United States, subtle differences in attitudes
1787—the same year Asbury was styled a bishop much to Wesley’s dismay (Hatch 82)—Methodists in America began to develop their own rhetorical strategies for investing printed commodities with symbolic status that did not rely directly on the reputation of Wesley’s public self. The second part of this chapter will describe the expansion of Methodist printing in America beginning with the arrival of Robert Williams in 1769, Wesley’s actions to safeguard his cultural authority by placing a temporary interdict on the printing of Methodist texts by American printers, and the process by which American Methodists developed and extended a unique strategy for building their own store of cultural capital by equating patronage of the denominational publisher with the consumer’s broader denominational identity.

Wesley’s efforts to exercise the same measure of control over Methodist print culture in America that he did throughout much of Britain were complicated by a number of factors. The first and most obvious was the Atlantic itself. Wesley knew from his own crossing to Savannah in the 1730s that journeys overseas were invariably long and perilous. While the advent of the flying shuttle and the threshing machine may have promised to bring great changes on land, the power of the steam engine would not be applied to naval purposes until the nineteenth century. Until then, crossings would continue to depend almost entirely on the vagaries of the weather and even under the best conditions a sailing of less than two months was not to be expected. Thus Wesley found his authority attenuated by the fact that he could not hope to receive responses to his overseas letters in anything less than four months. Second, Wesley’s status as a Church of England clergyman, and his insistence that Methodists continue to receive the sacraments only from similarly ordained clergymen, counted for less in a region where Anglicanism, even before the Revolution, did not enjoy the same degree of prestige and privilege that it did in the mother country. Finally, as James Green describes, the growth of the market for printed commodities in America, a market that quadrupled in size between 1740 and 1770, was not unaccompanied by structural changes that precipitated an end to the dominance of British printers. In the earliest
years American printers, like English provincial printers, confined themselves primarily to producing texts of a local character that could not be imported from London. Soon, however, the reprint trade in Scotland and Ireland began to threaten the hegemony of London printers in America just as it did in parts of Britain (“English Books” 276-7). By the 1760s, as Green further notes, many of the printers emigrating to America, primarily from Scotland and Ireland at that time, were already accustomed to occupying roles in established reprint markets overseas. In 1769, four years after the controversial Stamp Act stirred anti-British sentiment in the colonies by placing a tax on print and paper, Robert Bell, a Glaswegian by birth who had operated a successful reprint and book auctioneering business in Dublin in the late 1750s and early 1760s, relocated to Philadelphia and reopened his reprint business there (ibid. 284-5). Bell’s inexpensive editions printed on American paper, together with the proliferation of nonimportation agreements organized in the wake of the Stamp Act, were seen by some as declarations of independence from the London book trade (ibid. 287). It is remarkable that Wesley’s status as Methodism’s chief interpreter and producer of texts was largely sufficient to counter these considerable forces until after the conclusion of the Revolutionary War.

The same year Robert Bell opened his Philadelphia shop Wesley sent his first official Methodist preachers to America in response to a repeated and “pressing call from our brethren at New York (who have built a preaching-house) to come over and help them” (Journals 5.333; Andrews 37). After collecting £50 from their fellow preachers at the annual Methodist conference, volunteers Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmore set sail for America on the Mary and Elizabeth with Wesley’s official sanction. Meanwhile, Welshman Robert Williams, a decidedly more controversial preacher, determined to make the same transatlantic voyage even without the financial support of the conference. When Wesley first encountered Williams in Ireland sometime in April 1765, he found the young preacher’s ecclesiology as repellant as he did his pulpit oratory

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68 As Dee Andrews notes, the death of George Whitefield in Massachusetts in 1770 marked the end of Whitefieldian Methodism in America and the beginning of a new era of Wesleyanism (31).

69 When Wesley had called for volunteers among his licensed preachers to travel to America in 1768 none but Williams, though Wesley declined to send him, stepped forward (Andrews 37).
adroit. Although Methodism was open to all regardless of religious affiliation, at times Wesley had difficulty hiding his dislike for the “dissenting” opinions of some. And Williams, as John Telford notes, was “a strong dissenter” (Letters 5.23). Nehemiah Curnock, the editor of Wesley’s Journals, even speculates that Williams was “so much a Dissenter that Wesley more than once put his initials only in the Minutes” (Journals 5.202). Shortly before Williams set sail for America, Wesley noted disparagingly that “There was a general love of the gospel [in Ireland] till simple R[obert] W[illiams] preached against the clergy. It is strange every one does not see (1) the sinfulness of railing at the clergy: if they are blind leaders of the blind, then (says our Lord) ‘Let them alone’; (2) the foolishness of it. It never can do good, and has frequently done much harm” (Journals 5.315-316). Yet, in spite of their differences, Wesley’s pragmatism compelled him to recognize Williams as one of the most effective Methodist preachers in Northern Ireland (Letters 5.47 n1). “What is become of Robert Williams?” Wesley asked of one of his preachers stationed there in 1766, “He is usually a reviver of the work wherever he comes. Let him and you go on hand in hand, and you will carry all before you” (Letters 5.23).

With no official backing, Williams was obliged to raise funds independently and relied on a sympathetic Dublin merchant to get the initial leg of his mission underway (Letters 5.47, Andrews 40). Jesse Lee, the first unofficial historian of Methodism in America and a man coincidently converted under Williams’s preaching (Letters 7.190), suggested Williams’s final departure was abrupt and chaotic. “He hurried,” Lee wrote, “down to the town near to which the ship lay, sold his horse to pay his debts, and taking his saddle-bags on his arm, set off for the ship, with a loaf of bread and a bottle of milk, and no money to pay his passage” (Lee 27). Williams’s haste delivered him to the American shore sometime in August 1769, about two months before the more ceremonious Boardman and Pilmore arrived. With his feet back on solid ground, Williams wasted no time in taking the pulpit at the meeting house that Methodist pioneer Philip Embury and his family had erected in New York the previous year.70 The following month, Williams found himself in Philadelphia where, though his traveling expenses were covered by the local Methodist society, his money began to run out.

70 For more on Embury as an early leader of American Methodism see Andrews 32-36.
Determined to find a way to sustain himself, Williams took matters into his own hands by hiring John Dunlap in early October 1769 to print three hundred duodecimo copies of Wesley’s *Hymns for the Nativity of Our Lord* from his own Bristol copy (Pilkington 26). First published by Wesley in 1744, the hymnbook had since become enormously popular. As Williams’s experience as a Methodist preacher in Ireland had no doubt taught him, no other book, not even the Bible, was as useful or as salable as a good portable hymnbook. As he filled his saddlebags with Dunlap’s unbound stitched edition, Williams must have also trusted to the proven fact that, though he could not rely on Wesley’s financial capital to see him through, the latter’s cultural capital would be enough to keep his own head above water for the time being.

With the ink on Williams’s American edition of Wesley’s hymnbook only just dry, Boardman and Pilmore finally arrived in New York on 24 October 1769. But they seemed in no hurry to track down their fellow preacher or to inquire about his activities. Indeed, their paths crossed only infrequently as Williams continued to use Wesley’s works to advance his own reputation as well as the interests of Methodism more generally. Within two weeks of landing, Wesley’s official preachers each

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71 John Dunlap established a printing office in Philadelphia sometime in 1767 though he did not begin printing materials that can be traced with any certainty back to his shop until 1768. By 1769 Dunlap seems to have been one of the most active printers in Philadelphia and continued to be so for several decades. A shrewd businessman, there is ample evidence that Dunlap took on printing jobs from all quarters. In addition to *Hymns for the Nativity of Our Lord*, for example, he also printed James Murray’s anti-Methodist *Sermons to Asses* in 1769 and 1770. Murray, a Newcastle Congregationalist minister and no friend to Methodists, attacked John and Charles Wesley (as well as George Whitefield) by name in this popular volume. None of this, however, discouraged the Methodists from returning to Dunlap in the following year to order a printing of Wesley’s duodecimo *Hymns and Spiritual Songs, intended for the use of Real Christians, of All Denominations* in 1770. Although there is no surviving record of the number of copies ordered, at 132 pages it represented a far more serious undertaking and likely would not have been printed in fewer than three-hundred copies given the labour involved in setting the type for a book this large. These hymnals, incidentally, like the Bristol copies from which they were taken, did not include musical notation. Dunlap, who strategically allied himself with the revolutionaries as early as 1776 and who remained active in Philadelphia until 1789, does not seem to have printed any more of Wesley’s works after 1770. Instead, James Adams, a printer in Wilmington located 47 kilometers south of Philadelphia, printed three Methodist works including the twelve-page *Sermon Preached on Sunday, April 4, 1742 Before the University of Oxford* by Charles Wesley in 1770, a sixty-four page octavo hymnal *Hymns for those that Seek and those that have Redemption in the Blood of Jesus Christ* by John and Charles Wesley in 1770, as well as a thirty-two page octavo Methodist tract *The Case of John Nelson* in 1771. Although there is no way to trace any of these publications back to Williams with absolute certainty, there is a record of £5 being paid by the Philadelphia Methodists to James Adams in December 1772 “for printing” (Pilkington 29). Finally, Joseph Crukshank printed Wesley’s perennially popular *Primitive Physik* in Philadelphia in 1770. Although Pilkington notes the *Case of John Nelson* and Charles Wesley’s sermon, he omits any reference to the larger hymnal *Hymns for those that Seek and those that have Redemption in the Blood of Jesus Christ* (28-29). Pilkington also does not note Crukshank’s printing of Wesley’s *Primitive Physik*. 
dispatched letters to report on their progress (Letters 5.231-232, Journals 5.350-351, Lee 27-28). Williams, by contrast, appears not to have written Wesley at all. By November, Boardman and Pilmore had moved on to Philadelphia and Williams was back in New York where, early in the new year, he enlisted the help of Philip Embury to publish an American edition of Wesley’s sermons. In February 1770, an entry in the Methodist account book in New York shows £8 10s being paid to print such a work. The following month an additional payment of £1 4s, authorized by Embury, was made for the same title (Andrews 278n2). Sums this large suggests that Williams was beginning to print Wesley’s works in fairly large numbers (Pilkington 26-9). Although disparaged by Pilmore as a man whose “gifts are but small” (Journal 25), Williams adroitly used his inventory of American editions not only to sustain himself, but to spread both his message and his market beyond its denominational boundaries—even reaching such figures as evangelical Anglican clergyman Deveraux Jarratt who welcomed Williams as both colporteur and preacher (Pilkington 30; see also Andress 40, Lee 49, Wakeley 172). Astonishingly, although there is no evidence that Boardman or Pilmore engaged in similar practices themselves, neither preacher seems to have lifted a finger to prevent Williams from publishing and selling Wesley’s hymnbooks, sermons, and probably other works, for his own financial benefit. That they did not know what he was doing seems unlikely.72 Perhaps Williams’s activities seemed less egregious in America than they might have in Britain. After all, amid rising anti-British sentiment, American printers were already making a regular practice of producing their own editions rather than importing more expensive books from London. Against political protests of this kind Williams’s activities probably seemed inconsequential. He just needed the money. And any scruples he may have had about it himself—surely he must have at least wondered whether Wesley intended his prohibition against publishing to extend to the colonies—he could have easily dismissed on biblical grounds. After all, even Jesus said “the labourer is worthy of his hire” (Lk 10.7).

72 Although his name appears frequently, Pilmore makes no mention of Williams’s publishing and book distribution activities in the journal he kept between August 1769 and January 1774. A limited edition of 1,515 copies of Pilmore’s journal was published by the Historical Society of the Philadelphia annual conference of the United Methodist Church in 1969.
Whatever Wesley’s official preachers knew or thought, neither bothered to keep him abreast of Williams’s expanding publishing activities. Soon, however, events were set in motion that would change that. In March 1771, Pilmore and Boardman (but not Williams) were accused of “fraudulent dealing with the preaching-houses in New York and Philadelphia” (*Journals* 5.404 n2). Although Wesley refused to accept the accusations without proof, he immediately wrote to Pilmore for an explanation. In addition to complaining that Pilmore was not writing often enough, he demanded to know more about the whereabouts and activities of Robert Williams (*Letters* 5.232). Frustrated by this turn of events, Wesley dispatched two more preachers to America: Richard Wright, who was soon defeated by the rigors of the American itinerancy, and Francis Asbury, who would rise to become the most famous American Methodist of his generation (Andrews 42). Asbury and Wright sailed on 2 September 1771 and landed in Philadelphia on 27 October. For some months Asbury was impressed by Williams. “Brother Williams,” he observed in his journal in the spring of 1772, “gives a flaming account of the work [in Virginia]. Many of the people seem to be ripe for the Gospel and ready to receive us” (*Journals* 1.28). But Asbury’s enthusiasm was dampened when he learned that Williams had been doing more than preaching. Circumstantial evidence suggests that it was he who betrayed Williams’s activities to Wesley. In the autumn of 1772, Asbury received a letter from Wesley appointing him special assistant in the place of Richard Boardman and charging him to ensure that, “Mr. Williams might not print any more books without my consent” (Asbury *Journals* 1.46). Asbury’s sudden promotion may have been a reward for providing information about Williams. And yet, though the benefits to himself were not to be doubted, Asbury’s censure of Williams seems to have been sincere. When Williams died in September 1775, Asbury remarked

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73 Wigger notes that, “By the 1810s Asbury’s phenomenal stamina has made him a living legend throughout much of the nation. Everywhere crowds pressed close for a look at the famed preacher […] Among Methodist preachers he had no rival” (174).

74 Although Asbury notes in a letter to his parents that Whitefield had made little progress in Virginia and Maryland in previous years, it isn’t surprising that Williams met with some success since these colonies (together with New York, the Carolinas, and Georgia) were dominated by the Church of England and Methodism officially remained under its aegis in America until 1784 (*Letters* 13, Pilkington 23). John Wigger also acknowledges Williams’s pivotal role in introducing a new and “shocking” form of evangelical preaching to the American frontier (78).

75 Dee Andrews also points to Asbury’s unwavering loyalty to Wesley to explain his promotion to assistant (44). As these events show, Asbury’s role in drawing attention to Williams’s unauthorized publishing activities was probably among the most powerful demonstrations Wesley had of that loyalty.
in a spirit of dark theodicy, that “perhaps brother Williams was in danger of being entangled in worldly business, and might thereby have injured the case of God. So he was taken away from the evil to come” (Journals 1.164). The phrase “worldly business” is almost certainly a veiled allusion to Williams’s publishing activities.\footnote{Significantly, Williams’s reputation in America was recuperated by subsequent nineteenth-century historians. In fact, with the exception of Jesse Lee, these narratives universally pass over the controversy involving Wesley’s censure of Williams’s printing activities in silence. Both Nathan Bangs and Abel Stevens, who each published four-volume histories of Methodism in America, the first between 1838 and 1842, and the second between 1865 and 1867, praise Williams for being the first to print Wesley’s work in America—tellingly, however, neither offer anything at all about Wesley’s interdict. This is particularly surprising in Bangs’s case since he was a writing as a former book agent who, as American Methodism’s first official historian showed a marked tendency to describe in detail his denomination’s participation in American print culture. The omission was probably calculated to protect Wesley’s posthumous reputation against what many American would have certainly regarded as an ungenerous action on his part.} Despite Asbury’s commitment to holding up Wesley’s authority in America, however, and his seemingly genuine disapproval of Williams’s activities, Wesley was not quite ready to leave everything in the hands of a largely untried lieutenant.

The following spring veteran preacher Thomas Rankin was dispatched to restore order and ensure that Williams’s publishing activities were well and truly brought to a halt (Andrews 45-6, Wigger 113). In fewer than six weeks, less time that it would have taken a letter to cross the Atlantic, Rankin had called all the preachers in America back to Philadelphia and on 14 June 1773 the proceedings of what came to be known as the first Methodist conference in America began. In addition to affirming the subservience of Methodism to the Church of England by legislating that preachers were not to administer the sacraments, the sixth “proposition” stated unambiguously that: “No preacher shall be permitted to reprint our books, without the approbation of Mr. Wesley, and the consent of his brethren. And that Robert Williams shall be allowed to sell what he has, but reprint no more” (Asbury Journal 1.85, Lee 46-47). Jesse Lee added his own gloss on these events thirty years later:

The rule formed for putting a stop to the printing of Mr. Wesley’s books without his authority, and the consent of the preachers in this country, was well enough. Previous to the formation of this rule, Robert Williams, one of the preachers, had reprinted many of Mr. Wesley’s books, and had spread them through the country, to the great advantage of religion. The sermons which he
printed in small pamphlets, and circulated among the people, had a very good effect, and gave the people great light and understanding in the nature of the new birth, and in the plan of salvation: and withal, they opened the way in many places for our preachers to be invited to preach where they had never been before. But notwithstanding the good that had been done by the circulation of the books, it now became necessary for the preacher to be all united in the same cause of printing and selling our books, so that the profits arising therefrom, might be divided among the preachers, or applied to some charitable purpose. (Lee 48-49)

The account leaves little doubt that Williams’s publications, however much Wesley might have disapproved of them, yielded positive results for Methodism in America. Although not inattentive to these benefits, Wesley weighed them more lightly in the balance than the potential damage his cultural capital might suffer if he lost control of Methodist printing and publishing in America. After all, his powers of cultural production were not based solely, or even primarily, on his role as an original author, but as Methodism’s chief editor, abridger, consecrator, and publisher of texts that, in most cases, had been written by others. Books and tracts sold by Methodist itinerants across Britain possessed symbolic status, not because Wesley had written them, but because he had approved their production and distribution as publisher. Williams, as a licensed Methodist preacher, was a part of that distribution infrastructure—even if he happened to be traveling throughout what British Methodists at the time referred to as circuit 50—the American colonies. For this reason, any edition of a Methodist text sold by Williams as an authorized preacher, implied the same consecratory role for Wesley as publisher. That formulation was the source of its symbolic value in the market. It was also the reason Williams’s editions, to a much greater extent than the pirated editions of Methodist texts produced by other American printers, had the potential to damage Wesley’s cultural capital. If the printers Williams selected to produce hymnbooks and other texts did not take the necessary trouble and expense to set accurate type and use quality materials, Williams’s involvement in their sale would only damage the public

77 Like other Methodists in America, Lee was anxious to take Wesley at his word when he claimed that the source of his concern was financial rather than cultural. But when Methodist preachers were ordained to perform marriages in 1784, Wesley offered no objection to having the money individual preachers received for such services “applied to the making up of the preacher’s quarterage” (Lee 103). Wesley’s inconsistency suggests he felt there was something more important at stake in regulating publishing in America than simply the equitable distribution of funds.
self Wesley had worked so tirelessly to construct in Britain throughout the preceding decades. That was a risk he was not prepared to take.\textsuperscript{78}

Despite Wesley’s unyielding efforts to prevent others from diminishing his cultural capital overseas, he was narrowly prevented by American Methodists from inadvertently dealing his own reputation a fatal blow when he published the anti-revolutionary tract \textit{A Calm Address to Our American Colonies} in 1775.\textsuperscript{79} Its appearance probably surprised at least some of his American followers. Although, as Dee Andrews notes, its arguments were entirely consistent with Wesley’s position as a Church of England clergyman who deplored the separation of church and state, only months earlier Wesley had betrayed sympathies with the patriot cause in a letter to the Earl of Dartmouth (48-9). His abrupt reversal on a matter of such importance is partly accounted for by David Hempton, who suggests that Wesley’s political views, not highly developed in the abstract, were often formed in direct reaction to specific events. Whatever the cause, something changed Wesley’s opinion about the American question between April 1775, when the first shots were fired in Massachusetts, and the publications of \textit{A Calm Address} five months later (Hempton \textit{Methodism and Politics} 45). Forty thousand copies sold throughout Britain in only three weeks (Andrews 50). By contrast, sensing the enormous damage its distribution would inflict on their religious interests in a rapidly changing political climate, American Methodists seized and burned the entire shipment of pamphlets (Pilkington 41). The total physical destruction of Wesley’s \textit{Calm Address} constituted an absolute repudiation of his political position while preventing his cultural capital from entering a period of unimaginably sharp decline. But even the most devoted of his followers could not shield Wesley from all the consequences. That the first major breach between Wesley and his American followers occurred not around issues of ecclesiastical polity, but over the distribution of a printed text, prefigured developments that would occur after the conclusion of the conflict. In

\textsuperscript{78} Unauthorized copies of several of Wesley’s works (particularly his \textit{Primitive Physik}) had been issued regularly in Philadelphia, Boston, and elsewhere since 1740. John and Charles Wesley’s \textit{Hymns and Sacred Poems} was also printed in Philadelphia in as early as 1740. This was followed by Wesley’s sermon \textit{Free Grace} in the mid-1740s, Wesley’s \textit{Nature and Design of Christianity} in 1746, his \textit{Scripture Doctrine Concerning Predestination} in Boston in the same year, as well as numerous printings of Wesley’s popular \textit{Primitive Physik}. According to Pilkington, by 1775 American printers “had issued over three hundred distinctly Methodist items, presumably without Wesley’s sanction” (25).

\textsuperscript{79} Wesley borrowed his text almost word-for-word from renowned Tory Samuel Johnson.
the meantime, as ports closed and Wesley’s interdict against printing in America continued to hold, large caches of other Methodist books were secreted away to avoid being collaterally destroyed in the fighting (Pilkington, 37, 41).

With the exception of a single printing of Wesley’s *Calm Address* by Philadelphia printer Robert Bell in 1778, a time when British forces controlled the colonial capital and official Methodist activities were suspended, there is no surviving record that any of Wesley’s works were printed in America between the years 1775 and 1780 (Lee 63). Throughout these years Methodist preachers came under heavy persecution as suspected loyalists and membership statistics fluctuated wildly (Andrews 56). In 1778, Jesse Lee reported an unprecedented decline of 873 while in 1779 he reported an increase of 2,482 members (63, 67). By that time Rankin had long abandoned his American post as Wesley’s chief lieutenant and the head of his book distribution system for the safety of England. Asbury, the only British Methodist to remain overseas during the conflict, quietly assumed both roles after sequestering himself in Delaware where the “clergy were not required to take the state oath” (Lee 62, 64). Pilkington speculates that, “With such a well-organized and evidently well-functioning system for distributing the books in those years, one may wonder why it did not continue to form the basis for the Methodist publishing program after the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized. The war, of course, was largely the reason” (41). The role the War played in precipitating a decline in Wesley’s transatlantic authority and the eventual discontinuation of his system for distributing printed commodities had ideological and practical dimensions. On the one hand, Wesley’s cultural capital continued its decline in the years following the appearance of his *Calm Address* in 1775. In 1779, for example, Asbury only narrowly prevented a body of southern Methodist preachers from arrogating to themselves the sacramental powers of ordained clergymen—a move that would have certainly invited Wesley’s profoundest censure (Wigger 23-4). The following year, John Dickins, who would later become American Methodism’s first book steward, presciently called for the formal separation of Methodism from the Church of England in the full knowledge that Wesley would oppose such a move (Pilkington 49-50). Meanwhile, as Methodist preachers in America continued to chaff against Wesley’s polity restrictions, the inconvenience of his interdict on American publishing was becoming ever more acute. As shipments from London became all but impossible to secure, even Asbury’s resolve began to fade.
“May I print any of your books? We are in great want,” Asbury solicited Wesley in the waning weeks of the summer of 1780, adding by way of explanation that the last shipment to arrive “was huddled and improper” (Asbury Journal and Letters 3.26). Among the books he most desperately needed, and ones he thought ideal candidates for printing in America, were hymnbooks. Wesley’s response, assuming it reached Asbury at all, does not survive. But shortly after American troops regained the capital in 1781, Philadelphia printer Melchior Steiner issued three Methodist hymnbooks: *A Collection of Psalms and Hymns, Hymns and Spiritual Songs intended for the use of Real Christians of all Denominations*, and *Hymns for those that Seek and those that have Redemption in the Blood of Jesus Christ*. Although there is no direct evidence to tie these hymnbooks to Asbury, the timing of his letter, and their sudden appearance from a printer known almost exclusively for German publications, is suggestive. “We have come to the conclusion,” Asbury noted in his journal a month later, “to print the four volumes of Mr. Wesley’s Sermons” *(ibid. 1.413)*. That these also emerged from Steiner’s press shortly thereafter all but confirms Asbury’s involvement in procuring the earlier hymnbooks (Pilkington 53-5). And yet, despite Asbury’s undoubted loyalty to Wesley, and his sincere attempt to secure the latter’s blessing on these endeavours, it seems unlikely that his use of the plural denotes a transatlantic agreement. More likely, given the difficulty with which letters written during the War were transported, and the alacrity with which Asbury moved to procure these editions, his decision was probably arrived at after consulting with Methodists only on his own side of the Atlantic. Thus the difficult and highly unusual circumstances under which these editions appeared might have easily been used by Wesley to argue that they were no more than exceptions to his earlier interdict against printing in America. Evidence suggests, moreover, that Wesley expected Americans to resume importing books from the London Book Room according to Rankin’s prewar practices after American ports reopened. But American Methodists, no less than any of the majority of those remaining in the former thirteen colonies, found themselves unconvinced that a resumption of trade with a London publisher was either inevitable—or in their best interests.

In view of wider postwar cultural developments in the new republic, it is not surprising that American Methodists began to take their first tentative steps towards cultural independence from Wesley and the London Book Room after the cessation of hostilities. Indeed, Wesley’s steady opposition to American “rebels” who now occupied
positions of power at the head of a emerging nation gave his followers on the western side of the Atlantic little choice. But if American Methodists wish to achieve independence from Wesley’s oversight in both polity and in print culture, they first needed to ensure that proceeds from the sale of books would be distributed in a way that would prevent Wesley from accusing them of mere financial opportunism. Thus in 1782, two years before the formal establishment of an independent Methodist Episcopal Church, American Methodists passed a formal resolution requiring that the profits from the sale of all Methodist books in America, whether imported or printed locally, would be directed back into the wider charitable efforts of the movement as a whole. This not only made it impossible for Wesley to criticize Asbury and other American Methodists on the same grounds that he had earlier prosecuted Williams, but also set British and American editions of Methodist books on an equal footing in the market. There remained the substantial difficulty, however, that other printers might (and would) attempt to leverage Wesley’s residual cultural capital by simply issuing their own accurate and inexpensive editions of Wesley’s works, anthologies, and abridgements. With no legal means for protecting this textual heritage, and a rapidly expanding printing and publishing industry with which to contend, American Methodists needed a strategy that would effectively distinguish their offerings from the products of competitors in a way that did not rely solely on Wesley’s imprimatur as author, editor, or abridger. In this American Methodists were particularly fortunate in their selection of John Dickins as first official book steward. Over the next decade, Dickins would use his unusual talent for rhetoric to begin evolving his coreligionists’ 1782 resolution to direct profits from the sale of books back into wider Methodist interests into a just such a strategy.

Born and educated in London, Dickins traveled to America as a tutor before joining the Methodists on the eve of the Revolutionary War in 1774 (Bangs History 2.67-69, Pilkington 43). In spite of his British birth, Dickins’s sympathies were wholly with the disgruntled colonists. He quickly rose to a position of importance within Methodism and was among those in 1780 who first called for independence from the

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80 In 1784, Wesley’s Thoughts upon Slavery was printed by Enoch Story in Philadelphia, his General Rules were printed in New York. Joseph Crukshank of Philadelphia also printed John Helton’s anti-Methodist tract Reasons for Quitting the Methodist Society.
Church of England. Dickins’s talent for rhetoric became apparent shortly after Wesley ordained Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury as joint superintendents of Methodism in America in 1784 (Andrews 66-7). When the time came to bestow an ecclesiastical name on what had until then been framed as a renewal movement within England’s established church, Dickins suggested the Methodist Episcopal Church. The shrewdness of that formulation would have been immediately apparent to Dickins’s contemporaries: it not only signaled Methodism’s independence from the Church of England, but also arrogated in three words the same sacramental prerogatives that southern preachers had first called for in 1779. While serving as the incumbent of the Wesleyan Chapel in New York, Dickins also became the movement’s unofficial publisher, revising the familiar British Minutes of Several Conversations and publishing them with the a distinctly American title Form of Discipline in 1787 (a title he revised again to Doctrine and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1792). Under Dickins’s authorial pen this document also styled Asbury a bishop against Wesley’s thunderous but futile opposition (Andrews 198; Pilkington 71, 77).

In the next several years it became increasingly clear to American Methodists that Wesley’s endorsement of an independent Methodism in the United States and a Lockean separation of church and state was not quite as unqualified as it had first seemed. Wesley also remained decidedly ambivalent about the publication of Methodist books on American presses. Doubtless frustrated by his continued prevarications, American Methodists began to reject Wesley’s ecclesiastical authority. Events came to a head in 1787 when American Methodists took the extraordinary step of striking Wesley’s name from the list of Methodist preachers in the minutes of conference and discarding Wesley’s Sunday Service, together with, in their view, the pretentious requirement that ordained clergy preach wearing gown, cassock, and bands. When Wesley proposed the appointment of Richard Whatcoat and Freeborn Garrettson as joint superintendents, with the intimation that Asbury would be removed from his position of authority, American Methodists refused, largely under the influence of those preachers who claimed they owed Wesley no duty of obedience because they had joined the Methodists after ecclesiastical independence in 1784

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81 Dee Andrews suggests that Wesley may have been only reluctantly persuaded to allow ecclesiastical independence at the urging of Thomas Coke (68).
(Andrews 197, Hatch 90-1). Instead, the Americans made the grossly unreasonable suggestion that Wesley visit them personally so that his decisions concerning the Methodist Episcopal Church might be better informed. Wesley’s expected refusal to make the perilous eight-week journey in a state of advanced age meant that, in effect, ecclesiastical authority previously invested in him as an individual was transferred to the assembled body of Methodist preachers in America. This not only placed Methodism on a better footing relative to the new republic’s evolving political structures, it also opened a space for the development of independent market strategies that did not rely on their founder’s declining cultural capital in America. Thus Dickins used his newly published Form of Discipline to codify the principle that profits from the sale of Methodist books would be directed back into the work of the Church as a whole, thereby arrogating to himself and other American Methodists Wesley’s full authority in matters pertaining to print:

As it has been frequently recommended by the preachers and people, that such books as are wanted, be printed in this country, we therefore propose,

1. That the advice of the conference shall be desired concerning any valuable impression, and their consent be obtained before any steps be taken for the printing thereof.

2. That the profits of the books, after all the necessary expenses are defrayed, shall be applied, according to the discretion of the conference, towards the college, the preachers’ fund, the deficiencies of the preachers, the distant missions, or the debts of our churches. (Lee 129)

“From that time,” Lee observed, “we began to print more of our own books in the United States than we had ever done before; and the principal part of the printing business was carried on in New-York” (129). Further evidence of the seismic cultural shift this resolution effected appeared almost immediately when Dickins published an American edition of a pirated, rather than an authorized, collection of Wesley’s hymns.

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82 Wigger argues that Wesley’s authority in America, because it was “so circuitous” was limited from the start. “In general,” he writes, “American Methodists accepted Wesley’s authority only in matters of doctrine, and then only so far as his guidance seemed practicable” (19). In matters of print culture, as the foregoing has demonstrated, Methodist acquiescence to Wesley’s interdict was similarly observed only insofar as it could be implemented practically.
In Britain, Wesley had long been plagued by pirated editions of his hymnbooks. One of the most successful of these appeared in the early 1780s when Robert Spence published an unauthorized hymnbook containing hymns composed by John and Charles Wesley under the title *Collection of Hymns from Various Authors*. Wesley responded by issuing his own pocket hymnbook in 1785 (Pilkington 78-9). Dickins, perhaps in a show of deliberate defiance, published the Spence hymnbook rather than Wesley’s hymnbook and thereby established a preference among his denominational customers that would endure for decades (Tyson “Methodist National Anthem” 23). The freedom with which Dickins exercised his editorial prerogative in the selection of the Spence text, whether for reasons of convenience or symbolism, proves he no longer believed Americans should be fettered by Wesley’s preferences. Such acts of defiance on Dickins’s part were not unaccompanied by market implications. As Wesley’s juridical word continued to lose force in America, the cultural status of his imprimatur as author, abridger, or publisher declined proportionately. Although the Federal Copyright Act was still several years away, Dickins seems to have understood as early as 1787 that an alternative rhetorical strategy, one that did not rely on Wesley’s powers of cultural production, was called for.  

By 1789 Wesley’s control of Methodism and Methodist print culture in the United States had withered to almost nothing. Even in Britain he had ceded considerable authority over the activities of the London Book Room by permitting the establishment of a separate Book Committee in 1788. His regret in doing so is hinted at in the relevant journal entry: “I appointed a committee for auditing my accounts and superintending the business of the Book-Room, which, I doubt not, will be managed in a very different manner from what it has been hitherto” (*Journals* 7.441). In May 1789 Dickins was officially appointed book steward by the Methodist conference in New York and, in the following months, relocated himself and the business to Philadelphia. Two months later Wesley, fully aware that developments of this kind were beyond his

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83 By 1786 all states except Delaware, largely at the urging of Noah Webster, has passed a form of copyright law to protect the interests of American authors (McGill “Copyright” 201).

84 Although the first book steward in England was appointed in February 1753 (*Journals* 4.52) there is no evidence to suggest that Wesley did not maintain complete control over the steward and Methodist print culture after that time.
throughout, though perhaps not entirely beyond his influence, wrote to Dickins with equal parts of encouragement and adjuration:

[...I am glad to find Providence had pointed out a way wherein you may be of general use, and the more so as in some of the extracts from late authors the inattention of my corrector inserted some sentences which I had blotted out, two or three of which assert Universal Restitution. The numerous errata likewise I doubt not you will carefully correct, which sometimes spoil the sense. Wishing you much of the favour and of the presence of God, I am, dear sir, Your affectionate friend and brother. (Letters 8.153)

This text suggests an assumption on Wesley’s part that Dickins would rely on editions of Methodist texts published by the London Book Room to supply him with copy. Significantly, he makes no mention of the Spence hymnbook. Perhaps Wesley, who by this time had no reliable lieutenant in the United States who would place his interests above those of the Methodist Episcopal Church, had not heard of it. But when Dickins issued a second edition of the Spence hymnbook the following year he did more than exercise his editorial freedom. By adding the phrase “Approved by Conference” to its title page, Dickins openly declared to his coreligionists for the first time the cultural independence of American Methodists to select and approve their own texts. As an official publication of the Methodist Episcopal Church, this edition, not Wesley’s hymnbook, became definitive for American Methodists. Significantly, the title pages of works published by Dickins before this time, perhaps because he could not claim any special office as book steward, did not bear any similar identifier to set his books apart from those of other publishers. As a rhetorical strategy, however, it was still in its embryonic stage since the cultural status it embodied resided solely with the authorized text rather than the physical commodity that instantiated it. Thus Dickins’s rhetoric was incapable of discrediting another publisher or printer who might issue the same text and claim the same degree of authenticity on the grounds that the two editions were identical in content.

The ink on the minutes appointing Dickins as book steward was hardly dry before competition of this sort from other printers, combined with new internal financial demands, emerged as serious obstacles to success. In Philadelphia, for
example, former Methodist and sometime friend of Dickins, William Glendinning issued several texts by the Wesleys including John Wesley's *Character of a Methodist*. In Baltimore John Hagerty offered a pirated Methodist *Pocket Hymn Book*, and in New York Matthew Carey issued editions of Joseph Alleine’s *Alarm to the Unconverted* and Richard Baxter’s *A Call to the Unconverted* (Pilkington 105). Although the Carey items were not uniquely Methodist, they had both been abridged and published by Wesley and had regularly appeared in the London Book Room’s catalogues for decades. As extraordinarily popular texts with broad denominational appeal it was particularly important that Dickins not cede ground by allowing the Roman Catholic Carey to profit by selling these texts to Methodists. Additional pressure was put on Dickins when the Bishop’s Council of 1790 voted to invest the Preacher’s Fund in the book business in order to allow that fund to draw dividends from profits arising from the sale of books. Although this decision lent real substance to Dickins’s rhetorical claim that profits benefited the wider Methodist Episcopal Church, at this time the business was still very small with fewer than two dozen books, apart from those imported from the London Book Room, offered for sale. Nor had the distribution infrastructure that would later allow the Methodist Book Concern to reach distant customers through a corps of travelling preachers yet been developed.85

Competition in the market, internal financial demands, and the lack of a distribution infrastructure, all drove the business into an early debt that it would not successfully retire until the early 1830s as the Concern grew to become the largest publisher in North America. In the final decades of the eighteenth century, by contrast, the simple survival of the business was far from certain and Dickins was obliged to develop rhetorical strategies for insulating his denominational market in an environment that afforded inadequate legal protections. Dickins issued his first catalogue in 1793 as an appendix to his first edition of John Fletcher’s *Posthumous Pieces*. Far more important for the long-term survival of the business than the twenty-three

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85 Not until 1800, partly in response to Asbury’s call to “draw resources from the centre to the circumference,” would preachers be required to function as official colporteurs and be accorded a commission on the sale of books in recognition of that fact (Pilkington 134; Hatch 89, 142). James Green describes an interesting parallel arrangement that developed between Philadelphia publisher Mathew Carey and itinerant clergyman Mason Locke Weems beginning in 1796. Unlike Methodist preachers, however, Weems sold books and subscriptions to all without implying any rhetorical linkages between these commercial activities and his spiritual mission as an Anglican priest (“British Books” 86-8).
items this catalogue listed for sale was the fact that Dickins sacrificed almost half of the space allotted in the two-page catalogue to set forth to his readers the reasons why his books possessed a symbolic status that resided not merely in the content of the texts—whether consecrated by Wesley’s pen and press or not—but in the paper, ink, and binding that constituted those texts as physical commodities in the market:

The Following BOOKS are published by John Dickins, No. 118, North Fourth-Street, near Race-Street, Philadelphia; for the use of the Methodist Societies in the United States of America; and the profits thereof applied for the general benefit of the said Societies. Sold by the publishers, and the Ministers and Preachers in the several Circuits.

[...]

As the Profits of these Books are for the general Benefit of the Methodist Societies, it is humbly recommended to the Members of the said Societies, that they will purchase no Books which we publish, of any other person than the aforesaid John Dickins, or the Methodist Ministers and Preachers in the several Circuits, or such Persons as sell them by their Consent.86

By connecting the sale of his books to the welfare of the Methodist Episcopal Church in a document read not only by preachers but by all his potential customers, Dickins was able to widen significantly the reach of his strategy for equating patronage with denominational loyalty. This allowed him to invest his commodities with a potent symbolic value that no other publisher could duplicate. This applied to every text Dickins published whether by a Methodist or a non-Methodist, a living or a dead author, an American citizen or a British subject. As such, it not only set his Methodist hymnbook apart from the Methodist hymnbook offered by John Hagerty in Baltimore, but also his edition of Alleine’s _Alarm_ and Baxter’s _Call_ (offered by Dickins bound together for three shillings) from Matthew Carey’s editions of the same texts—texts that were authored decades before Wesley’s birth. This conferred an important advantage on Dickins as a publisher since other editions, even if printed more handsomely and offered for a cheaper price, conferred in the mind of the customer no financial benefit

86 See Pilkington 102 for a facsimile reproduction of this catalogue (102).
on the wider Church. To open an edition of Baxter’s *Call* and see Dickins’s name on the imprint conveyed, to anyone who had read Dickins’s catalogue, a message about the denominational identity and loyalty of the owner of that book.

In spite of the market benefits that this rhetorical strategy would eventually confer on the Methodist Book Concern, in Dickins’s own time the claim that profits from the sale of books were actually going to help support superannuated preachers, widows, and orphans was empty of any real substance. When Dickins died of Yellow Fever in Philadelphia in 1798 the value of the business, excluding its substantial debt, was estimated to be only $1,000 (Andrews 217, Pilkington 102-4, 115, 138). After Dickins’s unexpected death, Ezekiel Cooper, recently appointed chair of the Philadelphia Conference’s Book Committee, stepped in to sort out the accounts and carry on the work of supplying American Methodists with books and tracts. Dickins’s son Asbury, meanwhile, carried on a separate book and stationery business his family had been operating for years. Recognizing the value of Dickins’s rhetorical strategies, if not his bookkeeping methods, Cooper placed the entire onus for the survival of the Concern on the shoulders of Methodist preachers and adherents in the pages of the *Methodist Magazine* and the published minutes of conference (Pilkington 125, 127, 513n28). At the General Conference of 1800 Cooper was officially, if reluctantly, appointed Dickins’s successor. As a mark of the conference’s growing understanding of the value of the Concern’s cultural capital, and in a bid to protect it, preachers were also prohibited in the minutes from publishing anything on their own authority. In order to return the business to a state of profitability, payments from the Concern to the Church were temporarily suspended. And, for the first time, a commission on the sale of books began to be paid directly to the preachers. In exchange for working “to see that his circuit be duly supplied with books, and to take charge of all the books sent to, or that may be in his circuit, and account with the presiding elder for the same” (*JGC* 1.45), preachers were assured by the General Conference of a commission of not less than 15% and not more than 25%. In most circumstances this commission was to be divided with one-third going to the presiding elder “for his trouble” and two-thirds to the preacher

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87 The accuracy of this figure was never fully accepted since, in addition to his work as official book steward, Dickins also opened his own book and stationery shop and often confused the accounts of the two businesses.
who actually made the sale (JGC 1.46). In this ironic twist onDickins’s rhetoric, the Church assumed responsibility for the Concern’s debts, and preachers became authorized salesmen rather than beneficiaries of the Concern’s largesse. The suspension of payments, combined with the institution of commissions, meant that superannuated preachers would receive no financial benefits, while young men strong enough to carry saddlebags full of books stood to gain the most. The financial rewards a preacher could earn through these commissions should not be underestimated. Nathan Hatch writes that, “In 1816, for instance, the average book bonus for ministers in the Ohio conference was seventy-five dollars, at a time when the annual salary was only one hundred dollars for a single minister” (142). From a practical perspective, there is little difference between this arrangement and the practices Robert Williams adopted thirty years earlier. In both instances the more books a preacher sold the larger the financial reward would be and no provision, at least at this point, was made for those preachers unable through illness and age to function as colporteurs. From the Concern’s perspective, however, it meant that preachers would be far more inclined to sell rather than loan the contents of their saddlebags to their Methodist auditors. 

With these policies in place, Cooper was able to extend Dickins’s original strategies for equating patronage with denominational identity and improve the Concern’s financial standing considerably. The first few decades of the nineteenth century, a period referred to as the Second Great Awakening, witnessed a massive expansion of Methodism in America. The largest single period of growth over a five-year period recorded before 1830 occurred during most of Cooper’s tenure as book steward between 1800 and 1805. During this time the Church’s official membership rolls grew from 64,894 to 119,945. This represented an 84.8% increase compared with a much more modest 11.2% expansion in Britain (Hempton Empire 216). As the number of

88 Methodist preachers were not unaware that work as commissioned salesmen might expose them to uncomfortable accusations. “Circulate good books,” one Methodist preacher advised a junior colleague several years later, adding, “Let it be known that you do not do this on account of the profits of sale. A just suspicion of this motive will destroy your dignity and usefulness. But if you do it from the same motive with which you preach the gospel, namely, to save souls, you will benefit both yourself and those to whom you sell them” (Bangs Letters 197-8).

89 David Hempton remarks that “The phenomenal success of Methodist book sales, regarded by many as the jewel in the crown of the early Methodist mission, was owed at least partly to the entrepreneurship of an impoverished itinerant ministry” (Empire 122).

90 For Methodist growth in individual annual conference between 1773 and 1810 see Wigger 197-200.
Methodists in the United States, and later Upper Canada, grew, Dickins’s rhetorical equation of patronage with denominational identity promised to become ever more useful. Since the appearance of Nathan Hatch’s influential *The Democratization of American Christianity*, many historians of American Methodism, including John Wigger and Dee Andrews, have tended to account for Methodism’s early success by pointing to a natural, if accidental, accord between its egalitarian theology and the republican political ideology that gained ascendancy after Jefferson’s election in 1800. David Hempton, on the other hand, has expressed reservations about the simplicity of this model—a model put under additional stress by George Rawlyk’s observation that Methodism expanded more quickly in Upper Canada than in the United States before the War of 1812 (*Canada Fire* 102). The growth of Methodism north of the border and its relationship to a burgeoning evangelical print culture will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter. What is important for the argument at hand is not whether a vibrant denominational print culture was the cause or the effect of Methodism’s rapid growth during Cooper’s term, but that the two expansions took place together in a clear demonstration of the degree to which Dickins’s rhetorical strategies had begun to be reflected in reality by this time. The fortunes of the two institutions, the Church and Concern, seemed well and truly united.

Between 1799 and 1804, Cooper published an astonishing 170,000 books, tracts, and other religious texts—and this at a time when many of America’s larger printers and publishers were teetering on the verge of bankruptcy (Wigger 179, Pilkington 135, Green “Book Publishing” 94-7). At the General Conference of 1804, Cooper reported

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91 Hatch writes that “While the structure of the Methodist Episcopal church may have seemed conspicuously out of accord with the democratic stirring of the times, the vital spring of Methodism under Asbury was to make Christianity profoundly a faith of the people” (85). Although careful to acknowledge that “Wesley did not shape his message in response to American democracy,” John Wigger also notes that many of Wesley’s doctrines “resonated with the prevailing democratic notions of the day” (17).

92 For more on not only the difficulty, but the inadvisability, of establishing causal relationships between developments in print culture and wider social changes see the first chapter of Michael Warner’s *The Letters of the Republic*. As Warner argues, those who posit such logical relationships inevitably privilege either culture or, more commonly, technology, with a prior unchanging status upon which either printing or culture acts. The alternative to this approach is to make no such judgements while continually keeping “the complex relation between the two subjects [printing and culture] in view” (10).

93 By comparison, the Massachusetts Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, an organization established in 1803 and one that David Nord somewhat misleadingly calls the “first American association
that the Concern, though still in debt, was worth an estimated $27,000 (JGC 1.61, Pilkington 138). The Concern was able not only to survive but to thrive during these years because its market had been rhetorically imagined as being perfectly coterminous with the rapidly expanding boundaries of Methodism itself. As the number of Methodist converts grew across North America, Cooper extended Dickins’s rhetorical equation to insulate his denominational market from competitors by systematically identifying the sale of Concern’s commodities with the welfare of the wider Church. In his 1799 edition of Wesley’s abridgement of Kempis’s Christian’s Pattern, Cooper included the following imprint: “Published under the patronage and for the benefit of The Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America by Ezekiel Cooper.” A variation on this imprint, from 1799 onward, appeared on the title page of most books and effectively tied the sale of each item to the interests of the wider Church. The symbolic status afforded by Dickins’s strategy was in this way made explicit on every purchased commodity. Tellingly, tracts printed for free distribution were not so identified. Though efficacious for bringing about what the Book Concern always maintained was its chief end—the eternal salvation of the reader—free tracts were thereby deprived of additional symbolic status because their distribution did not confer financial benefit on the wider Church. In 1802, Cooper took another step to protect the Concern’s most valuable title—the Methodist hymnbook—by publishing it for the first time under copyright (Pilkington 135). As subsequent events show, however, the Concern’s rhetorical strategies ultimately proved to be far more effective tools for protecting its denominational market than the legal provisions of a Federal Copyright devoted solely to religious books and tracts” distributed 6,253 tracts in 1804 (Nord “Benevolent Books” 224).

94 Although a modest sum when compared to the net worth reported by other publishers such as Ebenezer Andrews, Isaiah Thomas, and Isaac Riley, the Methodist Book Concern managed its inventory more successfully than many of these and thereby placed itself on a largely uninterrupted trajectory of steady growth. Methodist publishing successes flowed in large part from Dickins’s rhetorical strategies for insulating the denominational market and a ready corps of preachers willing to supply customers with books and tracts to the limits of white settlement. Andrews and Thomas, by contrast, both suffered major reversals in the first decade of the nineteenth century as a result of their inability to move stock. Riley, even more astonishingly, went bankrupt in 1812 leaving behind an inventory of unsold books worth some $400,000. In addition to problems with distribution, James Green attributes the difficulties most publishers encountered during this time to the irresponsible accounting practices (“Book Publishing” 95-7).
Act drafted to safeguard the interests of American authors alone (McGill “Copyright” 202-3).\(^{95}\)

At the General Conference of 1804 the Book Concern was removed from Philadelphia, amid some controversy, to New York (rather than Baltimore) by a vote of 38 to 36 (JGC 1.62).\(^{96}\) A subsequent motion to establish a separate Book Concern in Baltimore in the face of this decision was also defeated (JGC 1.68). Although commission on the sale of books continued to be paid during this time, Dickins’s original rhetorical equation regained some of its former substance when the General Conference of 1804 mandated that the book steward begin paying annual dividends of at least $100 to each of the Church’s nearly twenty annual conferences (JGC 1.66). Although a substantial amount of money for the Concern to disburse, at the level of individual conferences the figure was largely symbolic. In 1804, Cooper’s salary as book steward was also increased to $400 per year. For comparison, the annual salary of itinerant preachers had been raised from $64 to $80 four years earlier. John Wigger and Nathan Hatch note that a typical Congregational minister at this time earned about five times that—or approximately as much as Cooper in 1804. (JGC 1.35, Hatch 88, Wigger 49). Thus few would have hoped for much practical help from the payment of $100—especially when measured against the needs of an ever growing number of superannuated preachers and the families of deceased preachers. Nevertheless, the payment of dividends, however small, did at least allow the Concern to continue truthfully to claim that its profits were being used to meet the Church’s wider material needs. Importantly, these were in addition to the much more substantial commissions being paid directly to preachers and presiding elders for actually selling books. When

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\(^{95}\) Not a single work, not even Freeborn Garrettson’s popular journals, appears in the copyright registry of the United States Patent Office during the period of Dickins’s tenure. Indeed, the only original work by an American Methodist to be found in this register before 1801 is the printed sermon Ezekiel Cooper preached at John Dickins’s funeral in 1799 (Wills Federal Copyright Records no. 222). Other printers and publishers in the United States who relied on British reprints found themselves in much the same position as Dickins. As James Green notes, these publishers attempted to govern themselves by conventions known as “courtesy of the trade” in order not to enter into direct competition. Informal agreements of this kind, however, often ended badly, particularly as the nineteenth century progressed and large publishers, including Harper & Brothers, issued their own editions of popular British titles despite the fact that their competitors may have successfully placed an American edition into the hands of readers first (“Book Publishing” 80, 86, 108-9, 123).

\(^{96}\) The move was prescient. At this time Philadelphia continued to be the leading “printing city, followed by Boston and New York” (Green “Book Publishing” 93).
Cooper resigned as book steward at the following General Conference in 1808 he left his successor, John Wilson, a much larger and more valuable business—by then worth some $45,000 (JGC 1.90-1, Pilkington 147). At least as precious as its growing catalogue of titles, financial resources, and galvanized denominational infrastructure for distribution, was the business’s enhanced standing in the minds of its Methodist customers. As the Concern gained a reputation for producing and distributing affordable and well-manufactured books whose sale uniquely furthered Methodist interests in America, it accrued both financial and cultural capital that could be reinvested in its denominational market to ever more effectively shut out the products of a growing number of rival printers and publishers.

In the following years the General Conference attempted to regularize the payment of commissions on the sale of books at 18% with 12% being allotted to the preacher making the sale and 6% to the presiding elder of the district (JGC 1.118-9). In reality the actual commission paid was often much higher—as much as three times higher—in an effort to make up what was lacking in a preacher’s required salary. In one striking example that will be discussed in more detail in the subsequent chapter, the General Conference forgave Upper Canadian preacher and presiding elder Henry Ryan a debt of $227 to the Concern for that reason (JGC 1.172; infra 115-7). The Book Concern was also, in 1812, prohibited from giving commercial booksellers a larger discount on books than those extended—at least officially—to Methodist preachers. In this way the preeminence of the preacher as the primary distributor of Methodist texts was established in polity as well as in practice. Although the Concern continued to remain in debt, this change promised to help strengthen its denominational market by lending additional force to its ecclesiastical distribution infrastructure. In 1816 the General Conference elected Joshua Soule to succeed the lethargic Daniel Hitt who had replaced John Wilson after his death in 1810 (JGC 1.162, Pilkington 149-50). Soule’s commitment to the welfare of the business is evinced by his willingness, following the example of his

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97 Wilson was narrowly defeated by Cooper for the job in 1804 by a vote of 34 to 36 (JGC 1.62).
98 Dickins and Cooper used a variety of printers throughout these years including Parry Hall, Henry Tuckniss, Solomon Conrad, and, less commonly, John Bioren and Jacob Johnson.
99 Midway through his tenure as senior book agent in 1824, Bangs wrote that the difficulties in making up preachers’ salaries were so pronounced that “the conference stewards usually settle[d] with the preachers at a discount from thirty to sixty per cent” (History 3.265).
two ablest predecessors Dickins and Cooper, to invest his own money in the Concern by borrowing on the responsibility of his own signature (Pilkington 154-8). The Concern was fortunate in Soule’s election, since under a less steady hand it might have easily foundered during these critical years following the death of Bishop Asbury, a man described by John Wigger as Methodism’s “leading architect” in America (25, 43, 171). Like Cooper and Dickins, and in spite of an ongoing debt, Soule attempted to expand and consolidate the Concern’s market by finding new ways to entrench the rhetorical connection between patronage and denominational identity. While he continued to use catalogues and imprints to achieve this end, Soule extended the Concern’s rhetorical powers considerably by reintroducing a new monthly Methodist Magazine in January 1818. Although the General Conference had expressed its desire for such a periodical as early as 1812, no steward or agent had been bold enough to make the attempt in the shadow of two similar failed ventures by Dickins before his death in 1798 (JGC 1.119, 171; Bangs History 2.317, 3.53). In a bid to ensure both the Magazine’s success and to shore up the Concern’s exclusive access to its denominational market, Soule and his successors used the monthly to draw an ever more pervasive linkage between patronage of the Concern and the welfare of the wider Church. Candy Brown has written extensively about the role religious periodicals played in fostering a fierce denominationalism among most evangelicals in America, particularly during the 1830s and 1840s. Soule’s use of the Methodist Magazine anticipated these developments by more than a decade. Because the Magazine was issued monthly, it provided Soule and later book agents with the ability to respond with greater speed to any threats to its growing market dominance. The most dangerous of these came in the form of pirated

100 This is also the year that, under the direction of Richard Allen and Daniel Coker, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, formally broke with the Methodist Episcopal Church (Wigger 146).

101 Brown observes, “As the titles of periodicals more often identified the editor’s religious affiliation, subscription to a church periodical became an act of expressing denominational loyalty. By the end of the 1840s, most religious denominations endorsed at least one periodical per state, many of them privately owned but issued in the name of the editor’s denomination and unofficially adopted by an ecclesiastical body” (145). See also Hatch 125-6, 141-2.

102 The appearance of the Methodist Magazine, Bangs observed, “gave great satisfaction to the most enlightened and intelligent friends of our communion, and hence a commendable zeal was exemplified in procuring subscribers, that it might have as wide a circulation as possible among the people of our charge; and I believe that not less than ten thousand were procured in the first year” (History 3.74). With even half that number of subscribers, the Magazine would have been among the most widely distributed North American monthlies before 1820 (Brown Word 155).
editions of the Concern’s products and most especially the Methodist hymnbook which had been, at least since Ezekiel Cooper’s tenure, its best selling title (Pilkington 135). Other printers soon recognized the economic value of that title and, in spite of the fact that Cooper registered the hymnbook under the protection of copyright law in 1802, began to issue their own editions (Pilkington 162-3). Soule used the first issue of the Methodist Magazine, not the courts, to respond to such piracies. At the conclusion of his “Introductory Address” Soule cautioned his readers against “two evils.” The first was failing to take steps to preserve back issues of the Magazine as “a legacy for their posterity.” The second is worth quoting at length:

2. Without offering any violence to the rights of men, we think ourselves authorized to caution our friends against purchasing, or encouraging the publication, sale, or purchase of any book or books, directly or indirectly under the name or title “Methodist,” unless they are published and sold in conformity to the rules of the Discipline in such cases made and provided.

As an act of this kind of imposition, we give the following fact. —A short time past, a book was put into our hands by a friend, the title page of which begins thus, “The new Methodist Pocket Hymn Book.” This heterogeneous mass has its untimely birth in a back county of this state. It is a libel upon the Methodist Episcopal Church, and a reproach to her name.

It is like a counterfeit coin, which could never obtain currency by its real worth, and therefore must circulate under a forged stamp.

We have no disposition to abridge the rights which a wise and liberal constitution secures to every citizen. Real merit should be suitably appreciated and encouraged wherever it exists. But the man who does not blush at the recollection of being the author of a book which can gain credit only from a borrowed title, must have learned the art of eluding the sensibilities of conviction.

If any man, after having read the sentimental, sublime and spiritual Hymns of Mr. Wesley, and other authors from whose works our hymnbooks are composed, can sit down and derive either edification or entertainment from the common-place poetry of the day, we are far from wishing to lessen his enjoyment; but the honour of the Church, whose interests we are sacredly bound to promote, calls upon us, as far as our influence extends, to prevent the circulation of such publications under the sanction of her name. (“Introductory Address” Methodist Magazine January 1818: 6-7)103

103 The pirated hymnbook Soule describes appears to be no longer extant.
There is much worth remarking in this lengthy passage. Ignoring for rhetorical purposes the damage such a hymnbook might inflict on the economic interests of the Methodist Book Concern, Soule frames his whole objection to the pirated hymnbook on the grounds that it will injure the “honour of the Church.” In this way, he is able to subtly connect in the mind of his reader the act of patronage with the wider interests of the Church. Distancing himself from the role a mere publisher would occupy as a producer and vendor of texts for profit, Soule sets himself forward as the “sacred” defender of the Church’s interests by denouncing the pirated hymnbook as a libel and reproach on the entire ecclesiastical community. At the same time, he recognizes the right of customers to choose their own commodities in the free market and expresses his reluctance to offer “any violence to the rights of men” in that regard. There is, in this, a tacit admission that the pirated hymnbook he sets his rhetoric against has some merit. There is, for example, no way for Soule to deny that it contains the same edifying and entertaining verses authored by the Wesleys and “other authors” as the Concern’s own. By invoking the image of a counterfeit coin, however, and by indicating that the offending “heterogeneous mass” was “put into our hands,” Soule subtly draws attention to the book as a physical commodity rather than simply as a container for information. It is counterfeit not because it offers the reader a corrupted text, but because it lacks the symbolic value invested in the Concern’s genuine products by the wider benefit the sale of those commodities confer on the Methodist Episcopal Church. By pointing this out, Soule concludes, he is attempting not to lessen anyone’s enjoyment—itself a slight that willing purchasers of such a text are interested only in their own selfish pleasure—but to fulfill his sacred duty as a servant of the whole Church. Not until the appearance of a weekly newspaper, nearly a decade later, would the Concern’s agents have at their disposal a more powerful and reactive tool for protecting their market with denominational rhetoric.\(^{104}\)

\(^{104}\) There is a deep irony in Soule’s indictment of “the man who does not blush at the recollection of being the author of a book which can gain credit only from a borrowed title” in the context of Methodist textual practices. This accusation could be applied without change to Wesley himself as he went about building his own cultural capital in Britain at the expense of countless authors whose works he republished with little or no attribution.
At the General Conference of 1820, Nathan Bangs, a former itinerant in Upper and Lower Canada and more recently the presiding elder of a New York district, was elected to replace Soule as senior book agent (JGC 1.226). Unlike his predecessors, Bangs evinced no reluctance about adopting the role (Pilkington 174, Nord “Benevolent Books” 238). Nathan Hatch calls him “Methodism’s first major polemicist, theological editor, and historian,” and notes that he, “relentlessly advanced the cause of higher intellectual standards for the church” (204). When Bangs assumed his appointment the Concern had no real estate, no press, no bindery, and no newspaper. By increasing the Concern’s debt substantially, Bangs soon provided all these and added to the business a growing number of paid staff including Azor Hoyt, hired in 1824, as the Concern’s full-time in-house printer (JGC 1.287, Pilkington 189). Hoyt saw his shop grow from only two presses in 1824 to more than a dozen by the end of his term in 1828 (CA 10 October 1828: 21). The expansion of the Concern’s printing infrastructure also helped Bangs to diversify and expand the catalogue of titles, in part by publishing a larger proportion of American authors than ever before. Part of a wider phenomenon in American publishing at this period, the Americanization of the catalogue is chiefly important for what it signifies about the Concern’s growing cultural authority in the market of religious cultural production.\(^{105}\) Galvanized by its increasingly entrenched equation of patronage with denominational identity, by the time of Bangs’s appointment the Concern’s cultural capital had developed sufficiently to allow for a more widespread consecration of printed commodities that neither Wesley nor the British Methodists had endorsed.\(^{106}\) As the Concern’s continued rhetorical strategies throughout Bangs’s tenure indicate, however, its imprint, not the names of individual American Methodist authors, remained the primary source of each book’s symbolic value. Seen in the context of the wider Atlantic world, Bangs’s diversification of the catalogue also allowed the

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\(^{105}\) For more on the development of distinct forms of secular literature in the United States see Lazar Ziff’s Literary Democracy: The Declaration of Cultural Independence in America and Christopher Looby’s Voicing America: Language, Literary Form, and the Origins of the United States. For a greater emphasis on the role publishers played in the wider field of American cultural production see Susan Williams’s chapter “Publishing an ‘Emergent’ American Literature” in Casper, Chaison, and Grove’s 2002 collection Perspective on American Book History: Artifacts and Commentary (165-194).

\(^{106}\) Bangs complains about the paucity of American authors offered for sale through the Methodist Book Concern until his appointment in 1820 in his History of the Methodist Episcopal Church. He also notes that, until the War of 1812, the Concern continued to import some of its titles from the London Book Room (2.318-20).
Concern not only to outsell the London Book Room, but to offer its customers a wider variety of titles than the Book Room made available to British Methodists. The Concern further consolidated its position in the market by continuing to reprint the works of emerging British Methodist authors throughout these years while the London Book Room eschewed, without a single exception, works by American Methodists. In a further bid to consolidate his market Bangs also offered to secure on behalf of Methodist preachers any book available in the United States through a system of exchange he established with other publishers (Pilkington 181). And because profits generated from the sale of these books were used for the same denominational purposes as the Concern’s other profits, by this arrangement Bangs was able to extend the boundaries of the Concern’s rhetorical framework to envelop the commodities of other publishers, provided those commodities were obtained through his agency. That same year, in an effort to liquidate some of the Concern’s still growing debt, commission on the sale of books already in the hands of presiding elders and preachers was increased to 40%: 26% for the preacher making the sale and 13% for the presiding elder (JGC 1.349).

In addition to these innovations, Bangs also provided the Concern with a weekly newspaper that quickly evolved into an unequalled vehicle for equating patronage with denominational interests, insulating its market from the products of other publishers, and creating a sense of community among its individual customers and colporteurs. After receiving permission from the New York conference’s book committee, Bangs published the first issue of the Christian Advocate on 9 September 1826. Preachers and presiding elders were charged with selling annual subscriptions for $2.50 (or $2.00 if paid in advance) and were provided with a free paper for every six subscriptions sold. Within a space of only five years, circulation had grown from 5,000 to more than 25,000—a circulation so large that it required not only a state-of-the-art steam press but also a round-the-clock production schedule (Hatch 142-3, Pilkington 202, Wigger 180). Bangs’s success in building such a large list of subscribers in such a short space of time

107 Giving a slightly larger circulation figure of 30,000 in his History of the Methodist Episcopal Church Bangs writes that “in the course of one year from its commencement, [the Christian Advocate] by far exceeded every other paper, religious or secular, published in the United States” (3.323). By comparison, Candy Brown indicates that no secular periodical at that time could number more than 4,500 subscribers (155). Pilkington also notes that Methodist preachers encouraged communal subscriptions when individuals found themselves unable to afford the $2.00 annual subscription price (204).
was enabled, at least in part, by the continual reminder he gave readers about the benefits their faithful subscriptions conferred not only on their own souls, but on the interests of the wider Methodist Episcopal Church. The *Christian Advocate*'s first editorial makes the connection explicit:

> The claims which this paper holds out for an extensive patronage, are, that it has not one merely local or sectional object—it is designed to promote the general interests of the kingdom of Christ. It has a great advantage in the situation from which it issues, and can reap the benefit of an extensive correspondence long since established by the Book Concern with all parts of the world. The manner in which its profits are to be applied presents a claim to the benevolent heart. Every one who becomes a subscriber puts his hand to the missionary cause, helps to speed on the “angel having the everlasting gospel to preach,” and contributes to cheer the heart of the widow and the orphan. ("Editorial" CA 9 Sept 1826: 2)

Easily eliding the “general interests of the kingdom of Christ” with Methodist denominationalism, in an extension of Dickins’s original rhetoric Bangs transforms the act of subscribing from a simple economic transaction into a corporal work of mercy capable of cheering “the heart of the widow and the orphan.” The same sentiment is repeated more prosaically at the head of Bangs’s editorial in smaller type: “The proceeds of this paper will be equally divided among the Annual Conferences, to be applied in spreading the gospel, and in aiding distressed and superannuated preachers, and the widows and orphans of those who have died in the work.” Although not the first weekly Methodist newspaper to be published in the United States, the *Advocate* was the first newspaper to be deliberately and systematically used to extend and consolidate the Concern’s denominational market. In addition to editorials like the one above, Bangs also published catalogues; excerpts from books; and, just as Soule had in the *Methodist Magazine*, warned subscribers away from pirated editions of Methodist texts. Within months of the *Christian Advocate*’s appearance Bangs also began to publish a small regular column of the names and locations of those who had sent the Concern letters and orders, together with a separate list of those to whom orders of books had
been shipped, in what quantity, and by what means.\textsuperscript{108} This permitted Bangs not only to communicate with his customers at almost no cost to the Concern, but also allowed all the Advocate’s readers to see at a glance the rate at which the Concern was selling books; where those books were being sold; in what quantity; and who among the Church’s preachers and presiding elders were the most successful colporteurs. As such it provided not only a window into the aggregated reading habits of the entire Church, but also a indirect adjuration to preachers to sell and Methodists to buy the Concern’s products.

Although the Concern’s infrastructure and cultural capital had grown significantly under Bangs’s tenure, by the time John Emory was elected senior book agent at the General Conference of 1828, its financial debt had swollen to a staggering $100,000 (Pilkington 211, 223). As Emory would demonstrate, however, the efficacy of the Concern’s rhetorical strategies was approaching its apogee in these years. Through the use of conference minutes, the Discipline, the imprints of all saleable books, several monthly periodicals, and a weekly newspaper, the Concern’s agents had long since convinced customers and colporteurs alike to identify patronage with the interests of the denomination as a whole. The decades following Bangs’s tenure were two of the most difficult in the Concern’s history. Emory and his successors would need to draw heavily on its stores of cultural capital to weather several storms including the strongest market headwinds the Concern had yet encountered; the rise of a rival Methodist Book Concern in Baltimore; the loss of copyright protection for its hymnbook; the utter destruction of its stock, buildings, and equipment in a devastating fire that was followed by a severe national economic depression; as well as major financial claims made by secessionist conferences that threatened to sever access to lucrative markets in Upper Canada and the southern United States. The last of these will be analyzed in this dissertation’s fourth and fifth chapters. Among the former, by far the greatest challenges to the Concern’s solvency, and even its survival, resulted, first, when a court failed to recognize the Concern’s legal and moral right to remain the sole publisher of its best-selling hymnbook in 1833; and, second, when a ruinous fire leveled its newly

\textsuperscript{108} The first of these columns appeared in the 30 December 1826 issue (62).
erected premises one February night in 1836. The Concern’s rhetorical strategies played a critical role in moderating the potential consequences of these reversals.

Mark Noll writes that “from 1781 to 1820, when evangelicalism began to exert a pervasive effect on the religious life of England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and the new United States, the number of hymn tune books brought out each decade skyrocketed to about 310. Such enumerations indicate the shape of a cultural, as well as a religious revolution” (“Defining Role of Hymns” 6). The proliferation of hymnbooks during these decades provides a good example of what R. Laurence Moore would call the commodification of religion. According to the reports filed with the General Conference by Ezekiel Cooper, before the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century the Methodist hymnbook had already become the Concern’s most lucrative title. Not surprisingly, hymnbooks were also the most likely of all the Concern’s offerings to be pirated by others. As noted earlier, Joshua Soule in 1818 used the Methodist Magazine as a platform to discredit a pirated hymnbook on the grounds that it constituted a “libel”—not, tellingly, on the Concern, but on the whole Methodist Episcopal Church. Azor Hoyt, the printer Bangs hired in 1824 to superintend the Concern’s growing number of presses, would have quickly become acquainted with the fact that the hymnbook was by far the Concern’s best-selling title. Published catalogues typically offered the hymnbook in a wider number of formats, bindings, and styles than any other item—including the Bible. A catalogue that appeared in the Christian Advocate on 9 November 1827, for example, contains eleven separate entries for the hymnbook in 12mo, 24mo, and 48mo formats. In prices ranging from 75¢ to $2.25 (or about the cost of an annual subscription to the Christian Advocate) the hymnbook could be purchased bound in sheep, plain calf, calf gilt, calf extra, roan extra, calf extra with gilt edges, and with or without tucks and clasps. The first title to be stereotyped by the Concern in 1820, and the first to be brought back into print after the Concern was destroyed by fire in 1836, its salability cannot be doubted (Bangs History 4.433, “Destruction of the Methodist Book Room by Fire!!” CA 29 February 1836: 102).109

109 Bangs writes, “The printing of books from stereotype plates had recently been introduced into this country, by which means standard works, for which a constant demand might be expected, were very much cheapened. The first work stereotyped in this establishment was the 24mo. edition of the hymnbook, soon after the General Conference of 1820” (History 4.433). Pilkington, in an apparent contradiction of Bangs’s testimony, suggests that stereotyping equipment was not obtained by the Concern until April
As the Concern began to print all of its books and periodicals without resort to outside printers, the need for not only more presses, but more efficient presses grew. This was especially true in the case of the *Christian Advocate*. Since September 1826, it had been produced on a double-pull Washington handpress that took two or three men to operate and was capable of about 300 impressions an hour (Pilkington 218). As the number of copies comprising each issue grew, it became necessary to put the paper to press earlier and earlier in the week. By the middle of 1828, in order to send the paper out by Friday or Saturday, it was necessary for Hoyt to begin the printing on Monday. Neither Bangs nor Hoyt were happy with this and in April 1828, just one month before the former completed his term as senior book agent, Hoyt began to test his own experimental cylinder press designed to print on both sides of the sheet simultaneously while making four to five thousand impressions per hour. Because it fed and threw off its own sheets, moreover, it required only a single operator (“New Printing Press” CA 11 April 1828: 32). Speed and efficiency of that sort promised to reduce the length of time needed to print 25,000 copies of the *Advocate* by three full days. In August, Hoyt’s enthusiasm got the better of him and he used his new press, without obtaining either Emory’s or Bangs’s permission, as senior book agent and editor of the *Christian Advocate* respectively, to produce the 8 August 1828 issue of the newspaper. It was not a success (“Superior Court” CA 8 February 1833:24). Although Hoyt included an article in the 8 August issue in which he enthused about the new technology, the pages were blurry.

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1828. If Pilkington is not mistaken, perhaps the hymnbook Bangs notes was stereotyped by another publisher on behalf of the Concern (215). Nathan Hatch, tying the commercial success of the hymnbook to the central role singing played in Methodist expansion, calls it “one of the best-sellers of the early republic” (150).  

110 Although steam presses in England were typically of the cylinder type by this time, the relatively primitive state of machine shops in the United States prevented American manufacturers of presses from imitating the design. Daniel Treadwell, for example, after returning from England where he had seen cylinder steam presses in operation, designed his own power press (first operated by horse and later by steam) in Boston in 1821 using the same flat platen design typical of a hand press. Although this set modest limits on the speed with which the Treadwell press could operate—throwing off about 600 sheets an hour or roughly twice that of a hand press—the quality of the printing was sufficiently good to attract business from many quarters including Daniel Fanshaw of the American Bible Society. Hoyt’s design, by comparison, was far more aggressive in its adoption of the English cylinder design. In the end, however, the failure of Hoyt’s press showed the wisdom of Treadwell’s technological conservatism (Pretzer 164-5, Nord “Benevolent Books” 233, Green “Early American Power Printing Presses” 143-8).
and difficult to read. Emory, in only the third month of his first term as senior book agent, was probably embarrassed not only for the Concern, but also for himself. More seriously, a poorly printed Advocate would diminish circulation, reduce profits, and ultimately damage the Concern’s cultural capital in its denominational market. Emory needed a scapegoat. The next issue contained an apology from Emory and a deflection of blame to “the part of the printer” who had acted “without our direction.” Hoyt was fired and his name stricken from the paper’s masthead. When Hoyt sought and failed to realize redress in the courts, hoping to force Emory to purchase his experimental press, he was thrown back on his own resources (CA 8 February 1833: 24, Pilkington 219, 228-9). 

In 1830, Hoyt published his own edition of the Methodist hymnbook and offered it to booksellers for 33¢ a copy. By comparison, the cheapest edition of the Concern’s hymnbook had a wholesale price of 56¢ (Pilkington 230). Although less expensive, it was in every way that he could make it an exact facsimile of the Concern’s edition. Emory responded, as Soule had before him, using the periodical press to underline the rhetorical connection between the sale of the Concern’s products and the welfare of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Unlike Soule, however, Emory rashly attacked Hoyt by name. It is a long passage but worth quoting in full since it touches on many points that are relevant to the present argument:

The time is come when we ought to be able to distinguish friends from enemies. As a vital auxiliary of our itinerant system of spreading the gospel, there is no institution in our whole economy more important, or more efficient, than the Methodist Book Concern. Our enemies see this, and feel it. Hence every attack on Methodism, from whatever quarter, uniformly connects with it an attack, directly or indirectly, openly or secretly, on “the Book Concern.” This

111 Physical copies of this issue of the Christian Advocate were later introduced in court as evidence to a jury that Hoyt’s cylinder press did not produce results of an acceptable quality (“Superior Court” CA 8 February 1833:24).

112 Emory later alleged that Hoyt’s dismissal was brought about by a variety of causes including the fact that the printer generally neglected his duties, kept wages back from workers, and may have pocketed money from the sale of two of the Concern’s presses in 1828. If any of this is true, it is interesting that Bangs chose not to act against Hoyt before his term ended as senior book agent in May 1828 (“Superior Court” CA 8 February 1833:24). In any event, Bangs makes no mention of Hoyt and his sensational libel case in his History of the Methodist Episcopal Church.
establishment, for many years heretofore, has been burdened with a very heavy debt,—the interest on which swallowed up almost the whole of the profits,—so that the clear avails for the relief of distressed preachers, widows, &c, have been extremely small.—The present agents, in pursuance of the plan directed by the last General Conference, have been exerting their utmost energies to pay off the debt. In order to [do] this, they have made extensive sales of stock, at very reduced prices, and have been continuing to reduce the prices of various works, as circumstances would admit, and as the times have demanded.—It is indispensable, at the same time, that a moderate profit on the general sale should be secured, otherwise the heavy expenses, and occasional losses to a considerable amount over such an extensive country and in such an extensive business, cannot be borne; and in that case, not only would the conference be deprived of any pecuniary relief from this source, but the Concern itself must be greatly crippled, if not annihilated. This, we know, would greatly gratify its enemies. But is there one of the preachers,—is there one of their friends,—nay, is there an individual real friend of Methodism, who is prepared to unite with our enemies to effect this? We are sure there can be no such one among our real friends. And if there be any among us, profiting by our name, acting in a way calculated to produce this result, and to undermine our most valuable institution, they ought to be known.

We are happy to be able to state that, since the last General Conference, we have succeeded in paying off, though at a great sacrifice of stock, a large amount of the debts of the Concern, and hope, with the Divine blessing and the united aid of our friends, to be able, by or before the session of the next General Conference, to discharge the whole. The Agents will then have it in their power, as has always been their anxious wish and their ardent hope, both to make our publications more numerous, and as cheap as our improved finances will admit, and also to increase the dividends, which, in despite of all the slander of our enemies, every intelligent man among us knows to be so urgently needed, to relieve the pressing wants which exist in the several annual conferences.—With the united and preserving aid of our friends, this can be done. But if they suffer themselves to be deterred from the support of our own Book Concern, it cannot be done. As agents in trust, we discharge our duty, by giving this notice. If any friend, and especially if any preacher, refuse to heed it,—he may repent it,—when too late;—yet shall we enjoy the consolation of having given this warning.

It has always been our most earnest desire to avoid collisions with any other publishers. Yet when an individual (and one, we blush to say it, calling himself a Methodist too!) commences a systematic course of bitter hostility to this Concern, seeking by every art in his power to draw away its business for his own private gain, regardless who may suffer by it, if he may only gratify his hostile feelings, and accomplish his own private ends, we are compelled, after long and painful forbearance already exercised, to give up the name of the individual, that our friends may be on their guard, and know how they ought to act in such a case. All that we desire of them, however, in reference to such an individual is, that they have nothing to do with him or his publications, so long as he shall continue thus to trespass on our own institutions. And we cannot but be confident that every real friend of the Methodist Book Concern, and of Methodism, when he understands the matter, will take this course.—The
individual to whom we now allude is a man in this city by the name of Hoyt. This man was formerly our printer, and thus obtained a knowledge of our business. About two years since we found it necessary to dismiss him from our employment. This is the ground of his hostility, and of his schemes for revenge. To gratify it, he first resorted to a vindictive suit at law, in which he was defeated. Since then he has devised a Hymnbook as nearly like ours as he could make it, so as to avoid the copyright. It is like ours in shape, and has the same lettering on the back, and no doubt booksellers or others, who, ignorantly or otherwise, may have purchased it for ours, will attempt to pass it as such. The imprint on the title page is,—“New-York, printed and published by S. Hoyt & Co, for the booksellers.” The preface is signed “The Publishers,”—and not with the name of our Bishops, as the preface of our genuine official hymnbook always is.—Any individual who shall knowingly have anything to do with that hymnbook, in such circumstances, cannot but be regarded as thereby participating in Mr. Hoyt’s hostility, and consequently as encouraging other similar attacks, and thus aiding and abetting him and others in aiming the most deadly blows at our Book Concern, and all the charitable and important objects which it has been instituted to accomplish. We shall add no more at present; though if it shall become necessary, we will give other names and facts hereafter. From open and known enemies we fear nothing. If secret ones, from within our own bosom, or elsewhere, develop themselves, we shall take care to expose them; and Methodists have been greatly betrayed if they have not spirit enough to rally around and to support their own institutions. (“To Our Friends” CA 24 September 1830: 4)

The shrill tone of this piece, combined with its particularly pointed third paragraph, resulted in a successful libel suit being filed against the Concern by Hoyt in 1833. Emory’s polemic is built around a metaphorical distinction between the friends and enemies of Methodism—those in the flesh and those in print. Although a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church (Emory blushes to admit), by publishing a rival edition of the hymnbook Hoyt was, Emory’s text argues, aiming “deadly blows” at Methodist interests. Emory’s call to distinguish this enemy from among friends is paralleled by his call to distinguish counterfeit editions of Methodist books issued by publishers for private gain, from the “genuine” commodities of the Concern issued for the benefit of Episcopal Methodists everywhere. By devising “a Hymnbook as nearly like ours as he could make it,” right down to the shape and lettering on the spine, Emory contended that Hoyt was attempting to fool booksellers and consumers into believing that they were purchasing an authorized hymnbook. Admittedly, a certain amount of imitation was necessary for Hoyt’s hymnbook to be usable. In public worship Methodist “hymns were given out not by the number of the hymn, but by the page of the book,” Lemuel
Bangs, Nathan Bangs’s son and the Concern’s bookkeeper, would later testify. But, Bangs continued, Hoyt went much further than functional necessity required by constructing a hymnbook so like the Concern’s that “it was easy to mistake the one for the other” (“Superior Court” CA 8 February 1833:24). Unable thus to fault the Hoyt hymnbook for either its content or its price, Emory argued, as his predecessors had before him, that the hymnbook—like any rival edition of a book sold by the Concern that somehow found its way onto the shelves of Methodists—constituted a counterfeit because it lacked the symbolic value that the connection between the Concern and the Methodist Episcopal Church conferred on the Concern’s commodities alone. Profits generated from the sale of Hoyt’s hymnbook, rather than aiding “charitable and important objects” connected with the Church’s wider interests, served only to “gratify his hostile feelings, and accomplish his own private ends.” The only way to identify a genuine hymnbook from an imitation, Emory elaborated, was to inspect its imprint. By drawing attention away from the book’s content, format, price, and material quality, and emphasizing the importance of its imprint, Emory set the Concern’s hymnbook apart from the Hoyt’s rival edition as a commodity uniquely imbedded in an institutional structure that alone furthered denominational interests. Those who failed to recognize the symbolic value that only the Concern’s commodities possessed and who patronized other publishers were as guilty as those publishers of acting against—not the Concern—but the charitable interests of Methodism itself. Thus Emory not only set the imprint of the book far above all other considerations by arguing that an authentic Methodist book must be identified only by its imprint, but also implied that a “real friend of Methodism” could be similarly recognized by the consumer choices he or she made in the marketplace. The Concern will survive these trials, retire its debt, lower its prices, expand its offerings, and increase the amount it pays to conferences as annual dividends, only if “real friends of Methodism” refuse to allow themselves to be “deterred” from patronizing the Concern. Although Emory’s rhetoric may have staunched sales of rival hymnbooks, Hoyt’s eventual victory in court had the far more consequential effect of placing the Methodist hymnbook, to Emory’s horror, in the public domain.

Atkinson’s Saturday Evening Post describes the trial of the New York state Supreme Court that took place near the end of January 1833 as being of “no ordinary character.” Over the course of almost an entire week the court room was “crowded with
the clergy and members of the [Methodist] Society” straining to hear the testimony of Hoyt and those he accused of libel: Nathan Bangs who had hired him, John Emory who fired him, James Collard who replaced him as printer, and Beverly Waugh, who as assistant book agent had refused to authorize Hoyt’s actions (9 February 1833 13.2).

Hoyt demanded $5,000 in restitution. Although they jury awarded him only the sum of $300 he won the moral victory. Far more damaging to the Concern’s long-term interests was the finding that “There could be no monopoly on the part of the Book Concern, for they had no patent right” (Pilkington 231).\footnote{The \textit{Christian Advocate} published a lengthy summary of the proceedings in its 8 February 1833 issue. As part of that summary, the agents also quoted in full Emory’s original article of September 1830 that precipitated the libel case.} It was an invitation to publishers across the United States to begin publishing their own editions of the popular hymnbook. It also meant that the Concern’s only recourse lay in rhetorically linking patronage with denominational identity. The quality of its commodities, their price, and their ready availability all fell to a place of secondary importance. In subsequent years regular columns appeared in the \textit{Christian Advocate} and other Methodist publications warning its customers, as Emory’s indictment of Hoyt’s hymnbook had, to inspect their books closely to ensure that they bore the Concern’s imprint (Pilkington 232). This was particularly true in the case of the lucrative hymnbook, which typically carried similar pleas for patronage in prefatory material. The preface of the 1836 edition of the Concern’s hymnbook, for example, signed by the Church’s four bishops, after pointing out that all profits from its sale are directed towards charitable purposes, adjures the reader, “if you have any respect for the authority of the Conference, or of us, or any regard for the prosperity of the Church of which you are members and friends, to purchase no Hymn Books but what are published by our own agents, and signed with the names of your Bishops” (5).

In the end, the additional stress Emory was obliged to place on rhetorical linkages between patronage and denominational identity to counteract the loss of the putative publishing monopoly it had enjoyed over its hymnbook for decades may have been fortunate. Without a galvanized denominational market predicated on the widespread acceptance of such linkages it seems highly unlikely that the Concern would have survived the most serious reversal it has yet faced: the complete
destruction of its largely uninsured building and stock by fire on the eve of the Panic of 1837.\textsuperscript{114} Nathan Bangs records his horror at being awakened in the middle of the night with news that the Concern was in flames:

\begin{quote}
It was on a very cold night in the month of February, 1836, but a short time after the great fire in the city of New York, which destroyed about twenty million dollars' worth of property. I was awakened about four o'clock A.M. by a ringing at my door, and a voice which apprised me that the Book Room was on fire! I sprung from my bed, dressed, called my two sons, and repaired with all possible speed to the scene of the conflagration. I hoped, at least, to save the library. But the smoke was already issuing from the windows of my office, and the flames from other parts of the house! Here I found the agents, who were on the spot before me. The hydrants were frozen, and the waters were thrown but feebly, though all exerted themselves to their utmost. We saw that all was gone (Stevens Bangs 301).
\end{quote}

The situation was made worse by the state of the Concern’s insurance policies. With its debt largely retired by 1831, Emory reported to the General Conference the following year that the combined value of the New York and Cincinnati operations, the latter opened twelve years earlier to alleviate logistical problems, amounted to almost $450,000 (Pilkington 224, 237-8). After occupying new buildings in New York in September 1833, the Concern maintained as many as seven separate insurance policies against loss by fire. After the massive losses associated with the “great fire” in New York’s Ann Street that destroyed millions of dollars of property in mid-December 1835, the Concern’s agents sought ways to increase the amount for which they were covered. Among those companies that survived the disaster, the agents found that the premiums required to renew their expiring policies had risen precipitously and so explored the possibility of taking out policies with insurance companies operating in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Boston. When these firms discovered the value of the property the agents wished to insure, however, they refused to take on the risk. Unable to obtain the additional insurance they desired for what they deemed a reasonable price, the agents

\textsuperscript{114} In his history of the American Bible Society, Peter Wosh notes that, “The Panic of 1837 ushered in the most serious depression in American history, and contributions to philanthropic causes declined dramatically. Between 1836 and 1837 the amount the Society collected for foreign distribution decreased from $13,789.19 to $6,205.09. The following year was worse […]” (172).
“commenced a more careful and rigid system of self protection” to prevent fires, including requiring that Thomas Baker, the Concern’s porter and cartman who lived on the premises, make nightly inspections of all the rooms and the stoves used to heat them (“Book Concern” CA 19 February 1836: 103). The agents estimated that the fire that leveled the Concern on 18 February 1836 had destroyed $340,000 worth of property including $40,000 in buildings “erected since the last General Conference” and $300,000 in “stereotype plates, presses, paper, and other printing and binding materials, together with an immense amount of Bibles, tracts, Sunday school books, and the various theological and religious publication of the Church.” By that time three of New York’s largest insurance companies had been forced into bankruptcy, and the agents estimated the policies that still remained in effect would yield only $25,000 in compensation. (“Destruction of the Methodist Book Room by Fire!!” CA 29 February 1836: 102). The rest, if the Concern was to survive, would have to be recovered through voluntary subscriptions and donations. Never before had the Concern stood in greater need of its rhetorical strategies for equating its welfare with the welfare of the larger Church.

In the 19 February 1836 issue of the Christian Advocate the agents published a lengthy account describing the fire, the losses incurred, and minutes of meetings held in the following days to address their calamitous misfortune.115 By publishing the resolutions contained in these minutes, the agents took their earliest opportunity to establish in the minds of their readers that the loss of the Concern’s property and stock was a loss sustained, not by the agents as mere publishers, but by the whole Methodist Episcopal Church. One of the first resolutions adopted by the trustees and stewards meeting on the day following the fire read, for example,

That in this great loss, we recognize its serious consequences upon the prosperity of the M. E. Church in general and particularly and more intimately upon the comfort and support of our superannuated and beloved brethren in the ministry, who have worn out their lives for Christ; and in the calamitous condition of the

115 Although dated 19 February 1836, this issue of the Christian Advocate was not mailed to subscribers until the end of the month. In the same article the agents acknowledge their gratitude for assistance received from some of the city’s other publishers including Harper & Brothers who provided them with type, the New-York Observer for the use of office space, and the R. Hoe & Co. for providing them with access to a Napier power press on which to print the Christian Advocate.
many widows and orphans of our preachers, who are also thus deprived of the ordinary provision of the conferences.

Three days later, another meeting of “the male members and friends of the Methodist Episcopal Church” was held to solicit subscriptions and donations for the support of the Concern. By the end of the meeting $13,000 dollars had been pledged, including $500 from Harper & Brothers, to help rebuild the Concern. A committee was also struck to compose a circular addressed “To the membership and friends of the Methodist Episcopal Church throughout the United States” with the purpose of stirring a similar response in circuits across the country. The circular relies heavily on the rhetoric connecting denominational interests to the welfare of the Concern. After a short history of its development from a one-room operation to “one of the largest, and most successful book manufactories in the new world” the narrative elaborates not only on what the Concern has already done to meet the needs of the wider Church but what it might have done had a “mysterious Providence” not permitted its destruction:

And we looked too, we confess, with heart-cheering emotion to the prospect that a permanent and ample provision would soon be secured, through the resources of this Concern, for our superannuated brethren in the ministry, and for the widows and orphans of our deceased preachers, for whom we shall never cease to feel and pray. That this desirable result was probable and even certain, may be seen from the fact that, for the present year, the agents were prepared to appropriate $1000 to each of the twenty-two conferences for this important charity.

Although the circular appeals to “other Churches [to] extend us their assistance” the chief responsibility for providing aid is laid squarely on the shoulders of the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, each of whom is called in equal measure by the calamity “to suffering and duty.” In a separate article appearing in the same issue, and in spite of the assistance provided by other publishers including Harper & Brothers, the agents also pleaded with their customers to refrain from purchasing Methodist books from other publishers: “We have only time to add that we request our friends to withhold their orders for Methodist books, except to the branches at Cincinnati and New-Orleans, and those person who may have on hand books of our former publication,
until they can be supplied from our own press” (“Methodist Book Concern” CA 19 February 1836: 103).

In the months following the fire, pledges and donations flowed into the Concern’s coffers from Methodists across the continent. Many of those donations were also accompanied by letters that reinforced the rhetorical connection between the Concern and the denomination’s wider interests. One writer observed in a letter dated 12 March 1836, “The destruction of that great establishment must be felt as a heavy calamity throughout every part of our field of labor, and I can but fear it is destined to exert a paralyzing influence upon the Church for years to come.” After observing that the Book Concern’s products served in the place of schools and colleges for many, he dismisses the financial loss as insignificant when compared to the diminution of the Concern as the Church’s chief centripetal influence, “the focus where all the scattered energies of the Church were collected, and the radiating point from which a thousand salutary influence proceeded to cheer and bless our widespread congregations” (CA 25 March 1836: 123). The agents published a collection of letters together under the title “Every Cent Will Tell” at the beginning of April in which various writers observed that the Concern was integral to the functioning of the Church, that its destruction amounted to “the greatest evil she could be called to suffer,” and that the whole Church had a duty to rise simultaneously to its aid (CA 8 April 1836: 130). A quarterly conference in Alabama wrote on 15 April to inform the agents they had ordered all their preachers to collect donations on behalf of the Concern because “we think the whole Church has participated in the loss, and she should help to repair it” (CA 20 May 1836: 155). Two days later Heman Bangs wrote from Connecticut with news that $800 in pledges had been collected on the grounds that “the whole Methodist community ought to come forward and make a united and simultaneous effort to put the Book Concern in as good a condition as it was before the fire” (“Subscriptions and Donations to the Book Concern” CA 29 April 1836: 142). One of the most interesting letters to be published in response to the destruction of the Concern was authored by Samuel Luckey of the Genesee Wesleyan Seminary in New York. Luckey attempted to solve the theological problem of the fire by accusing Methodists of causing the calamity by failing to support the Concern as they should. God, Luckey argues, allowed the fire to destroy the Concern in order to send a powerful message to Methodists about their duty to support an organization so central to the welfare of the Church’s wider charitable missions and
the care of superannuated preachers, widows, and orphans. He demands, in response, that Methodists do more than return the Book Concern “in as good a condition as it was before the fire.” “And shall we now,” he writes, “talk of satisfying our consciences by barely rendering the institution what it was before? This is not what our heavenly father intended by afflicting us. This admonition extends much further” (CA 25 March 1836: 123).

Responses like these underscore the extent to which the book stewards and agents had successfully linked patronage and support of the Concern with denominational obligations and identity. A strategy that had originally been developed solely to shore up its denominational market by setting its products apart from the products of competitors served equally well in this case to transform the destruction of the Concern’s buildings, presses, and stock into a symbolic derogation of the entire Methodist Episcopal Church. Not once was it suggested, moreover, that Harper & Brothers step into the breach as devout Methodist publishers to supply the needs of Methodist readers across the country. Although this would have been a far less expensive alternative, it seems no one, not even the Harpers, gave any serious consideration to anything but rebuilding the Concern from the ground up. Thus rank-and-file Methodists opened their purses, despite the Panic, to offer money in exchange for—not printed commodities—but a heightened sense of denominational goodwill. By November 1839, the Concern’s new buildings were complete and it was soon operating eight steam presses as well as a double-cylinder Napier power press capable of 2,000 impressions per hour purchased at a cost of $5,000. In addition to its operations in Cincinnati and its depository in New Orleans, by 1840 the Concern also opened

116 Peter Wosh notes the deleterious effect that the triumph of Jacksonianism had on the American Bible Society beginning in 1830 as critics linked its success with charges of excessive wealth, elitism, and urban luxury (124-129). There is evidence in Luckey’s argument that the Methodist Book Concern’s market success had resulted in similar criticism and that the fire amounted to a Divine punishment inflicted, not on the Concern, but on its detractors for making such false accusations. Similar accusations were also directed against individual Methodist preachers. In his 1826 Letters to Young Minister of the Gospel, Nathan Bangs cautioned itinerants against focusing too much on the financial rewards associated with selling books: “Circulate good books. Our plan of printing and circulating religious books, is admirably calculated to aid the minister in his work. Let it be known that you do not do this on account of the profits of sale. A just suspicion of this motive will destroy your dignity and usefulness” (197-198).

117 By this time Harper & Brothers had grown to become one of the largest publishers in the United States. “No American firm,” notes Scott Casper, “issued more books in the 1830s and none gained as wide a reputation [as Harper & Brothers]” (128).
additional depositories in Pittsburgh, Charleston, and Boston (Pilkington 259-62). Although the Concern had yet to weather the financial demands placed on it by the secession of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the southern states over slavery, it had not only regained its original footing by that time, but, as Samuel Luckey had hoped, grown to become a larger operation than ever before. None of this would have been achieved as quickly or as easily, if at all, without a fully developed and entrenched strategy for linking the welfare of the Concern to the denominational interests of the wider Church. Had the London Book Room experienced a similar calamity, it seems far less certain that it, lacking a comparable strategy, would have engendered an equally generous response from British Methodists.

This chapter has attempted to unfold the rhetorical strategies that Wesley, and later the Methodist Book Concern, used to invest texts and printed commodities with symbolic value in the market for religious books, tracts, and periodicals. Even before the appearance of his first abridgement in 1735, Wesley displayed a natural inclination, as a member of the Oxford Holy Club, to position himself as a consecrator and interpreter of texts for his followers. Following the example of George Whitefield, Wesley soon began to use published texts to fashion a public self for the purpose of enhancing his reputation and his concomitant symbolic power as a publisher. Like any publisher, Wesley’s cultural capital grew as his catalogue of successful titles expanded. To guard that capital Wesley prohibited his preachers from publishing anything without his permission and attempted to enforce the same prohibition among his preachers overseas. But because American Methodists were forced to grapple with the decline of their founder’s transatlantic reputation as a result of the Revolutionary War and the events associated with the establishment of ecclesiastical independence of 1784, their polity and their print culture became relatively insulated from the effects of his death in 1791. Unlike British Methodists, who found the years following Wesley’s death particularly difficult, and who continued to depend in large measure on his residual cultural capital to invest their printed commodities with symbolic status in a wider market for religious texts, American Methodists were well on the way to developing new rhetorical strategies for the same purpose. By equating patronage with the denominational identity of the Concern’s potential customers, Dickins and his successors were able to set not only the content of the Concern’s texts, but the paper and ink that constituted those texts as physical commodities, apart from the productions of
other printers and publishers. This allowed the Methodist Book Concern’s agents to consolidate their own rapidly expanding denominational market, while also guarding the Concern’s economic interests in a legal environment that provided ineffective copyright protection. Documents emanating from both the conference and the Concern continually underscored the connection between consumer choices and denominational identity. Conference minutes; the Discipline; catalogues; the Methodist Magazine, the Christian Advocate, and other Methodist periodicals; and even the Concern’s imprint, all became vehicles for entrenching the belief that purchasing a book printed by the Concern amounted to an act of denominational self-identification because it furthered the wider charitable interests of the Methodist Episcopal Church. While books printed by others might be less expensive, more readily available, and even of a higher manufactured quality, only those books printed by the Concern could confer financial benefit on Methodism’s superannuated preachers, widows, orphans, and other charitable interests. Put another way, while British Wesleyans continued to rely on Wesley’s cultural capital to consecrate texts that they then sold as printed commodities, the Methodist Book Concern developed strategies for consecrating printed commodities that they then sold as texts. This effectively moved authors, including Wesley, into a place of secondary importance relative to the positions occupied by the publisher and the denomination in the field of cultural production. For American Methodists, the commodity as the product of the denominational publisher, not the text as the creation of an author, became the locus of symbolic value. While other publishers might be able to duplicate the original text and even the material book that instantiated it, they were structurally unable to replicate the Concern’s printed commodities as symbols of denominational identity.

Although these strategies worked particularly well in the United States, where Methodism and Methodist cultural production existed in a natural correspondence with the democratic and market principles prevalent in the new republic’s wider power field, the same cannot be said of Upper Canada. In spite of attracting followers almost as readily as in the United States, Methodism in Upper Canada was forced to evolve in ways that ultimately threatened the Concern’s access to the province’s growing market for printed religious commodities. The Concern never ceased in its attempts to convince the members of its denominational market that it was not like other publishers and that its commodities, however similar, were not like the books, periodicals, tracts, and bibles
produced by others. The relationship Upper Canadian Methodists maintained with the Concern also took place in the shadow of this framework. As the next several chapters will show, continued patronage of a denominational publisher in the context of a highly developed rhetorical strategy calculated to foreground the interests of the Methodist Episcopal Church became an increasingly fraught proposition as the province’s Methodists struggled to find ways to contend with establishmentarianism, changes brought about by the War of 1812, a rising tide of British immigration, radical discontent with the province’s political institutions, and the return of British Wesleyan missionaries to the colony.
Chapter 2
Opening a market for Methodist texts in Upper Canada

After receiving his license to preach in August 1801, Nathan Bangs furnished himself with the material objects needed to carry out his mission: new clothing, a horse, a saddle, and the “indispensable saddle-bags” in which to carry Methodist books and tracts for distribution along his preaching circuit in the Upper Canadian wilderness (Stevens Bangs 64). Recent historians of North American religion agree that, in the decades following this earnest beginning, Bangs’s impact on the development of Methodism was singularly consequential. George Rawlyk calls him the “most influential” Methodist actor in the unfolding Upper Canadian religious drama in the first decade of the nineteenth century (Canada Fire 106); Mark Noll writes that he came closest to “filling the gap left by Asbury’s death” in the development of Methodist theology in America (America’s God 349); Nathan Hatch notes that Bangs was “Methodism’s first major polemicist, theological editor, and historian,” (204); and Dee Andrews credits him with setting the Methodist Book Concern on its trajectory to become “the largest publishing house in the world by 1860” (230). But this memorable career was almost cut short in its first year when someone along Bangs’s initial preaching circuit placed in his hands a copy of James Lackington’s 1791 Memoirs, an anti-Methodist polemic that had been “passed from house to house, from hand to hand” to counteract his preaching (Stevens Bangs 86). The book almost drove the

118 Remembered by most scholars for his commercial success as an eighteenth-century London bookseller, Lackington fell in and out of Methodism several times throughout the course of his life and in his Memoirs accused Methodists of religious charlatanism who “hocus pocusly” pretended to be converted but who secretly remained plagued by “doubts, fears, and horrors of mind” (Memoirs 108). Lackington retracted these charges in his 1804 The Confessions of J. Lackington. The ms. minutes of the New York annual conference held in May 1806 contain the following resolution “Voted that the Book Committee make an extract of the essence of Lackington’s Confessions to be printed and published by the Book Agents.” Ezekiel Cooper’s edition appeared that same year and John Wilson, his successor, published two separate editions in 1808. Between 1794 and 1810 Upper Canada constituted a district under the authority of the New York conference, after which it became part of the newly formed Genesee conference. By 1829 Lackington’s entire Confessions were offered by the Methodist Book Concern for 18½¢ (“General Alphabetical catalogue of Books on Sale by J. Emory and B. Waugh” CA 22 May 1829: 151).
young preacher out of his mind. He soon found himself unable to preach and complained that he was “tempted to open my mouth in blasphemy against God, and to curse the Saviour of men. Which way to look for relief, I knew not, for I thought God had deserted me” (Stevens Bangs 88). It is fitting that the disaster threatened by one book was soon averted by another when Bangs found the solace and resolve he needed to carry on his mission in the Methodist Book Concern’s hymnbook—the one book, together with the Bible, all but guaranteed to be found among the contents of any Methodist preacher’s saddlebags (Stevens Bangs 89-91).

The circulation of books in Upper Canada played a vitally important role in the battle for denominational converts during the early decades of the province’s history, a period that largely coincided with that rapid expansion in evangelicalism known as the Second Great Awakening. At least since the appearance of Nathan Hatch’s highly influential revisionist history of evangelicalism, The Democratization of American Christianity in 1989, the relationship between print culture and the rise of evangelicalism has become increasingly well documented by historians of religion in the United States. As part of his wider argument that the spread of evangelicalism in the early republic was not a conservative reaction to political change, Hatch cites the role religious print culture played in foregrounding the natural ideological affinities between participants of the Second Great Awakening and emergent forms of American republicanism. Since that time, a growing number of historians have furthered Hatch’s argument, from Frank Lambert and R. Laurence Moore, who explore the ways charismatic figures and religious denominations used print culture in America to pioneer commercial strategies in a growing market for religious commodities, to David Nord and Peter Wosh, who document the role evangelical bodies played in the

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It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance the Methodist hymnbook played in the intellectual and spiritual formation of new converts. The previous chapter has already shown the rhetorical and legal efforts the Concern’s agents made to protect this particular title from piracy. “Preachers and class-leaders,” one scholar writes, “were both raised from ordinary worshippers, and the basis of all they said and taught was in two books—the Bible and the Methodist Hymn-book” (Matthews Methodism and Education 75). When Anson Green began public ministry in Upper Canada a generation later he was equipped, like Bangs, with these same two titles. “My saddle,” he wrote, “was my study, saddle-bags my wardrobe, and my Bible and hymn-book my select library” (Life 64). John Carroll, who took up the itinerancy in 1828, was also supplied with “A newly presented pocket Bible and Hymn Book,” which, together with a volume of sermons and Watt’s Logic, formed the whole of his “travelling library” (Past and Present 108). And, like Bangs, Carroll also read his hymnbook “consecutively through, as much by course as the Bible” for consolation and encouragement (My Boy Life 252).
nineteenth century initiating the emergence of a “mass media” in the United States. Recent historians who have written about religion in Upper Canada, by contrast, have tended to ignore material and print culture to focus almost exclusively on questions of theology, politics, and ecclesiastical polity. This is particularly true of studies concerned with the period preceding the public conflict waged in print between Egerton Ryerson and John Strachan in the mid-1820s. George Rawlyk, for example, describes Bangs’s 1801 mental breakdown in considerable detail while neglecting to mention that it was precipitated by reading Lackington’s Memoirs (Canada Fire 117-8). Nancy Christie notes that Methodists typically came from uneducated, humble backgrounds, but says nothing about the requirement placed on them by the General Conference and the Discipline to improve themselves daily by study while they functioned as the denomination’s official colporteurs along preaching circuits (“Democratic Rage” 28-9). And Neil Semple, apart from several passing references to the Christian Guardian as a locus of contention between Upper Canadian and British Wesleyan Methodists during the first half of the nineteenth century, has almost nothing to say about Methodist print culture as a social force in its own right (Lord’s Dominion 76, 82, 92, 97, 125).

Historians of the book have done almost as little as scholars of religion to document the nature of Methodist print culture in Upper Canada before 1828. In part this is because those who have written about religious print culture in the province’s early decades have tended to focus almost exclusively on the distribution work of British philanthropic organizations. Janet Friskney and George Parker, for example, while acknowledging that Americans had some influence in this area, devote the majority of their narratives to describing the provincial work of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, the Society for Propagating the Gospel, the Religious Tract Society, and the British and Foreign Bible Society on the grounds that “most Bible

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120 Two existing unpublished studies that take Methodist print culture in the province as their exclusive focus, Janet Friskney’s 1994 thesis “Towards a Canadian ‘Cultural Mecca’: The Methodist Book and Publishing House’s Pursuit of Book Publishing and Commitment to Canadian Writing, 1829-1926” and Dana Garrick’s more recent doctoral dissertation “The Impact of Institutional Change on the Methodist Book and Publishing House, 1829-1919,” have, as their titles suggest, little to say about Methodist print culture in the province before the establishment of the Christian Guardian in 1829. With little attention to transnational aspects of Methodist print culture, these studies adopt a decidedly teleological approach to their subjects by unfolding the cultural and institutional implications, respectively, of the transformation of the Methodist newspaper office and book depository into the Methodist Book and Publishing House as a commercially successful publisher of Canadian literature.
and tract societies established in the colonies identified themselves as local affiliates of organizations based in Britain” (Friskney “Christian Faith in Print” 139; see also Parker Beginnings of the Book Trade 19-20). Friskney’s acknowledgment that the influence of these organizations remained limited while they lacked an efficient infrastructure of volunteers to assist in distribution until the 1820s, and that the subsequently more effective system of traveling agents and paid colporteurs remained in its infancy until the 1840s, is not surprising when juxtaposed to the widely-accepted view that Upper Canada was slow to develop a mass reading public (142). Citing low levels of literacy resulting from the absence of easily accessible schools, the rigours of pioneer existence, and a general lack of reading materials, other scholars have tended to argue that Canada’s early reading public was confined to “the elites from the administration, and military, the trades, and professions, and the clergy” who were mostly located in the region’s few urban centers (Hare and Wallot “The Business of Printing and Publishing” 72; see also Parker Beginnings of the Book Trade 13, 18-19). While it would be difficult to maintain that Upper Canada was a stronghold of literary culture in the first several decades of settlement, concluding that the majority of settlers were completely illiterate probably overstates the case considerably. In the absence of actual figures for literacy in the Upper Canadian period, many scholars have relied on anecdotal evidence. Much of this, however, has been drawn from the published narratives of British immigrants who were, as often as not, inclined to regard the province as a cultural backwater and time spent in it a form of intellectual martyrdom. In an attempt to show that few outside the province’s towns participated in a popular reading culture, for example, one recent scholar cites Anna Jameson’s 1838 assessment that “only one in twenty or thirty to one in seventy residents” of Upper Canada “was able to read or write” (Peterman “Literary Cultures and Popular Reading in Upper Canada” 396). But Jameson, like the even more frequently cited Susanna Moodie, was a political conservative, recently immigrated from Britain, and not much inclined to take a favourable view of many of the province’s inhabitants—particularly those who had arrived from the United States. With a

121 Jameson was the wife of the province’s sometime attorney general Robert Jameson and had little direct experience of the backwoods. Moodie, on the other hand, moved to Upper Canada to settle with her husband, a half-pay officer, and lived for a number years in the most primitive conditions. Both shared an outspoken and thoroughly conservative dislike of American immigrants and American institutions. Anna Jameson also wrote in Winter Studies and Summer Rambles that 427,567 papers circulated through the mail in 1836 among a population of about 370,000 (1.191). In its review of Jameson’s book, the Christian
literacy rate as low as the one Jameson suggests, the province would have been all but bereft of any meaningful literary culture. The emergence of a functioning public sphere under these conditions would have been, moreover, entirely out of the question. Other scholars take a somewhat more optimistic view. Michel Verrette, for example, notes that a “generally more literate elite from New Brunswick settled in Upper Canada” after 1790, and that other regions supplying the majority of immigrants until 1840, including parts of the United States, England, Scotland, and Ireland, were marked by “very high literacy rates” (“The Spread of Literacy” 169-70). Recent social historians tend to share this view. In her study of popular politics in Upper Canada, Carol Wilton notes that her “unscientific impression from examining signatures of petitions of the 1830s is that the overwhelming majority of signatories could sign their names” (247n40). Jeffrey McNairn goes further, arguing that the province’s literacy rates before mid-century were actually higher than those in Britain itself. “The best estimates,” he writes, “suggest that, by 1840, about 80 percent of Upper Canadians adults could read and write” (133). Even in prewar Upper Canada, literacy rates were probably not nearly as depressed as some have argued. Although studies of literacy rates based on signatures suggest that only 15% of Quebec colonists could sign their names at the time of the Revolutionary War, the majority of refugees and immigrants from the United States who settled west of the Ottawa River between 1783 and 1812 were drawn from the New England and mid-Atlantic states where general literacy rates, based on studies of signature literacy, fluctuated as high as 80 to nearly 100%. The New England states in particular, a region from which many Loyalists and so-called late-Loyalists arrived, had a relatively well-established system of common schools that resulted in an almost perfect literacy rate among white males by the middle of the eighteenth century (Monaghan Learning to Read and Write 384-5). And, as Michael Warner points out, the common practice among scholars of inferring literacy rates from signatures in the absence of other evidence probably results in an overall underestimation of the total literacy rates.

Guardian was skeptical—estimating a much higher rate and wrote, “in Upper Canada there is twice the number of newspapers read, in proportion to the population than there is in any county, city, town or village, in England” (CG 20 February 1839, McNairn 127).
number of people who could actually read—particularly women—but who did not participate in “written culture” (14).

Although there is no way to know precisely what the province’s literacy rate may have been at any particular time throughout the Upper Canadian period, it would be difficult to explain the success Methodist preachers encountered opening a market for the Methodist Book Concern’s printed commodities in Upper Canada if things were really as bleak as Anna Jameson claimed. However many readers there may have been, it is certain that the Concern had a considerable head start on inducting them into its denominational market relative to competitors such as the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Society for Propagating the Gospel, and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. By the time the York Upper Canada Bible Society, a branch of the British and Foreign Bible Society, was established under the province’s Receiver-General John Henry Dunn in November 1828, Methodist preachers had been selling the Concern’s products to Upper Canadians for almost forty years (Woodley 23-4). When compared to the British and Foreign Bible Society’s nascent network of volunteers and colporteurs, Methodist preachers, operating as commission agents of the Methodist Book Concern, constituted a practiced sales force ready to supply customers with bibles, hymnbooks, and a steadily growing number of titles authored by evangelicals on both sides of the Atlantic. This chapter will attempt describe how these preachers opened a resilient market for the Concern’s products in Upper Canada by inducting converts into local Methodist societies that functioned as denominationally sheltered spaces for the distribution of printed commodities away from the scrutiny of a wider public, by promoting the sale of Methodist periodicals in which subscribers could read about religious developments on both sides of the border, by providing inexpensive texts for young readers to the province’s emergent Sunday school market, and by introducing formal courses of study that helped to homogenize the reading tastes of ministerial candidates and converts alike to conform to the Concern’s catalogue of offerings.

122 It seems probable, moreover, that the literacy rate of the province’s Methodists, even before the establishment of Sunday schools, may have been higher than that of the general population. Wesley’s unyielding emphasis on the importance of study, for preachers and members alike, combined with a class structure that often encompassed smaller “reading circles” would have provided a venue for the illiterate to hear others read aloud and fostered in them a strong desire to learn how to read for themselves (Burton 19, 27, 233-4; Matthews Methodism and Education 78-9). “Methodists doubtless were,” writes Goldwin French, “as literate and intelligent as the overwhelming majority of their fellow-citizens” (107).
Potential tensions between the conservatism of the province’s elite and the Concern’s increasingly developed rhetorical strategies for linking acts of patronage with membership in a foreign church will never be far from the surface of this analysis. Although many historians, including Egerton Ryerson in his highly ideological 1880 *The Loyalists of America and their Times*, have generally characterized Upper Canadian society as a largely monolithic polity founded from the outset on the principled rejection of all things American, Jane Errington’s 1987 study *The Lion, the Eagle, and Upper Canada* has done much to displace that view. Through a close reading of correspondence and other contemporary records, Errington shows that Upper Canadians before the War of 1812 were more divided, and North Americans more unified, in their political convictions than had been previously understood. Importantly, a power field as fragmented and ideologically diverse as the one Errington describes would have done little serious harm to the symbolic value of printed commodities whose sale was identified with the interests of an American institution. The War of 1812, however, marked the beginning of an important shift in Upper Canada’s political complexion. Dividing a period of relative ideological diversity from one increasingly dominated by an influential conservative leadership that shared the anti-American prejudices of the colonial administration, this event will function as natural hinge in this chapter’s narrative.¹²³ Postwar trends associated with a steadily more uniform colonial ideology had considerable potential to complicate the Concern’s access to its market north of the border. As the following will show, however, such complications were kept to a minimum by the continued insularity of the market for Methodist books in Upper Canada—a market defined, as it was in the United States, strictly along denominational lines. The rhetorical reasons for this south of the border have already been explored. Practical reasons were at least as important in British North America. Upper Canada’s towns were smaller, its print culture infrastructure less developed, and the expanses of wilderness between settlements more extensive than in much of the northeastern United States. Books and tracts of any sort were scarce throughout the province’s relatively sparsely settled territory and Methodist preachers remained the most

¹²³ The War was also an important chronological marker for Upper Canadians themselves. John Howison notes in his 1820 *Sketches of Upper Canada* that, “The last American war forms an important era in the history of Upper Canada, and as such, it is continually referred to by the people, who, when alluding in a general way to the time at which any circumstance occurred, say that it happened before or after the war” (77).
practical means for placing the Concern’s printed commodities in the hands of readers. Although deliberately marketed within a rhetorical framework that tied subscription and purchase to denominational membership in an American church, the Concern’s published products were never part of a public market for such goods in Upper Canada. Because distribution took place entirely through a denominational sales force of preachers, the Concern’s commodities remained sheltered from much of the criticism they would otherwise have attracted from the province’s conservative elite. Thus the Concern’s denominationally-sequestered North American market was permitted to grow into an increasingly integrated and seamless transnational textual community throughout most of the period considered by this chapter.

The families of Barbara Heck and Philip Embury, who settled north of the St. Lawrence in Augusta in 1785, were among the first Methodists to bring religious texts published on American presses into post-revolutionary British North America. These probably included some of the earliest editions Robert Williams published in New York, without Wesley’s permission but with the cooperation of Philip Embury, sixteen years earlier. At this early date the association of these texts with Williams would have meant more to Methodist readers than the fact that they had been printed in territory belonging to the new United States. Washington’s inauguration and the formal establishment of Methodist printing under the auspices of the Methodist Episcopal Church were both still four years away. And no rhetorical strategy, apart from a continued reliance on Wesley’s cultural capital, had yet been devised. Wesley’s insistence that printed materials for distribution by Methodists be imported from London, moreover, would hold for two more years—both in the United States and in British North America. Writing from Nova Scotia in the spring of 1786, Freeborn Garrettson asked Wesley to send, among other titles, hymnbooks, editions of his journals and sermons, and Fletcher’s works. Wesley did not reply until September to write that it was “too late in the season to send books” (Bangs Garrettson 168-9).

124 George Parker writes that the market for books in the United States was “larger, richer, and geographically more compact” than in British North America (Beginnings of the Book Trade 18) and Michael Peterman notes, “in the early days the demands of settlement and daily living in Upper Canada left relatively little time for cultural amenities, and the formidable distances made travel and the distribution of reading material difficult” (“Literary Culture and Popular Reading in Upper Canada” 396). “Even as late as 1812,” George Sheppard further remarks, “the three newspapers in the province had only limited circulation” (35). See also Fiona Black “Importation and Book Availability” 115ff.
Interestingly, Wesley’s loss of control over Methodist print culture in the United States in 1787 roughly coincided with a letter written by Garrettson from Nova Scotia in March of that year informing Wesley that, because he had not received any books since coming to the province, he “thought it expedient to have about fifty pounds’ worth printed, as the printer was at leisure this winter” (172). Perhaps in view of the resistance to his authority he was encountering in the United States at this time, Wesley conceded the point in his reply the following summer, writing that he did “not blame” Garrettson “for printing those tracts” (175). In any event, it seems the practical difficulties involved in observing Wesley’s interdict were felt equally by Methodists operating in the United States and in British North America at this time.

When the New York annual conference officially appointed its preacher William Losee to form the first Methodist circuit north of the St. Lawrence in 1791, Methodism on both sides of the Atlantic entered a period of considerable change. John Wesley’s death threw British Wesleyanism into a time of confusion while members of the independent Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States found themselves on the verge of unprecedented expansion unencumbered by religious establishments. In the few years that had elapsed since Wesley’s exchange of letters with Garrettson, Asbury and Dickins had also provided American Methodists with their own liturgy, their own polity embodied in the revised Discipline, their own hymnbook, and their own publishing business. Dickins had also begun to outline rhetorical strategies for linking the welfare of the Book Concern to the success of the wider Church as Methodism grew in size and influence. North of the border, Methodist preachers found a scattering of settlers whose religious diversity rivaled that of any American state. In the years following the Revolutionary War, Moravians spread into the province from Ohio, Lutherans and Presbyterians from New York, Mennonites from Pennsylvania, and Baptists from Vermont (Adamson 432, Fahey 12, Grant Spires 38-45, Semple 42). Although religious disestablishment extended a tacit blessing to such diversity in the

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125 See Tremaine’s Bibliography of Canadian Imprints, 1751-1800 nos. 500 and 501. Although Wesley’s intention to have the London Book Room publish its own edition of Garrettson’s journal was never realized, extracts did appear in the Arminian Magazine several years after Wesley’s death (“The Experience and Travels of Mr. Freeborn Garrettson, Minister of the Gospel in North America” Arminian Magazine 17 (Jan 1794): 3-9, 17 (Feb 1794): 57-62; “The Journal of Mr. Freeborn Garrettson” Arminian Magazine 17 (Oct 1794): 505-11). John Dickins, for his part, listed a complete American edition of Garrettson’s journal for three shillings in his first published catalogue in 1793 (Pilkington 102).
United States, a very different political context was beginning to take shape in Upper Canada. Under pressure from settlers who did not want to live under the conditions set out by the Quebec Act of 1774, the British Parliament passed the 1791 Constitutional Act to set Upper Canada apart from Britain’s North American French colony, now Lower Canada, as a distinct Westminster-styled political entity with its own lieutenant governor, its own appointed legislative council, and its own elected legislative assembly. The Act also sought to endow a state church by setting aside one-seventh of all lands in the upper province for the “maintenance of a Protestant clergy” (Fahey 6, Grant Spires 85-89, Semple 43). Although a great deal of controversy eventually resulted over the interpretation of this phrase—particularly over whether it was meant to confer state support on the Church of Scotland as well as the Church of England—in the earliest decades the “Clergy Reserves,” like the rest of the province’s land, had little economic value as undeveloped wilderness. In the meantime, the province’s first lieutenant governor John Graves Simcoe did what he could to impart legal advantages to the Church of England by providing land and financial assistance for the erection of churches and rectories, and restricting the solemnization of marriage to Anglican clergymen with the passage of the Marriage Act of 1793 (Semple 48). But as John Strachan noted in an 1808 report to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, land and legal monopolies would do little, without more clergymen, to help the Church of England exercise a sustained and meaningful influence over the majority of the province’s settlers who lived outside the new towns of Kingston, Newark, and York (Fahey 20). With no facilities in British North America for educating seminarians, that shortage would not begin to be remedied until well after the War of 1812. After completing a tour of Upper Canada in 1794, Anglican Bishop Jacob Mountain wrote to Henry Dundas, Secretary of State for Home Affairs, to lament the paucity of clergymen in the Canadas and the concomitant influence—pervasive and deleterious—Methodists were exercising in their place:

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126 As late as 1819 only 650 reserves lands had been leased and of those only 100 lessees were bothering to pay rent (Fahey 16).

127 Strachan’s remarkably sustained postwar efforts to establish a provincial seminary were continually blocked by the province’s various legislative bodies for decades (Fahey 62-3, 67-73).
With respect to Religious Instruction the state of these settlers is, for the most part, truly deplorable. From Montreal to Kingston, a distance of 200 miles, there is not one Clergyman of the Church of England, nor any houses of Religious Worship except one small Ch belonging to the Lutherans & one or perhaps two belonging to the Presbyterians [...] The greatest bulk of the people have and can have no instruction but such as they receive occasionally from itinerant and mendicant Methodists, a set of ignorant enthusiasts, whose preaching is calculated only to perplex the understanding, & corrupt the morals & relax the nerves of industry, & dissolve the bonds of society. (Preston 292)

Although Mountain, and his small handful of clergymen, continued to complain about the harmful effects of Methodist expansion in the upper province throughout the prewar period, they did so primarily in private correspondence that circulated only between themselves and a handful of government officials. As Curtis Fahey notes, the early reluctance of clergymen to censure other denominations in public can be attributed to the supreme confidence these writers entertained in the eventual and inevitable triumph of the Church of England. As soon as an adequate number of clergymen were provided, Mountain, Strachan, and others believed, Upper Canadians would quickly abandon their “sectarian” preachers for the stability of the established church (21-8, 89). While the Church of England deliberately chose not to antagonize rival denominations for tactical reasons, the province’s divided political leaders found themselves equally unable to check Methodism’s advances. As Jane Errington has shown, there were significant ideological differences between early merchant-loyalist leaders, who argued that the British constitution and British traditions should be adapted to the North American environment, and British-born political administrators such as Simcoe and his successors, who wished to anathematize all things American in an effort to build a “little Britain” in Upper Canada (Errington 17-8, 29-33). Simcoe even went so far as to call for the establishment of a colonial newspaper to “counter the baneful effects of the News Papers of the United States, disseminated with great Industry in this Province” (qtd. Parker Beginnings of the Book Trade 42, Peterman

128 Strachan’s own confidence in this tactic held until after he began publishing the Christian Recorder in 1819. He explained the rhetorical purpose of the periodical as an instrument for drawing readers into the Church of England in letter written to Bishop Mountain in March 1819. “I will gradually lead my readers, ” he wrote, “in favour of the Church of taking care to insert nothing particularly offensive to Dissenters; as the work gains ground we can be more explicit, but caution is necessary as the whole of the population not of our Church is ready to join against us” (qtd. Fahey 25).
“Literary Cultures and Popular Reading in Upper Canada” 396). The consequences of these divisions for a developing colonial ideology were further complicated by the fact that many elite Upper Canadians, including in the earliest years John Strachan himself, were sympathetic to the plight of conservative federalists south of the border. Perhaps the most important commonality between these groups of conservatives was the fact that both American federalists and Upper Canadian conservatives were, unlike Jefferson’s republicans, on the side of Britain in its conflict with France. Jefferson’s electoral victory in 1800, however, marked the beginning of the end of federalist hegemony south of the border and helped to alienate Strachan and other conservative Upper Canadians who had previously found some aspects of American democracy deserving of praise. In the event Americans managed to avoid descending into a period of civil war, Upper Canadians feared that Jefferson and his “French faction” would soon declare war on Britain and invade British North America. After 1807, when the Chesapeake affair led the British to recall their ambassador from Washington and Jefferson to pass his Embargo Act, armed conflict seemed increasingly inevitable (Errington 63-4). Political tensions in Upper Canada were further exacerbated by the agitations of Robert Thorpe who, between 1805 and 1807, managed to place more internal pressure on the colony’s tiny administration than it had faced at any time since first settlement (Errington 49-50). Meanwhile, the province continued to attract tens of thousands of settlers from the New England and mid-Atlantic states who took up land grants chiefly in the western portions of the province. Although obliged by the practical exigencies imposed on them by the region’s wilderness settlement conditions to set aside politics, their arrival temporarily transformed Upper Canada into a demographic, if not a political, extension of the United States. Within the next five years these immigrants would even come to outnumber the province’s British and loyalist settlers. “If all the inhabitants of Upper Canada were divided into 10 parts,” wrote itinerant

129 Although Strachan’s views changed relatively precipitously after 1800, for others it took far longer. The province’s early newspapers provide some of the most pervasive evidence of a lingering transnational North American conservatism after 1800 and even throughout the War of 1812. Errington notes, for example, that, notwithstanding Simcoe’s own aversion to the American press, the Kingston Gazette reprinted 70% of its news and topical copy between 1810 and 1815 from federalist newspapers south of the border. She speculates that, in light of the financially precarious state of most printers in the province at this time, this practice probably reflected the preferences, or at least did not offend the sensibilities, of the majority of the province’s reading public (38-9; see also Gross “Introduction” 12, Parker Beginnings of the Book Trade 16-7).
Baptist minister Michael Smith on the eve of the War, “6 parts would be natives of the United States” (61). As the province’s leaders began a campaign to prepare settlers to take up arms in defence of the province, it was not possible for them to do so without at least tacitly acknowledging a rhetorical difference between Jefferson’s hawkish republicans and conservative federalists who largely opposed the War. With so many American-born settlers, not all things emanating from the United States, for tactical if not ideological reasons, could be indiscriminately tarred with the same brush (Errington 36-7; Mills 23, 32; Sheppard 19-20).

In spite of the province’s increasingly complicated and precarious political footing, uncertainty about the loyalties of the majority of its inhabitants, and a steadily growing chorus of animadversions directed against at least some factions of the United States, Episcopal Methodism in Upper Canada grew, as George Rawlyk points out, at an even faster rate than it did south of the border. By 1810, 3.7% of the province’s total population were formal members of the Methodist Episcopal Church while in the United States that figure stood at only 2.5% (Canada Fire 102). Some of this growth was related to the arrival of American immigrants who were already Methodists. Many more were converted as part of a province-wide awakening known as the “Canada Fire” that, in the words of Nathan Bangs, “spread like a conflagration over the Canada circuits” (Stevens Bangs 120). In the same year that Mountain made his report to Dundas, Upper Canada was set apart as a separate district within the New York conference with its own presiding elder, two preachers, and 332 formal members. In 1805, the year Thorpe began causing trouble for the colony’s administration, Methodist preachers introduced American-style camp meeting revivals that attracted thousands of auditors and resulted in hundreds of conversions. Michael Smith observed that among the province’s prewar religious communities “The Methodists are the most numerous, and are scattered all over the province.” He also noted that the colony’s inhabitants continued to “enjoy full liberty of conscience to worship God as they please,

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130 Fahey notes that the denominations that benefited most from the arrival of American immigrants into the province between the early 1790s and the War of 1812 were the Baptists and the Methodists. Of these, the Methodists were far more numerous (12).

131 For more on Methodist revivals in Upper Canada before the War of 1812, see also Grant Spires 58 and Adamson 433-4. An online edition of Nathan Bangs’s eyewitness account of Upper Canada’s first camp meeting can be found at http://www.yorku.ca/scottm/journals/
and are protected by law from penalties, impositions, or burthens of any kind relative to religious concerns” (63-4). John Wigger suggests, moreover, that for every formal member of the Methodist Episcopal Church there were at least another eight adherents (177). Applying this formula to Methodist membership statistics in Upper Canada, Rawlyk calculates that by 1812 Methodists comprised some 20% of the colony’s total population (Canada Fire 122). In an effort to account for this extraordinary growth, Rawlyk speculates that, because Methodism in the province was comparatively free of political homologies, the movement was largely unencumbered by the secular concerns and occupations that may have slowed its relative expansion in the United States (Canada Fire xvi). In any event, it is at least clear that, “These preachers and their lay colleagues were eminently successful in attracting pioneer Upper Canadians to the Methodist fold during this period” (Semple 45).

Methodist expansion was both a cause and an effect of the province’s growing religious print culture. While religious texts could often help precipitate conversion, as Bangs discovered on one occasion when a single tract on drunkenness resulted in dozens seeking repentance in the western reaches of the province, Methodism’s progress north of the border opened an expansive denominational market for the Methodist Book Concern’s products (Stevens Bangs 143). Every Upper Canadian converted to Methodism who began to attend regular preaching and class meetings became a potential participant in the Concern’s market for texts. As Methodist circuits grew in size, every one of the seventy-six preachers that the New York conference, and later the Genesee conference, sent into the province before the War of 1812, helped to extend the reach of the Concern’s market as they moved books in their saddlebags “from the centre to the circumference” (Semple 45). Just as other denominations were structurally unsuited to offer Methodists much in the way of competition for souls, the province’s few peddlers and booksellers were similarly disadvantaged by a lack of infrastructure for distributing their products. Fiona Black notes that the book trade in

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132 When Upper Canada became, with western New York, part of a newly formed Genesee conference in 1810, there were 20 preachers and 3,177 members in Upper Canada (Cornish 31).

133 If true, this argument runs counter to Nathan Hatch’s influential thesis in The Democratization of American Christianity, that evangelical expansion was aided by natural political affinities.

134 For more on the effectiveness of religious tracts for bringing about communal repentance see Kyle Robert’s recent article “Locating Popular Religion in the Evangelical Tract”. 
British North America was “severely constrained, prior to the burgeoning immigration of the 1820s and the beginnings of railway building in the 1830s, by a relatively low and widely scattered population coupled with limited and slow transportation” (“Importation and Book Availability” 115). Books and other manufactured commodities remained scarce for decades, and were valued in ways incommensurate with their actual commercial worth. Amelia Harris, daughter of Samuel Ryerse, underlines the value her family had come to place on all material commodities—but especially on books—in her description of the destruction of her family’s house by fire in 1804. In addition to the loss of linen, bedding, and articles of furniture, she notes that “the greatest loss was a box or two of books. These were not to be replaced this side of New York, and to a young family the loss was irreparable” (Ryerson Loyalists 2.249). Shortly after settling in Upper Canada in 1799, Nathan Bangs was unable to obtain any books except by borrowing reading material from a local family who, he was delighted to find, possessed a “small library” that included works by Milton, Bunyan, and James Hervey (Stevens Bangs 37, CHC 1.28). Andrew Prindle, born in Prince Edward District in 1780, put it even more bluntly when he complained that he “received his education in Canada, when there were no schools and no books” (CHC 1.133).

In a market characterized by such scarcity, Methodist preachers, known for their tenacious pursuit of converts to the furthest limits of white settlement and beyond,

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135 This limitation also applied to British philanthropic societies including the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, the Society for Propagating the Gospel, and the British and Foreign Bible Society (Friskney “Christian Faith in Print” 142).

136 Also cited by Bertrum MacDonald “Print in the Backwoods” 185. By contrast, semiannual book fairs instituted by the American Company of Booksellers held in Philadelphia and New York between 1802 and 1806 resulted in what James Green describes as a “glut of books” that forced many American printers and publishers into bankruptcy—not because they had too many books, but because they lacked a reliable system for distributing those books to paying customers (“Book Publishing” 86-8, 93-5).

137 Although it attracted 41 subscribers in its initial year of operation, Bangs makes no mention of the province’s first subscription library opened in Newark in 1800 (Parker Beginnings of the Book Trade 21, Karen Smith “Community Libraries” 146). Less surprising, perhaps, is his failure to note the commodious private library of Newark’s Anglican clergyman Robert Addison. With some 1,500 volumes, Richard Landon calls it “the largest private collection in the province” at that time (“Robert Addison’s Library” 211). Bangs, who described Addison as “a card-player and a drunkard” who “performed the liturgical services with indecent haste, following it with a brief, rapid, and vapid prelection,” would probably not have humbled himself to solicit access to a collection—even one this spectacular—that had, at least in his opinion, done its owner so remarkably little spiritual good (Stevens Bangs 39).

138 George Playter notes that Prindle was one of the “earliest births in Upper Canada,—and one of the first of Canadian birth going into the Methodist itinerant work” (History 88).
became, in their capacity as colporteurs, one of the most pervasive agents for the systematic distribution of printed materials in prewar Upper Canada. This was particularly true for regions beyond the province’s principal towns of Kingston, Newark, and York. In these early years of settlement, as John Carroll notes in his anecdotal history of Upper Canadian Methodism, had it not been “for the books carried in the Methodist Preacher’s saddle-bags, and scattered [by] them throughout [Upper Canada], the reading matter among the people would have been small indeed” (CHC 1.153). The distribution of the Concern’s products took on added importance after 1800 when the General Conference instituted a formal requirement that all preachers and presiding elders take an active interest in promoting the sale of books and tracts along their circuits and within their districts:

It shall be the duty of every preacher, who has the charge of a circuit, to see that his circuit be duly supplied with books, and to take charge of all the books sent to, or that may be in his circuit, and account with the presiding elder for the same. When a preacher leaves his circuit, he must settle with the presiding elder for all the books he has disposed of, and make out an inventory of all that are remaining unsold, which must be collected at one place, an amount of which shall go to his credit and be transferred to his successor, who is to take charge of the same. In case the preacher who has the charge of a circuit be negligent in disposing of books, let the presiding elder commit the charge of the books to another. (JGC 1.45)

Valuable only if they found their way into the hands of readers, the wording of this resolution leaves little doubt that the General Conference hoped to make presiding elders and preachers personally responsible for the sale as well as the stewardship of the Concern’s books. By formalizing a method for accounting for the inventories of stock “collected at one place” whenever a new preacher was appointed, and giving the presiding elder authority to appoint other Methodists to distribute books if a particular preacher was found to be negligent in the performance of this part of his duty, the Conference hoped to make the distribution of books as integral a part of an itinerant’s work as preaching itself. The 1800 General Conference also provided for the payment of commissions on the sale of printed commodities to reward those presiding elders and preachers who most efficiently fulfilled their parts as agents within the Concern’s denominational distribution infrastructure: “The preachers shall be allowed for their
trouble not less than fifteen, nor more than twenty-five percent, upon the wholesale price of all the books they sell” (JGC 1.46). It is not insignificant that without such commissions few preachers, relying solely on salaries that were rarely paid in full, would have been able to meet basic living expenses. John Carroll describes the effect these policies had on the distribution of printed materials in Upper Canada and suggests that in the absence of such a system many readers would have probably been forced to go without:

[Methodist preachers] were indefatigable sales-men of good books, which they carried about with them in their saddle-bags. To this they were impelled, partly by a sense of duty and respect to the rule of Conference on the subject, and partly by necessity; for the little profits they made on books sold, went to supplement their very small allowances. Further, they had the use of the books themselves, both before and after they were sold. Thus their own and the people’s improvement was promoted. The result of the preachers’ efforts in this line was that the principal Methodist family in the early days were better supplied with standard books in theology and religion than similar families are now,—not only relatively, but often really. What a boon were these publications in the then tardy state of communication with the outside world. (CHC 1.257)

That preachers “had the use of the books themselves” as they traveled through hundreds of miles of tedious wilderness not only helped them to fulfill the Discipline’s requirement that they spend a portion of each day in study, it also afforded an opportunity to become intimately familiar with the products they were offering for sale. It is hard to imagine that references to the contents of these books did not leaven their sermons and inform their conversation as they led local Methodist societies in class and quarterly meetings along their isolated circuits. This would in turn have helped to shape and homogenize the market demand for books by indirectly encouraging in readers a particular taste for the Concern’s growing list of titles.

As Methodist preachers lingered on horseback over the Discipline and the catalogues included in many of the Concern’s books, they would have come to think of their auditors not only as spiritual charges, but also potential customers in a market driven by their own financial and the denomination’s wider strategic interests. The most obvious way of expanding such a market was to establish new classes and societies of believers and consumers along preaching circuits. Those who converted to
Methodism typically remarked a significant change in their reading habits and tastes. Those not inclined to reading at all took it up in earnest. Those who read only for pleasure set aside those inclinations to read for spiritual self-improvement. Nathan Bangs provides the best documented example of this in Upper Canada before the War of 1812.  Although always a studious young man, Bangs was more inclined to pore over Locke’s philosophy than Wesley’s sermons when growing up in the wilds of western New York state (Stevens Bangs 27). After relocating to Upper Canada in 1799, Bangs entered a spiritual crisis and began attending Church of England and other non-Methodist religious services. He also turned with renewed interest to the Bible (CHC 1.28, Stevens Bangs 37). Until taking an interest in Methodist preaching, however, he seems to have had no access to Methodist books being circulated throughout the province at this time. “Before I became acquainted with the Methodists,” he writes, “my theological reading had been confined mostly to Calvinistic authors; but now I began to read the writings of John Wesley and John Fletcher” (Stevens Bangs 51).

Although Methodist itinerants of the period often preached in open fields and in the centre of towns, there were compelling reasons for them not to attempt to sell the contents of their saddlebags in large and unregulated settings. The rule of law had little practical meaning in settings where few settlers were willing or able to enforce it. Methodist preachers in particular were often the target of violent threats and physical assaults carried out by those who opposed their work. They would have been more keenly aware than most of their personal vulnerability as they traveled between the colony’s tiny settlements. William Case, a preacher Neil Semple calls one of the “two most dominant to emerge during the prewar period” (44), describes the acute sense of vulnerability under which he laboured after taking up the itinerancy in Upper Canada:

When you consider that I came alone into this almost savage land, two hundred miles from my brethren, and among a people, not one of whom I had ever seen before, and had not a friend, save one, with whom I could converse freely on the subject of experimental religion, you may guess what were my feelings. It was

139 Changes in the reading habits of John Carroll, Anson Green, and Egerton Ryerson that followed their conversion to Methodism will be discussed in detail later in this chapter (infra. 136-7, 141).
soon told me that there were some who would not hesitate in taking my life if they could do it without being detected. (CHC 1.182)

Carroll’s anecdotal history of Methodism is replete with examples to suggest that the warning Case received was well founded. George Neil, for example, one of the first local preachers to settle in the upper province, was pelted “with stones till the blood flowed down his face” after “preaching against the prevailing vices of the country” (CHC 1.89). Case himself, though travelling at times with Henry Ryan, a preacher known for enormous physical strength and skill as a former boxer, soon encountered similar difficulties. On one occasion, for example, Case’s hearers brandished a rope and threatened to hang the young preacher if he did “preach to suit him” (CHC 1.183). On another occasion, although preaching with the formidable Ryan in the colony’s most populous region, the market at Kingston, their auditors attempted to trip both men from their preaching podium (a butcher’s block) and set their hair on fire (CHC 1.113). Bangs describes similar forms of opposition in his autobiography, including a narrow escape from some “ruffians” who disliked his preaching and set an ambush to “wreak their vengeance” with an eye to stealing his horse as well as the contents of his saddlebags (CHC 1.97-8, Stevens Bangs 105-6). The imprudence of openly displaying fragile printed wares for which individual preachers had been made financially responsible to their presiding elders, and that would have been extremely difficult to replace if stolen or destroyed, would have been only too obvious to those who had

140 That Carroll dismisses this particular instance of opposition as “trivial” suggests that far more serious threats that these, particularly in the remoter regions of the province, were common.

141 Freeborn Garrettson, one of Bangs’s heroes in the itinerancy, related an extraordinary series of violent encounters while preaching throughout the eastern regions of British North America. “My lot has mostly been cast in new places to form circuits,” he explained in a letter to Wesley sent from Halifax in 1785, “which much exposed me to persecution. Once I was imprisoned; twice beaten; left on the high way speechless and senseless; (I must have gone into the world of spirits, had not God in mercy sent a good Samaritan that bled, and took me to a friend’s house;) once shot at; guns and pistols presented at my breast; once delivered from a mob, in the dead time of night, on the high way, by a surprising flash of lightening; surrounded frequently by mobs; stoned frequently; I have had to escape for my life at dead time of night” (Bangs Garrettson 161). Although such a litany of opposition and misfortune all but strains the credulity of a modern reader, Bangs accepted Garrettson’s claims at face value and included them in his 1829 biography of the legendary preacher. Though perhaps exaggerated, there seems little doubt that Garrettson and many of his fellow preachers must have believed that they laboured under an almost continuous threat of mortal danger. For more on Bangs’s relationship with Garrettson, and his own encounter with the veteran preacher before taking up the itinerancy as an ordained preacher in Upper Canada, see Stevens Bangs 126-8).
experienced or even heard of such hostility. It is not surprising, then, that Bangs suggests in his narrative that financial transactions between preachers and customers took place in more sequestered settings, probably within the Methodist class meetings that followed public preaching, that were characterized by a higher degree of denominational homogeneity. For this reason, the Methodist Book Concern’s market for books in Upper Canada, though largely coextensive with white settlement, remained socially isolated and denominationally insular.

Bangs’s acceptance into his local Methodist society coincides with an abrupt end to his complaints about the paucity of books available to “indulge [his] ruling passion for acquiring knowledge” (Stevens Bangs 27). As a member of a Methodist society he also became a participant in the Methodist Book Concern’s denominational market at a time when Ezekiel Cooper was rapidly expanding book and tract production. “From reading the Holy Scriptures, Mr. Wesley’s ‘Plain Account of Christian Perfection,’ and Mr. Fletcher’s writings on the subject,” Bangs explains, “I clearly saw the necessity of a deeper piety than I had yet attained; of being sanctified throughout, soul, body, and spirit” (Stevens Bangs 57). Like those Methodists around him, Bangs’s piety and his reading practices became mutually reinforcing. The more Bangs read, the more fervent his convictions became, the more entrenched his Methodist faith, and the more ardently he coveted the books Methodist preachers offered for sale to members of the local Methodist society. Importantly, Bangs also familiarized himself with the Methodist Discipline:

When I became acquainted with the ‘General Rules’ I was struck with their Scriptural character, and could not but remark the truth of Mr. Wesley’s saying: ‘All these, we know, the Spirit of God writes on truly awakened hearts.’ Before I knew these Rules, as in the Methodist Discipline, or any of the rules of that

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142 Insularity was expressly encouraged at class and society meetings by the Discipline. Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke wrote in the 1798 edition that, “It is manifestly our duty to fence in our society, and to preserve it from intruders, otherwise we should soon become a desolate waste. God would write Ichabod upon us, and the glory would be departed from Israel.” (154). This text remained a part of the Discipline for the entire period of this study. Although instituted for socio-religious reasons, the practice of insularity, as the following will show, had incidental but critical market advantages in Upper Canada. See also Wigger 89, Lester Ruth Early Methodist Life and Spirituality 269, and the 1845 edition of the Discipline (330).
Discipline, the Holy Spirit had written most of them on my heart. (Stevens Bangs 47)

But not all of them. As a regular consumer of Methodist texts, Bangs would have learned from the Discipline, just as he would have from the catalogues printed on the final few pages of some of the books he had purchased, that proceeds from the sale of the Concern’s printed commodities were directed back into the work of the wider Methodist Episcopal Church. It seems probable, moreover, that preachers would have also foregrounded the relationship between patronage and the furtherance of denominational charitable interests in order to augment the sale of books and tracts. Thus, as the years passed it would have become increasingly difficult for Upper Canadian Methodists to have remained unconscious of the rhetorical framework originally developed to set the Concern’s commodities apart from the products of competitors in American cities with burgeoning printing industries such as Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and Baltimore. In prewar Upper Canada, where the Concern had few competitors, such rhetoric would have had little practical utility. Its symbolic implications, however, would have been undiminished: by purchasing the Concern’s products, Bangs and thousands of other Upper Canadian Methodist converts knowingly shored up the interests of an American religious institution by expressing, through economic behaviour, membership in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Before the War of 1812, in a province as religiously eclectic and as demographically American as Upper Canada was, the identification of printed commodities with the interests of an American church would have remained largely unproblematic. The War would do much to change that.

After the United States declared war against Britain on 18 June 1812, Methodist expansion in the province was temporarily halted and the Concern’s direct access to its market north of the border severed. The causes of the War—British naval blockades of continental Europe, the impressment of British-born sailors serving on American ships, Jefferson’s Embargo Act—must have seemed remote to many settlers toiling in the Upper Canadian wilderness. Its effects, however, were immediately felt when the province’s farmers, merchants, labourers, and artisans were organized into militias while the vast majority of Britain’s professional military force was busy contending
with Napoleon in Europe. Although Bangs notes in his *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church* that “this event had been suspected for some time” (2.347), contemporary Methodist sources appear to suggest otherwise. It is striking, for example, that not a single mention of an impending conflict—and the dire impact such a conflict might have on Methodist societies in Upper Canada—is contained in the minutes of the General Conference held in New York less than one month before the formal outbreak of hostilities (*JGC* 1.97-122). A written statement dispatched by preachers belonging to the newly formed Genesee conference, none of whom attended the General Conference as official delegates, similarly omits any reference to worsening political circumstances between Britain and the United States at that time (*JGC* 1.97, 101). Less than a year earlier, in July 1811, the aged Francis Asbury, believing that a bishop should see every part of his diocese, made a two-week visit to Upper Canada between meetings of the New England and the Genesee conferences. Apparently in no fear that the border might be closed in the event of a war, Asbury met with Upper Canada’s newly appointed presiding elder Henry Ryan, preached half a dozen sermons, and visited Methodist societies in Cornwall, Matilda, Kingston, and Elizabethtown (*CHC* 1.228-239, Playter 103-4). Returning to the United States with a renewed sense of the importance of the Methodist mission in Upper Canada, in May 1812 Asbury expressed a desire to send Nathan Bangs to Lower Canada as presiding elder. Although Bangs had already served a difficult term in the lower province between 1806 and 1808, and was reluctant to return, just days before the declaration of War he agreed to Asbury’s proposal. Probably much to his own relief, Bangs’s plans were suddenly thrown into confusion when “all friendly intercourse between the Canadas and the United States” was cut off (Bangs *History* 2.348, *CHC* 1.271-2, Stevens Bangs 157-164, 299-201). Had War appeared as imminent as Bangs suggests in his later *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, it seems unlikely that he, to say nothing of Francis Asbury eleven months earlier, would have agreed to cross the border at all, much less accept a lengthy administrative appointment as the presiding elder of a district that held for him few fond memories.

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143 The official minutes published in the *JGC* do not list the names of any preachers from the Genesee conference because it had yet to be approved by the General Conference of 1812. Among the six Genesee preachers that Bangs notes were present unofficially, none was from Upper Canada (Bangs *History* 2.305-7).
If the War came as unexpectedly as this seems to suggest, Methodists in Upper Canada would have had little opportunity to prepare for it, and no time to stockpile books in depositories north of a border that threatened to remain closed for years while hostilities lasted. Neil Semple notes that during the War the district’s presiding elder Henry Ryan, “supervised both Upper and Lower Canada, stationed preachers, filled vacant pulpits, mobilized local preachers, and by the sheer force of his personality and energy, kept the church functioning” (45). Semple and other recent historians neglect to mention one additional wartime duty that also fell to Ryan—a duty that if he failed to perform might have deprived him of a significant portion of the financial means necessary to carry out many of the others. Just as Thomas Rankin and Francis Asbury had been placed at the head of Wesley’s system for distributing printed materials imported from the London Book Room throughout most of the Revolutionary War, so Ryan became responsible for superintending the continued sale of Methodist books and tracts printed on the presses of a denominational publisher located in a country with whom his host government was at war. To make matters worse, he had to do so while using a sales force that was made up of preachers increasingly suspected of disloyalty and even outright sedition. In addition to the strident antipathies harbourd by the province’s slowly growing number of Church of England clergymen, the province’s British-born administrators continued to nurse a dislike of Methodism on the grounds that it had spread to the province from the United States. Even Isaac Brock, the province’s celebrated military commander before he was killed by American fire on 13 October 1812, believed, “that these American-based [Methodist] preachers held political principles that were highly prejudicial to the peace of Society” (Sheppard 25). Asbury provided Ryan with some help when he allowed preachers of British or Canadian birth to remain in the province (Playter 109). Connections between Upper Canadian preachers and Asbury’s leadership were, however, severed after Brock demanded that the province’s residents “forbear all communication with the enemy or persons residing within the territory of the United States” (Errington 74). Perhaps for this reason not a single Canadian preacher, including Ryan, left his circuit to attend the Genesee annual conference held across the Niagara river in July 1812 (Bangs History 2.348, Playter 108-9). Unlike many other Methodist preachers from the United States, Ryan was not obliged to leave the province during the conflict because, though an American citizen, he had been born in Massachusetts before the beginning of the Revolutionary War and
thus could claim to be a British subject (Grant Spires 69). Received on trial by the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1800, Ryan joined William Case as a preacher on the Bay of Quinte circuit in 1805, and attended that same year the province’s first camp meeting revival under the direction of Nathan Bangs. When the district of Upper Canada became part of the newly formed Genesee conference in 1810, Ryan was appointed to serve as its presiding elder (CHC 1.23-6, 1.225-7). Ryan was a disciplinarian and former stage boxer who did not hesitate, when the need arose, to use his physical strength to bend others to his will. John Carroll notes that “He was known in his prime to throw ordinary sized men over the enclosure of the Campground, who were found disturbing the order and solemnity of the services within” (CHC 1.24, Rawlyk Canada Fire 145). Methodists would need such a determined leader to hold them together throughout a conflict that, by its nature, tended to foreground in uncomfortable ways their membership in an American religious institution.

John Carroll refers to the years between 1812 and 1815 as the “non-historic period” of Canadian Methodism because, while the conflict lasted, Ryan kept no membership statistics, attended no meetings of the Genesee conference, and kept no minutes of the three conferences he reportedly held with his own preachers each July (CHC 1.261, 1.288). But by the time hostilities ceased in March 1815, it was clear that Methodism had suffered major reversals across the province. Although Ryan had recruited four new preachers to the ministry, six others had resigned or left the itinerancy to become local preachers, and regular membership in Upper and Lower Canada combined had declined from a high of 3,293 before the War, to only 1,785 by the time the Genesee conference met in June 1815 (CHC 1.288-9, Cornish 31, Playter 143). Although William Case spent the War in the United States, he described the severe disruptions occasioned by the conflict in Upper Canada in an article that appeared in the New York Methodist Magazine in 1819. “The sudden and repeated calls of the militia in cases of alarm,” he wrote, “rendered it extremely difficult, at times, and especially in some

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144 In 1810 William Case was also appointed a presiding elder of the Cayuga district in New York state. Case returned to Upper Canada after the War concluded in 1815 (CHC 2.7ff. Semple 44-5).
145 The province’s Baptists and Presbyterians also suffered reversals as a result of the War (Fahey 13).
146 At the Genesee annual conference of 1815 Ryan was placed in charge of the smaller Lower Canada district and William Case became presiding elder of Upper Canada.
circuits, to get many together for the purpose of religious instruction. Frequently none but women and children could attend preaching” (“Account of the Late Revivals in the Province of Upper Canada” MM 2.1 January 1819:33). Money was almost as scarce as converts. In addition to carrying out his responsibilities as the region’s only presiding elder, Ryan was obliged to “eke out the sum necessary to support his family by peddling a manufacture of his own in his extensive journeys, and by hauling with his double team in winter time, on his return route from Lower Canada, loads of Government stores, or general merchandise” (CHC 1.286). Fortunately, he and his preachers were also able to supplement their incomes by continuing to sell the Concern’s books and tracts to the province’s dwindling number of Methodists. Although they may have found it difficult to sell books whose imprints linked their purchase to the welfare of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States, and although there is no record of any shipments being sent from New York to Upper Canada between June 1812 and March 1815, evidence suggests that Ryan and his reduced complement of preachers were at least partially successful in maintaining a market for the Concern’s printed commodities along their preaching circuits. When Ryan traveled as a delegate to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Baltimore in May 1816, he remained in considerable debt to the Concern for books he and his preachers had sold in the Canadas during the War. A committee appointed to examine the affairs of the Methodist Book Concern made the following report:

The case of brother Henry Ryan has been represented to your committee, in which it appears that, during the late war, while he and the preachers on his district were traveling in Upper Canada, they were, in consequence of the prevailing distress and scarcity, reduced to the unavoidable necessity of supporting themselves, in part, by means of book-money, or of leaving the work; that they therefore expended money belonging to the Book Concern to the amount of more than $700; and that, since the war, they have collected and refunded all that sum except $227, for which sum brother Ryan is now responsible. (JGC 1.172)

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147 Playter cites Case’s account in his 1862 History of Methodism in Canada without noting its source (143).
148 Carroll notes that Ryan did not accept any payment of salary at the meeting of the Genessee conference in June 1815 (CHC 2.2).
That Ryan and his preachers were able to collect the money owing on the sale of books after the War suggests that many of his wartime customers persisted in their willingness to patronize the Concern even after 1815. The remaining debt, however, was not trivial when one considers that each of the nine annual conferences were authorized by the same committee “to give away annually of unsalable books to any amount not exceeding $50” (JGC 1.171). Fortunately for Ryan, the committee’s recommendation that his debt be forgiven was accepted by the Conference delegates.

The size of these figures raises several important questions about the distribution of the Concern’s products north of the border during the conflict. Wartime catalogues published by Daniel Hitt, the Concern’s book agent between 1810 and 1816, suggest that $700 would have been sufficient to provide Upper Canadian preachers with a fairly large inventory of stock from which to supply readers as the conflict persisted. During these years Lackington’s Confessions was offered for between 25¢ and 37½¢, Law’s Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life for between 50¢ and 75¢, and Elizabeth Rowe’s Devout Exercises of the Heart for 25¢ (Pilkington 149-150). Assuming that Ryan and his preachers sold books at an average price of 40¢ each, and taking into account the 18% discount the committee would have excluded from the total figure owed, it would appear that Ryan and his preachers sold at least 2,000 books before the border reopened. If, as seems likely, a portion of these sales was made up of far less expensive tracts, that number would have to be revised upward considerably. Where were these books stored and who purchased them? While the majority of the province’s male population was occupied in militias, women and children, who Case indicates continued to meet for Methodist preaching during the conflict, probably composed the remnant of the Concern’s active market. It also seems probable that some of these women may have also helped Ryan by storing caches of books in their own homes and outbuildings. 149 This would have been by far the most practical arrangement since a

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149 Less circumstantial evidence exists for the need to acquire storage space for books in the year 1820 when Carroll records that William Case, still a presiding elder in Upper Canada at that time, “made his head quarters at the commodious house of Mr. James Gage, at Stoney Creek […] Here Mr. Case deposited the publications of the Book-Concern, in New York, the general agent for the sale of which he was in the Province” (CHC 2.304).
single large store of books held in some central location would have been more vulnerable to damage or destruction in the fighting as well as necessitated additional travel on the part of preachers to re-supply their saddlebags. Whatever the precise arrangement may have been, however, this much at least is clear: the volume of sales implied by Ryan’s postwar debt suggests that some kind of provincial depot must have been in operation during, and probably well before, June 1812.

Assuming the existence of at least one such depot during the wartime years, evidence that the closing of the border took the Methodist Episcopal Church by surprise suggests that Ryan probably did not seek to import a larger quantity of the Concern’s products than he would have under normal conditions. Thus the quantity of materials Ryan and his preachers sold would have been limited from the outset by the number of books and tracts that happened to be in the province at the outbreak of the War. Since Methodist itinerants met annually to render an account of their activities and receive new preaching assignments, it seems unlikely that whatever stock Ryan had on hand would have been intended to last for more than a year. That stock, moreover, may well have been depleted entirely before the end of the conflict. Although this suggests far more books could have been sold under even marginally more favourable logistical conditions, that the province’s reduced complement of preachers met with even the limited success these figures indicate, suggests that a relatively robust denominational market for the Concern’s commodities had been successfully established in Upper Canada well before the formal declaration of war in 1812. As the following will show, however, while the Concern’s evolving rhetorical strategies helped it further to strengthen that market in the United States after 1815, the symbolic value of its printed commodities in Upper Canada promised to become increasingly fraught as those same strategies served to diminish the symbolic status of the Concern’s products relative to a power field ever more hostile to American influences.

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The nature of the immediate impact of the War on Upper Canada’s political temper, and the degree to which it initiated a sharp rise in anti-Americanism across the province, are subjects of disagreement among recent scholars. Religious historians generally concur that there was an abrupt and causal relationship between the two. In
his history of Upper Canadian Methodism, *Parsons & Politics*, Goldwin French notes that “By 1815 […] Upper Canada had become a self-conscious society and one of the primary elements in its new identity was a virulent suspicion of all things America” (68). Writing thirty years later, Neil Semple expresses a similar sentiment in his sweeping history of Canadian Methodism, *The Lord’s Dominion*, when he observes, “The war naturally did much to crystallize anti-American sentiment and to renew the badge of distinction for the United Empire Loyalists. All things American were bitterly suspect; loyalty and conservatism became synonymous” (46). John Webster Grant further suggests that the distinction between federalists and republicans quickly became irrelevant after the War, noting, “The War of 1812 displayed citizens of the United States in a new role as invaders from without, and the result was to make possible a sentiment that was not merely anti-republican, or anti-democratic but specifically anti-American” (*Spires* 68). Other scholars, notably Jane Errington and George Sheppard, argue that the rise of anti-Americanism in Upper Canada was more protracted and resulted from causes more complex than the conflict itself (Errington 89ff., Sheppard 8-9, 189-91, 229-30). Whether the change was immediate or protracted, however, it is clear that the War at least initiated a new phase of development in the province’s political character that led to the eventual hegemony of a conservative ideology at odds with the steady decline of federalism south of the border. These opposing trends, whatever the immediate effects of the War, would have helped to widen the political gap in the postwar period as distinctions between republicans and federalists were also invoked less and less frequently in the province’s newspapers (Errington 85-6). Indeed, the artillery was hardly cool before the *Kingston Gazette*, the only Upper Canadian newspaper published continuously throughout the conflict, reprinted a letter from the *Montreal Herald* complaining about the influence of American books. “They teach us,” the writer objected, “to hate the government that we ought, and are bound, to support; to revile the country that we are bound to love and respect; and to think that there is nothing great or good, generous or brave, anywhere to be found but in the United States” (qtd. Parker *Beginnings of the Book Trade* 24, Peterman “Literary Cultures and Popular Reading in Upper Canada” 396).

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150 See also Rawlyk *Canada Fire* 123 and Christie “Democratic Rage” 41-2.
Just as the War eventually became a symbol of colonial loyalty to the British crown and constitution, so too figures who had played an important role in the defence of the province found their status enhanced. By far the most prominent and influential of these in the postwar period was Church of England clergyman John Strachan. After converting from Presbyterianism as a young man, Strachan took orders in the Church of England and operated one of Upper Canada’s most esteemed grammar schools in Cornwall for several years. In 1812, he was transferred to York and took a major and very public part in negotiating terms of surrender with invading Americans. His bravery was soon rewarded with appointments to the Executive Council in 1817 and the Legislative Council in 1820. Strachan’s influence in the councils of church and state continued to grow in the following years when he was appointed Archdeacon in 1827 and secured prominent posts for many of his former Cornwall students—including John Beverley Robinson, attorney general of the colony, and Christopher Hagerman and George Markland, members with himself of the Legislative and Executive councils. Charles John, another former student, was also elected to serve as a member of the province’s Legislative Assembly (Errington 93, Fahey 62). Strachan also won the complete confidence of Sir Peregrine Maitland, Upper Canada’s lieutenant governor between 1818 and 1828. As the leader of this powerful oligarchy—referred to by its detractors as the Family Compact—Strachan was able to shore up the interests of the Church of England by condemning the Methodists, his chief religious rivals in the province, for their connections to an American church.\(^{151}\)

Although Strachan did not need any unusual provocation to deplore the presence of religious competitors in a province he regarded as the special territory of the Church of England, his antipathy to the United States stretched back as far as Jefferson’s electoral victory in 1800. As early as 1803 he condemned American immigrants arriving in the province as little more than uneducated “brutes” and noted four years later that “The character of the Americans is generally speaking bad, and craft and duplicity is too much resorted to in their public measure.” (Errington 45, 151)

\[^{151}\text{As one historian has noted, “Maitland’s ten-year term of office marks the heyday of the Family Compact, that group of men who, Lord Durham charged, through its influence in the Executive Council ‘wielded all the powers of government.’ Strachan was so much the leading figure in this group that he has sometimes been referred to as the province’s first unofficial prime minister” (Wilson “Pre-Ryerson” 29).}\]
Sheppard 22-4). While not abandoning any of his fellow clergymen’s points of criticism, Strachan rarely criticized Methodists for ignorance or enthusiasm without adding that its “close connections with American Conferences” caused it to be “tainted by religious dissent and republicanism” (Mills 52, Westfall 21-28). The ultimate purpose of such dissenters, Strachan maintained, was to “pull down all establishments, undermine the loyalty of the people and constitute us a province of the United States” (French 126, Wilton 45-6). While Strachan continued in his attempts to discredit the province’s Methodists for their ties to the United States, members of the colonial government, led by his former pupil John Beverley Robinson, set about stemming the flow of American immigrants to Upper Canada and discrediting American-born settlers—particularly Barnabas Bidwell—who had entered colonial politics (Errington 167-9, Sheppard 189-90).

Soon the province’s American settlers also found their numbers increasingly diluted by a sharp increase in the rate of British immigration throughout the 1820s. A rapidly improving road and waterway infrastructure in the postwar years, together with the arrival of steamboats on the Great Lakes, also helped the Church of England to extend its reach beyond the colony’s few towns and reduce the tactical advantage itinerant Methodist preachers had enjoyed in the period before the War of 1812. Financial support for Anglican missions in Upper Canada was also increased after 1813, when the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts began to receive annual British parliamentary grants. Between 1818 and 1819 five additional clergymen were appointed to Upper Canada, expanding the total to thirteen. Britain’s protracted postwar economic depression also helped to encourage additional Church of England clergymen to immigrate to the province during these years. This period also marked the beginning of a change in the Church of England’s approach for dealing with

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152 Later in 1827, when Strachan traveled to Britain to secure a charter for King’s College, he “took advantage of the American alliance of Canadian Methodism to brand its people with disloyalty […] and urged the necessity of multiplying the Established clergy in order to prevent the Americanization of the population through the arts of the Methodist itinerants” (Findlay and Holdsworth 1.417). In later decades Egerton Ryerson concluded that “the great object of the whole scheme was not merely the support of the Church of England in [Upper Canada], but the extermination of other religious persuasions, especially of the Methodists, who were represented as republicans and overrunning the country, and whose influence was represented as hostile to the civil and religious institutions of England” (Canadian Methodism 23).

153 Goldwin French speculates that many American-born settlers left the province permanently during the War and did not return (68).

154 Many of these British clergymen, it should be noted, were nevertheless profoundly dissatisfied with the size of their stipends after emigrating and wrote to the Colonial Secretary to complain (Fahey 220).
Methodists as Mountain, Strachan, and others finally began to accept that the Church of England, even with an adequate number of ministers, would not be able to eliminate religious competition from the province. Public attacks on other denominations, and the response these attacks elicited from Methodists, form the subject of the following chapter. For the present, it is enough to acknowledge that these criticisms helped to stir more vigorous forms of opposition to Methodism among the colony’s political actors (Fahey 39, 89; Cornish 31-2).

Political, ecclesiastical, and demographic shifts of this sort fostered a growing awareness among Upper Canadian Methodists of the liabilities an overt connection to the American Methodist Episcopal Church—and the Methodist Book Concern—posed to its postwar recovery and expansion. In acknowledgement of these changes, the Genesee conference, meeting in Lyons in June 1815, resolved “to go on with the work in Canada; but to be careful in the choice of preachers, that offence, as far as possible, might be prevented” (Playter 143). The most practical result of this resolution was an increase in the number of Canadian and British-born preachers appointed to circuits north of the border—a trend that Neil Semple suggests “more than any other factor, promoted the eventual creation of an independent connexion and allowed Methodism to sustain a vital role in the country” (46). In the immediate postwar period, however, preachers of the Methodist Episcopal Church encountered their stiffest opposition—and some of the period’s most strident denunciations of disloyalty—from their British Wesleyan coreligionists who had answered wartime calls, first in Montreal and later elsewhere, to begin preaching in the Canadas. When Henry Ryan, appointed presiding elder of Lower Canada by the Genesee conference in June 1815, arrived the following September in Montreal, he found himself locked out of the Methodist chapel by British Wesleyans. The Montreal Methodists protested Ryan’s presence by chanting “I am a true Britton” while Ryan countered that no one could prove that any Methodist preacher had “not been conscientious in praying for Kings and all that are in authority” (French 71). The matter was not easily remedied. In May 1816, the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church resolved, in the presence of two delegates from the London Methodist Missionary Society, not to abandon their work in either Upper or Lower Canada. John Emory and Nathan Bangs, both of whom would later serve terms as book agents, together with one other preacher, were appointed to draft a letter to the London Methodist Missionary Society to that effect (JGC 1.151-2). The British
Wesleyans, however, did not relent, and by 1817 ten of their preachers were stationed in the Canadas—at Quebec, Montreal, Kingston, Cornwall, and elsewhere. The following year they spread further west to the Bay of Quinte and York and by 1818 had come as far as Niagara (Playter 164-171). Accompanying this expansion, British Wesleyan Henry Pope, who had spearheaded the charge by arriving first in Cornwall in 1816, York in 1817, and Niagara in 1818, argued that the American preachers were “by no means acceptable, partly owing the late war […] and partly owing to their extensive ignorance and uncouth conduct.” William Case, whose star was clearly rising in Episcopal Methodism, was also singled out for condemnation for allegedly saying that “As they [the British Wesleyans] were English men he could give them red hot balls, this he has done in the true spirit of a republican Methodist” (French 72; see also Clark Church and Sect 200). Clearly Pope and his British Wesleyan colleagues were quite willing to join Strachan, Robinson, and other members of the colonial elite in condemning the province’s Episcopal Methodist preachers as disloyal because of their connections to an American church—regardless of where they had been born. In May 1820, the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, meeting again in Baltimore, ordered the following passage inserted into the Discipline in an effort to staunch this rhetoric:

As far as it respects civil affairs we believe it the duty of Christians, and especially all Christian ministers, to be subject to the supreme authority of the country where they may reside, and to use all laudable means to enjoin obedience to the powers that be; and therefore it is expected that all our preachers and people who may be under the British or any other government, will behave themselves as peaceable and orderly subjects. (JGC 1.215)

Later that year, John Emory traveled to London to meet with members of the Methodist Missionary Society where he “asserted that his brethren were grievously wronged by the insinuation that they had acted in a manner imimical to the established Government of Canada,” pointed to this passage, and managed to convince the committee that “in Upper Canada at least, his Church was competent for the work it had undertaken” (Findlay and Holdsworth 1.387). On 28 May 1821, Bishop Enoch George wrote to the Missionary Society to confirm the details of an agreement between the British missionaries and “the preachers of the American connexion” to divide between them the Canadas—the former occupying Lower Canada and the latter Upper Canada. In a
veiled reference to the charges of disloyalty leveled at William Case and others during the intervening years, Bishop George noted that "The prejudices which may exist in the minds of some of the members, on both sides, and which may have originated in the unpleasant state of things in the Canadas, will require time to remove them [sic]: but with a prudent administration, it is believed they will subside" (UCA, Methodist Episcopal Church General Conference correspondence, reports and addresses relating to Canada, Enoch George to the Missionary Society, 28 May 1821). Despite George’s hopeful tone, and although this agreement did succeed in clearing away most of the practical difficulties associated with the recent competition between the two bodies until ecclesiastical independence, the province’s anti-American prejudices only deepened. In the end, the whole affair underscored the degree to which the ongoing connection to an American church was becoming increasingly problematic for Upper Canadian Methodists.\(^{155}\)

In spite of these difficulties, preachers assigned to the Canadas by the Methodist Episcopal Church reported impressive gains at the annual meetings of the Genesee conference in the immediate postwar period. Charles Stuart, in his 1820 *Emigrants Guide to Upper Canada*, draws attention both to the efficacy of Methodist preaching in the province and the political shadow it operated under after the War. “The American Methodist church of the United States,” he writes, “a society without public funds; without any public constituted authorities; the members of a state severed from us by the reminders of civil wraths, and by mutual intolerance, and emulation, and pride, had been the chief (by no means the only) medium, under God (particularly westward) of fostering in our districts the spirit of the Gospel” (227-8).\(^{156}\) In 1820, Upper Canada’s presiding elder William Case reported that, “The last four years have been a season of

\(^{155}\) Although never seriously considered by the General Conference, turning over control of the province’s Methodist societies to British Wesleyan missionaries, as they had done in Nova Scotia in 1800, would have done little to soften Strachan’s negative view of the impact Methodism was having on the province. In a letter written to Bishop Mountain in November 1817, Strachan noted that “The Sectaries are gaining ground in many parts of the Province. A large importation of English Methodist Clergymen have arrived. A competition had been raised between them and their brethren from the United States—new zeal has been excited, and converts multiplied. *The Church finds much the same enmity in each*” (Spragge John Strachan Letter Book 141; emphasis mine).

\(^{156}\) Stuart had early hopes of ordination in the Church of England and was a regular correspondent of Peregrine Maitland in the first year of his term as lieutenant governor of the province. Stuart’s ecclesiastical hopes were never realized and he eventually became involved in the abolition movement in the United States (Dictionary of Canadian Biography online)
harvest indeed, and revivals are still going on” (“State of Religion in Upper Canada” MM 3.10 October 1820: 94-6, CHC 2.294-5). By this time, Episcopal Methodism in the Canadas had grown to a record 5,470 official members, about half of whom were living in the upper province (Cornish 31, Playter 193).

These gains in membership were accompanied by a steady growth in the market for Methodist books. Throughout North America, the Methodist Episcopal Church’s denominational infrastructure continued to be the most reliable means for distributing the Concern’s printed commodities to members and adherents of local societies. This practice conferred a growing strategic advantage north of the border. By continuing to rely on preachers to sell Methodist books and tracts, the Concern’s denominational market in Upper Canada remained largely sheltered from the province’s increasingly indiscriminate rejection of American influences. This was particularly important at a time when book agents Joshua Soule and Nathan Bangs introduced monthly and weekly periodicals calculated to strengthen denominational loyalties by emphasizing the relationship between patronage and membership in the American Methodist Episcopal Church. It would be difficult to overstate the importance of these periodicals in shaping market demand to conform to the Concern’s offerings. For the first time, book agents were able to promote their products directly to Methodist customers through the publication of editorials, advertisements, and letters, without relying solely on the mediated salesmanship skills of Methodist preachers. The Concern’s agents also used periodicals to forge an increasingly distinct denominational market for Methodist books in North American Sunday schools. In response to a call by the General Conference to counter the growing influence of Calvinists over the American Tract Society and the American Sunday School Union, the Concern’s agents expanded their Sunday school offerings and published catalogues, reports, letters, and exhortations, intended to encourage preachers to promote, and Sunday school teachers and students to buy, these new titles for young readers. In a similar way, book agents also used the Concern’s periodicals to direct the reading tastes of Methodist itinerants, through the regular publication of courses of study and advice literature, with the goal of encouraging intellectual improvement among preachers and ministerial candidates. The remainder of this chapter will consider the way these developments in the United States affected Methodist print culture in postwar Upper Canada, and how the Concern’s denominational market was progressively homogenized, deepened, and extended as
Methodist preachers drew new converts—and new consumers—into their sequestered religious and textual communities north of the border.

Much has been written about the way periodicals foster coherence within textual communities by reflecting and fashioning the opinions of readers. A great deal of this scholarship has derived from the work of Jürgen Habermas and what he calls the structural transformation of the public sphere—the process whereby political authority vested in executive and sacerdotal figures is transferred by means of the press to a community of readers engaged in the rational and voluntary debate of the public interest. Jeffrey McNairn’s recent study of deliberative democracy in Upper Canada, *The Capacity to Judge*, relies heavily on Habermas’s work in order to resituate the province’s early political history in a wider frame of developments informed by the Enlightenment (9, 16, 152, 267, 433-4). Although McNairn writes extensively about the role the province’s periodicals played in the emergence of Upper Canada’s public sphere, his analysis contains not a single mention of any of the Methodist Book Concern’s widely-distributed periodicals. This omission is quite correct. There are a variety of reasons that make it impossible to connect the Concern’s periodicals to the province’s emergent public sphere. Perhaps the most obvious of these is the fact that their denominational character made them unlikely vehicles for the impartial debate of religious or political disagreements. Far more important, however, is the way they were distributed north of the border. Unlike the periodicals McNairn includes in his analysis—periodicals that were available to all Upper Canadians who chose to subscribe or to read them in a newspaper reading room—the Concern’s periodicals were set beyond the reach of the majority of Upper Canadians by its denominational subscription infrastructure. Only those already committed as members and active adherents to the cause of Episcopal Methodism could subscribe. Sequestered from the wider concerns of Upper Canadian society, and hidden from the view of most readers by the Concern’s method of distribution, these periodicals not only existed outside the province’s emerging public sphere—they also fell short of being genuine public

157 See especially McNairn’s third chapter “‘The most powerful engine of the human mind’: The Press and Its Readers” (*The Capacity to Judge* 116-175).
commodities in the full sense of that word.\textsuperscript{158} And yet their impact on the way Upper Canadian Methodists came to see themselves as participants in a transnational textual community was not small. Candy Brown argues that in the United States, the publication of denominational periodicals entered a period of rapid expansion and deepened cultural influence after 1820 so that, within a decade, of the 193 religious periodicals being published across the United States, 131, or 68%, openly declared their denominational affiliation. Brown argues that this reflected a solidification of denominational identities in the first half of the nineteenth century and helped to turn the act of subscribing to a church periodical into a deliberate expression of denominational loyalty (144-5). Although the impact of this development on transnational religious print culture is beyond the scope of Brown’s study, other scholars, most notably Jane Errington, show that the border between the United States and British North America was far from impermeable by pointing to the frequency with which Upper Canadian conservative newspapers before the War of 1812 reprinted copy from federalist papers south of the border (41-3). A similar alliance also grew up between North American Methodists in the postwar period. It, however, was not reflected in the reprinting of American copy, but through the act of subscribing to—and publishing in—Methodist periodicals whose sale as material commodities was rhetorically calculated to entrench denominational loyalty within an American church.

That alliance seems not to have been much anticipated by Joshua Soule when he introduced the \textit{Methodist Magazine} in January 1818. His muted expectation about its potential appeal to British North American Methodists is suggested by his dedication of the first issue to “patrons and friends in the United States, and especially to the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church” (“Address” 1.1 January 1818: 3). However disobliging this may have appeared to potential subscribers outside the United States, the \textit{Methodist Magazine} soon found a ready audience in Upper Canada. George Playter notes that it “was much circulated in Canada among preachers and

\textsuperscript{158} Perhaps it is for this reason that scholars have not considered in any detail the potential impact religious periodicals may have had on the public sphere in national contexts where a distinction between church and state was not observed. One important exception can be found in Frank Lambert’s study of George Whitefield’s use of the colonial newspapers to appoint readers as public arbiters over religious rather than political disputes (“Pedlar in Divinity” 170-1). This will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter. See also Warner \textit{Letters of the Republic} 34ff., Friskney “Christian Faith in Print” 143-4.
members,” and situates it as a direct forerunner to the Christian Advocate and the Upper Canadian Christian Guardian as periodical repositories “of records concerning the M[ethodist]. E[psicopal]. Church, either in the United States or Canada” (History 165-6).

By the end of 1824, William Case was able to report that even around Kingston, an area typically more resistant to Methodism than other parts of the colony, the Magazine had found a significant number of subscribers. “Sixty-four subscribers,” he wrote, had “given in their names for the Magazine” in that region, together with seventy in “Bay of Quinty [sic] circuit alone.” “The list of subscribers,” he went on to add, “might be easily increased, greatly to the advantage of the cause of religion, as well as the interests of the concern, if an active part were taken by the preachers in the circulation of this valuable work” (“Utility of the Magazine” MM 8.3 March 1825: 109). An extrapolation of these figures across the colony’s other circuits suggest that there may have been as many as 1,644 active subscriptions to the Methodist Magazine in Upper Canada in 1825.159 Even at half that number, the Magazine would have reached a larger number of paying subscribers, and that strictly within the Concern’s denominationally-circumscribed market, than any periodical produced by Canadian printers. The interest Upper Canadians took in the Magazine flowed in part from the fact that Methodists in the colony did not confine themselves to being passive readers. Almost immediately after its introduction, Upper Canadian preachers began to use it to publish narratives describing Methodist activities along their own circuits. These efforts were given formal sanction, moreover, when William Case, together with two American preachers, were appointed by the Genesee conference to “prepare materials for publication” in the periodical shortly after its appearance (CHC 2.131).160 Case also answered an early request from Joshua Soule for an account of the effects of the War on Methodism in Upper Canada. His report appeared in the first issue of the Magazine’s second volume

159 This extrapolation is based on a ratio of Magazine subscribers to total members in the Bay of Quinte and Kingston areas combined of 134 to 518 for the year 1825 against a total additional provincial Methodist membership of 6357 (for membership figures in individual circuits see Playter 271). By comparison, William Lyon Mackenzie claimed to print 1,000 copies of his weekly Colonial Advocate at this time while the Upper Canada Gazette, the province’s official weekly newspaper, was printed in only 300 copies (McNairn 128, 132, 149).

160 This seems to have developed out of an earlier committee, organized by the Genesee conference at the time of its establishment in 1810, to examine texts prepared by its preachers for publication by the Concern as books and tracts. Carroll notes that this committee was distinctly transnational from the start with a membership of nine preachers consisting of “five from the United States and four from Canada” (1.196-196).
(“Account of the Late Revivals of Religion in the Province of Upper Canada” MM 2.1 January 1819: 33-38). This was only the first of dozens of such articles published by Upper Canadian preachers intended to interpret Methodist advances in the province to readers in their own circuits and across North America.\textsuperscript{161} As Upper Canadians learned more about Methodism in the United States, moreover, and continued to see their own stories juxtaposed to these narratives in the Methodist Magazine’s pages, the transnational nature of Methodist print culture—and Methodism itself—must have taken on a new reality for many readers as commonalities across all North American Methodist conferences, districts, and circuits were continually emphasized.

Such transnational textual cohesion was particularly important in Upper Canada as a persuasive counter to the arguments of political conservatives who contended that an ever widening ideological gap separated the subjects of British North America from the inhabitants of the United States. At the same time, a periodical circulated exclusively “among preachers and members,” drew little notice and no sustained opposition from the province’s conservative quarters. Because only those who attended Methodist classes and societies came in contact with the Concern’s itinerant subscription agents, the Magazine, like the Concern’s earlier books and tracts, remained insulated from the effects of the province’s antithetical power field. Strachan, Maitland, and other conservatives who would have been quick to cite its popularity as yet another example of the insidious influence Americans wielded over the province’s Methodists, would have found it difficult to obtain a copy as Methodist outsiders, and impossible to estimate its circulation within such a denominationally sequestered market. Fortunately, the Concern’s denominational infrastructure remained the most convenient, practical, and inexpensive method for distributing Methodist periodicals for many years—especially in Upper Canada where the postal system was still in its infancy when the Methodist Magazine was introduced.\textsuperscript{162}

When Nathan Bangs set about publishing the Concern’s first weekly newspaper, the Christian Advocate, in 1826, he took much more trouble to cultivate the new

\textsuperscript{161} Additional articles pertaining to Upper Canada published in the Methodist Magazine are as part of this chapter’s discussion of the Sunday school movement and the rise of ministerial courses of study.

\textsuperscript{162} Only about a dozen post offices were in operation across the province in 1817. That number would increase to more than a hundred by the end of 1831 (McNairn 124-5).
periodical’s Upper Canadian market than had his predecessor Soule in 1818. Although Bangs had personal reasons for doing so—he always regarded Upper Canada as his spiritual birthplace and had also married a Canadian before returning to the United States—his business reasons were more compelling. Such efforts were invited by the existing success of the *Methodist Magazine* north of the border, the continued growth of the denominational market for the Concern’s commodities in the province, and the establishment of a separate Upper Canadian conference within the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1824 (*JGC* 1.224, 1.302; Playter 234-6). In the intervening years, Henry Ryan and others had also mounted a strident campaign to agitate for complete separation from the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States (Green *Life* 38-9, Playter 244, Semple 71-4). Aware of these difficulties, and a steadfast opponent of ecclesiastical separation, it is probable that Bangs hoped the widest possible circulation of the *Christian Advocate* in Upper Canada might help to strengthen the church’s transnational bonds in much the same way the *Methodist Magazine* had throughout the previous eight years. Bangs was also probably coming to realize that Upper Canadian Methodists, hindered by increasingly outspoken political opponents and beleaguered by growing internal dissent, formed a market that the Concern could no longer take for granted. All these reasons invited a greater effort on his part to gain the cooperation of the Canada conference and its preachers in this new endeavour. When the Canadian preachers met for their annual conference in Hamilton in August 1826, Bangs made an official visit as the Concern’s senior agent and personally “informed the Conference that they had resolved on publishing a weekly religious newspaper in New York, for the benefit of the general work in the United States and Canada, and hoped for the approval and aid of the Provincial Conference in the undertaking” (Playter 288, Webster *History* 197).

Bangs must have been relieved when the Canada conference, in spite of growing pressures from within and without to sever its ties to the American church, resolved “That we highly approve of the publication of said paper; and we pledge ourselves to

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163 Canadian petitions for independence from the Methodist Episcopal Church began as early as 1817 as a way of eliminating charges of disloyalty. Although Ryan’s own campaign probably had far more to do with proposed changes in ecclesiastical polity that might negatively affect his own career, than a sincere concern that continued attachment to the American church was harming Canadian interests, his agitations helped to advance the separation agenda. These developments will be discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters (*infra. 186ff., 207-8, 283n328; see also French 75-8).*
encourage its circulation” (MAC 13). “The paper,” Thomas Webster notes elsewhere, “was well received throughout the province” (Life of Richardson 112).  

As this suggests, the Christian Advocate, like the Methodist Magazine, was distributed through the Concern’s denominational infrastructure and thereby insulated from much of the criticism it would otherwise have attracted from the province’s conservative elite. Anson Green, an American-born preacher received on trial by the Canadian conference in 1825, describes his own efforts to promote it along his first preaching circuit in Ancaster. “I read portions of it in my congregations,” he writes, “and obtained quite a number of subscribers, advancing the pay for those who were not prepared to do it themselves—most of whom paid me during the year. It is an excellent paper and much needed” (Green Life 90-1; Playter 259, 289). Sold for $2.50 per year, or $2.00 if paid in advance, by subscribing on behalf of “those who were not prepared to do it themselves,” Green went beyond the formal requirement of promotion and probably also gave away the many free copies he would have received for every six subscriptions he obtained (“Terms” CA 9 September 1826: 1). Upper Canadian Methodists also began to submit copy to Bangs for publication in the Christian Advocate as well as the Methodist Magazine. In less than one month the first article concerned exclusively with Methodism in Upper Canada appeared, describing the Hamilton conference Bangs had attended the previous August to encourage preachers to circulate the Advocate (“Canada Conference” CA 26 September 1826: 10). Dozens of additional articles appeared in the paper’s first year—some concerned exclusively with Upper Canada and others combining events north and south of the border into a single narrative—describing the lives of individual preachers, religious revivals, missionary work, and the growth of Sunday schools.  

The Canada conference also continued to publish its annual minutes in the Advocate until the appearance of the York Christian Guardian in 1829 (See CA 21 September 1827: 10, 24 October 1828: 31). Although minutes often provided readers with the fullest formal account of developments, some of the more poignant articles were submitted by preachers describing their own diurnal

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164 See also Bangs History 3.322-323 and Stevens Bangs 243-244.

165 In one typical example, descriptions of revivals in Virginia, New York, and the Mississippi were bracketed with accounts of revivals in Ancaster and Hallowell, Upper Canada (“Revivals of Religion” CA 1.16 23 December 1826: 62).
efforts along Upper Canadian preaching circuits. Often the authors of these articles reflected an intimate knowledge of developments in the United States and a desire to emulate American Methodist practices in Upper Canada. Writing from his Ancaster circuit in the spring of 1827, for example, Anson Green noted that the progress Sunday schools had made along his circuit had much to do with American examples. Without the Advocate—and Green’s enthusiastic pursuit of a large audience for it along his circuit—that example would have been less well known and, as the following shows, the Concern’s market for Sunday school books in the province less well developed:

Such a Sunday School Union as you have now formed in New-York has, for some time, been a desideratum in the economy of our Zion. It has already given a zest to the cause of Sabbath Schools on this circuit, which it never possessed before; and, I trust, it will give an importance to the institution which will not soon be forgotten. Many are hastening to form auxiliaries, and avail themselves of the books which you offer them. Our Sabbath schools on this circuit have increased, the present year, from two to ten, and all are earnestly wishing to have a box of books deposited in this district, as considerable money is collected for the purpose of establishing Sabbath School libraries.

I here send you the reports of three auxiliaries, recently organized on this circuit, together with ten dollars each, which, after deducting the necessary expenses, you will please send back in books (CA 13 June 1827: 178).166

Green’s trust in the Concern’s agents to provide for the needs of Sunday school readers along his circuit in this brief passage is total and exemplary: total because he leaves the choice of what individual titles would fill the “box of books” entirely up to the Concern’s agents in New York; and exemplary because Bangs, by publishing Green’s letter in the Advocate, set his work as a salesman of the Concern’s products before the entire community of Methodist readers both north and south of the border. The Concern’s unyielding pursuit of ever larger denominational markets throughout North America made it strategically worthwhile to draw attention to Green’s example since, by the time his letter appeared, the Sunday school movement—and the new market for

166 The Methodist Episcopal Church organized its own Sunday School Union on 2 April 1827 to counter the Calvinistic influence of the ostensibly nondenominational American Sunday School Union (Kirby, Richey, and Rowe 181; Wardle History 61ff.).
books that accompanied its expansion—was well advanced in the United States. Even in Upper Canada Sunday schools had been in operation in some places for more than a decade.

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Partly in response to a call from the ecumenical itinerant Thaddeus Osgood, one of Upper Canada’s first Sunday schools was established in York in 1818—the same year Soule began publishing the *Methodist Magazine*. John Carroll, who had until that time inhabited Methodism’s periphery under his mother’s influence, was among its initial students. Held “every Sunday afternoon in the new Methodist meeting-house on King Street” (Carroll *My Boy Life* 135), its teachers, including prominent York businessman and political reformer Jesse Ketchum, who had a pew in St. James’s Church of England, were drawn from a variety of denominations. Soon Fitch Reed, assigned to the York circuit in 1820 and 1821, was able to report in the *Methodist Magazine* that “Sunday schools were fast rising in the estimation of the people, and increasing throughout the country” (“State of Religion in Upper Canada” *MM* 4.9 September 1821: 351).

Although Upper Canadian Methodists did what they could to support the province’s earliest nonsectarian Sunday schools, they, like their British Wesleyan counterparts in Lower Canada, preferred to exercise denominational control over local Sunday schools in order to foster Methodist expansion and, in Upper Canada, open a new denominationally sequestered market for the Concern’s printed commodities (Little *Borderland Religion* 208-9, Semple 369-70). “Union” or nonsectarian Sunday schools were more common in rural areas of the province initially, while schools at York and Kingston bore a denominational character from the outset. Allan Greer and Neil Semple

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167 Although Osgood was ordained a Congregationalist in Massachusetts in 1808, he worked closely with members of all denominations, from Episcopal and Wesleyan Methodists to Church of England clergymen. He even managed to elicit financial support from John Strachan (Grant *Spires* 111-2, Adamson 433-4). Around the time Osgood visited York the British Wesleyans, who were soon to take sole possession of Lower Canada, were already experimenting with denominational Sunday schools in Montreal (CHC 2.123-124).

168 Ketchum may have kept his religious preferences unclear deliberately in an effort to avoid confrontation with the province’s conservatives. Only when his daughter married York’s first Presbyterian minister did he finally and unambiguously turn his loyalty in that direction (Grant *Spires* 52). In 1845 Ketchum returned to the United States where he later died in Buffalo in 1867.

169 Reed’s report is quoted by Playter who does not provide the original citation (*History* 195). Greer cites Playter but not the *Methodist Magazine* (172).
cite the paucity of denominational resources outside the province’s few towns for this development (Greer 173-5, Semple 369). But there was more than one way the province’s Methodist preachers could exert sectarian influence without contravening the principles of “union” espoused by many such school constitutions. As Greer and Semple also note, the establishment of libraries in small communities, like the ones Green hoped to open with the help of the Concern, were unequalled in the province as inexpensive sources of reading material—often the only such sources available in some quarters of Upper Canada as late as the middle of the nineteenth century (Clark *Church and Sect* 99-100, Greer 172, Semple 368). Methodists, who were more evenly spread across the province than any other denomination, who possessed the largest number of preachers, who had an established system for the distribution of books, and who found in the Concern’s periodicals a perennial source of encouragement and new ideas for fostering the establishment of Sunday schools, were far better positioned to fill the empty shelves of these libraries than any other group.\footnote{By 1820 Methodists also appear to have had more lay teachers involved in the Sunday school movement than any other denomination in the province. William Case and Henry Ryan reported in the *Methodist Magazine* that of the 211 “public teachers” belonging to all denominations in Upper Canada, 140, or 67%, were Methodists involved with the province’s growing number of “Sabbath schools” (“State of Religion in Upper Canada” MM 3.10 October 1820: 94-6).}

In spite of these advantages, the capacity of the Methodist Book Concern to meet the demands of this new market did not evolve overnight. Initially, even Sunday schools operating under the direct supervision of Methodist preachers were obliged to rely on nondenominational societies to supply many of their texts. John Carroll notes that even in the York Sunday school “There were few books of any kind in that early day, and not enough Bibles and Testaments. My first lesson was a fragment of a Bible, a psalm, pasted on a single sheet, which I read and committed to memory” (*My Boy Life* 135). Outside the province’s principal towns the situation was even worse. Thomas Webster paints a gloomy picture of the way students growing up in the western regions of Upper Canada just before 1820 were obliged to work with an eclectic mix of texts that were always in short supply. “A few of the pupils,” he writes, “had Maver’s Spelling book, others had Webster’s Spelling book, and others had the English Reader, and most of those that could read had a copy, in whole or in part, of the New Testament, while several of the smaller children had to wait for a chance to borrow a book out of which
they were to say their lessons. And in many cases two and sometimes three of the large scholars had to use the same book.” He adds, moreover, that even these few titles were only available by sending “to Niagara or Queenstown” (UCA, Thomas Webster fonds, “Autobiography”). Fitch Reed also complained of shortages in his letter to the editor of the Methodist Magazine. “If we listen again,” he wrote, “to the cry of the people, we hear them inquiring for Bibles and Testaments. ‘Have you none to give us, or sell to us at a small price? We have none to read in our families, or give to our children in the Sunday Schools” (“State of Religion in Upper Canada” MM 4.9 September 1821: 351). Fitch appealed to Bangs, the periodical’s editor and the Concern’s senior book agent, to lay his case before the American Bible Society. A year later William Case noted in a letter published in the Magazine that, “the donation of the Bibles and Testaments from the American Bible Society has arrived. These will be joyfully and thankfully received by the sabbath [sic] schools” (“Upper Canada District” 5.5 May 1822: 198). And although Carroll was thankful, sensations of gratitude did not prevent him from suggesting that the availability of bibles only helped to draw attention to the fact that students still remained “entirely without hymnals, library books, and reward books” (My Boy Life 135).

After the first Methodist Sunday school in North America was established in New York in 1812, the Concern began to publish a slow trickle of books intended for younger readers such as the Scripture Catechism, Instructions for Children, Youth’s Manual, and Religion Recommended to Youth (Kirby, Richey, and Rowe 170-2; Pilkington 158). By the mid-1820s, Methodist preachers and book agents began to assert a greater degree of denominational control over Sunday schools in an effort to counter what was perceived to be the growing influence of Calvinists over such schools through the publications of the American Sunday School Union and the American Tract Society—ostensibly nondenominational publishers that both “specialized in providing cheap literature for

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171 Carroll mistakenly notes that the York Sunday school was under the patronage of the American Sunday School Union at this time—impossible given that the Union was not established until 1824. If it was in fact under the patronage of any nondenominational American publisher, it was probably, as Fitch’s and Case’s letters in the Methodist Magazine suggest, the America Bible Society (established in 1816). For more on the American Bible Society’s work among Upper Canadian Methodists see also Playter 215. The British and Foreign Bible Society was also actively distributing bibles to Sunday school students in York and Kingston during this period (Twenty-Second Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society, London, 1826, 56).
Sunday school libraries, families, and communities” (Brown Word 62). In 1824, the General Conference passed a resolution requiring all Methodist preachers to “encourage the establishment and progress of Sunday schools” along their circuits. For their part, the Concern’s agents were to “provide and keep on hand a good assortment of books suitable for the use of Sunday schools” while ensuring that, “Sunday schools and all benevolent institutions for the gratuitous distribution of books, shall always have them as low as they can possibly be afforded” (JGC 1.287, 1.295). Methodist repudiation of the American Sunday School Union was complete when a separate Methodist Sunday School Union was established in April 1827 (Kirby, Richey, and Rowe 181; Wardle History 61ff.). Although none of these actions was undertaken with a particular eye to Methodist interests in Upper Canada, they helped to foster the growth of a market for Sunday school books that was increasingly denominational in character and therefore largely protected by sectarian insularity from the censure of the colony’s conservative elite. The Concern’s willingness to provide Sunday school books as cheaply as possible also helped Upper Canadian Methodists to counter John Strachan’s own state-sponsored efforts to exert a distinctly Anglican influence over the province’s Sunday schools beginning in the same year.

As the Concern’s Sunday school books became more readily available north of the border, they helped to alter and homogenize the reading tastes of students—even in the province’s few towns where readers had access to a larger variety of books than elsewhere. John Carroll, for example, after being converted by two Sunday school tracts distributed at the local Methodist Sunday school, set aside Richardson’s Pamela

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172 The Methodist Episcopal Church established its own denominational tract society in 1817. When the American Tract Society was formed in 1825 the Methodists refused to join on the grounds that the former was dominated by Calvinists (Nord Faith in Reading 77, Pilkington 159, 192).

173 Although the Montreal-based Sunday School Union of Canada, founded about 1822, and its successor, the Canada Sunday School Union, were both nonsectarian and therefore posed a similarly disruptive threat to the denominational interests of Methodists in Upper Canada as the American Sunday School Union did south of the border, neither is mentioned in Methodist literature of the period.

174 In 1824 Strachan received a grant of £150 from Upper Canada’s Legislative Assembly to provide, as the province’s chairman of the General Board of Education, Sunday schools with Anglican books and tracts at little or no cost (Brouillette “Books of Instruction” 259-60, Grant Spires 97-8, Greer 175). See Fahey for more on Strachan’s desire—dating back to 1816—to influence all state-supported schools by arrogating to himself “the power of directing the books to be used” (65).

175 The first tract, identified by Carroll as “The Life of Old Bridget,” is probably a variant of the twelve-page tract published by the Philadelphia Tract Society in 1818 under the title “The History of Old
and *Clarissa* as well as *Robinson Crusoe, Don Quixote*, and the *Buccaneers of America* (*My Boy Life* 211, 237-8, 276)—books he probably obtained from commercial sources such as George Dawson’s York circulating library—\(^{176}\) to take up “the precious Bible, the Methodist Hymnbook, Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress, Dodderidge’s Rise and Progress, the Lives of the Early Methodist Preachers, with many, many, other good books” (*My Boy Life* 158).\(^ {177}\) So dramatic was the change in Carroll’s reading habits, that his friends thought he must have been dying. Otherwise, they reasoned, he “would not be so serious, and be reading the Bible so much” (248). By the late 1820s, denominational Sunday schools were beginning to supplant “union” or nonsectarian schools as Methodists became convinced of their utility to serve not only as “nurseries of piety” but also as “nurseries of the church” (Semple 369). They were also, as Carroll’s experiences demonstrate, potential nurseries of the Concern’s denominational market in Upper Canada. By the time Green wrote to New York to order books in July 1827, the Concern’s agents had already begun the practice of publishing catalogues of Sunday school books in the *Christian Advocate*. The catalogue Green probably had in hand when he wrote to the Concern, instructs purchasers to send cash with their orders for

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\(^{176}\) Not a great deal is known about George Dawson though he seems to be the same man described by George Rogers Howell as a Scottish bookbinder in his 1886 *Bi-centennial History of the County of Albany*. According to Howell, Dawson emigrated from Scotland to New York in 1816 where he lived for two years. In 1818 he moved to York, Upper Canada, with his wife and son where he may have opened the “York Circulating Library.” If this is so, it seems probable that the stock of his circulating library would have been comprised primarily of books Dawson collected during his two year residence in New York. Dawson remained in York for six years before moving to Niagara and then, in 1826, to Rochester, where he continued to work as a bookbinder. He never returned to Canada (2.360). There are two brief references to Dawson’s activities as a bookseller in Lamonde and Rotundo’s “The Book Trade and Bookstores” (132, 136) as well as a reference to his work printing John Strachan’s *Christian Recorder* from 1819 to 1821 in Vincent, Alston and MacLaren’s “Magazines in English” (249). Neither of these articles mention Dawson’s emigration from New York or his work as a bookbinder. See also Firth *York 1793-1815* 210n47 and Parker *Beginnings of the Book Trade* 14.

\(^{177}\) See also Carroll’s *Past and Present* 41ff.
quantities of 12 to 100 copies of any of its 28 items. These ranged in price from 25¢ for a
dozen copies of Watt’s Hymns for Children, to $3.00 for the same quantity of Youth’s
Instructor and Guardian (“Sabbath School Books” 1.31 7 April 1827: 123). This was soon
met with another letter from Upper Canada written by Thomas Demorest, a former
Methodist preacher who had retired from the itinerancy in 1827, informing the Concern
that “the schools here are well attended […] Measures have been adopted to furnish
those infant nurseries with the advantages of a small library” (“Sunday School in
Canada” CA 13 July 1827: 178). The demand for these books north of the border must
have been considerable since, by August of that same year, the Sunday School Union of
the Methodist Episcopal Church had opened its own Upper Canadian Sunday school
book depository in Stoney Creek under the supervision of Alvah Green (“List of
Sunday School Depositories” CA 3 August 1827: 190). It has already been noted that as
these schools became increasingly denominational in character during the late 1820s,
yet also became increasingly sequestered from the influence—and the criticism—of the
province’s political elite. It is probably for this reason that the backlash against the
widespread use of American textbooks in the province’s common schools that erupted
in the 1840s seems not to have been anticipated by any similarly pervasive disapproval
of what must have been at least as widespread a use of American Methodist Sunday
school books a generation earlier—particularly at a time when Bangs, in the tradition of
his predecessors, began using the Methodist Magazine and the Christian Advocate not only
to disseminate information about the Methodist Sunday school movement on both sides
of the border, but also to draw attention to rhetorical linkages between patronage of the
Concern’s Sunday school offerings and membership in America’s Methodist Episcopal
Church.

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Bangs and his successors also used the Concern’s periodicals to shape the
denominational market by publishing articles intended to foster more disciplined study

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178 As early as 1780, British Methodists began operating Sunday schools for children whose poverty or
factory employment would have otherwise prevented them from learning how to read and write. The
original educational role of Sunday schools in Upper Canada and the United States was, as Neil Semple
notes, soon supplanted by their mission to evangelize. Not surprisingly, half of the titles in Bangs’s
catalogue of Sunday school books are devotional in nature (368).
habits among Methodist preachers and thereby equip those preachers to promote more knowledgably the Concern’s products. Bangs in particular had always been sensitive to the accusations of critics such as Jacob Mountain and John Strachan who characterized Methodist preachers as “ignorant enthusiasts” who “preach what they do not know, and which from their pride they disdain to learn” (Preston 292, Ryerson Claims 43). Until his own conversion, in fact, he had harboured many of these same prejudices himself—prejudices he had imbibed from his father who, he never forgot, refused to hear the famous Methodist itinerant Jesse Lee preach because “Lee was not educated” (Stevens Bangs 22). By the time he immigrated to Upper Canada, Bangs’s bias against Methodism had become so pronounced that it almost prevented him from formally joining his local Methodist society even after he had begun to attend preaching regularly (ibid. 38). Determined to unseat any legitimate excuse others might have for holding similar prejudices in later years, Bangs played an important role in encouraging the delegates of the 1816 General Conference to adopt a resolution requiring annual conferences to “point out a course of reading and study proper to be pursued by candidates for the ministry,” and presiding elders to direct “those studies which have been thus recommended” (JGC 1.151, Flores 41ff.). Although a standard course of study for ministerial candidates was not finally adopted by the General Conference until 1844, Bangs’s influence over the intellectual development of Methodist preachers received a major boost when he was elected senior book agent and editor of the Methodist Magazine in 1820—a circumstance that he later described as “very agreeable” (JGC 1.226, Stevens Bangs 240).

In the absence of a standard course of study with the force of polity behind it, Bangs used his complementary positions in the field of Methodist cultural production

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179 In a letter published in the Methodist Magazine to a junior preacher, Bangs noted, “Our plan of printing and circulating religious books, is admirably calculated to aid the minister in his work. Let it be known you do not do this on account of the profits of sale. A just suspicion of this motive will destroy your dignity and usefulness. But if you do it from the same motive with which you preach the gospel, namely, to save souls, you will benefit both yourself and those to whom you sell them (“Letter to a Junior Preacher” MM 7.3 March 1824: 115). This letter was reprinted in 1826 by Bangs in his Letters to Young Minister of the Gospel 197-8.

180 A subsequent resolution of the same General Conference required the Concern’s agents to include this text in the revised edition of the Discipline (JGC 1.160-1).

181 Although not reflected in the Journals of the General Conference, Bangs notes elsewhere that his efforts “to raise the standard of education” met with considerable opposition at the time (Stevens Bangs 238).
both to stimulate and to meet a market demand for the Concern’s printed commodities. As editor of the *Methodist Magazine*, he was able to encourage an appetite for specific texts that, as senior book agent, he was uniquely situated to satisfy. By influencing the textual practices of Methodist preachers, moreover, Bangs also exerted an indirect and pervasive influence over the purchasing preferences of wider denominational audiences composed of members and adherents under the ministerial care of those preachers. Thus the market for Methodist books was shaped to conform, not to the untutored demands of consumers, but to the catalogue of titles Bangs chose to publish. The first of a dozen articles intended to shape the study habits and influence the reading choices of Methodist preachers appeared in the September 1822 issue of the *Methodist Magazine* under the title “The Importance of Study to a Minister of the Gospel.”

In this and each subsequent article in the series, Bangs presented a narrative bibliography organized around a variety of subjects intended to help readers “explain,” “defend,” and “enforce” the Holy Scriptures (*MM* 5.10 October 1822: 377). By the time the final article appeared almost a year later, a total of nearly two hundred titles had been enumerated and described, ranging from Wesley’s *Notes on the New Testament* to Webster’s *Dictionary*. The majority were drawn from the Concern’s existing catalogue. The rest Bangs offered to obtain on behalf of Methodist preachers in his role as senior book agent. Although Methodist preachers were his primary audience, Bangs also knew that there was nothing to prevent others within the Concern’s denominational market—local preachers, class leaders, exhorters, members, and even adherents—from reading and following his advice as well. Even without the force of polity, then, these articles had the potential to homogenize the reading tastes of Methodist preachers and, directly or indirectly, lay customers as well. That potential was further realized when annual conferences in the United States and Upper Canada took these articles, shortly after the series was complete, as a basis for constructing courses of study for ministerial candidates.

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When the preachers of the newly formed Canada conference met for their second annual conference in September 1825, it was resolved, in view of an improvement in “literary acquirements” among Upper Canadians more generally, that, “our young men should have more advantages for the improvement of their minds.” To that end, presiding elders and other “senior brethren” were instructed “to pay special attention to this matter; taking the oversight of, and affording to, our young men all the aid in their power for the attainment of this object” (MAC 8-9). These resolutions were not much different from those adopted by the General Conference in 1816 except in one important point. The manuscript minutes for 1825 indicate that a “Committee on a Course of Study” was struck to provide a list of texts on which ministerial candidates would be examined (UCA, Canada Conference Minutes, 1824-1828). Although the Committee’s full report is no longer extant, Playter describes it in detail. “[I]ndispensably necessary,” he notes, were, “Wesley’s Sermons, Fletcher’s Checks, Clarke and Benson’s Commentaries, Watts’s Logic, Mosheim and Milner’s Church Histories, Murray’s English Grammar, and Morse’s Geography” (Playter 260, Ryerson Claims 44-5). In addition to these:

[T]he young men were recommended to peruse, as “useful and ornamental” study, the following variety:

- Wesley’s Natural Philosophy
- Goldsmith’s Rome, Greece, and England
- Rollins’s Ancient History
- Prideaux and Shuckford’s Connections of the Old and New Testaments
- Clarke’s Chronological Tables in his Commentary
- British Nepos
- Milton’s Paradise Lost
- Young’s Night Thoughts
- Cowper’s Poems
- Biographies of Wesley, Fletcher, Coke, Bramwell, and Francis Xavier.

(History 260)

These titles formed the core body of texts that Bangs endorsed in his series of articles on “The Importance of Study to a Minister of the Gospel” published between September 1822 and August 1823 and it is no coincidence that the manuscript conference minutes also contain a resolution requesting “the Agents to republish in a convenient volume, the course of study published in the late Vol. of Methodist Magazine. At the same time
wishing the Author to make such amendments to the work as may seem to him most proper” (UCA, Canada Conference Minutes, 1824-1828). It is probably in this more “convenient” form that most preachers received on trial in that and subsequent years encountered Bangs’s advice as a means to shape their earlier resolutions to “improv[e] [their] time more diligently in reading useful books, and study” (Hodgins Story 38, Green Life 25). The following year, Bangs’s Letters to Young Minister of the Gospel on the Importance and Method of Study was published by the Concern. It included the twelve articles that had previously appeared in the Methodist Magazine as well as three additional chapters including advice to a “junior preacher” to “Circulate good books” while letting it be known that “you do not do this on account of the profits of sale” (197-8). In the preface to the volume, Bangs notes the encouragement he had received in the endeavour from the New York and Canada conferences and even reproduces in full the Canada conference’s resolution that had been forwarded to him in a letter by the conference secretary William Case (iv).183

Although Bangs’s Letters to Young Ministers was not included on the course of study itself, the conference’s resolutions and Bangs’s public acknowledgement of the role Canadian Methodists played in bringing it to press, amounted to its unofficial endorsement as a textbook for aspiring ministerial candidates in Upper Canada. In a letter written in April 1826, William Case made reference to having several copies of “Bangs’s Course of Study” on hand for distribution among Canadian preachers (CHC 3.67-8). Egerton Ryerson was among those newly inducted preachers provided with a copy. In 1841, he wrote to Bangs to thank him for his efforts on behalf of Upper Canadian Methodism, and, “not least for your ‘Letters to Young Ministers of the Gospel,’ which were the first I recollect of reading on the subjects of which they treat. Many of your remarks & suggestions have been of great service to me” (Sissons 1.575). Other ministerial candidates including Anson Green, who had never been much given to study before his conversion, became acquainted with Bangs’s study outline as the original letters were being published in the Methodist Magazine. Even in that unofficial form, they provided Green and doubtless other Canadians with the scaffolding they

183 This resolution was not reproduced in Anson Green’s 1846 Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Wesleyan-Methodist Church in Canada, suggesting that by that time Canadian Methodists were not anxious to have it widely known the extent to which their program of study had been influenced by Americans.
needed to shape their studies to conform with the Concern’s evolving catalogue of offerings. In Green’s case, the letters also roused a hope he would long cherish to attend the newly opened Methodist seminary in the Genesee conference (Life 49). “Although taken on trial at this Conference,” he noted of his activities in 1825, “my judgment told me that Cazenovia was my appropriate place. I thirsted for classical lore, and anxiously desired a more thorough mental training than any which I saw before me in this new country” (Life 73). Unlike numerous other Canadian Methodists, however, Green’s hope of attending the American seminary was never realized. But even without such formal training, Bangs’s letters reinforced a sufficiently systematic approach to study that Green was later able to engage in playful banter with William Case and others along his circuit about his theological opinions while invoking works by “Wesley, [Joseph] Benson, [Thomas] Coke, and [Richard] Watson” to support his arguments (82-3). Green’s description of this casual exchange points to the success Bangs’s strategies to homogenize the Concern’s denominational market achieved in Upper Canada. And, as the market conformed ever more closely to the Concern’s catalogue of offerings, it only became steadily easier for the book agents to meet, and continue to shape, its demands.

Although all these vehicles—the publication of two periodicals, an increasingly denominationalized Sunday school movement, and the introduction of a formal course of study for ministerial candidates—stimulated demand for the Concern’s products north of the border, the Concern’s maturing rhetorical strategies for consecrating its printed commodities were becoming steadily more fraught as pressure mounted to sever ties with the American Methodist Episcopal Church. These pressures, moreover, were arising closer and closer to home. After the Genesee conference failed in 1823 to elect him as one of its delegates to the upcoming General Conference, Henry Ryan published a series of pamphlets arguing strenuously for total separation from the Americans in the hope that he might be appointed leader of an independent connexion in Upper Canada. Strachan, meanwhile, continued to press his own arguments by

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184 William Reddy’s official history of the seminary published in 1877, The First Fifty Years of Cazenovia Seminary, 1825-1875, attests that during its first decade at least twenty-five or thirty Canadians, male and female, enrolled in the American seminary (51, 82). Other students came from New York, Pennsylvania, Maine, and Connecticut. Among the most prominent Canadians were Daniel Van Norman and Egerton Ryerson’s younger brother Edwy. Van Norman graduated in 1836 and served as one of the first professors at Victoria College (80-81). Edwy graduated in 1832 and followed his siblings into the itinerancy, playing a significant role in the development of Upper Canadian Methodism (589).
publishing an incendiary sermon accusing the province’s Methodists of political disloyalty for “gather[ing] their knowledge and form[ing] their sentiments” based on teaching they received from the “republican states of America” (French 75-7; Ryerson Claims 19-20, Canadian Methodism 258-60; Semple 71ff.).\footnote{185} Episcopal Methodism’s common enemies in Upper Canada—Ryan, Strachan, and Maitland—soon found themselves in an uneasy alliance as they argued, for vastly different reasons, that the influence of Americans over the province’s Methodists was a mounting threat to peace and good government.\footnote{186} Criticism of this sort drew much of its force from a more widespread and ever-rising tide of anti-Americanism throughout the province. John Howison, in an account published in 1821 notes that, “Although the Americans and Canadians upon the Niagara frontier, are not a quarter of a mile distant from each other, the difference that exists between them, in point of character and ideas, is as perceptible as the lines of demarcation which divides the two countries.” In Upper Canada, he continues “the people of the United States [are] mentioned with dislike and reprobation” (Howison Sketches 275). That trend was not soon to abate. Writing several years later, Anna Jameson went even further, noting that the “very elements” out of which the Upper Canadian “social system was framed, were repugnance and contempt for the new institutions of the United States, and a dislike to the people of that country” (1.100).

And yet, in the face of such pressures, all evidence suggests that in the final months before the Canadian conference achieved ecclesiastical independence, the Concern’s provincial market continued to expand largely unhindered. The most systematic proof of this trend can be found in the pages of the Christian Advocate itself. Shortly after its first issue appeared in September 1826, Bangs began to publish a regular column listing the names of all those from whom the Concern had received letters and those to whom books had been shipped in the previous week. A selected review of these columns from the six-month period between 24 August 1827 to 18 January 1828 shows that approximately 20% of Upper Canada’s Methodist preachers were in direct correspondence with the Concern during that time and that a smaller, but

\footnote{185} The public confrontation Strachan’s sermon set off between himself and the province’s Methodists in the public sphere forms the subject of the next chapter.

\footnote{186} Unfortunately Ryan’s pamphlets are no longer extant.
still significant number, were ordering books to stock provincial depositories in Upper Canada’s two, and later three, districts.\textsuperscript{187} Not surprisingly, William Case, who was by then the most senior preacher in Upper Canada and presiding elder of the Bay of Quinte district between 1824 and 1828, was the most regular correspondent. He and two of his fellow presiding elders, John Ryerson and Thomas Madden, all received shipments of books during this period.\textsuperscript{188} Separate orders of books were sent to Case on 5 October 1827, 2 November 1827, 16 November 1827, and 23 November 1827. John Ryerson and Anson Green were each sent separate shipments of books by the Concern on 2 November 1827 “care of S. McAfee, Canada, opposite Black Rock.” Ryerson was sent a second shipment of books two weeks later on 16 November 1827, this time care of S. McAfee “by tow boat.” In addition to these, there are also two recorded shipments to David Wright of Kingston on 7 September 1827 and 12 October 1827.\textsuperscript{189} Finally, a single shipment of books was made to an unidentifiable person by the name of J. Rowell “by tow boat, Canada” on 14 December 1827.

Such a steady flow of texts across the border as the province’s political mood became marked by growing levels of hostility towards American influences can only be explained by the fact that Upper Canada’s conservative forces, reaching the apogee of their influence at this time, were entirely unaware of what was going on. Though pioneered for purely practical reasons in the United States, the Concern’s denominationally insular method of distribution proved extraordinarily effective in shielding Canadian Methodists from the harsh criticism they would have doubtless received for participating in a market characterized by rhetorical strategies that were stunningly ill-suited to Upper Canadian political realities. Had John Strachan and other

\textsuperscript{187} The names of the following Upper Canadian preachers appear in Bangs’s column of Book Concern correspondents between these two dates: Avah Adams (14 September 1827, 21 September 1827, 28 September 1827, 18 January 1828), George Bissell (31 August 1827), David Breakenridge (14 September 1827), William Brown (7 September 1827, 23 November 1827, 7 December 1827), William Case (24 August 1827, 5 October 1827, 2 November 1827, 9 November 1827, 23 November 1927, 4 January 1828, 18 January 1828), Sylvanus Keeler (28 September 1827), Thomas Madden (4 January 1828), Francis Metcalf (9 November 1827, 14 December 1827, 11 January 1828), George Poole (21 December 1827), John Ryerson (26 October 1827), James Wilson (24 August 1827, 19 October 1827, 28 December 1827), David Wright (2 November 1827, 30 November 1827), and possibly Matthew Whiting (31 August 1827).

\textsuperscript{188} Philander Smith and William Ryerson, whose names do not appear on Bangs’s shipment lists, each served as presiding elders for a single year before 1829.

\textsuperscript{189} The last is mistakenly identified as “Daniel Wright of Kingston” in the October shipment notice.
conservatives known the extent of that market there can be no doubt that they would have been quick to point it out as yet another example of the way Americans continued to exert a dangerous influence over the province’s largest “dissenting” religious denomination. But because only those already committed to the cause of Methodism, as either members or adherents, were able to participate in the Concern’s market, Strachan and other outsiders would have found themselves excluded even from knowing the full extent of its reach. Thus the Concern’s products—though published commodities that found a large audience north of the border—were not a part of Upper Canada’s public market. Nor were its periodicals, as denominational publications to which only Methodists could subscribe, in any way part of Upper Canada’s emergent public sphere. Only in such a denominationally sequestered space could the Concern’s market have continued to expand as Methodist societies and Sunday schools proliferated while the reading tastes of individual Methodists became steadily more homogenized to conform to the Concern’s catalogue of offerings.

A situation like this one could not last forever. As Upper Canadian Methodists became ever more aware of the extent to which their interests were hindered by an antagonistic political environment, a small but influential coterie of new preachers began to take steps to reinterpret the movement as a loyal segment of the province’s religious mainstream. This in turn threatened to diminish the insularity of the Concern’s market and increase the difficulties associated with its rhetorical strategies connecting patronage with denominational membership in an American church. The Concern’s agents could only do so much to offset these problems. Although Bangs, for example, did far more to court Upper Canadian patronage of the Christian Advocate in 1826 than had his predecessor Soule when he introduced the Methodist Magazine in 1818, such direct appeals, however sincere, could not diminish the effect that the Concern’s rhetorical strategies were having on the symbolic value of its products in Upper Canada. Travel to Upper Canada to solicit the support for a new publication was one thing. Altering the strategies by which that publication was promoted in the wider North American market to accommodate a more open Upper Canadian market was quite another. In the years between Nathan Bangs’s first arrival in Upper Canada and the appearance of the Christian Advocate 28 years later, those strategies had become too fixed—and were frankly too successful for insulating the Concern’s market from the products of competitors in the United States—to be replaced by alternate strategies in
the hope of resituating the market for Methodist books on a rhetorical footing that would strike Upper Canadians as more politically benign. The growing tensions between the needs of Upper Canadian Methodists, who increasingly wished to exonerate themselves from charges of political disloyalty, and the intractability of the Concern’s rhetorical strategies, form the subject of the following chapters. Egerton Ryerson, a Methodist convert raised in a conservative household whose father shared many of the political viewpoints of the province’s elite, played a major role in complicating these tensions. Ryerson took his first step in drawing the province’s Methodist print culture out of its denominationally sequestered and protected sphere when he publicly countered John Strachan’s criticisms in William Lyon Mackenzie’s reformist newspaper the *Colonial Advocate*. The impact of that debate on the province’s Methodist print culture, and the way it placed new stresses on the Concern’s access to its Upper Canadian market, form the subject of the next chapter.
Chapter 3

Contending for Methodism in the Upper Canadian public sphere

In the spring of 1826, Anson Green and Franklin Metcalf, Methodist preachers along Upper Canada’s Augusta circuit, sat down in a field behind a parsonage and began to read aloud to one another. As the men read, they also wept. A casual observer familiar with Methodism might not have remarked anything unusual in this at first. After all, Wesley had taught his followers to read the Bible as though it had been written especially for them. But these men were not reading the Bible. Nor were they reading the Methodist hymnbook, one of Wesley’s biblical commentaries, or even a particularly urgent summons to spiritual reformation of the kind contained in William Law’s *A Serious Call to a Holy Life*—a favourite of Methodists that often brought readers to tears. Instead, spread out on the grass between them, was the latest issue of William Lyon Mackenzie’s reformist newspaper the *Colonial Advocate*. In its pages was an adroitly argued rebuttal of the accusations of perfidy and ignorance published several weeks earlier by Church of England clergyman John Strachan as part of a new Anglican offensive against the province’s dissenters. At the time, Green, Metcalf, and the vast majority of their fellow preachers, did not know the identity of the person who had simply signed the article “A Methodist preacher.” What they did know was that their cause had finally been taken out into the open. The publication of Egerton Ryerson’s Methodist apology—for it was he who had written the rebuttal as he continued to travel on horseback across his own preaching circuit in and around the provincial capital of York—marked the most dramatic entry to date of a Methodist author into Upper Canada’s emergent public sphere.¹⁹⁰

Scholars concerned with the formation of public opinion continue to owe a considerable debt to Jürgen Habermas’s 1962 seminal study *The Structural

¹⁹⁰ See *CHC* 3.86-8 and Green *Life* 83. Green and Carroll’s published texts both clearly rely on the manuscript journals of the former. While Carroll included in his account references to weeping as well as reading, Green later chose to omit this detail. Unfortunately, Green’s original papers do not survive.
Transformation of the Public Sphere. Its main outlines can be summarized in a few words. Habermas contends that, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a distinct arena or “public sphere” for the rational debate of the issues of the day emerged in several Western European countries. Unencumbered by the apparatus of the state, such debate took place through personal modes of communication at public gathering places, such as coffeehouses, or in print through a growing number of newspapers and periodicals. Regardless of the medium, voluntary participants assented to the adjudication of competing viewpoints on the basis of reasoned argument alone. All appeals to dogma, tradition, prejudice, class, and social status were deemed irrelevant. Michael Warner makes an important contribution to Habermas’s theory in his 1990 The Letters of the Republic by arguing that the emergence of an early American republican public sphere was abetted by the disembodiment of printed discourse. “[T]he public sphere,” he writes, “requires a special set of assumptions about print” that differentiates it from “personal modes of sociability” (39). The fact that the press allowed disputants to engage in public argument without revealing their identities enabled the reading public to evaluate more readily the strength of arguments on the basis of reasoned merit alone while minimizing the influence a disputant’s social status might inadvertently have on the outcome of that evaluation. For this reason, Warner argues, the proliferation of newspapers and periodicals reinforced the political logic of egalitarianism and voluntarism because these modes of communication, unlike personal modes of sociability, were impersonal. Or, as he puts it, the distribution of print cohered with republican political ideology because “the impersonality of public discourse is seen both as a trait of its medium and as a norm for its subjects” (38).

Habermas is almost completely silent on the topic of religion in The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. Some, including Charles Taylor in his 2007 The Secular Age, seem to take this silence as an invitation to conclude that the rise of “radical

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191 An English translation of Habermas’s earliest major study, Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit, did not appear until 1989. By that time, Habermas’s work on the public sphere had been incorporated into more comprehensive theories of communicative action he developed during the 1970s and 1980s. These theories became the basis for all his subsequent work.

secularity” in eighteenth-century Europe was a necessary precondition for the emergence of a “functioning public sphere emptied of appeals to dogma and tradition” (192). By adopting this view, however, Taylor ignores not only the voices of many other scholars, who have convincingly argued that religion played an important role in preparing the ground for the emergence of a political public sphere in Europe and America, but also Habermas’s own recent reassessment of the contribution religion can make to rational public debate. While insisting on the necessity of a separation of church and state where the machinery of government operates with strict religious impartiality, Habermas has recently acknowledged that “in well-established constitutional states, churches and religious communities generally perform important functions for stabilizing and advancing a liberal political culture” (Between Naturalism and Religion 124-5). More importantly,

There are also functional reasons for not overhastily reducing the polyphonic complexity of public voices. For the liberal state has an interest in the free expression of religious voices in the public arena and in the political participation of religious organizations. It must not discourage religious persons and communities from also expressing themselves as such in the political arena, for it cannot be sure that secular society would not otherwise cut itself off from key resources for the creation of meaning and identity. (ibid. 131)

Other scholars have anticipated these observations. For example, there have been growing calls—intimated here by Habermas’s use of the word “polyphonic”—for the acknowledgement that, “the concept of a unitary public sphere is no longer viable and needs to be replaced by an account of multiple, intersecting and contesting public spheres, whose inter-relation is problematic” (Hebert 95). Perhaps even more important, however, has been the willingness of scholars to accept, in Habermas’s own words, the expressions of religious persons “as such” as legitimate contributions to public

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193 In a line of argument that in many ways parallels those of Warner and Lambert (discussed below), Leon Mayhew argues that religious agents and institutions prefigured the emergence of a political public sphere in Europe as well. “Public space,” he writes, “did not initially emerge in London’s eighteenth-century coffee houses, as Habermas seems to suppose, but in the intellectual circles of radical seventeenth century ministers whose writings exhibit self-conscious awareness of their public creating roles” (161). See also Nancy Fraser “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy” in Habermas and the Public Sphere, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997): 123-5.
debate. Birgit Meyer and Annelies Moors argue in Religion, Media, and the Public Sphere that the principal question for religious citizens wishing to participate in public debate, whether the forum for such debate is conceived of as a unitary or polyphonic space, centers around a critical willingness on the part of religious participants to be “seen not so much as in the public but rather as the public” (12). And although Habermas’s own reassessment was made with reference to a post-911, postsecular world, where, he argues, religious and secular citizens must work equally hard to employ what he calls “postmetaphysical” thinking in order to incorporate religious arguments—at least those that do not belong to the “opaque core of religious experience” (ibid. 143)—into a public sphere, he offers no reason why this same approach could not be applied to post-Enlightenment public discourse in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Michael Warner was one of the first to strike out in this direction. In The Letters of the Republic, he speculates that the Great Awakening did much to transform contention between various members of the clergy into subjects of discussion among members of the public, often in print. In this way, the Awakening “could have results similar to those of printed political debate, bringing about a critical break with the order of traditional authority” (57). Warner concludes that, as public religious disputes became normalized in the colonial press, established forms of traditional authority were proportionately weakened.194 Although Wesley, as a Church of England clergyman, encouraged his followers to submit to the principles of church establishment, the Methodist movement was not itself a locus of traditional authority and stood to gain much by entering into such public debates. As David Zaret argues in a 1992 essay, moreover, in spite of Wesley’s emphasis on experiential religion, he agreed with members of the Royal Society, latitudinarians, and Whig ideologues, that there was nothing in religion that was fundamentally incompatible with reason (“Religion, Science, and Printing in the Public Spheres in Seventeenth-Century England” 192ff.). Although Wesley’s reasons were different—he held that reason was invested in the individual through prevenient grace rather than natural endowment—the end was the

194 Like Habermas, Warner also asserts the critical importance of an eventual separation of church and state because established religion, unlike religion in a marketplace of ideas, ultimately pulls against “the normalization of social division” necessary for the emergence of a fully developed public sphere. The truth of this observation is borne out by the following discussion of John Strachan’s refusal to enter into public debate with his antagonists (58).
same. Thus no doctrinal impediment prevented Methodists from entering into public debate on religious topics provided they refrained from resorting to private revelation or the “opaque core of religious experience.” Frank Lambert, drawing on Timothy Breen’s 1993 essay “Retrieving Common Sense: Rights, Liberties, and the Religious Public Sphere in Late Eighteenth-Century America,” develops these ideas further in the fifth chapter of his 1994 study of the transatlantic Methodist revivalist George Whitefield “Pedlar in Divinity.” Lambert argues, with Breen, that, just as their English counterparts debated the political issues of the day, eighteenth-century American colonists debated religious issues (171-2). As Whitefield travelled throughout the American colonies, publishing his sermons and engaging in debate with anti-revivalists in the colonial press, he transformed passive consumers of religious doctrine into active participants obliged to use “their independent reason to construct their own meanings of the revivals in the marketplace of ideas” (197). In the process, as readers demanded that writers adduce evidence for their claims, Whitefield and other public disputants were obliged to accept the final judgments of the religious publics they had helped to create.

Peter Van der Veer’s 1999 article “The Moral State: Religion, Nation, and Empire in Victorian Britain and British India” in Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia provides an interesting and particularly relevant example of how religious citizens can enter into such debate that bears a striking resemblance to Ryerson’s own participation in Upper Canada’s public sphere at roughly the same period of time. In direct opposition to earlier scholars who suggested that secularism was a necessary precondition for the emergence of a public sphere, Van der Veer argues that religious groups in India successfully used the colonial public sphere in order to thwart the introduction of religious establishments by the state. When dissenting Christian missionaries feared that the East India Company might establish Hinduism after the government of Madras took over the operation of Hindu temples in 1817, they, together with Hindu voluntary revivalists, used the emergent public sphere to force the government to adopt a policy of religious noninterference (19-20). Thus religious agents were able to make public arguments about how the state must assume a political position of religious neutrality. Van der Veer writes that, “it is remarkable to see that both in the American colony and in the Indian colony it is the Christian dissenters which try to erect ‘a wall of separation’ between church and state” (21). On the other
side of the globe, such a “wall of separation” is precisely what Ryerson was also hoping to establish in Upper Canada—“a critical break with the order of traditional authority” (Warner 57)—when he attempted to engage Strachan and the supporters of church establishment in debate before a reading public. In both colonial settings, the eventual shift of the state to a neutral position, allowed a vigorous voluntary religious sector to develop, shifting the “location of religion in society from being part of the state to being part of a newly emerged public sphere” (23).

“The United States,” Northrop Frye observed in 1982, “found its identity in the eighteenth century, the age of rationalism and enlightenment.” By contrast, he wrote, “Canada had no enlightenment and very little eighteenth century” (Divisions on the Ground 76-7). This view seems to have prevailed among a majority of scholars and historians who have been reluctant to discuss Upper Canadian politics and religion in the context of a colonial public sphere. Jeffrey McNairn’s 2000 The Capacity to Judge: Public Opinion and Deliberative Democracy in Upper Canada, 1791-1854 remains the only monograph-length study to fully engage with Habermas’s theory in its interpretation of Upper Canada’s developing colonial ideology before 1850.¹⁹⁵ McNairn, however, takes only passing notice of the colony’s religious organizations in his analysis, choosing instead to situate all such organizations—whether or not they had pretensions to establishment—outside the collection of associations such as Freemasonry (69), debating societies (83), and mechanics’ institutes (92), that provided colonists with voluntary forums for democratic sociability. Recent scholars of religious history, on the other hand, have either said little about the debate between Ryerson and Strachan, or have concerned themselves entirely with the content of the arguments rather than with the material and cultural processes by which a reading public participated in the adjudication of those arguments.¹⁹⁶ Neil Semple, for example, does not mention the

¹⁹⁵ Marguerite Van Die’s edited collection Religion and Public Life in Canada: Historical and Comparative Perspectives (Toronto: UTP, 2001) does not concern itself with the period before the secularization of the clergy reserves in 1854.

¹⁹⁶ This is in contrast to nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century historians of Canadian Methodism. Joseph Sanderson, for example, devotes an entire chapter to the controversy in The First Century of Methodism in Canada (Toronto: William Briggs, 1910): 176-192. Ryerson also accorded considerable space to recounting these events in Methodism: Its Epochs and Characteristics (Toronto: William Briggs, 1882): 141-160. It should be added however, that American religious historian Mark Noll, though unconcerned with the material aspects of the debate, makes the public contest between Ryerson
encounter at all in his sweeping history of Canadian Methodism *The Lord’s Dominion*. John Webster Grant includes only a single passing reference in *A Profusion of Spires* (89). Even William Westfall, who affords readers a more detailed analysis of the public confrontation than any other recent scholar, dismisses Ryerson’s response as “a long, vituperative, and rather meandering letter” (24). In an apparent effort to counter the tendency of other historians to elevate Ryerson’s contributions to the province’s public institutions in hagiographic terms, Westfall even argues that Ryerson’s response was so thoroughly unoriginal that his “words could have been spoken by many others” (28). Viewed as a contribution to the colony’s emergent public sphere, however, considerations such as these are largely beside the point. Even if Westfall could conclusively prove that Ryerson had not authored the words at all—as Ryerson’s public interlocutors would actually contend—the rational merit of the arguments those words embodied, their impact on the formation of public opinion about Methodism and establishmentarianism, and their eventual implications for the Concern’s continued access to its market north of the border, would all remain. As McNairn and others note, authors contending in a public sphere could exercise a truly legitimate influence “only by their words, not their identities” (119).

Setting aside questions of style, originality and, indeed, passing over much of the substance of the exchange entirely, this chapter will argue that by inviting the reading public to scrutinize Methodist textual practices as an antidote to Strachan’s claim that Methodists were uneducated, Ryerson placed inadvertent stress on the Concern’s extensive market north of the border at a time when he and his fellow preachers continued quietly to distribute its products in the denominationally sequestered spaces described in the previous chapter (*infra* 109ff.). Although unprecedented in its

197 Goldwin French makes a similar claim about Ryerson’s lack of originality (Parsons 112-1). The surprisingly unenthusiastic assessment on the part of these historians probably stems from a common effort to distinguish their narratives from what Mark McGowan characterized as the predominately uncritical “providential” historiography that dominated the study of religion in Canada before the Second World War (McGowan 178-9). Curtis Fahey, writing more recently and perhaps no longer under that shadow, takes a more balanced (though certainly not hagiographical) tone by simply calling Ryerson’s text “a detailed philosophical critique of the principle of church establishment” (75).
boldness—the “Review” and the sustained debate that followed its appearance in the colonial press was characterized by one of his contemporaries as “the commencement of the war for religious liberty” (Green Life 84) in Upper Canada—Ryerson’s polemics were not alone in complicating the Concern’s access to its market at this time. Several years before the appearance of Ryerson’s “Review” in the Colonial Advocate in 1826, Methodists had already attracted unwanted attention from the colony’s political elite for their success in converting Natives in the western portions of the colony—some of whom were previously affiliated with the Church of England. Strachan responded to this threat by promising an increase in state funding to Native communities if they foreswore Methodism. With no comparable political leverage, Methodists turned to the public by first issuing missionary reports and later, Native translations on local presses for the consumption of nonpartisan readers. This slow bifurcation of the market for Methodist texts—one established by preachers and supplied solely by the Methodist Book Concern, another supplied by local printers and comprising the wider Upper Canadian reading public—helped to foreground the risks Methodists incurred by continuing to distribute printed commodities that bore the imprint of an American publisher whose commercial interests were protected by rhetorical strategies calculated to identify patronage with denominational membership in a foreign church. Ryerson was obliged to be particularly attentive to such implications because his texts directly attacked the Church of England’s entitlements and therefore would have been most vulnerable to a counterattack premised on such transnational cultural connections. But even Native translations—originally intended for distribution in denominationally sequestered settings and produced on presses in New York—eventually drew the attention of the political oligarchy and had occasionally to be produced locally to prevent accusations of American cultural hegemony. Thus as Methodism and Methodist print culture continued to move toward the mainstream, it became increasingly obvious that severing the Methodist Book Concern’s access to its market north of the border formed a critical component—perhaps second in importance only to suspending the direct episcopal oversight exercised by bishops residing in the United States—in an overall strategy for achieving political equality with the colony’s other religious denominations.

Curtis Fahey has argued convincingly that, before the 1820s, Strachan and his fellow clergymen confined their efforts to discredit itinerant preachers to the expression
of establishmentarian sentiments in private correspondence addressed to one another and to government officials in positions to effect changes in policy (89ff.). After 1820, as it became clearer that Upper Canadians would not inevitably gravitate toward the Church of England as the number of clergymen increased, Strachan, following the lead of Bishop Jacob Mountain, began to move his views out into the open. This new tactic, however, should not be misconstrued as an effort to engage the critical faculties of an Upper Canadian reading public. Strachan makes clear his desire to avoid any discourse that might invite public debate in a letter written to Mountain outlining his plan for publishing a religious periodical in 1819. “I will,” he explained, “gradually lead my readers in favour of the Church taking care to insert nothing particularly offensive to Dissenters; as the work gains ground, we can be more explicit, but caution is necessary as the whole of the population not of our Church is ready to join against us” (Christie “Democratic Rage” 40, Fahey 25). Assent, not debate, to the principles of church establishment and religious homogeneity was the desired outcome. When Strachan delivered his sermon on the death of Mountain in July 1825 his aims were no different (Westfall 19ff, French 111, Fahey 76-6, 97, Wilton 45). His choice of audience is suggestive. On this occasion, the faces that looked up to his pulpit were those of prominent colonists and government officials who might have it in their power to effect, or at least profitably advocate for, an increase in the emoluments to which the Church of England in Upper Canada was entitled. When Strachan went to James Macfarlane in Kingston in the early spring of 1826 to have his sermon printed, moreover, he did so not to disseminate his arguments to an Upper Canadian reading public, but in order to have an adequate number of copies on hand to distribute to government officials during a trip to England while he sought a university charter and higher levels of ecclesiastical financial support (Fleming UC Imprints no. 299).

198 Mountain first denounced sectarianism in public in an episcopal charge delivered in Kingston on 25 July 1820 (Fahey 89).

199 Strachan had pursued the same policy even in matters that did not touch directly on religious controversy. In 1810, for example, he published A Discourse on the Character of King George the Third in an effort to inform the public and “quiet the minds of my fellow subjects.” His intention, as McNairn notes, was not to engage them in critical dialogue or debate: “Their loyalty and deference, not their active participation or critical assessment, were sought” (181).

200 The precise date of the printing of Strachan’s sermon is uncertain. Ryerson notes, however, that “The sermon was evidently intended more for England than for Canada; it was not printed until the spring of 1826, on the eve of its author’s departure for England, in order to procure large additional supplies and a University Charter for the Church of England, endowed out of the public lands of Upper Canada”
Although, as the following will show, a few copies of Strachan’s sermon did fall into the hands of Upper Canadians, his purpose was not to turn public opinion in his favour, much less to initiate a debate with those who might oppose his views, but to seek favourable action from Parliament, the Colonial Office, and the Colonial Secretary.

By the time Ryerson found himself listening to someone read the offending sermon aloud in York’s wooden Methodist meetinghouse in April 1826, Strachan was already en route to England. Still a junior preacher only just received on trial less than a year earlier, Ryerson had arranged with his superior James Richardson, a veteran of the War of 1812, to meet ever four weeks with the fifty or so Methodists who lived within York’s town limits. Somehow a copy of Strachan’s sermon fell into the hands of one of these Methodists and was carried to the meeting. Though Strachan did not mention Methodists by name, two passages stood out to the auditors as particularly pointed:

Even when [Anglican] churches are erected, the persons who give regular attendance are so few as greatly to discourage the minister, and his influence is frequently broken or injured by numbers of uneducated itinerant preachers, who, leaving their steady employment, betake themselves to preaching the Gospel from idleness, or a zeal without knowledge, by which they are induced without any preparation, to teach what they do not know, and which from their pride, they disdain to learn.

[...]

Is it to be wondered at under such circumstances, the religious benefits of the Ecclesiastical Establishment of England are little known or felt, and that sectaries of all descriptions are increasing on every side? And when it is considered that the religious teachers of the other denominations of Christians, a very few respectable ministers of the Church of Scotland excepted, come almost universally from the republican states of America, where they gather their knowledge and form their sentiments, it is quite evident, that if the Imperial Government does not immediately step forward with efficient help, the mass of the population will be nurtured and instructed in hostility to our parent church,

(Methodism 141). The Dictionary of Canadian Biography notes that Strachan sailed for England sometime in March 1826. If this is so, the sermon must have been printed in the very early spring, or perhaps the late winter. And on 23 March 1826, William Lyon Mackenzie published a request for the sermon in the Colonial Advocate: “Could anyone favour us with a copy of Dr Strachan’s sermon upon Bishop Mountain’s death, it is said to be in print.” See also Fleming UC Imprints no. 297.
nor will it be long till they imbibe opinions anything but favourable to the political institutions of England. (Henderson 92, 93)

It is hard to know which of these two charges—political disloyalty or religious ignorance—would have stung Ryerson more. Although Upper Canadian Methodists were routinely suspected of sedition, particularly in the postwar period, members of Ryerson’s own family had repeatedly proven themselves willing to bleed for the Crown. Ryerson’s father Joseph was a loyalist veteran of the Revolutionary War and had fought again for the British in the War of 1812—this time alongside his three eldest sons George, William, and John. The trials of war stirred something in Ryerson’s older brothers that caused them all to become “deeply religious” after the conclusion of hostilities (Hodgins Story 25). Despite their father’s staunch attachment to the Church of England—an attachment so strong that it threatened to undo the bonds of kinship between Joseph and his five sons—all but one found his way into the Methodist itinerancy to become part of a growing complement of Canadian preachers. As members of a United Empire Loyalist family, moreover, Ryerson and his brothers also enjoyed all the cultural and intellectual benefits that an education in the province’s government supported grammar schools could afford. Indeed, not only did Ryerson attend his local grammar school, fortunately located only a short walk from his childhood home in Vittoria, but his brother-in-law James Mitchell (who married Ryerson’s youngest sister) taught at the school. His father Joseph and his uncle Colonel Talbot were also school trustees (Sissons 1.3, Hodgins Story 24). Ryerson was more driven by a spirit of intellectual acquisitiveness than most of his brothers and, in the early 1820s, took up the post of usher, or teaching assistant, at the London district grammar school where he styled himself “both teacher and student.” During this time, he “took great delight” in John Locke’s foundational Enlightenment text *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, as well as William Paley’s *The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy*, and William Blackstone’s massive *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (Hodgins Story 27). Locke had been a staple of Methodists since Wesley’s day, and Paley was highly recommended by Bangs in his *Letters to Young Ministers of the*

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201 Ryerson cites both passages in the account he published in *Canadian Methodism: Its Epochs and Characteristics* more than fifty-five years later (145, 154).
Deep familiarity with Blackstone, however, would have been a rare thing for a North American Episcopal Methodist. After August 1824, Ryerson also enjoyed unrestricted access to the library owned by John Law, the head of the Gore district grammar school, with whom he undertook an intensive course of study in classical literature (Hodgins Story 32, Sissons 1.7 n1). By the mid-1820s, Ryerson had much more in common with the intellectual habits of men like John Strachan and John Beverley Robinson than with William Case and other Upper Canadian Methodist preachers. As such, he was probably better prepared than any other North American Methodist to engage the province’s conservative elites in public debate according to the norms of a common British intellectual tradition.

William Case, Ryerson’s presiding elder at the time, was not alone in recognizing the young preacher as “as one of the best educated men of the connexion [...]” (CHC 3.110, 192). Shortly after the conclusion of the reading of Strachan’s sermon fingers soon began to be pointed in Ryerson’s direction. Although hesitant at first, Ryerson reluctantly agreed to compose a response when his circuit’s supervising preacher James Richardson agreed to do the same. By the time of the next meeting, however, only Ryerson had anything to show. He recalled that,

It was then insisted that I must read what I had written. I at length yielded, and read my answer to the attacks made on us. The reading of my paper was attended with alternate laughter and tears on the part of the social party, all of whom insisted that it should be printed, I objecting that I had never written anything for the press, and was not competent to such a task, and advanced to throw my manuscript into the fire, when one of the elder members caught me by the arms, and another wrenched the manuscript out of my hands, saying he would take it to the printer. Finding my efforts vain to recover it, I said if it were restored I would not destroy it but rewrite it and return it to the brethren to do what they pleased with it. I did so. Two of the senior brethren took the manuscript to the printer, and its publication produced a sensation scarcely less violent and general than a Fenian invasion. It is said that before every house in Toronto might be seen groups reading and discussing the paper on the evening

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202 John Carroll, who did not attend a district grammar school, cited among his reasons that only “the well-to-do could afford to attend” and that, in any event, such schools “were mostly appropriated by the descendents of the Family Compact” (My Boy Life 15, 265). Methodists, as a rule, were neither wealthy nor associated with the province’s ruling class.
This passage provides a useful starting place for discussing three crucial points: first, the material and cultural mechanisms operational in the colony in the 1820s that enabled Ryerson’s paper to elicit such a widespread response; second, the legitimacy with which his paper may be considered a genuine contribution to an emergent public sphere in Upper Canada based on its method of distribution, intended audience, and mode of argumentation; and, third, what it was about the province’s political climate that made Ryerson initially so reluctant to antagonize Strachan in print. Consideration of the latter two points will also permit an exploration of the extent to which Ryerson and Strachan, and the traditions they represented, were amenable to the Enlightenment principles Habermas incorporates into his theory of the public sphere.

By the time Strachan published his sermon, the communicative infrastructure necessary to support a colonial public sphere had already, with some difficulty, begun to emerge. The province’s first privately owned newspaper, the Canada Constellation, had appeared a generation earlier in Niagara when the government-subsidized Upper Canada Gazette, established in 1793, relocated with the lieutenant governor to the new capital at York in 1798 (McNairn 120). In 1807, Joseph Willcocks established the colony’s first fully oppositionist newspaper, the Upper Canadian Guardian, and the following year took his seat in the Legislative Assembly (McNairn 153, Wilton 25). But when Willcocks allied himself with Robert Thorpe and used his dual positions as editor and legislator to make the debates of the Assembly public, conservative forces—forces that relied on violence, partisanship, and an emphasis on the natural depravity of man’s rational capability—took steps to prevent the Guardian from becoming a forum for debating the actions of the colonial government (McNairn 156-7, 177-8). Although the Upper Canada Gazette played its part by attempting to vilify Willcocks in print, members of the Assembly believed that only by silencing Willcocks completely could their victory be assured. Accordingly, Willcocks was charged with contempt and thrown in jail in an effort to remove him from the Assembly and thereby prevent him from continuing to publish the business of the government in the Guardian. Unfortunately for his supporters, Willcocks eventually ruined his credibility by aiding American forces in the
burning of Niagara and fleeing to the United States during the War of 1812. For his disloyalty he was formally ejected from the Assembly in 1814. He died of wounds received in combat at Fort Erie the same year (McNairn 139, 158; Wilton 24-5).

A similar trajectory of events unfolded in the postwar years when Robert Gourlay, a well-connected Scotsman and self-described “radical,” immigrated to Upper Canada in 1817 to pursue a land claim (Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online). By that time John Strachan had risen to a position of some influence among the colony’s elite and soon took a major role in opposing the emergence of a public sphere separate from the machinery of the state. Although the clergyman viewed Gourlay with circumspection from the start, the Scotsman’s impressive letters of introduction went far to convince others that no difficulties were in the offing. Using these letters, Gourlay even convinced the colony’s administrator, Samuel Smith, to allow him to use the official Upper Canada Gazette to gather information for compiling a topographical or statistical account of the region (Wilton 28). Although Gourlay’s first address caused no great stir, Strachan remained suspicious and took the time to review Gourlay’s second address—an address that was openly critical of the government—before it was published in the Niagara Spectator in February 1818. Alarmed, Strachan went immediately to Smith to denounce Gourlay as a “dangerous incendiary” and his “Scheme of a topographical work a mere pretence to conceal his real views.” In a letter written several months later, Strachan described these events in detail and noted that his legitimate concerns were “treated with ridicule” by Smith and that no action was taken to prevent the publication of Gourlay’s second address (Spragge 162-5). In the meantime, Gourlay learned of Strachan’s attempt to undermine him. When he was subsequently unable to obtain land from the provincial administration, and was denied access to information, he blamed Strachan’s influence. Gourlay went public with his complaints. Strachan, however, refused to engage his antagonist in public debate about either his own conduct or the conduct of the colonial government:

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203 Gourlay’s writing also appeared as a series of separately published pamphlets. See Fleming UC Imprints nos. 125-128.
Finding himself thwarted he began to write in the newspapers and giving me all
the credit for all his disappointments I became the particular object of his attack.
His abuse and ravings I little regarded, but as I could not descend to a
newspaper altercation I determined to prosecute him for libel [...]. (Spragge 164)

Strachan’s preference for legal rather than dialogic means to deal with public criticism
isn’t surprising when one considers how effective the law had been in silencing
Willcocks before the War. But when juries acquitted Gourlay of the charges of seditious
libel that Strachan had been instrumental in having laid against him in August 1818, the
clergyman found a more willing collaborator for bringing down his opponent in the
person of the new lieutenant governor Sir Peregrine Maitland. Under Maitland’s
guidance, the Assembly passed a new law to ban seditious meetings. This gave attorney
general John Beverley Robinson, Strachan’s close friend and former pupil, all he needed
to initiate proceedings against Gourlay. When Gourlay went ahead with several
meetings of freeholders in defiance of the Assembly, he soon found himself not only
backed into a legal corner, but also the target of physical violence. Before Gourlay was
arrested under the provisions of the new law, he was assaulted in Cornwall by
provincial magistrate Duncan Fraser and horsewhipped by prominent lawyer
Christopher Hagerman in the streets of Kingston. Although there is no evidence that
Strachan instigated this violence, neither did he condemn it. When he subsequently
refused to leave the province he was jailed to await a trial that did not occur for another
eight months. After being found guilty of failing to leave Upper Canada after his initial
arrest, Gourlay finally left the province in August 1819 (Errington 109, McNairn 139,
Wilton 27-38).

The use of legal sanctions and violence to silence Gourlay constituted a
fundamental repudiation of the norms of sociability necessary for the functioning of a
public sphere as described by Habermas—norms that call for the adjudication of
arguments on the basis of reasoned merit alone. Strachan resorted to the province’s
sedition laws, and then turned a blind eye to physical violence, precisely because he

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204 Strachan’s countenance of violence is reflected in a letter written to John Macaulay in 1832 where he
observed that “A man who goes about to disturb the peace deserves a horse-whipping every time he
leaves his own country” (Wilton 107). As far as Strachan was concerned, a disruption of the peace is
precisely what Gourlay had been attempting to achieve.
believed the press would fail to produce a correct judgment against Gourlay in the crucible of public opinion. On the contrary, for Strachan the press only helped to exacerbate the difficulties he and the members of the colonial elite encountered as they moved to silence Gourlay. These views are set out succinctly in an account he published under his brother’s name after Gourlay’s expulsion:

Even from prison [Gourlay’s] seditious papers found their way to the press; but the delusion has now vanished, and the number of his followers are reduced to a very few persons, of desperate fortunes, without respectability or talents. Still, the mischief which this man would have accomplished, under a less firm and intelligent government than that of Sir Peregrine Maitland, is incalculable. Though followed only by a desperate portion of the people, yet in possession of the press, continually writing, and full of activity, a minority appeared in his hands the majority; and a civil war would have been the consequence, and for no reason but to gratify a man of desperate fortunes. (James Strachan A Visit to the Province of Upper Canada 195)

According to this description, the press, far from being a means for the dissemination of reasoned impersonal arguments to a reading public, is easily transformed into a tool for permitting “a minority” to masquerade as “the majority” as the public is “deluded” by persons lacking “respectability.” For these reasons, Strachan made certain that Bartemus Ferguson, who as editor of the Niagara Spectator published several of Gourlay’s texts, including a letter in which Gourlay singled out Strachan for criticism for blocking the progress of his work, suffered the full legal consequences of his actions including the levying of fines, threat of public pillorying, and an eighteen-month confinement (Sheppard 196). Three days before Gourlay was brought into custody, Ferguson was arrested for seditious libel for publishing that letter. As a result, the Spectator was forced into bankruptcy (McNairn 139; Wilton 34, 91).

In the years between Gourlay’s expulsion and Mountain’s death, Strachan’s view of the press changed little. He continued to regard newspaper editors as irrational and

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205 Henry Scadding confirms that, “The bulk of the information contained in this volume was confessedly derived from Dr. Strachan” (Toronto of Old 58).

206 Gourlay shared his own bitter account of these events in his Statistical Account of Upper Canada published in London in 1822 (1.522ff.)
impulsive just as he refused to dignify published criticisms of himself or the government with a public response. In a letter written in April 1825, for example, he complained of being “praised or blamed according to the caprice of the editors of the newspapers” while heroically allowing “these calumnies to pass me like an idle wind, and I turn for them neither to the right hand nor to the left” (Bethune 102; emphasis Strachan’s). Strachan’s rejection of the idea that the press had a legitimate role to play in forming public opinion was not inconsistent with his view of the interpenetrating relationship between church and state, his rejection of the principles of democracy, and his insistence on the Westminster model. According to that model, at least as far as Strachan was concerned, the role of checking the Assembly belonged to the lieutenant governor, his executive council, and the Legislative Council—“not to a reading public” (McNairn 167). Not coincidentally, Strachan was a prominent member of both these administrative bodies at the time of Mountain’s death. And if his encounter with Gourlay had taught him anything, it was that he could, without “descending” to the indignity of “a newspaper altercation,” rid himself of agitators with the help of a cooperative lieutenant governor, an indebted attorney general, and an Assembly with a conservative majority. What had happened to Bartemus Ferguson and his newspaper, meanwhile, would serve as a good example to the editors of the province’s other oppositionist newspapers to tread carefully when challenging Strachan and his allies in print.

The memory of what happened to Robert Gourlay and Bartemus Ferguson had only had a few years to fade before Ryerson’s coreligionists took his paper to the offices of William Lyon Mackenzie for publication in the Colonial Advocate. Mackenzie, who by that time was already proving to be a thorn in the side of the colonial government, saw himself as a direct successor to these men. Having first immigrated to Lower Canada from Scotland in 1820, Mackenzie wrote briefly for the Montreal Herald, before moving to York to work in a book and drug company. He also took up his pen to write for the Observer, York’s first oppositionist newspaper. Established that same year by John Carey, the Observer reported on the deliberations, not just the decisions, of the Assembly and thereby opened up a space for public debate of those deliberations. Other newspapers, including official ones, soon followed suit. By February 1821, even the government’s weekly Upper Canada Gazette announced the beginning of formal parliamentary reporting. Jeffrey McNairn characterizes this period as one in which the
province’s periodical print culture began to undergo a significant shift of the sort Michael Warner argues took place in the American colonies about a century earlier (Letters 34ff.). “By the 1820s,” McNairn writes, “diffusing the norms and content of polite sociability was nearly eclipsed as most newspapers became political weapons to create and reflect public opinion. Concurrently, most became less genteel in readership, tone, and intent. Democratic sociability was replacing its polite precursor” (119). Watching Carey help bring about this change by means of his press must have been a formative experience for Mackenzie. When his own business partnerships in York soured two years later, he relocated to Queenston and on 18 May 1824 published the first issue of his own weekly, the Colonial Advocate. Without a single subscriber, Mackenzie claimed to have printed 1,200 copies in order to “influence voters in their choice of representatives in the approaching election” (“William Lyon Mackenzie” Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online). By this time Mackenzie was already a stern opponent of John Strachan and his coterie of like-minded conservatives. He had begun the Advocate for the express purpose of opposing these men:

I had long seen the country in the hands of a few shrewd, crafty, covetous men, under whose management one of the most lovely and desirable sections of America remained a comparative desert. The most obvious public improvements were stayed; dissension was created among the classes; citizens were banished and imprisoned in defiance of all law; and people had been long forbidden, under severe pains and penalties, from meeting anywhere to petition for justice; large estates were wrested from their owners in utter contempt of even the forms of the courts; the Church of England, the adherents of which were few, monopolized as much of the lands of the colony as all the religious houses and dignitaries of the Roman Catholic Church had had the control of in Scotland at the era of the Reformation; other sects were treated with contempt and scarcely tolerated; a sordid band of land-jobbers grasped the soil as their patrimony, and with a few leading officials, who divided the public revenue among themselves, formed ‘the family compact,’ and were the avowed enemies of common schools, of civil and religious liberty, of all legislative or other checks to their own will. (Lindsey 40-1)

Mackenzie was determined that his weekly would constitute one such “other check” to the will of Strachan, Robinson, Maitland, and other members of the colony’s political oligarchy. In July that year Mackenzie succeeded in having his reform candidate, Marshall Spring Bidwell, elected to the Assembly after Bidwell’s candidacy had been
initially rejected on the grounds that he had been born in the United States (Wilton 39). In November, Mackenzie relocated his press to the provincial capital where, according to Henry Scadding, it occupied “the largest space in the early annals of the press at York” (272). Mackenzie claims that in the year following the move he regularly published 1,000 copies of the Advocate each week—a figure that he compared favourably with the estimated 300 copies printed each week of the province’s official Upper Canada Gazette. Mackenzie’s readership was considerably larger than even that number suggests, however, because he deliberately targeted taverns, often sending out free copies, in an effort to transform them into informal distribution centers. Although this did not always net Mackenzie very large profits, his aggressive methods of promotion and his vitriolic prose would have helped to ensure that his paper was among the most widely read and widely debated in the province (McNairn 128, 132, 149).

It is not difficult to see how Mackenzie’s advocacy for reform and his continual railing against Strachan’s school of establishmentarianism would have attracted both the ire of the colony’s political elite and the sympathy of its growing community of Methodists. Ironically, Mackenzie’s most serious immediate troubles came not from Strachan, but from Francis Collins, who established his own reform paper, the Canadian Freeman, in the summer of 1825. By July Mackenzie was mired in serious financial difficulties and was forced to suspend the Advocate for a number of months. In October, in an effort to revive his business, he purchased a new printing press and type from the United States and by December had resumed publication. In such a competitive environment, Mackenzie would have had not only ideological, but obvious financial reasons, for wishing to publish Ryerson’s text. In a deliberate effort to boost circulation—and in order to ensure that the special feature would take no one by surprise—Mackenzie advertised the forthcoming “Review” by “A Methodist Preacher” two weeks before its appearance. When Ryerson’s 12,000 word “Review” finally appeared in the 11 May 1826 issue of the Advocate, it initiated a serious and sustained public debate over the religious rights of Upper Canadians in much the same way that George Whitefield opened a similar dialogic space in colonial newspapers a century...
earlier by appealing to the authority of public opinion as a forum separate from the machinery of the government and uncontrolled by the dictates of an established church (Lambert ‘Pedlar in Divinity’ 170-1). The “Review,” in Ryerson’s own words, “produced a sensation and alarm scarcely less than that of a Fenian invasion,” and that, “it was the sole topic of conversation, and the subject of universal excitement in town and country” (Methodism 143).

After publishing the “Review” in Mackenzie’s Colonial Advocate, a choice that appears to have been made for rather than by Ryerson, Methodism became openly associated with the forces of reform active in the province’s oppositionist press. It was an alliance that carried considerable risk. The fates of Gourlay, Ferguson, Thorpe, and Willcocks were probably in the mind of Ryerson’s father Joseph when, after discovering that the author of the “Review” was his son, he exclaimed “My God we are all ruined!” (Hodgins Story 51). At least initially, however, Ryerson’s anonymity sheltered him from those who had shown their readiness to take up the law, arms, or both, to defend their entitlements. More importantly, it also allowed a reading public to evaluate the merit of Ryerson’s arguments without unconsciously juxtaposing Strachan’s elevated social standing with Ryerson’s own, far less impressive, status. Joseph Sanderson and John Carroll both describe these events by comparing Ryerson to the biblical David with “sling and stone” and Strachan to the much more formidable—but soon to be felled—Goliath (CHC 1.192, Sanderson 177, cf. 1 Sam 17.39-49). It is an apt comparison. Strachan, by the mid-1820s, was an ordained clergyman, a member of the colony’s executive and Legislative Councils, former periodical publisher and author of several books, chairman of the Board of Education of Upper Canada, leading member of the Clergy Reserves Corporation, a principal shareholder and director of the York Joint-Stock Bank, and missionary for the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. He was also regarded as a wartime hero and given the credit for saving York from destruction by fire (Bethune 49). By contrast, Ryerson was an inexperienced young man with no

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208 To underscore Strachan’s formidable status, Mackenzie enumerated his many distinctions—which had been added to since the mid-1820s—in his 1833 Sketches of Canada and the United States: “witness the Honourable and Venerable John Strachan, Doctor in Divinity. President of the Board of Education of Upper Canada, member of the Legislative Council, rector and parish priest of York, missionary of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, member of the executive council or colonial cabinet, a principal shareholder in the York Joint-Stock Bank, (and a late director,) member of the clergy (or clergy-reserve) corporation, President of the University of King’s College, justice of the peace, college councilor,
great public service record, no publications, and only tentative status as a Methodist preacher since he remained “on trial” at the time of writing. His education and his status as the son of a United Empire Loyalist, though worth something, would weigh only lightly in the balance compared with Strachan’s own reputation as a distinguished schoolmaster with a Doctor of Divinity degree. The enormous social distance between Ryerson and Strachan makes Ryerson’s challenge in the colonial press a good example of the critical importance of “the very printedness” of the debate taking on a “specially legitimate meaning, because it is categorically differentiated from personal modes of sociability. Mechanical duplication equals publishing precisely insofar as public political discourse is impersonal” (Warner 39; emphasis mine). Although Ryerson’s discourse was as much religious as it was political—offering a critique of Strachan’s view of both church and state—without the use of the press to render Ryerson’s “Review” impersonal, it is highly doubtful that his contention—as a spoken set of arguments—would have had nearly as significant an impact on the Upper Canadian public.

The stakes were almost as high for Mackenzie as they were for the province’s Methodists. In the spring of 1826, the Colonial Advocate remained in such serious financial trouble that Mackenzie was able to remain in the province only long enough to publish one more issue before fleeing across the border to avoid arrest for debt. That issue, probably in an effort to increase circulation, contained as scathing an attack on the province’s ruling elite as Mackenzie had ever published. Had he remained in the province, he may have found himself the recipient of a horsewhipping as had Gourlay for similar transgressions the previous decade.209 Instead, a gang of fifteen young conservatives raided the York office in Mackenzie’s absence, smashed his press, and threw his type into the lake (Kilbourn 69, Wilton 37-8, 152). In response, Hugh Thomson, a more moderate advocate for reform than Mackenzie, published an article in Kingston’s Upper Canada Herald advocating freedom of the press and arguing that the

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209 In 1832, Mackenzie was lured out of his hotel in Hamilton and beaten in the street by William Johnson Kerr, a conservative magistrate (Kilbourn 103-4).
authors and publishers of falsehoods ultimately suffered more harm in the court of public opinion than the target of those falsehoods (McNairn 143). Mackenzie, meanwhile, with the help of his former subscription agent and member of the Assembly Marshall Spring Bidwell, sued the vandals. After prudently refusing a small out-of-court settlement, Mackenzie won £625 in damages when his case was tried in October of that year. The province’s Methodists were not inattentive to the outcome. The settlement, one Methodist preacher observed in his journal, “will furnish him [Mackenzie] and his paper with the sinews of war, and he is lashing the Family Compact in fine style” (Green Life 113). In addition to saving the Colonial Advocate from bankruptcy and elevating Mackenzie’s status in the province’s reform movement, the settlement also demonstrated that the province’s legal machinery could conclude deliberations more quickly than the court of public opinion. The public debate that Ryerson’s “Review” set off the week before Mackenzie’s press was destroyed was still only midway through its life by the time Mackenzie received his money.210

To be considered a thoroughly legitimate contribution to the province’s emergent public sphere, Ryerson’s “Review” had to do more than appeal to democratic forms of sociability. That, for Methodists, was the easy part. After all, Wesley’s brand of Arminian theology was spiritually egalitarian, and Methodist polity was, particularly in the United States, founded on the principle of religious voluntarism. But as a member of a denomination that also made claims about the importance of “experiential religion,” and that was regularly accused of fanaticism by those who witnessed the demon exorcisms, miraculous healings, and dramatic conversions that accompanied Methodist camp meetings across the province, Ryerson would have found it much more difficult to limit his “Review” to purely rational arguments that could be evaluated by a reading public without recourse to privately held convictions. By no means, moreover, did Ryerson’s involvement as a student and teacher in several of the province’s District Grammar Schools purge him of his belief in the importance of revelation and epiphany. In his private journal, for example, he often described having “a conscious Divine

210 In spite their loss to Mackenzie, conservatives continued to use violence against newspaper editors for a number of years. In 1833, for example, the press of the St. Thomas Liberal was destroyed and the following year the editor of the Kingston Whig was assaulted by Henry Smith, a conservative lawyer who would later be elected to the provincial Assembly (Wilton 152).
strength according to [his] need,” and in a biographical sketch prepared for publication, Ryerson described in vivid detail a conversion experience in which Jesus appeared both to his mind and to his “bodily eye” (Hodgins Story 25, 27; Burwash Ryerson 6). These experiences, what Habermas might call examples of the “opaque centre of religious experience,” are precisely what Ryerson had to avoid referring to in his narrative. Remarkably, he did avoid them. Although Methodists seem to have reacted to the “Review” with just the sort of emotionalism they were often accused of—laughing and crying by turns—a close reading of the text itself suggests that Ryerson was aware of what his wider, non-Methodist, audience implicitly expected of him, and that he made a serious effort to exclude appeals to private revelation from his discourse. By doing so he successfully appealed to the only locus of authority – the reading public – that was open to him outside the colony’s conservative government.211

Ryerson’s text consists of a theological repudiation of the doctrine of church establishment, and an attempt to rebut Strachan’s dual calumnies that Methodist itinerants preach “the Gospel from idleness, or a zeal without knowledge, by which they are induced without any preparation, to teach what they do not know, and which from their pride, they disdain to learn,” and that the majority of Methodist preachers, “come almost universally from the republican states of America, where they gather their knowledge and form their sentiments” (Henderson 92, 93). Ryerson supports his broad argument against a continued relationship between church and state in Upper Canada with forty-one quotations from the Bible. He also cites the texts of several early church figures such as Eusebius and Cyprian, as well as eighteenth-century clergyman William Paley who argued that a church could not be properly established without enjoying the support of the majority of a nation’s inhabitants (Ryerson Claims 30-3). Altogether the “Review” draws on a body of literature widely acknowledged to be authoritative by Christians of his time without making a single reference to the private convictions or religious experiences of its author. Ryerson’s frequent references to the Bible, moreover, are typically in the form of arguments that invite readers to draw their own conclusions about the accuracy with which he interprets specific passages and

211 Appeals of this sort to public opinion were important precursors to the elaborate petitioning movements described by Carol Wilton in Popular Politics and Political Culture.
relates them to religious practices in Upper Canada. Thus Ryerson, rather than appealing to inspiration to validate his reading of the Bible, invites the same kind of dialogue with his readers others might have used in the employment of political or legal documents to support arguments pertaining to a different (or even similar) set of propositions.

To counter Strachan’s accusations about the ignorance of Methodist preachers, a considerable portion of Ryerson’s text is devoted to describing the academic credentials of Methodism’s founders, recounting passages from the *Discipline* that outline the number of hours itinerants are expected daily to devote to reading, and reproducing in full the course of study the Canada conference adopted in September 1825 (*Claims* 43-5). Attentiveness to what Ryerson excluded from this section of his polemic is particularly instructive. Specifically, in his lengthy and detailed description of the Canadian course of study, Ryerson makes no mention of the fact that the conference modeled the program on Nathan Bangs’s *Letters to Young Ministers of the Gospel*. Nor does he add that a ready supply of books at affordable prices were well within the reach of all preachers through the exclusive agency of the Methodist Book Concern. Ryerson’s reasons for silence on these matters are not difficult to discern. Even if the majority of the province’s preachers were British or Canadian born, as Ryerson contended, their continued reliance on the Concern to provide all their reading materials might easily have been construed by his opponents as proof that, though perhaps not from the “republican states of America,” Methodist preachers continued to “gather their knowledge and form their sentiments” from south of the border. Even worse, information of this sort might have tacitly invited one of Strachan’s supporters to look more deeply into the Concern’s mechanisms for distributing its products in Upper Canada and led to the discovery not only of the extent of its market as well as the rhetorical framework in which that market operated with its strong implications about the religious and denominational identity of its customers in a foreign church. Thus Ryerson could go only so far, and no further, in adducing evidence to counter Strachan’s first argument without inadvertently proving his second. Ryerson’s successful skirting of this boundary suggests that he was well aware of its existence and of the difficulties that would continue to accompany the work of exonerating Methodism from charges of disloyalty as long as the province’s Methodists continued to
purchase commodities from a foreign denominational publisher that invested its products with symbolic status by linking the act of patronage with religious identity.

In the weeks following its publication, four replies appeared in three of the province’s leading newspapers—the Kingston Chronicle, the Upper Canada Herald, and the Brockville Recorder. Three of these replies were authored by Church of England clergymen and one by an Anglican layperson. No public reply had been or ever would be written by Strachan.\textsuperscript{212} Although Strachan remained overseas for the entire duration of the debate—he did not return to Upper Canada until August 1827—his dealings with Gourlay strongly suggest that, even if he had been present in the colony, he would have refused to condescend to a public debate with the anonymous author of the “Review” (Bethune 119). But Ryerson didn’t need Strachan’s participation to carry on a debate with other conservatives who shared Strachan’s political and religious views but were perhaps less circumspect about where such democratic modes of exchange would inevitably lead. Even so, the risks attendant for Ryerson and his coreligionists on the lengthy dialogue that followed carried the same potential consequences even without Strachan’s participation. Ryerson had to be especially careful, as he had in his original “Review,” not to shine a light on the Methodist Book Concern’s continually expanding Upper Canadian market during these years and the increasingly entrenched rhetorical strategies the book agents used after the introduction of the Christian Advocate in 1826, to equate patronage with denominational identity. This was made more difficult by the fact that Ryerson’s interlocutors took up Strachan’s original criticisms of Methodist textual practices and the educational qualifications of Methodist preachers. Even Ryerson’s own educational credentials were questioned in what were sometimes contradictory arguments. One writer speculated, for example, that the “Review” was too accomplished to have been the work of a single Methodist, while another attacked the apology for being insufficiently rigorous. A third accused him of citing “authors whom he has never read” (Ryerson Claims 55) while others charged him of deliberately

\textsuperscript{212} Statements made by recent historians are often misleading in his regard. Jane Errington, for example, notes that, “In the colonial press, Rev. John Strachan was engaged in a vitriolic debate with the young Methodist preacher, Egerton Ryerson, over the establishment of the church, the disposition of the clergy reserves, and the educational needs of the colony” (187) and David Mills remarks “Religion shaped Ryerson’s political perceptions and ultimately drew him into debate with John Strachan over their differing perceptions of Upper Canadian society” (53, see also 57).
taking the words of various authorities out of context to proffer calculated
misinterpretations in the furtherance of his own position (*ibid*. 54, 83). All recognized,
however, that Ryerson’s “Review” had been written in a purposeful effort “to sway the
public mind” (*ibid*. 53). Questions of authorship and intellectual integrity aside, it was
the arguments around what Methodists did and did not read that had the greatest
potential to expose the extent of the Concern’s denominationally sequestered market
north of the border. One of Ryerson’s interlocutors took particular issue with the course
of study on the grounds that it included many titles that had no obvious connection to
theological training but instead had the appearance of serving only as remedial
textbooks for illiterate Methodist preachers:

Will they [Church of England clergymen] who have trodden the enchanted paths
of science—who can call up and combine the varieties of nature—who can search
out and bring forth the treasured stores of philosophy to fortify and adorn the
excellencies of religion—will they suffer by comparison with those who admit
amongst their systematic studies in theology so strange a classification as that of
‘Murray’s Grammar’ and Morse’s Geography? Why not annex to that dazzling
catalogue the perhaps necessary appendages of the ‘New England Primer,’
‘Entick’s Dictionary,’ and the ‘Ready Reckoner?’ (*Claims* 68-9)

Arguments of this sort probably caused Ryerson to regret reproducing, rather than
simply referring to, the 1825 course of study. In his response, however, he was careful
not to point out—as he had refrained from doing in his original “Review”—that the
course of study, as it had been adopted, was deeply influenced by the work of a highly
respected American Methodist author and editor then serving his second successful
term as the Methodist Book Concern’s senior book agent. Nor did he cite the large
number of Methodists in the province who subscribed to the *Christian Advocate* and the
*Methodist Magazine*. Although these may have served as effective examples for refuting
charges that the province’s Methodists were ignorant and were led by the ignorant,
they would have inevitably increased suspicion that Methodists south of the border
continued to control the denomination’s print and intellectual culture in Upper Canada.

Ryerson was relieved when the debate finally exhausted itself in February 1827.
“During the past year,” he confided in his diary a month later, “my principal attention
has been called to controversial labours. If the Lord will, may this cup pass by in my
future life” (Sissons 1.69). It seems probable that at times he continued to persist only because William Case, his presiding elder, encouraged him to “devote himself” to the public defense of Methodism in the Upper Canadian periodical press for as long as he could (CHC 3.192). From the vantage point of several years later, Ryerson and Strachan took widely divergent positions on both the means and the outcome of the debate. Writing in the Christian Guardian in 1832, Ryerson observed:

I first appeared before the public as a writer, at the age of two and twenty years. My first feeble effort was a vindication of the Methodists, and several other Christian denominations against the uncalled-for attack made upon their principles and character. It also contained a remonstrance against the introduction into this country of an endowed political church, as alike opposed to the statute of law of the Province, political and religious expedients, public rights and liberties. I believe this was the first article of the kind ever published in Upper Canada, and, while from that time to this a powerful combination of talent, learning, indignation, and interest has been arrayed in a vain attempt to support by the weapons of reason, Scripture, and argument, a union between the Church and the world – between the earth and heaven; talents, truth, reason, and justice have alike been arrayed in the defense of insulted and infringed rights, and the maintenance of the system of public, religious, and educational instruction, accordant with public rights and interests, the principles of sound policy, the economy of Providence, and the institutions and usages of the New Testament. (qtd. Hodgins Story 116)

However much Ryerson might have deplored the actual positions of his interlocutors, he saw the public contest as one that was waged on both sides using the “weapons” of reason and argument to assert a right interpretation of Scripture for the sake of “public rights and interests.” It is difficult to imagine how he might have framed the public debate in summary that coheres more easily with the terms Habermas lays out in his theory of the public sphere.

Strachan saw things differently. The debate and its outcome did nothing to alter the clergymen’s view about the inability of a reading public to adjudicate religious and political disputes. Though he had remained steadfast in his own refusal to participate, Strachan commented at length on the public altercation in a letter to a friend dated 12 April 1828:
Having gotten into an interminable paper war, I have abstained for some time from corresponding, in the hope of its being brought to a close [...] The floodgates of the most licentious press were opened upon me; newspapers in both Provinces, day after day and week after week, poured out the most rancorous calumnies and abuse against me. Having very good nerves, I permitted them to rail on; and, conscious of my integrity, I maintained an invariable silence. I am, indeed, so situated, that I cannot, with propriety, enter into a newspaper controversy; nor can I descend to the language made use of in such publications. [...] But although I considered that I could not, with dignity, enter into a newspaper war, yet so many things had been said against me that I felt it dutiful at last to break my silence, by giving, in my place in the Legislative Council, a full reply to all that had been asserted against me. The Speech which I delivered upon that occasion, is considered a most triumphant refutation of the calumnies of my enemies. (Bethune 125-6)

Strachan’s preference for silence over animated debate is unmistakable. His chief strategy seems to have involved abstaining “from corresponding” with his public antagonists in the hope that the whole affair would somehow be “brought to a close” by creeping entropy rather than by rational argument. For Strachan, the “paper war” was nothing if not intensely personal. Despite the fact that Ryerson’s text omits any mention of the clergyman by name—taking instead the institutional bulwark of a political church as the object of contention—Strachan persists in describing himself, not his ideas, as the target of the press’s “rancorous calumnies and abuse.”213 Thus Strachan, unlike Ryerson, declined to submit his arguments to the adjudication of reading public for fear it might somehow diminish his dignity as a member of the colonial elite. As he looked to his peers in the Legislative Council for exoneration instead, Strachan must have lamented the loss of those legal mechanisms that had so effectively silenced his critics in the past. For it was more than just Ryerson’s print anonymity that prevented him from becoming yet another trophy on Strachan’s wall. The Seditious Meeting Act—the same act that Maitland had convinced a conservative Assembly to pass in large part to put Gourlay behind bars a decade earlier for similar impertinences—had been

213 In a letter Ryerson published in the Herald later that year he made the distinction between his public and private self even clearer. Addressing himself to Strachan he wrote, “While as a public man, pursuing your present measures, I feel myself in duty bound decidedly to differ from you; as a private individual, I entreat the smiles of Heaven upon yourself and your family” (qtd. Sissons 1.89).
repealed in 1820.\textsuperscript{214} Just as importantly, the bonds of Strachan’s political oligarchy—what Mackenzie derisively called the “Family Compact” (\textit{Sketches} 409)—were on the verge of a material weakening when Maitland found himself appointed to Nova Scotia and John Colborne replaced him as Upper Canada’s lieutenant governor in 1828. Unable to ingratiate himself with Colborne in the same way, and having to contend with a newly antagonistic Assembly after the election of Upper Canada’s first reform majority in the summer of 1828, Strachan could no longer count on the government to furnish him with the legal apparatus he needed to safeguard his conservative agenda. And yet, for all that, a titan as formidable and as fixed as Strachan was not so easily toppled. Despite the ongoing advance of reformism in both Upper Canada and the British metropole, the steady decline of Strachan’s political influence was interrupted by several noteworthy rallies among the colony’s conservatives. These will be discussed in due course.\textsuperscript{215}

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Although the publication of Ryerson’s “Review” in the \textit{Colonial Advocate} was a critical first step toward the eventual separation of the interests of church and state—something scholars agree is vital to the continued development of a functioning public sphere—the pressure that it placed on the Concern’s access to its market was incremental rather than revolutionary. Nor was it, as Ryerson would later claim, “the first publication put forth by the Methodists in Upper Canada in their own defence” (\textit{Canadian Methodism} 143). Between six and eight months before the appearance of Ryerson’s “Review,” Methodists in Upper Canada had already made use of the local press to publish the first annual report of their newly established missionary society (Fleming \textit{UC Imprints} no. 254). Although vastly different in tone and rarely mentioned

\begin{flushleft}\textsuperscript{214} Charges of seditious libel continued to be brought against the province’s reformist newspapers until the very eve of the repeal of the 1804 Sedition Act in 1829. A year earlier, for example, Mackenzie’s \textit{Colonial Advocate}, Hugh Thomson’s \textit{Upper Canada Herald} and Francis Collins’s \textit{Canadian Freeman} were all the target of such legal action. Although the charges against Mackenzie and Thomson were later dropped, the case against Collins actually resulted in a conviction and a jail sentence (McNairn 139-40). See also Fleming \textit{UC Imprints} nos. 376 and 378 for separate pamphlets published to protest such prosecution.
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\begin{flushleft}\textsuperscript{215} Chief among the numerous reformist advances during these years were Catholic emancipation in 1829, the election of Whig majority to the Imperial Parliament in 1830, the repeal of Parliament’s annual grant to the Society for Propagating the Gospel used to shore up the colonial church during the postwar period, and the passage of the Reform Act in 1832 (Wilton 15, 35, 40, 118; French 111; Fahey 44, 53).
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by historians, this report served the same public rhetorical purpose as Ryerson’s polemic. Though the report was not published to invite public debate in the same way that Ryerson’s “Review” had been, and therefore not necessarily part of a “public sphere” in the truest sense, its apologetic nature was similarly calculated to influence public opinion about Methodist religious rights and practices in Upper Canada. For this reason both documents were intended to reach a market beyond the Concern’s denominational distribution infrastructure comprised of nonpartisan public readers interested in religious issues but not necessarily affiliated with Methodism. The emergence of this secondary market—a market where the Concern’s imprint and its rhetorical strategies would serve as a counterproductive reminder of precisely the sort of American cultural hegemony Strachan so darkly condemned in his religious rivals—was linked to a protracted struggle with the Church of England as Methodist missions rapidly advanced even in Native communities where Anglicanism had long since taken root.

Before the early 1820s the Methodists had shown only sporadic interest in evangelization outside the boundaries of white settlement. Nathan Bangs and David Sawyer preached to some isolated Native communities as early as 1801, and William Case did so as circumstances allowed. But it was not until about 1820 that the Methodist Episcopal Church attempted to impose some structure on these efforts (Semple 150-3, Stevens Bangs 110, Playter 74). The official work began in Upper Canada when Alvin Torry, a preacher under the supervision of William Case, began to preach among the Mohawks settled along the banks of the Grand River in the western portion of his Lyon’s Creek circuit shortly before the meeting of the Genesee annual conference in midsummer 1822. Although Mohawks in this region of the colony had been identified for decades with the Anglicanism of Joseph Brant, Torry concluded on his own evidence that their Christian convictions were superficial. “I was accustomed to cross the Grand River,” he wrote, “within a few miles of the Mohawk tribe, and frequently met with groups of them here and there, and not unfrequently saw them lying drunk around hucksters’ shops, kept by white people for the purpose of getting the Indians drunk, and then robbing them of all that was of use to them.” Sights like these convinced Torry that “the Gospel of Christ could be the power of God to the salvation
of the Indians” (Autobiography 46). Although Torry had originally hoped to be appointed to the United States the following year, he was convinced by Case to resume, this time officially, his missionary work the following year by forming a new and separate preaching circuit on the Grand River. William Case, a driving force behind such work, proudly reported on this development in the Methodist Magazine (MM Nov 5.11 1822:428-9). By establishing this circuit, Methodists officially entered into competition with the Church of England for Native souls. Neither Case nor Torry were impressed with the intermittent services the latter had provided. “The only religious services,” Case reported in another article published in the Methodist Magazine, “performed among these Indians, I understand, is at the Mohawk Village, 50 miles from the mouth of the river. Here they have a Meeting-House, here Divine Service is performed occasionally, by a Minister of the Church of England, and where the church service is read in Mohawk, by one of the natives every Sabbath day” (“Upper Canada Mission” MM 6.6 June 1823: 233). Torry’s assessment was even more blunt. “It was easy to see,” he observed, “what the Church of England had done, and was doing in the way of religious instruction. Instead of reforming and bettering their condition, they were likely to provide their ruin, both body and soul” (Autobiography 67). The Natives, for their part, had already been warned away from the Methodists because they “prohibited their drinking rum and playing cards and horse racing” (CHC 2.403).

For all that, however, not even Torry could deny that the Church of England had done more than smooth the way for white abuses and warn the Natives away from Methodist preachers. The fact that liturgical texts translated into Mohawk were already in use was evidence of that. Torry admitted as much, noting in his Autobiography that Joseph Brant had been employed by the Church of England in the late-eighteenth century to “translate into Mohawk portions of the Holy Scriptures, some part of their prayer-book, and also the ten commandments” (59). Without translations of their own, Torry and other Methodists continued to rely on Brant’s work as they devoted more resources to their missionary efforts (Banks “Not Hearers Only” 284). At the General Conference of 1824, Upper Canada was set apart as its own annual conference and

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216 William Apess paints a similar portrait in the eastern reaches of the province, suggesting difficulties of this sort extended back at least as far as the beginning of the postwar period (On Our Own Ground xxxii, 32-3, 130-1).
immediately formed its own auxiliary missionary society to ensure that this work was not diminished. In yet another article published in the *Methodist Magazine* later that year, Case noted that by the autumn of 1824 a separate building had been erected “for the double purpose of schools and meetings” where “twenty-five Indian children are daily taught the rudiments of reading” (“Grand-River Mission, Upper-Canada” *MM* 7:10 October 1824: 398). With a growing emphasis on reading and writing, the need for translations into Mohawk became more pressing, particularly in the mind of William Case who insisted, contrary to others, that Natives “were capable of comprehending the complexities of Christianity even before they were transformed by secular European civilization” (Semple 153; see also Smith *Sacred Feathers* 61).

Soon new translations of the gospels into Mohawk were being prepared by Joseph Brant’s formerly Anglican son-in-law Henry Aaron Hill, a man whom Torry calls “an intelligent Mohawk chief” (*Autobiography* 158-9; Smith *Sacred Feathers* 46). Torry and Case considered these translations to be denominational in character inasmuch as they were devotional and intended for circulation only among Native converts and potential Native converts associated with the Grand River mission. For this reason economy of time and money superseded political considerations in their production and they were accordingly sent to New York for publication. Torry observes:

He [Henry Aaron Hill] entered upon his work with much spirit and ambition, for we had promised him a compensation if he succeeded in his work. He first translated the Gospel according to St. Matthew and St. Luke, and having corrected a former translation of St. Mark and St. John, he soon finished the collection of hymns, and they were immediately sent on to New York, where our Missionary Society printed them, and sent us back a neat hymn-book, containing the English and Indian on opposite pages. (*Autobiography* 182)²¹⁷

²¹⁷ Printing Mohawk and English on facing pages appears to have been undertaken first by the Church of England in London in the production of Joseph Brant’s translation of Mark in 1787 (Banks “Not Hearers Only” 282-3).
Hill was not the only Native working on such translations in Upper Canada. Several years earlier, at a camp meeting organized in Ancaster by Torry and Case in June 1823, a young Mississauga chief later named Peter Jones was converted to Methodism. Jones’s father was a Welsh loyalist and his mother the daughter of a Mississauga chief. Peter and his brother John were raised by their mother and in their mid-teens joined their father’s household where they were taught to read, write, and farm. Thus Peter had learned to be at home in both Native and white settings. Case was convinced that this upbringing would allow Jones to explain with unique insight “one society to the other” (Semple 155; Smith Sacred Feathers 13-6, 41-7). Two years later, Jones was appointed an exhorter and within months set about the work of translating texts into Ojibway (Smith Sacred Feathers 64, Wyatt 159). In an article published in the newly established Christian Advocate, William Case explained to readers how such translations were proving useful even before they were printed. “While we are employed out,” he wrote, “Peter Jones, (besides superintending the cookery) is engaged in the wigwam, in translating portions of the Scriptures into the Chipawa [sic]. During the evenings, these portions are taught to the Indians, Peter pronouncing the sentence thus,—“ing-ke-chu-Hoo-se-non Esh-pe-ming a-ya-gun, (Our Great Father who in Heaven resides)” (“Methodist Indian Missions” CA 25 November 1826:46).

All this progress among the Natives did not go unnoticed by colonial partisans of the Church of England. Thomas Webster, in his history of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada, observed that it was not long before “very high-handed measures had been attempted by those high in authority, in order to coerce the Indians into coming to their terms, with regard to their adherence to the Church of England” (202). John Strachan in particular took a serious and sustained interest in Peter Jones after his conversion to Methodism in the hope of convincing the young Mississauga to shift his denominational loyalties toward Anglicanism. In mid-June 1825, less than two weeks

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218 Jones was as significant—and as prolific—a Native convert in Upper Canada as William Apess in the United States. Although Jones was only four years younger than Apess, there is no evidence the two met while Apess was in Upper Canada. Although Apess claims to have visited the Niagara region briefly, as Barry O’Connell notes in his introduction to On Our Own Ground, he spent little time west of the Bay of Quinte and had returned to New England long before Jones made his first visit to that region in 1827 (xxxiii n26, 131).

219 The words Ojibwa and Chippewa were used interchangeably to designate the same Native groups and languages.
after denouncing Methodists in his sermon to mark Bishop Mountain’s funeral, Strachan arrived at the Credit with his wife and Colonel Givins, the government’s Indian Agent, to make the annual distribution of “gifts” to the Natives. Jones, who had met with Colonel Givins in York several days earlier, was also in attendance. Strachan singled Jones out for special attention by presenting him with three books and asking him to “assemble the Christian Indians together by themselves, that he might hear some of the children sing and read” (Life and Journals 38). Strachan then urged Jones to consider settling his entire community on the Credit where, he suggested, the government would provide assistance for the erection of a permanent village. Strachan met privately with Jones the following day to provide further “advice as to the way he had better proceed to obtain assistance from Government in our proposed undertaking to settle at the Credit” (ibid. 39). Methodist suspicions were already aroused despite the fact that Strachan did not finally reveal his purely sectarian motives until several years later when, in January 1828, he informed Jones, after the latter’s continued refusal to convert to the Church of England, that “the Governor did not feel disposed to assist the Indians so long as they remained under the instruction of their present teachers, who were not responsible to Government for any of their proceedings and instructions” (Jones Life and Journals 106).

Although little was discussed, or at least recorded, in this connection at the annual conference held in mid-September, evidence suggests that William Case regarded the danger Strachan—and his promise of government money—posed to Methodist interests with growing seriousness. This is reflected in a sharp increase in the concern he took over ensuring that accurate records of Native missionary work be maintained and preserved. In a letter dated 5 October 1825, Case carefully instructed Jones to keep detailed accounts of Native converts including their “Indian name, then the name by which they were baptized, and of what tribe.” He concluded by urging Jones to “see that the Book is deposited in safe keeping, free from wet and other injury” (Life and Journals 45-6). Later that month, Case departed for Kingston where he probably hired Hugh Thomson, the publisher of Kingston’s Upper Canada Herald, to print 1,000 copies of the first annual report of the Missionary Society (Fleming UC Imprints no.
As evidence of Strachan’s interest in Methodist missionary activities continued to mount—Jones informed Case in a subsequent letter that Peregrine Maitland had promised to “build twenty dwelling houses, and a school house for us, between this and next spring” on the Credit (Life and Journals 46)—Case appears to have discerned advantages important enough to incur the cost of setting before the Upper Canadian public a printed record of Methodist progress among the Natives. Doubtless Case hoped that such a public record might help to minimize any occasions by which Strachan, Maitland, and other members of the political oligarchy, could exercise an undue interference with regard to Methodist missions. Had Case wished merely to preserve the report and to inform his fellow Methodists in Upper Canada about progress among the Natives, he could have done so much more easily—and saved himself and the annual conference £10 12s 6d in the process (Fleming UC Imprints no. 254)—by submitting the report for publication in the Methodist Magazine. Indeed, such reports continued to appear in the pages of that periodical throughout these months—the last in 1825 being Alvin Torry’s four-page report on the continuing work in the Grand River mission (“Grand River Mission, Upper Canada” MM 8:12 December 1825:477-480)—suggesting that Case had another audience in mind. This audience, a second and distinct market for Methodist texts in Upper Canada, was public in character and for that reason beyond the reach of the Concern’s denominational distribution infrastructure. Just as importantly, members of such a reading audience might easily discern in the Concern’s imprint evidence that Upper Canadians remained under the authority of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States. It is not

220 Although the annual report of the missionary society is the first Methodist Episcopal publication to be produced on a local press, it is not the first Wesleyan text. That distinction belongs to an address published by British Wesleyan Henry Pope in York in July 1820 (Fleming UC Imprints no. 154). Pope had been chiefly responsible for Wesleyan advances into the province after the War of 1812 and had won Strachan’s aid as a result. Thus the political circumstances attendant on its publication are entirely unrelated to the argument of this chapter.

221 Case and his coreligionists were well aware of the importance of not drawing unnecessary attention to this connection. Only a year earlier, when the Canadians solicited the General Conference for independence before being set apart as a conference of their own, they outlined several reasons for separation. The first and most important of the reasons given was that, “The state of society requires it. The first settlers having claimed the protection of his Britannic Majesty in the revolutionary war, had retired from their former professions, to endure great hardships in a remote wilderness. Time, however, and a friendly intercourse, had worn down their asperity and prejudice when the late unhappy war revived their former feelings: giving what they considered new, and grievous occasions for dissatisfaction with their invading neighbours. The prejudices thus excited would probably be removed, if their Ministry were to become permanent residents in this Country, as would be the fact, in case of a separate body in Canada” (UCA, Canada Conference Minutes 1824-1828).
unreasonable to conclude, in view of these circumstances, that Methodists were probably convinced of the necessity to incur the cost of publishing on local presses primarily to counter Church of England hegemony by drawing public attention to their work without at the same time raising suspicions about their continued cultural and ecclesiastical connections to the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States.

Initially, these two markets—the Concern’s denominational market and the broader public market for Methodist texts—remained distinct. Materials of a devotional nature for use within denominational settings continued to be—such as Henry Aaron Hill’s translations of the gospel into Mohawk—produced in the United States on the presses of the Methodist Book Concern. And while Methodists continued to publish their annual reports on local presses for distribution in a public market in the summers of 1826 and 1827 (Fleming *UC Imprints* nos. 287, 384), William Case and others continued to write to the *Methodist Magazine*, and later the *Christian Advocate*, with regular, more detailed, and more intimate narratives describing Native conversions on the Grand River and other Upper Canadian missions as they were established in subsequent years. Apart from Mackenzie’s printing of Ryerson’s original “Review” in pamphlet form in April 1826 (Fleming *UC Imprints* no. 297), the annual reports of the missionary society remained the only Methodist texts produced on local presses—excluding Ryerson’s controversial letters in the colony’s newspapers—before the end of 1828. For reasons of economy, convenience, efficiency, and perhaps denominational loyalty, Case and other Upper Canadian Methodists persisted in their preference, at least where missions remained sufficiently marked by denominational insularity to permit an American imprint, to rely on the Methodist Book Concern to publish Native translations of religious texts. In the spring of 1827, shortly after establishing a new mission and “Indian school” on Grape Island, Case set out for New York to arrange for the publication of several translated texts by the Concern (Hodgins *Story* 58; see also Playter 292-293; Jones *Life and Journals* 84; Smith *Sacred Feathers* 99; Wyatt 159). While there, Case wrote to Ryerson—then serving as the first permanent Methodist missionary to the Natives on the Credit while continuing to debate his opponents in the colonial press—to indicate that when he returned from the United States he would bring a newly printed “Indian book, containing the Decalogue, the creed, hymns, and our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount” (Hodgins *Story* 77). Although Hodgins doesn’t identify this “Indian book,” it is probably the Concern’s first edition of Peter Jones’ s
sixteen-page translation *Tracts in the Chippeway and English comprising seven hymns, the Decalogue, the Lord’s prayer, the Apostles’ creed, and the fifth chapter of St. Matthew.* A short notice also appeared in the *Christian Advocate* describing “the visit of the Rev. William Case to this city, for the purpose of [...] the printing of the gospel of St. Luke, and a collection of hymns, in the Indian tongue, for the use of the native Christians in Upper Canada” (CA 14 April 1827: 127).

Stress on the Concern’s continued access to this portion of the Upper Canadian market began to increase when Strachan returned to the colony in August of 1827 with a Royal Charter for an Anglican university and the elevated ecclesiastical rank of archdeacon (Bethune 108-110, 113). Although Ryerson’s initial public contention with the proponents of Anglican establishment had wound down by this time, Mackenzie rekindled the dispute with the publication of Strachan’s inflammatory and anti-Methodist “Ecclesiastical Chart”—drawn up the previous April and delivered in May to convince the incoming colonial secretary Lord Goderich of the merit of the Church of England’s continued claim on state monies (Spragge 265, Henderson 95-99)—in the 20 September 1827 *Colonial Advocate* (Craig 173, Errington 247). Not surprisingly, especially in view of the fact that it was never intended to become a public document, it contained the same anti-American calumnies Strachan had earlier directed against the Methodists in the 1825 funeral sermon that had resulted in the publication of Ryerson’s original 1826 “Review” (Sissons 1.81-2). The unsought appearance of Strachan’s “Chart” in the *Colonial Advocate* incensed Case who immediately wrote to Ryerson to urge a public response (Hodgins Story 81). Anson Green pronounced the chart “an outrage upon truth and propriety” (Life 113). Public protests that followed its appearance in Upper Canada soon prompted Strachan to issue another pamphlet while still in London that

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222 Joyce Banks omits mention of this American edition of Jones’s translation. Describing only the Upper Canadian printing of 1829, she writes, “The first of Peter and John Jones’s translations of Scripture into Ojibwa appeared in 1829 [...]” (286). Kyle Wyatt’s more recent study of Jones’s public persona corrects this oversight (159). Later in the same article Banks does note two subsequent New York printings of James Evans’s and George Henry’s translations.

223 Case had earlier written to the editors of the *Christian Advocate* in December of 1826 to provide an overview of his work as superintendent of “Indian Missions in Bay of Quinte District, Upper Canada.” (13 January 1827). Either Bangs confused the printing of Jones’s translation of St. Matthew with another translation of St. Luke, or Case had printed more than the single “Indian book” Hodgins describes. Although there is no record of the Methodist Book Concern printing a native translation of Luke’s gospel at this time, Azor Hoyt did print a Mohawk translation of that gospel in New York for the American Bible Society in 1827.
contained a more nuanced though still unambiguous condemnation of his religious adversaries (Sissons 1.82, 1.219). The pamphlet did little to assuage public outrage. Finally, after returning to Upper Canada, Strachan delivered a speech to the Legislative Council on 6 March 1828 that concluded in an exoneration of all charges of religious intolerance on the part of his peers (Bethune 126). Intended to recuperate Strachan’s reputation rather than instigate further debate, the archdeacon explained that he was “anxious to retain the good opinion of those who know me best, and with whom I have acted for so many years,” and that he felt “proudly conscious that I deserve the friendship and the esteem of all honorable men, and the approbation of the whole Province” (Sissons 1.83). Emboldened by the effect of the speech in a confined setting, Strachan ordered Robert Stanton to print it the following month (Fleming UC Imprints no. 402). The document did not have its desired effect. Ryerson received a letter from his brother William the following month encouraging him to respond to Strachan publicly, pointing out the fact that his published apologia did not address any of the criticisms made against his arguments, but simply restated his original positions. “Should you pursue this course,” he concluded his letter, “you had better endeavor to write in a candid, mild, and sweet stile [sic]. It will have a much more powerfull [sic] effect on the mind of the public” (Sissons 1.76). Ryerson followed both Case’s earlier urging and his brother’s more recent advice. In June a series of eight letters refuting Strachan’s contentions, signed by Ryerson, appeared in Hugh Thomson’s Upper Canada Herald and William Lyon Mackenzie’s Colonial Advocate (French 114, Wilton 45, Fahey 75-6). Strachan did not respond—underscoring the fact that he continued to reject the implication that a man of his standing could in any way be subject to the verdict of a reading public. In August 1828, a year after Strachan’s return to the colony, Ryerson had Thomson print the letters as a separate pamphlet to be sold for 1s 6d “at different Book Stores in Upper and Lower Canada” (Fleming UC Imprints 396).

While Ryerson was engaged with this final attempt to draw Strachan into public debate in the colonial press, Peter Jones, just six months after being warned by Strachan to reject Methodism or suffer the political consequences, was in the midst of preparing another translation for publication (Life and Journals 106). “In the afternoon

commenced,” he wrote on 2 June 1828, “by request of Elder Case, to form a spelling book in the Chippeway Language. Nothing of the kind has been attempted before, as I am aware of” (Life and Journals 148). Just over two weeks later, Jones found himself at the offices of William Lyon Mackenzie busily engaged “correcting the proof sheets of the spelling book” (Life and Journals 155, Fleming UC Imprints no. 401). Why didn’t Case arrange for the Methodist Book Concern to publish Jones’s translation, as he had with similar works just over a year earlier and would again the following year? Perhaps the political pressures stirred up by Ryerson’s renewed quarrel with Strachan were enough to temper William Case’s sense of loyalty to the Concern by nudging this sort of publication, by dint of public attention, out of the Concern’s denominational market and into a public market for such texts. More likely, at only twelve pages, the shortness of the work, together with the urgency that appears to have attended its production, Case’s choice of printer was made primarily on the basis of efficiency and convenience. In less time than it would have taken him to travel to New York, arrange for its production, and return to Upper Canada, the work went from inception to completion. Even so, Case appears not to have been anxious to spread news of its production to his brethren in the United States. In a letter published in the Christian Advocate dated 17 June 1828, just days before Jones delivered his completed manuscript to Mackenzie, Case enthused about progress among the “Chipeways” and noted that a teacher had been hired to work with “zealous members of the New Market Missionary Society” for the purpose of teaching “the Indians to read, in a sabbath [sic] school which they have instituted on their account” (CA 24 August 1828: 201). Case’s silence on the topic of Jones’s speller suggests a sense of guilt on his part, a lingering loyalty to the Concern that, though an achievement comparable to the appointment of a dedicated teacher in a mission school, was produced outside the denomination’s rhetorical framework and therefore deprived the annual conferences of dividends that would have otherwise resulted from its sale.

Case would have been less apologetic about his decision later that year to rush into print proceedings of the 1828 annual conference against the agitations of Henry Ryan. Ryan had been a thorn in the side of Upper Canadian Methodism since the Genesee conference, of which Upper Canada was a part until May 1824, failed to elect him a delegate to the General Conference at its annual meeting in 1823 (Playter 234). His dissatisfaction finally erupted into the public when, in 1826, Ryan published a
pamphlet denouncing his fellow Methodists for claiming to be loyal subjects of the
British crown while remaining ecclesiastically subject to the Methodist Episcopal
Church in the United States. Although it appeared anonymously, Ryerson noted that,
“no one had any doubt that to Mr. Ryan belonged both the authorship and the
circulation” (Methodism 259). The following year, Ryan published another pamphlet
which was “more insolent and libelous than its predecessor” (ibid. 259). Finally, at the
annual conference of 1827, Case was obliged to admit the obvious by accusing Ryan of
publishing both documents. Ryan confirmed his guilt by storming out of the conference
without answering the charge (Green Life 148). In 1828, the annual conference finally
dealt decisively with Ryan, striking a committee of five, including William Case and
Egerton Ryerson, to render a verdict (Semple 73ff.). Case was anxious to set its findings
before a public that had, through Ryan’s earlier publications, been made aware not only
of internal dissent, but of actual accusations arising from within Methodism about its
continued dependence on bishops in the United States for direction. The market for this
text, therefore, like the annual missionary society reports Canadians began publishing
in 1825, was comprised of a reading public beyond the Concern’s denominational
market. Methodists themselves would have needed no confirmation of the committee’s
deliberations since news would have travelled to them much more quickly through the
ministrations of the province’s travelling preachers. But the public also needed to be
alerted to the spurious nature of Ryan’s continued accusations before Strachan and
others outside the community could use them to their own advantage. Case urged the
quick publication of the committee’s findings in a letter to Ryerson, his brother John,
and William Slater, dated 17 November 1828. “As. Bro. Egerton is one of the Committee
for publishing the proceedings of Conference relative to Mr. Ryan,” he wrote, “I hope
he will assist Bro. Richardson to complete it without delay, & have it published &
circulated as soon as may be. Perhaps the printing of McKenzie [sic] under the
inspection of Bro. Metcalf” (Sissons 1.93). Ryerson had completed drafting the
committee’s formal report by the following month, and it was printed at York early the

225 Ryan’s pamphlets are no longer extant and are not referred to in Fleming’s UC Imprints.

226 A formal public repudiation of Ryan’s accusations could not have been made by the conference before
this time since, until the annual conference held in the first week of October 1828, Canadian Methodists
did, in fact, remain under the direct episcopal supervision of Methodist bishops residing in the United
States.
following year (Fleming UC Imprints no. 443). Though not identified, Mackenzie was probably the printer.

Although it is clear that by the time he instructed Ryerson to print the committee’s findings on Mackenzie’s press, Case had learned to appreciate the usefulness of local printers for reaching a public audience in Upper Canada, and even producing the occasional short publication of a denominational character for reasons of convenience and efficiency, his loyalty to the Concern persisted even after ecclesiastical independence was formalized in October 1828. He was beginning to realize, however, that it was more important than ever, in view of Methodism’s recently declared independence from the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States, together with the expulsion of Henry Ryan, that he and his brethren must not appear to be labouring under an excessive degree of cultural or ecclesiastical influence emanating from south of the border if the political progress they had already begun to make—Methodists were authorized to hold land for the purpose of building churches in 1828 but had not yet been given authority to perform marriage ceremonies—was to continue. The contours of the colony’s political environment had also begun to change. Strachan’s longtime supporter Peregrine Maitland was replaced by Sir John Colborne at the end of 1828 as the colony’s lieutenant governor, and the province’s first reform majority had been returned in the most recent Legislative Assembly elections, an outcome one Methodist preacher described as “very much to our liking” (Green Life 123). Just as importantly, the British House of Commons had by the end of the year issued a report “against his [Strachan’s] exclusive theories” that also noted “the inaccuracies of his statements” (Sissons 1.85, Green Life 129). For all these reasons, the colony’s new lieutenant governor, though a partisan of the Church of England, did not so easily fall under Strachan’s sway. Nor was he able to proceed openly against the Methodists as his predecessor had. In this delicately calibrated political context, Colborne was appointed head of the colony’s Indian Department in March 1829 and began to take a closer interest in the translation and production of texts for use in mission schools. Colborne’s attention, and the attention of ministers from other religious bodies to these texts, began slowly to divest them of their denominational character as they attracted first public interest and later state funding.
A month before Colborne’s appointment as head of the Indian Department, William Case and Peter Jones crossed the St. Lawrence to tour Methodist missions in New England, raise money for their own missions in Upper Canada, and oversee the production of more translations. By the middle of March, Jones and Case reached New York—an arrival noted in the Christian Advocate—but their plans were interrupted when a package of letters arrived from Canada informing that “His Excellency Sir John Colborne had been appointed by the British Government to be the head of the Indian department in Upper Canada” and that, as a result, Colborne wished Jones to “return to Canada” so that he could have his translation “Printed at his own expense in the town of York” (Life and Journals 206, CA 27 March 1829: 2). Case appears not to have responded immediately. Two days later he wrote to Ryerson to inform him that “The Gospel of Mark is now in the press, as also a Hymn Book & spelling book in Mohawk, & a Hymn Book in the Chipeway” (Sissons 1.105). By the following day, perhaps with some reluctance, Case had made up his mind. In a letter to George Ryerson he wrote:

We shall not get Peter’s translation of the Scriptures printed till we return to Canada, but the Hymn Books are now on press, and must be done here, as they are wanted immediately, and beside, the numerous accents cannot be furnished at any printing establishment in Canada. We hope the Bible Society of York will soon be able to provide for the further printing of the Mohawk translation now preparing of the Gospels & Epistles.

We are very grateful for the kind offers of his Excellency, Sir John Colborne, and that he feels desirous to promote the welfare of the Indians on the most liberal principles in matters of religion. (Sissons 1.106)

With Colborne’s eye on them, the circumstances of the cultural production of Peter’s translations were beginning to weigh as heavily in the balance as considerations touching on their material production. There is no indication, for example, that Case even briefly considered informing Colborne that the work was already underway and that funds in support of these texts could be directed to New York care of the Methodist
Book Concern. Case understood the limits of Colborne’s “liberal principles.”227 It was only too clear, moreover, after a successful fundraising tour through New England, that money was far less critical a commodity in the production of these texts than time. Colborne’s offer only meant that the production of whatever translations Methodists provided him with would be slowed by months at best.

Further evidence of Case’s ambivalence about Colborne’s offer can be found in the fact that he did not order Jones to return to Upper Canada immediately. Instead, they remained in New York to supervise the production of those items already in press and to attend the proceedings of the Sunday School Anniversary in late April (Life and Journals 207). Later, Case wrote to Ryerson to inform him that, “We hope to bring back with us the Gospel of Mark, with other portions contained in the Book of Common Prayer. The Spelling-book and a Hymn book in Mohawk, and a Hymn-book in Chippewa. They are all in the press, and will be ready by 5th May, when we leave to return (Hodgins 79).”228 On 4 June 1829, after a second fundraising tour, Case and Jones returned to New York and finally “began to make preparations for our return to Canada” after attending a meeting of the “Parent Missionary Society” and having Nathan Bangs—since it could not be done in Upper Canada—officiate at the marriage ceremony of William Case to Hetty Hubbard, a teacher employed in one of the Upper Canadian missions (Life and Journals 217). When Case finally returned to Upper Canada, he wrote to thank his brethren in New York for their work producing the translations he was now putting to work. “The Mohawks are very much pleased,” he began, “and will be very much profited by the new edition of the Mohawk Scriptures […] as also with the new edition of the Mohawk hymn book and spelling book. The 2,000 Chipeway hymn books lately printed by your [New York District Methodist Bible] society are also highly valued by our Mississauga brethren, and it will give a new impulse to the children, and even to many of the older people, to learn to read” (CA 3 July 1829: 173).

227 Colborne’s duplicity is evident in the fact that in the same month he offered to underwrite the costs of producing Jones’s Methodist translation in Upper Canada, he also refused his assent to a bill that had passed both the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly giving Methodists the legal power to perform marriages. For that reason Methodists had to wait another two years while the bill languished awaiting the approval of the King (Sissons 1.116).

228 This letter is not included in Sissons. See also CHC 3.221-224.
The 2,000 copies of Peter Jones’s translation of Matthew’s gospel into “the Chippewa tongue” printed by Robert Stanton later that year were never mentioned by Case, or any other Upper Canadian Methodist, in letters addressed for publication in the *Christian Advocate*. On 8 June 1829, two months after Colborne refused the bill that would have authorized the province’s Methodists to perform marriage ceremonies, Jones met the lieutenant governor in his residence at York to discuss the printing of his translations at the “Government press” (*Life and Journals* 221). Two weeks later, Jones also met with a Baptist and a Presbyterian who, perhaps because of growing public interest in Native missions, had learned of his translations and offered to contribute to pay costs associated with their printing as well. Although Jones declined the offers, it is clear that his translations were fast losing their denominational character as both the colony’s administrators and members of rival denominations took an increasingly lively interest in their availability (*Life and Journals* 225-6). Finally, on 26 June 1829, Jones met one last time with Colborne who officially placed an order with Robert Stanton, King’s printer and publisher of the official *Upper Canada Gazette*, for 2,000 copies of Jones’s first seven chapters of Matthew with English and Chippewa (or Ojibway) on facing pages (*Fleming UC Imprints* no. 435). Strachan also met with Jones later that same day to make yet another attempt to draw him away from the Methodists by arguing that camp meetings were unscriptural (*Life and Journals* 227). In the following years, interest in the production of Jones’s, and later James Evans’s translations, would only increase. The attention they commanded by Strachan, Colborne, and even ministers of other religious denominations, all helped to draw them out of the Concern’s denominational market and into a wider, more public market for Methodist texts in Upper Canada. Case’s reluctant willingness to accept this fact, and the inconveniences that sometimes resulted in the material production of these texts, is evident in his disinclination to sever relations with the Methodist Book Concern, particularly after Methodists achieved ecclesiastical independence. Ryerson, on the other hand, though aware of Case’s continued patronage of the Methodist Book Concern through the letters he regularly received as well as the reports that appeared in the *Christian Advocate*, had been sensitized by public contention to the cultural attributes and audience expectations that differentiated the Concern’s existing denominational market from a wider and more public market for Methodist texts in Upper Canada.

* * *
When Ryerson decided to publish in a single volume the documents that comprised his public debate with proponents of establishmentarianism, he was under considerably more pressure to be attentive to the implication of its material and cultural production than any Methodist before him. Case and Jones had made use of the local press for a very specific set of reasons. The missionary society reports had been published, first by Hugh Thomson in 1825, and subsequently through William Lyon Mackenzie, to meet both logistical and cultural demands. Such reports were published quickly and made available to a market of public readers in Upper Canada in order to counter Strachan’s political efforts to reassert his denominational hold over the province’s Native communities. Given Strachan’s tendency to denounce Methodists for their connections to the United States, it was equally important that such reports, though not overtly polemical in nature, not carry the imprint of a denominational publisher operating within the United States. Similar considerations governed the publication of the conference committee’s findings on Henry Ryan in early 1829. That document, like the missionary society reports, could not carry the imprint of an American publisher—much less a publisher that made rhetorical claims that connected patronage with denominational identity in a foreign church—without implicitly proving the accusations it was meant to refute. Months before Colborne’s appointment as head of the Indian Department began to divest translations of religious texts into Natives languages of their denominational character—Jones’s 1828 spelling book being an anomaly precipitated by the urgency attending its production—Ryerson had already selected a printer for his first book. Like the committee’s report against Ryan, a document Case ordered Ryerson to publish with Mackenzie around this time, Ryerson understood that his publication would be publicly scrutinized as both a material and cultural artifact. Ryerson’s book, moreover, was even more vulnerable to attack on such grounds inasmuch as it was a direct attack on the colony’s forces of establishmentarianism. His contention for Methodism in the public sphere in the preceding years had taught him that such detractors would fasten upon any weakness, explicit or implicit, in his text or in its material and cultural production, if it would help to undermine the efficacy of his arguments. Thus Ryerson had to be careful not only to choose a printer within the colony, but also one whose political associations would not leave him open to criticism by association. By the time he set about making arrangements with Mackenzie to print the committee’s report on Ryan at Case’s behest,
he had already entered into a contract with Kingston’s Hugh Thomson to produce his own book.

Thomson, notwithstanding the fact that Case had moved business away from him after 1825 and clearly preferred Mackenzie on grounds of efficiency, was ideally situated relative to the colony’s evolving political character to insulate Ryerson’s book against any incidental calumnies that might be hurled against it on cultural grounds touching on aspects of its production. Thomson began publishing the moderately reformist *Upper Canada Herald* in Kingston in 1819. In addition to being more moderate in his criticisms of the colonial government than Mackenzie, Thomson was also a member of the Church of England, as well as the local branch of the Freemasons that met in the Anglican parish church of St John’s in Kingston. He had also been elected as a moderate reformer to the Assembly in 1824 and was credited with helping to bring about, through the *Herald*, the reform majority in the elections of 1828 (McNairn 81). While his membership in the Church of England helped to place Thomson above any facile accusations his opponents might make about clandestine republicanism, his prominent but measured participation in the reform movement also prevented anyone from accusing Ryerson of outright hypocrisy in his choice of printer. Though a perfect political choice, Thomson soon proved to be a very inconvenient one from a practical perspective. While Ryerson read about the ease, speed, economy, and accuracy with which the Methodist Book Concern fulfilled orders for the province’s mission schools in Case’s letters to him, Ryerson’s relationship with Thomson was characterized by frustrating delays, unforeseen costs, and inferior composition. On 27 October 1828, Thomson wrote to Ryerson to apologize “for the delay which has taken place in the publication of the Controversy.” He offered the excuse that one of his employees had “absconded” and another was “seized with an illness” (Sissons 1.91-92). In a shop as tiny as Thomson’s, difficulties with just two employees was apparently enough to bring projects to a halt.229 More than a month elapsed before Thomson wrote again to say that he was “really ashamed” that he could not provide Ryerson with “more satisfactory information regarding the Book” (Sissons 1.95). It wasn’t until late March 1829, that Thomson finally wrote to Ryerson to inform him that he had forwarded the first 700

229 For more on the size of Thomson’s operation see Hulse 86-8.
copies of *Claims of the Churchmen and Dissenters of Upper Canada Brought to the Test* (Fleming *UC Imprints* no. 445). Thomson also included a bill for a total of 1,200 copies that included forty-five reams of paper as well as composition, press work, and binding. The total charge amounted to just over £115 (Sissons 1.109).

Ryerson found Thomson’s inefficiency anything but satisfactory. He seems to have seriously considered moving his business elsewhere despite the political advantages his press offered. In what appears to be a response to a direct question, William Case, in a letter to Ryerson dated 7 April 1829, wrote, “Such to the printers of U. Canada. I don’t know of one who can be depended on for doing anything promptly, except it may be Mackenzie.” Case, it will be remembered, moved business away from Thomson after he printed the missionary society’s 1825 annual report. Ryerson’s acute sensitivity to the province’s political currents is reflected in his refusal to follow Case’s advice. Ryerson, it will be recalled, probably did not choose Mackenzie for the publication of his original “Review” in 1826. Between that time and 1829 Mackenzie had become even more strident in his criticism of the colonial administration. Stridency of this order led John Colborne to conclude that the *Colonial Advocate* was “read primarily by Americans and that it had fomented discontent in that questionable segment of the population” (Mills 78). Strachan, meanwhile, continued to be a force in his own right. In addition to his efforts to reassert control over the province’s Native communities by promising increased government aid, he never ceased to wave the specter of American republicanism both in Britain and Upper Canada. His “Ecclesiastical Chart” has already been discussed. In addition to it, before returning to Upper Canada in August 1827, Strachan published an *Appeal to the Friends of Religion and Literature, in behalf of the University of Upper Canada*, where he argued that, without a university, Upper Canadian youth would have no sure protection against the influence of “dissenting” preachers who came from the “republican states of America” (Fahey 72). As a result Strachan received a royal charter that not only placed King’s College

230 Thomson also wrote to Ryerson on 23 April 1829 to note that the Errata slip would be ready the following day. This letter is not included in Sissons (UCA, Egerton Ryerson correspondence, Hugh Thomson to Egerton Ryerson 23 April 1829).

231 Ryerson’s original letter to Case does not survive. Hodgins omits this portion of Case’s letter and Sissons excludes it entirely (see UCA, Egerton Ryerson correspondence, William Case to Egerton Ryerson 7 April 1829).
under Anglican control, but that exceeded his expectations by also mandating an Anglican teaching staff (Wilton 45, Fahey 68-76, 97). In February of the same year, Upper Canada’s anti-American “Alien Bill” that required all “late Loyalists” to retake the oath of allegiance also passed into law (Wilton 40). In an effort to avoid any unnecessary associations with the United States in a political context so hostile to American influences, Ryerson probably elected to steer clear not only of the Concern, but even of Mackenzie where he could. But the quality of Thomson’s work, Ryerson later realized, fell far below the young preacher’s standards. In early April 1830, Ryerson wrote to Thomson to dispute the bill and complain that readers had found more than two hundred typographical errors in the book. Thomson deflected responsibility by claiming that the “Book was expected to contain only 150 pages, instead of which there are 232.” He also refused to be held solely accountable for the typographical errors since “many of them were doubtless in the copy” that Ryerson provided. Ryerson also had, Thomson argued, an opportunity to prepare an errata slip on which he had pointed out only “one fourth of that number” (Sissons 1.124).

Ryerson’s remarkable willingness to put up with Thomson’s high prices, slow work, inaccurate composition, and refusal to accept responsibility for mistakes made in his shop, demonstrates the enormous value that he placed on critical aspects of his book’s cultural—to the obvious detriment of its material—production. Although he would have been acutely aware, as he read the Christian Advocate and William Case’s correspondence from New York, that the Methodist Book Concern would have quickly produced for him a book that was materially superior and less costly than anything Thomson could manage, Ryerson appears to have understood the importance that no cultural dissonance exist between the contents of his book and its method of production. As status objects that drew their symbolic value from a rhetoric of denominational solidarity, it would have been an unthinkable contradiction for Ryerson to use the Concern to produce a material commodity calculated to argue that Methodist preachers were not guilty of “gathering their knowledge” from the “republican states of America.” This was particularly important at a time when the Canadian conference had, only a year earlier, established itself as a separate ecclesiastical entity in the teeth of anti-American criticisms emanating not only from Strachan and his conservative allies, but also from the disgruntled but still highly influential former Methodist presiding elder Henry Ryan. In this, at least, Thomson’s imprint succeeded where the Methodist
Book Concern’s (and perhaps even Mackenzie’s) would surely have failed: it provided no opening (however small) for either Strachan’s supporters or Henry Ryan’s followers to accuse Ryerson and his Upper Canadian coreligionists of maintaining a subaltern cultural connection to the United States or the American Methodist Episcopal Church.

The shipping records published in the Christian Advocate demonstrate that the Concern’s market in Upper Canada continued to expand in the quietude of the denominationally sequestered space that its distribution infrastructure enabled throughout the period considered by this chapter. These lists, which record the names of presiding elders with greater frequency than individual preachers, reflect a distribution system organized through Methodism’s denominational hierarchy. “[T]he people very much depend on us for their books, “Anson Green explained in his journal at the close of 1827, “The agents in New York send them on sale to the Presiding Elder, and we get them from him and supply our people as best we can” (Life and Times 112).

Meanwhile, in the three or four years before Methodists in Upper Canada acquired their own press in the fall of 1829, William Case and Egerton Ryerson emerged as the most prominent figures in growing Methodist efforts that centered on the production of texts by and for Upper Canadians. William Case’s continued preference for relying on the Concern to publish materials for its denominational market in Upper Canada throughout these years is clear. Although he understood the importance of a developing secondary market for Methodist texts composed of members of Upper Canada’s wider reading public—his encouragement of Ryerson’s efforts to counter Strachan in the periodical press is perhaps the best, though not the only, evidence of this—he continued to publish lengthy and intimate accounts of his own work and the work of other Upper Canadian Methodists in the Concern’s periodicals with remarkable regularity. Case was also reluctant to divert business away from the Concern for the production of translations composed by Peter Jones and others for use

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232 William Case, presiding elder of the Bay of Quinte district between 1824 and 1828, and two of his fellow presiding elders, John Ryerson and Thomas Madden, all received shipments of books during this time. Separate orders of books were sent to Case on 5 October 1827, 2 November 1827, 16 November 1827, and 23 November 1827. John Ryerson and Anson Green were each sent separate shipments of books by the Concern on 2 November 1827 “care of S. McAfee, Canada, opposite Black Rock.” Ryerson was sent a second shipment of books in two week’s time on 16 November 1827, this time care of S. McAfee “by tow boat.” See the final pages of the second chapter for a more comprehensive listing of correspondents and the names of customers who were not presiding elders.
in the province’s growing number of mission schools. Case’s preferences and loyalties in this regard say much about his own identity as a religious leader within the denomination. An American by birth who had spent the duration of the War of 1812 south of the border, Case’s inclination to see religious and political activity as part of two separate spheres was a natural one. As a man who had imbibed the Concern’s rhetoric connecting patronage with denominational interests for most of his life, moreover, Case was reluctant to deprive the Concern of revenues that would be returned to annual conference in the form of dividends to support widows, orphans, and superannuated preachers. For these reasons, he probably would have preferred to see Methodism and Methodist print culture continue to expand in Upper Canada in the same insular way it had since the arrival of William Losee in 1790. But as settlements became less isolated, and Methodist activities attracted growing attention from the colony’s political oligarchy, Case was practical enough to know that was impossible and that both Methodism and its print culture would have to adapt to meet the cultural demands imposed on it by British North America’s power field. Though his own inclinations probably ran counter to such strategies, it is a measure of his willingness to adapt to these circumstances that he slowly accepted that such shifts were necessary to ensure the continued welfare of Upper Canadian Methodism.

Ryerson’s inclinations ran another way. There can be little doubt that his protracted contention for Methodism in Upper Canada’s public sphere changed the way he perceived himself and the way he may have perceived Methodist religious identity in the province. If nothing else, he became acutely aware of the willingness of his detractors to fasten upon any available evidence that might help them to shore up arguments about the inherent disloyalty of a religious body planted by American itinerants after the Revolutionary War. Ryerson’s consistent reliance on Upper Canadian printers to publish his writings for the consumption of a wider reading public, and his astute choice of Hugh Thomson as the publisher of his first book, are evidence of his attentiveness to the implications connected with the cultural production of Methodist texts. It could be argued, of course, that the nature of his publications required him to use local printers and that his use of them was significant of no more attentive a cultural awareness than Case had shown when he orchestrated the publication of the missionary society reports in Upper Canada and later instructed Ryerson to publish the committee’s findings against Ryan with Mackenzie. The
difference between the two men, and their attitude to the Concern and its printed commodities, is more easily discerned in what Ryerson did not publish rather than by what he did. Torry, Case, Green, and other Upper Canadian Methodists with far less literary flair than Ryerson, did not fail regularly to submit copy to the Concern for publication in its periodicals and subsequent distribution among the readers that constituted its denominationally sequestered market on both sides of the border. In the entire time that Ryerson employed his pen in the defence of Methodism, however, on no occasion did he submit any of his work to the Concern for publication in these periodicals. His focus, as the son of a United Empire Loyalist and a former student of the province’s best grammar schools, was always implicitly directed toward members of the wider reading public. For Ryerson, Methodism—and that included its print culture—would never achieve its goals until it had gained religious equality and moved into the province’s mainstream.

In the years following ecclesiastical independence, Ryerson’s status continued to grow while the influence of older preachers, including William Case, waned. Ryerson’s authority over developments in the province’s Methodist print culture also entered a period of unrivaled ascendancy. As both the denomination’s chief public apologist, and editor of the extremely successful Christian Guardian, no other Methodist could place his opinions before the eyes of his coreligionists so easily and so regularly, nor did any other Methodist have a vehicle at his ready disposal through which to enter so fully into the public life of the province by addressing a reading audience in nondenominational terms. Working from such a visible platform, Ryerson developed an acute sensitivity to the need to insulate his denomination’s textual practices from criticism on all sides. He had already demonstrated the inconvenient lengths to which he personally was willing to go to ensure that end in his refusal to move his business

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233 Goldwin French notes that the province’s leading Methodists after 1828 were the Ryerson brothers, especially Egerton, as well as William Case, Anson Green, and James Richardson. French adds, however, that Case’s influence by 1829 had passed its apogee (103-5).

234 By 1831, the CG was paying enough postage to reach 1,000 subscribers through the mail. This figure represents only those subscribers—probably a majority of whom where non-Methodists—who did not receive the paper directly from a travelling preacher. Thus there is no inconsistency in the CG claiming to have sold almost twice that number of subscriptions (1,900—up 300 from the previous year) in 1831. By comparison, Hugh Thomson’s Upper Canada Herald paid enough postage to reach only 100 subscribers (McNairn 127-9).
from Hugh Thomson to either Mackenzie or the Concern. All of this placed inadvertent stress on the Concern’s access to its market north of the border—stress that only increased when Ryerson opened a Methodist bookroom in the provincial capital at the offices of the *Christian Guardian* in late 1829. That bookroom, like the *Christian Guardian* and Ryerson’s *Claims of the Churchmen and Dissenters of Upper Canada*, though denominational in character, was open to the patronage, and therefore subject to the potential criticism, of all Upper Canadians. Thus, not only items produced specifically for Upper Canada’s reading public such as Ryerson’s *Claims* and the annual reports of the missionary society, but *every book* imported into the province for Methodist consumption, would be viewed as a potentially public commodity. Such a movement away from the Concern’s strategically advantageous and denominationally sequestered method for the distribution of its products, to a market open to all Upper Canadian readers, would eventually lead Upper Canadian Methodists to make a formal—if somewhat disingenuous—financial claim against the Methodist Book Concern in an effort to sever themselves from its North American market and thereby insulate their denomination from the anticipated criticisms of conservative antagonists. These events, and their impact on Methodist religious identity in Upper Canada, are explored in the next chapter.
Chapter 4
The politics of print and the failed claim on the Methodist Book Concern

When delegates to the Canada conference elected Egerton Ryerson founding editor of the Christian Guardian in 1829, his earlier contention for Methodism in the colony’s public sphere must not have been far from their minds. Anson Green, who served on the committee that recommended the establishment of the paper, later reflected, “We had long felt the need of a Press at our command, not only to explain our doctrines and polity, but more especially to fight the battles in which we were engaged for equal rights and for religious equality” (Green Life 134). As a platform soon identified with reform interests, the Guardian quickly became one of the colony’s most popular newspapers. But publishing a newspaper, however popular, was often a better way to lose money than make it. For this reason, Upper Canadian publishers often resorted to bookselling to fill the gap. The editor of the Guardian was no different. One of the earliest indications of Ryerson’s activities as a bookseller can be found in a curiously-worded advertisement that appeared in the Guardian toward the end of the summer in 1830:

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235 Green admits that he initially preferred Ryerson’s brother George for the role of editor (Life and Times 134). Egerton prevailed over George by a vote of 16 to 15 (UCA, Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada Minutes 1829-1832; Friskney “Methodist Book and Publishing House” 36).

236 The Guardian began with a circulation of about 450 but within three years that number had risen to more than 3,000 (Hodgins Story 93). By 1831, from a quarter to a third of the subscribers were not Methodists (Friskney “Methodist Book and Publishing House” 36). That year the Guardian paid £227 10s on postage compared to the £56 10s laid out by William Lyon Mackenzie for mailing the Colonial Advocate (Pierce Chronicle of a Century 13). In addition, it is often forgotten that the Guardian, unlike the province’s other newspapers, was also distributed without the cost of postage by Methodist preachers making their rounds across the colony’s preaching circuits. See also Semple 76.

237 Ryerson also advertised the availability of his press for job printing and he appears to have undertaken work for a fairly wide range of non-Methodist customers including, in the early years, the York Auxiliary Bible Society and, later on, David Willson of the Children of Peace (Fleming UC Imprints nos. 514, 588, 906). Income of this sort was desperately needed since, by the spring of 1832, the Guardian was owed more than $5,000 in unpaid subscriptions (CG 16 May 1832: 106). The Journal the Book Committee, though its records do not extend earlier than 1836, is replete with complaints that subscribers to the Guardian were not in the habit of paying their bills in the timely fashion (UCA, Journal of the Proceedings of the Book Committee, 38.061C 1-1).
FOR SALE AT THIS OFFICE – Excellent Bibles and Testaments, printed by the British and Foreign Bible Society, at very low prices; Methodist Hymn Books and Watt’s Psalms and Hymns, of different qualities and sizes; also Sunday School Hymn Books of different kinds, and a small assortment of Sabbath School Books. We hope to obtain a larger supply shortly. (CG 11 September 1830)238

Although a few attentive readers, who knew that the British and Foreign Bible Society dealt only in bibles “without note or comment” (Howsam Cheap Bibles 33), might have wondered from whom Ryerson had acquired his supply of hymn and Sunday school books, it seems probable that most casual readers would have inferred from the prominence given to the British and Foreign Bible Society in the text of the advertisement that the whole of Ryerson’s stock, from whatever supplier, was of British manufacture. Such an inference—one that Ryerson appears to have deliberately encouraged by his careful choice and arrangement of words—would have been very wide of the mark. Around the same time that the type for this issue of the Guardian was being set in York, its editor was quietly dispatching a large order to the Methodist Book Concern in New York. The Christian Advocate noted the arrival of that order several weeks later, and soon shipped two boxes of books to Ryerson at his newspaper office “care S. M’Afee, opposite Black Rock” (CA 8 October 1830: 23, CA 22 October 1830: 31). Since Ryerson was not yet ordering books on behalf of his fellow preachers, the commodities contained in these boxes must have been intended for sale at the Guardian office.

Perhaps more than any of his coreligionists, Ryerson’s joint experiences as Methodism’s first advocate in the colony’s public sphere, and its first permanent missionary among Natives on the Credit, would have taught him to recognize liabilities associated with openly selling printed commodities whose symbolic value was predicated on a rhetorical linkage between patronage and denominational membership

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238 Canadian Methodists did not formally establish a Book Room at the office of the Guardian until 1833. (UCA, Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada Annual Conference Minutes, 1833-1842; MAC 57). The reasons for this were largely transnational in character and will be discussed below (infra 209-11).
in a foreign church. As the Guardian became more popular among the colony’s non-Methodists, moreover, these liabilities would grow as the books advertised in its pages fell under increasing scrutiny in Upper Canada’s public market for such goods. The awkward situation that Ryerson found himself in, as both the editor of a popular newspaper and the public bookseller of denominational commodities tainted by aspects of their cultural production, flowed in large part from the complicated terms under which Upper Canadians achieved ecclesiastical independence from the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States in 1828. The complexity of these terms, however, has been obscured by two factors. First, Upper Canadian Methodists were politically motivated to overstate the significance of their newfound ecclesiastical independence in order to throw off lingering accusations about the alleged authority of American bishops in the colony. Indeed, even before the ink used to ratify the terms of independence had dried, delegates to the 1828 Canada conference set about loudly declaring their newfound autonomy in a grandiloquent address to the colony’s new lieutenant governor Sir John Colborne in which they fashioned themselves “unconnected with the civil and ecclesiastical authority of any other country” and deeply concerned with inculcating “the principles of fidelity and obedience to the Governor and lawfully constituted authorities of our highly favoured country” (Playter 326). Second, by ignoring the political motivations Upper Canadian Methodists had for advancing such tidy assessments, modern historians have consistently privileged uncritical readings of polity documents, beginning with the Canada conference’s 1828 declaration, in order to construct teleological narratives that support the earliest

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239 When the question of who might lead Upper Canadian Methodists in the event of separation from the Methodist Episcopal Church was raised by Ryerson in a letter to Franklin Metcalf written 4 March 1828, the former expressed serious doubts about Nathan Bangs “since Bangs is an alien and prejudice of the Government toward American influence in the Methodist Church would be increased” (UCA, Egerton Ryerson correspondence, Egerton Ryerson to Franklin Metcalf, 4 March 1828; not in Sissons).

240 Scrutiny of this sort extended to include aspects of material as well as cultural production. In one highly publicized incident, Ryerson was castigated in 1830 for importing paper on which to print the Guardian from the United States. Ryerson addressed the charges in the Guardian by claiming that he had been obliged to do so in the face of inferior products available north of the border (CG 17 April 1830: 170). The incident, referred to by Ryerson as “The Paper Affair,” served as a serious reminder of how closely Methodist print culture was being watched for any sign of undue American influence. For more see Patricia Fleming’s “Paper Evidence in Toronto Imprints, 1798 to 1841.”

The mutually reinforcing character of these narratives has helped to discourage more recent scholars from asking why Upper Canadian Methodists, who apparently stood to gain so much from ecclesiastical independence, did not simply declare themselves autonomous years before they were able to reach an amicable arrangement with their American brethren. After all, Canadians had first sought independence more than a decade before the General Conference finally acquiesced in 1828. In the intervening years, Canadians could not have failed to recognize that unilateral independence would have yielded at least as many political benefits as any negotiated settlement. In fact, by acting on their own initiative, Upper Canadian Methodists would likely have disproved the calumnies of their detractors with an even greater warrant as they claimed credit for throwing off the perilous yoke of a foreign episcopacy that continued to resist such a move. The Americans, moreover, could have done little to

\footnote{242 The only recent scholars of Canadian religious history who have decidedly broken with a teleological approach, Jack Little and Todd Webb, have concentrated their narratives on describing a protracted British, not American, Methodist influence over the development of religious identity in Lower and Upper Canada respectively (Little \textit{Borderland Religion passim.}, Webb “How Canadian Methodism Became British” \textit{passim.}).}

\footnote{243 The earliest calls on the part of Upper Canadian Methodists for independence began almost immediately after the War of 1812 when British Wesleyans attempted to establish a body of rival preachers in the province. Although the General Conference was willing to negotiate with the British Wesleyans to eliminate competition in the Canadas, its delegates consistently turned a deaf ear to Upper Canadian pleas for independence on the grounds that, among other things, “it might prevent that interchange of preachers so very desirable and so essential to your prosperity” (JGC 1.214).}
prevent such a course. As one lawyer pointed out some two decades after the fact, “If there had been any idea of secession and schism it was only for the Canada Methodists to avow it. They needed no petition, no consent to secede. They might on the ground of the necessity of the case, of their distance from the place of meeting, have seceded and justified themselves, standing the charge of schism. This they did not do” (Bascom Church Property 167). By ignoring this question, historians have failed to recognize not only the existence of complex transnational material and cultural bonds that prevented unilateral declarations of independence, but also to consider how the suspension of a common episcopacy might have constituted a relatively insignificant development next to the endurance of such transnational connections even after the achievement of ecclesiastical independence. The continued functioning of the Methodist Book Concern’s denominational market in Upper Canada after 1828 was by far the most pervasive of these connections inasmuch as it not only continued to underwrite Methodism’s colonial economy, but also threatened to impinge on the religious identity of individual customers and thereby compromise the political gains an independent polity promised otherwise to yield.

This chapter will attempt to complicate existing historiography by considering the protracted efforts Upper Canadian Methodists made over a number of years to achieve not only ecclesiastical, but cultural and financial independence from the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States. Ryerson’s position as editor of the Guardian inevitably placed him at the centre of such efforts as he used the paper to “explain … doctrines and polity” to his denominational subscribers, as well as “fight battles … for equal rights and for religious equality” in Upper Canada’s public sphere (Green Life 134). When Ryerson’s denominational readers began to abandon their subscriptions to the Christian Advocate after the appearance of the Christian Guardian, their status within the Methodist Book Concern’s transnational market, inasmuch as it was defined by “undivided patronage” and equally undivided religious interests, was weakened. Conversely, when Ryerson began to use the Guardian to agitate for religious equality he attracted not only a larger audience of non-denominational readers, but also the disapproval of British Wesleyans who rejected Ryerson’s reformist arguments as
indecorous political interference on the part of a Methodist minister. Conflict over Native missions in the province became a tipping point when a public confrontation erupted between the Guardian’s editor and the colony’s lieutenant governor. In the wake of that conflict, and with the government’s support, British Wesleyans finally returned to the province both to gain control over Methodism’s Native missions and to restrain the editorial excesses of the Guardian. But when Upper Canadians hastily negotiated a union with British Wesleyans in order to avoid the prospect of rival altars in the colony, they inadvertently jeopardized their own efforts to achieve cultural and financial independence from the Methodist Book Concern by further weakening their status as denominational consumers of printed commodities whose acts of patronage functioned as rhetorical confirmations of a common transnational religious identity. Union with the British Wesleyans altered the religious identity of Upper Canadian Methodists so profoundly that it at once situated them more favourably within the colony’s conservative atmosphere and placed them beyond the boundaries of the Concern’s rhetorical framework. This afforded American Methodists an unexpected opportunity to deny the claims Canadians had made against a portion of the Concern’s value without also denying the same rhetoric that had so effectively insulated its commodities from the products of competitors in the United States. Thus, in what can be seen only as a profoundly ironic turn of events, Upper Canadians failed to neatly sever their cultural and financial dependency on the Methodist Book Concern primarily because of British Wesleyan efforts to dilute what they perceived to be a residual “Yankee” influence among their colonial brethren. In the absence of a financial settlement large enough to allow Canadian Methodists to expand their own publishing operations at a rate proportionate to their growing needs, those transnational dependencies would endure well into the middle decades of the nineteenth century.

Upper Canadians achieved their first taste of an independent polity in May 1824, when the General Conference agreed to set them apart as an annual conference in their own right (JGC 1.302, Playter 236, Webster History 188-9). Though grateful for this gesture, Upper Canadians immediately set about pressing their claim for a fuller independence with undiminished vigour. When preachers assembled at the first

244 Jabez Bunting, then the leading British Wesleyan, famously remarked, “Methodism hates democracy as much as it hates sin” (Thompson The Making of the English Working Class 392).
meeting of the Canada conference three months later, they drafted a set of resolutions for circulation among annual conferences across the United States in the hope that, by the time the General Conference assembled four years later, the tide might be turned in favour of their petition. The War of 1812, the first of these resolutions ran, had given those north of the border “new, and grievous occasions for dissatisfaction with their invading neighbours.” Another argued that the postwar arrival of British Wesleyans had awakened new “jealousies” that resulted in objections to Episcopal Methodism “as coming from the United States.” Still another raised the specter of renewed hostilities: “War between this Country and the United States, would render it extremely hazardous, if not totally impracticable, as we are now situated, for the superintendents to discharge their duties in Canada.” The common thread running through all these resolutions was that only genuine ecclesiastical independence would secure the religious equality Canadian Methodists sought. “The marriages already performed by our preachers,” the final resolution explained, “have not as yet, been legalized by the Government; nor can we expect such an act in our favour, without a separation” (UCA Methodist Episcopal Church, Canada Conference Minutes).

As members of an annual conference in its own right, Upper Canadian Methodists also became eligible in 1824 to receive a separate annual dividend from the Methodist Book Concern. Accordingly, delegates were notified by presiding bishops Enoch George and Elijah Hedding that Nathan Bangs, then entering his second term as senior book agent in New York, had authorized Canadians to draw a dividend against the Book Concern in the amount of $150. That figure remained constant for the following two years and was increased to $200 in 1827 (UCA, Methodist Episcopal Church, Canada Conference Minutes, 1829-1832). Such dividends were important for both rhetorical and practical reasons. Since the Concern’s commodities were also denominational status objects, annual dividends paid in recognition of their sale underscored the denominational relationship Upper Canadians continued to bear towards the Methodist Episcopal Church within a transnational print economy. Dividends were also increasingly important to the diurnal operation of Methodism’s missionary activities north of the border. When one considers, moreover, that these

245 These figures are only available in the ms. minutes of the Canada conference. Perhaps for political reasons Anson Green chose not to include them in the published minutes of 1846 (MAC 1-16).
payments were made in addition to the commissions the Methodist Book Concern had been paying to individual preachers and presiding elders for their work as colporteurs since 1800, there can be little doubt that the continued functioning of the Concern’s market in the colony provided the Canada conference with its single largest source of income. With not only access to books and periodicals at stake, but significant amounts of money in the form of commissions and dividends, it is not surprising that Canadian preachers asked, in the same document that petitioned the annual conferences for independence, that their American brethren also “grant to this new household an outlet from the Book Concern, and the Chartered Fund, to enable us to carry on the great work before us, in this new Country” (UCA, Methodist Episcopal Church, Canada Conference Minutes, 1829-1832).

As the Canadian petition circulated south of the border, members of the colony’s new annual conference were obliged to wait patiently until the next General Conference for anything to be done. It was a difficult four years. Anti-Americanism was reaching new heights as the meaning of the oath of allegiance was thrown into question by a legislative assembly and council deadlocked over the legal rights of those born south of the border (Wilton 40). And, as the previous chapter has shown, Strachan’s attacks on Methodism were becoming more strident as the Church of England attempted to use government monies to lure the province’s Native Methodists—so dear to William Case’s heart—away from the Canada conference (Fahey 75-6, Playter 338, Smith Sacred Feathers 101, Wilton 45). Although these advances were at least partly checked by Ryerson and others, Strachan did manage to obtain an ecclesiastical promotion and a royal charter for a provincial university that would operate under Anglican control for the express purpose of countering the influence of American dissenters (Bethune 109-110, 113; Fahey 67). At the same time, Henry Ryan redoubled his own efforts to sow internal discord by printing incendiary pamphlets and touring the province to denounce “Republican domination, the tyranny of Yankee Bishops, [and] the fallen

246 Next to the annual dividend of $150 paid to the 1825 annual conference, for example, the Bay of Quinte sent a donation of $4, Kingston $2, Hallowell $5, and Belleville $2 (UCA, Methodist Episcopal Church, Canada Conference Minutes, 1829-1832). The Methodist Episcopal Church also provided generous financial support for the province’s Native missions. Unlike this money, however, the Concern’s contributions to Upper Canada’s Methodist economy was more evenly spread since it helped to pay the salaries of every Methodist preacher as well as maintain superannuated preachers, widows, orphans across the colony. For more on American support for Native missions, see Playter 236-7.
state and corrupt character of the preachers in Canada” (Hodgins *Story* 385, Playter 237, Semple 71-6). Yet through all this, Canadian Methodists continued to choose to wait for the next General Conference to press their case for a negotiated settlement rather than declare themselves unilaterally independent. “Had not the American General Conference,” Ryerson speculated, “at this time, amicably set off the Canadian Conference and Methodists as an independent Church, no doubt the schism would have been extensive, and Mr. Ryan might have found himself at the head of a large body of followers” (Ryerson *Methodism* 262).

The schism that Ryerson envisioned would have taken place along ideological, not national lines. Upper Canadians must have understood that a unilateral declaration of independence from the Methodist Episcopal Church, though it would have silenced Ryan and his fellow detractors, would have done more than suspend the supervision of American bishops north of the border. Probable complications in the supply of books and periodicals also would have followed. And, at least as seriously, any refashioning of their religious identity effected by unilateral independence would have almost certainly altered the way American Methodists perceived their Upper Canadian brethren. This would have had the potential to empty their patronage, even if the supply of books remained uninterrupted, of its symbolic meaning and thus sever the rhetorical connections between patronage and denominational identity north of the border. Although this would have served useful political ends in Upper Canada, ends that were becoming more apparent as Methodism’s print culture became slowly less denominationally sequestered, it would have also obviated any compelling reasons the Methodist Book Concern’s agents had for supplying Upper Canadian preachers with discounted books and periodicals—or paying annual dividends to the Canada conference even if they did. Ultimately, individual preachers would have been deprived of a practiced means for making up shortfalls in their salaries, and the Canada conference, without its single largest source of income, would have found it all but impossible to continue to support a small but growing body of superannuated preachers, widows, and orphans. These are blows from which Upper Canadian Methodism would not have easily recovered—especially if the cultural and financial disorder attending such a declaration became apparent to those British Wesleyans in Lower Canada who remained intent on displacing Episcopal Methodism in the upper province (Semple 76-7).
Such potential consequences, it seems, were even less palatable to Upper Canadians than the prospect of Ryan at the head of a large schismatic body loudly denouncing his former coreligionists as disloyal republicans. Although the risk grew with each passing year that Strachan and other critics might expose the rhetorical underpinnings of the Concern’s transnational market as a serious instance of the Methodist Episcopal Church’s continued cultural hegemony over Upper Canadian Methodism, there was too much at stake in the continued functioning of the Concern’s market north of the border, despite its inconvenient claims on aspects of Methodist religious identity in the colony, to act unilaterally. Thus anything short of an amicable separation in both polity and print culture—one that did not impinge on the rhetorical integrity of a commercial transaction that implied more than the simple exchange of goods—could not be contemplated. But until Canadian Methodists could find a way to achieve financial independence—together with an alternative source of culturally suited printed commodities as materially inexpensive as the Concern’s products—the General Conference would maintain an indirect ability to govern key cultural and financial aspects of Canadian Methodism through its control of the Book Concern. The political situation in Upper Canada, meanwhile, continued to change. Ryerson’s contention for Methodism in the public sphere, and the unwanted attention Methodist successes among the province’s Natives had brought to the production and distribution of translated religious texts, had both rendered the Concern’s imprint—and its rhetorical strategies—increasingly fraught. It is therefore not surprising that by the time Upper Canadians sent delegates to the General Conference of 1828, they asked for something more than simply an “outlet from the Book Concern.” This time they sought both ecclesiastical and cultural independence. They did not get it.

On 5 May 1828, William and John Ryerson presented a new petition for independence to delegates attending the Methodist Episcopal Church’s General Conference in Pittsburgh on behalf of their brethren in Upper Canada. “Our political relations,” it ran, “and the political feelings of a great part of the community, are such that we labour under many very serious embarrassments on account of our union with the United States; from which embarrassments we would, in all probability, be relieved by separation” (JGC 1.311, Bascom Church Property 35). Although the general argument remained essentially what it had been in 1824, this new petition solicited that “the General Conference will, together with an independent establishment, be pleased to
grant your petitioners a portion of the Book Concern, of the Chartered Fund, and a portion of the fund of the Missionary Society” (*ibid.*). It is probably no coincidence that the committee struck to consider this petition selected Nathan Bangs as its chair—a Methodist with strong Upper Canadian credentials and one, as outgoing senior book agent, who would have a firm grasp of the economic implications attendant on granting Upper Canadians a “portion” rather than an “outlet” of the Book Concern. On 12 May, Bangs reported back on behalf of the committee. Although willing to sympathize with their Canadian brethren “in their present state of perplexity,” the report concluded that it was “unconstitutional” for the General Conference “to grant them a separate Church establishment, according to the prayer of the petitioners” (JGC 1.322, Bascom *Church Property* 36, Bangs *History* 3.390-1). Apparently the Ryersons were not expecting Bangs to oppose their petition. “You will doubtless be surprised,” John Ryerson confided in a letter to his brother Egerton, “on hearing of Dr. B[angs]’s opposing us as he has done, but you are not more surprised & astonished than what we were & we had no knowledge of his opposition to the separation until the morning that [sic] the debates when he got up & commenced his speach [sic] in the conference…” (Sissons 1.77). Others in attendance closer to Bangs would have been less surprised. At the meeting of the New York annual conference a year earlier, Bangs had helped to prepare a special address urging Canadians to “remain in Connexion with the general body of the Methodist Episcopal Church as they now are” (UCA, Methodist Episcopal Church, Journals of the New York Annual Conference, 1800-1839). Although he had then agreed to deliver the address to Canadians in person, perhaps because Bishop Hedding ultimately did so in his place, Bangs’s role in its formulation was never apparent to the Ryersons (UCA, Methodist Episcopal Church, Canada Conference Minutes, 1829-1832).

However surprised they may have been at Bangs’s opposition, the Ryersons appear to have understood that the book agent’s reference to constitutional difficulties was not really at the heart of the matter. It was not so much that the General Conference lacked the authority to divide the ecclesiastical body, as the committee claimed, but that a hasty severing of the Concern’s access to its growing market north of the border, all at a time when the Concern remained $100,000 in debt after years of expansion under

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247 For more on Bangs’s doubts about Canadian independence, see Stevens *Bangs* 260-1.
Bangs’ direction, was insupportable (Pilkington 211, 223). On 17 May, William Ryerson presented an alternative proposal that did nothing to obviate the constitutional difficulties. It did, however, defer any claims the Canada conference may have had against the Methodist Book Concern by specifying that such claims “shall be left open for future negotiation and adjustment between the two connexions” (JGC 1.338, Bascom Church Property 36). With this alternative petition on the table, a way around the constitutional difficulties, as the Ryersons probably suspected, was soon found. A committee that did not include Bangs, but that did include incoming senior book agent John Emory, was struck to formulate terms under which a mutual and amicable ecclesiastical separation might be effected. With the interests of the Concern no longer threatened by separation, Emory suggested that ecclesiastical independence for Canada was perfectly constitutional on the grounds that Methodist preachers had been sent to serve north of the border strictly on a voluntary basis. Thus, he argued, Upper Canadians had “a perfect right to request us to withdraw our services” (Bangs History 3.391, Emory Life 107-8). The last of three clauses drafted by Emory’s committee, however, made the analogous right of Upper Canadians to request the Methodist Book Concern to withdraw its products from their market an entirely different matter. Instead, the Concern was guaranteed uninterrupted access to its Upper Canadian customers for the foreseeable future. It read:

That our brethren and friends, ministers or others in Upper Canada, shall, at all times, at their request, be furnished with any of our books and periodical publications on the same terms with those by which our agents are regulated in furnishing them in the United States, and until there shall be an adjustment of

248 For the text of this proposal see Bangs’s History 3.389-90. Bangs does not specify that the Canadian delegates to the General Conference, John and William Ryerson, were the authors of the text. In both their original and revised petitions for ecclesiastical independence presented at the General Conference of 1828, Upper Canadians expressed a consistent desire to “maintain with the British Conference, as far as practicable, the main principles of the late arrangements with regard to Canada” (Bascom Church Property 35-6). This was a reference to the 1820 agreement of the Methodist Episcopal Church to confine its activities to Upper Canada in exchange for British Wesleyan withdrawal to Lower Canada (JGC 1.151-2). Although it was not within the power of the General Conference to grant this request unilaterally, the Americans did agree to instruct their delegate to the British conference to solicit “that the arrangement made with that Connexion in relation to the labours of their missionaries in Upper Canada may still be maintained and observed” (JGC 1.407). John Emory, senior book agent during the critical period between 1828 and 1832, represented American and Canadian Methodist interests in London in 1820 and successfully negotiated the withdrawal of the British Wesleyans from the upper province that year (Emory Life 84-110).
any claims which the Canada Church may name. On this connexion the Book
Agents shall divide to the said Church an equal proportion of any annual
dividend which may be made from the Book Concern to the several annual
conference respectively; provided that however the aforesaid dividend shall be
apportioned to the Canada Church only as long as they may continue to support
and patronize our Book Concern as in the past. (Bascom *Church Property* 36; JGC
1.407; UCA, Methodist Episcopal Church, Canada Conference Minutes, 1824-
1828)\(^{249}\)

The next day, delegates voted 108 in favour, and 22 against, its adoption. The
Canadians, for their part, were willing to accept these terms of separation—together
with an “outlet” rather than a “portion” of the Methodist Book Concern—since it at
least allowed them to shed immediately the oversight of American bishops while
ensuring that the much needed payment of regular commissions and annual dividends
would persist as long as they continued to “support and patronize our Book Concern as
in the past” (MAC 20). But this hardly constituted “so thorough” a separation that
American influences would continue to affect the province’s Methodists “only through
the process of osmosis that was common to practically all Ontario institutions” (Grant
*Spikes* 232). As long as Upper Canadians continued to participate in the Concern’s
market, and to accept annual dividends in recognition of that participation, they at least
tacitly assented to the Concern’s rhetorical claims linking their patronage to
membership in a transnational religious community defined by common interests. For
these reasons the Ryerson brothers, and other Methodists attentive to the dangers posed
by the Concern’s rhetorical strategies in Upper Canada, soon fastened upon the hope
promised in “an adjustment of any claims which the Canada Church may name.”

For all its pretended importance, the relationship that Upper Canadian
Methodists bore to other actors in the colony’s political drama was not much altered by
the achievement of ecclesiastical independence. The bludgeon of republicanism and
perfidy was too convenient an instrument to abandon so easily. John Strachan and the
new lieutenant governor, Sir John Colborne, though never as united in sentiment as

\(^{249}\) The *JGC*, which includes the 1828 terms of separation as part of the minutes of 1832, mistakenly assigns
a date of 26 May to the report. Bascom provides the correct date of 20 May. The General Conference of
1828 adjourned on 24 May. The timing of these events is important in determining whether constitutional
difficulties or economic matters related to the Concern functioned as the chief obstacles to separation.
Strachan had been with Maitland, continued to harbour a common suspicion about the lingering influences American Methodists exerted over their Upper Canadian coreligionists. With the exception of being granted the legal right to hold land corporately for the erection of churches, Methodists remained far from realizing their goal of religious equality with the Church of England (Semple 78). Marriages performed by their preachers continued to be unrecognized in law, and Strachan remained at liberty to carry on his own affairs as though the Church of England’s claims to establishment were largely uncontested. By 1829, Methodists appear to have become convinced that a newspaper under their own control might move the cause of religious equality forward. Perhaps by this time the colony’s Methodists feared that, after the attention their Native translations had already begun to attract from outsiders, the ongoing widespread distribution of the *Christian Advocate* among the colony’s supposedly “independent” Methodists would provide their critics with evidence of an uninterrupted and pervasive American influence north of the border. “One imperative want,” wrote Thomas Webster, “which the Church had long felt, was that of a connexional paper.” And in an apparent reference to the colony’s existing newspapers, Webster added, “No merely secular paper could fully understand the wants, or enter into the interests of the religious community, nor could it so ably defend the Church from the ungenerous and untruthful assaults of its enemies.” (*History* 229). That the colony’s printers were unsuitable cannot be doubted. Mackenzie was already becoming too radical. Other printers were too conservative, either to accept Methodist business, or publish Methodist opinions in their newspapers. The rest, including moderate reformer Hugh Thomson, were simply too inefficient and too expensive to be relied upon.

William Case, writing to Egerton Ryerson from Philadelphia in the spring of 1829, where he and Peter Jones were raising money for Native missions in the province, sweepingly dismissed all Upper Canadian printers, apart from Mackenzie, as incapable of “doing anything promptly.” Case added presciently, though as an afterthought, that he could return to Upper Canada from the United States bringing a full “printing

\[250\] Although the Canada conference appointed a committee in October 1828 to “superintend the establishment and circulation of a weekly paper to be entitled the *Christian Guardian,*” nothing was actually done until the conference met a year later (UCA, Canada Conference Minutes, 1824-1828).
establishment” without much difficulty (UCA, Egerton Ryerson correspondence, William Case to Ryerson, 7 April 1829; not in Sissons).  

For most of its first year, the Christian Guardian appealed primarily to denominational readers in the colony and avoided, at least relatively to later years, political controversy. In April 1830, for example, Ryerson called attention to the fact that “we have used unprecedented caution and patience in avoiding disputation, and for months we have ‘answered not a word to the railing accusations’ of several presses in this Province” (CG 17 April 1830: 170). Ryerson’s initial efforts to rhetorically situate the Guardian in the minds of potential subscribers further indicates his desire to attract primarily a denominational audience—and perhaps inch further toward cultural independence even without a final settlement in hand from the Methodist Book Concern. Appropriating the Concern’s rhetorical strategies to increase the denominational appeal of the Guardian in Upper Canada, Ryerson regularly claimed in a space above his weekly editorial that “The proceeds of this paper will be applied to the support of superannuated or worn out Preachers of the M. E. Church in Canada; and of widows and orphans of those who have died in the work; and to the general spreading of the Gospel” (CG passim; see also Friskney “Methodist Book and Publishing House” 46). Almost identical to the wording employed by the Concern’s own book

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251 With no clear sense of what they might need, or how much money would be necessary to finance the endeavour, Canadian Methodists looked south of the border for support, advice, and equipment, relying especially on Francis Hall, a leading New York Methodist who published the New York Commercial Advertiser. William Case and Peter Jones had often stayed with Hall while they oversaw the printing of Native translations at the Methodist Book Concern. On their most recent fundraising tour through the city earlier that year, Jones remarked in his journal that he and Case were “kindly received at the House of Mr. Francis Hall” (Jones Life and Journals 206, Sissons 1.102-5, CHC 3.227). Later Jones would refer to Hall and his wife as “our old friends” as he entrusted Hall to make the travel arrangements for Jones’s first transatlantic voyage in March 1831 (Jones Life and Journals 295). Anson Green, a member of the committee appointed to superintend the establishment of the newspaper, either knew Hall himself or had been referred to him by Case and Jones. As his committee set about discovering what was required to establish their own paper, Green noted that he was “favoured with a long conversation concerning the probable expense of a press, type, paper, &c., with Francis Hall, Esq., Editor of a New York paper, and we saw that by advancing liberally from our own pockets, and asking some of our laymen to aid us in this matter, we could accomplish our object” (Life and Times 135). Not surprisingly, after being elected editor and “appointed an agent to procure the apparatus and materials for commencing the paper” Ryerson travelled to New York, and probably to the home of Francis Hall, to conclude the transaction (Friskney “Methodist Book and Publishing House” 36).

252 Although the money was not used for this purpose, it is worth noting that the Methodist Book Concern paid the annual conference a dividend of $800 in 1829 (Green Life 135)—more than enough to cover the $700 estimated cost of purchasing “all the apparatus for a printing establishment” (MAC 27, Webster History 230).
agents, Ryerson’s rhetoric proposed a politically acceptable relationship between patronage and denominational identity in an ecclesiastically independent Methodist Episcopal Church in Upper Canada. But by establishing a rival rhetoric whose boundaries were both denominational and national in character, Ryerson placed the *Guardian* in direct competition with the *Christian Advocate*.

At first, this seems to have gone unnoticed by Methodists in New York. Nathan Bangs, who continued to edit the *Christian Advocate* until 1832, welcomed the *Guardian* and expressed a hope that it would become “a useful auxiliary in the cause of truth and righteousness” (CA 11 Dec 1829: 59). The use of the word “auxiliary” is instructive. Bangs appears to have believed that Upper Canadians would subscribe to the *Christian Guardian* in addition to, rather than instead of, the *Christian Advocate*. That Ryerson reprinted little from the *Christian Advocate* in the earliest issues of the *Guardian* suggests that this was probably the case. Soon, however, as John Emory would note in his report to the General Conference in 1832, the *Guardian* began to supplant the *Christian Advocate* in the Upper Canadian denominational market. But by subscribing to the *Guardian* alone, a newspaper rhetorically situated to benefit the work of Canadian Methodism exclusively, and ceasing to read the *Advocate*, a newspaper rhetorically situated to benefit the work of Methodism on both sides of the border, the colony’s Methodists became guilty of failing to “support and patronize our Book Concern as in the past” (JGC 1.407). Thus the more successful the *Guardian* became—in part by relying on the Ryerson’s appropriated rhetorical strategies—the more it would weaken Canadian claims to a portion of the Methodist Book Concern’s stock and worth at the ensuing General Conference.

The rhetoric that Ryerson borrowed from his New York counterparts, however effective it may have been in shoring up the newspaper’s appeal to denominational readers in the colony, ultimately had little to do with the *Guardian’s* eventual popularity among Upper Canada’s wider reading public. The defeat of the province’s reformers in the elections of October 1830 marked a critical turning point for both Ryerson and the

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253 This was probably written by Nathan Bangs who continued to edit the *Christian Advocate* until 1832 (JGC 1.353, Bangs History 4.437). John Durbin was elected Bangs’s replacement at the General Conference of 1832 (JGC 1.416, Bangs History 4.439).
In a move he believed to be consistent with developments overseas, Ryerson resolved after the election to harden the Guardian’s editorial stance in favour of reform. “The posture of affairs in England,” he wrote to his brother George the following month, “appears upon the whole more favourable to Reform than in U. Canada. We are resolved to double our diligence” (Sissons 1.126-7). By doubling his diligence, Ryerson transformed of the Guardian from a newspaper whose appeal was primarily denominational in character, into a political weekly whose readership was no longer coterminous with the boundaries of Methodism. In early 1830, William Bell, a Presbyterian minister, became one of many who wrote to Ryerson to convey that, though he differed with the editor “in many particulars, yet in some we agree” (Sissons 1.127-8). The particulars on which they disagreed were denominational. But, as Bell elaborated, the new reader he represented wholeheartedly supported Ryerson’s attempts to promote civil and religious liberty. Politics, not religion, is what drew these readers to Ryerson’s banner. Accordingly, Ryerson soon abandoned the Concern’s rhetoric in recognition that his new readers would care more about the impact the paper made in the colony’s public sphere than the fact that profits derived from its sale would be directed to denominational purposes. Although this may have pleased his readers in New York, the change inadvertently placed additional stress on the Concern’s market in the colony by attracting the eye of a wider circle of readers who did not share Ryerson’s denominational convictions, and who would therefore view the

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254 By contrast, on 12 December 1829, Ryerson referred to the neutrality of the Guardian with pride. “We are aware” Ryerson wrote, “that some of our cotemporaries have already erected the flag of war and commenced hostilities with their pugnacious quills. To such, however, we have nothing to present, but our sincere good wishes for their present and everlasting happiness” (CG 12 December 1829: 30). While Ryerson may not have been entirely ingenuous in his claim, it does indicate a desire, in the earliest days of the periodical, to at least limit the role the Guardian would play—at least in debating political matters that did not touch on the topic of religion and religious establishment—in the colony’s public sphere.

255 By 1831, from a quarter to a third of the subscribers were non-Methodists. By 1836, Ryerson could state that “it was the most extensively circulated paper in either of the Canadas” (qtd. Friskney “Methodist Book and Publishing House” 36). French notes that the Guardian “speedily acquired an influential place in the life of the province” (115) and Neil Semple, echoing Ryerson’s own sentiments, but missing entirely the transnational tensions its success caused in the market for religious printed commodities in Upper Canada, writes, “It quickly became one of the most widely circulated and influential newspapers in the province. The Christian Guardian complemented the Book Room, which distributed religious publications from the United States and Britain and acted as a clearing-house for important information” (76). As subsequent events would show, however, the Christian Guardian complicated rather than complemented the distribution of Methodist texts in Upper Canada. Beginning with 450 denominational subscribers, by 1832 it had attracted more than 3,000 subscribers, a large proportion of whom were not Methodists (Hodgins Story 93).
public sale of the Concern’s rhetorically-situated products as evidence of continued American cultural hegemony.

Without a financial settlement from the Methodist Book Concern to draw upon, Ryerson had no choice but to continue to underwrite the Guardian’s expenses by selling books. But to minimize the political risks to those interests that remained intensely denominational in nature, he supplied himself, where possible, with books that were not encumbered with the denominational rhetoric the Concern continued to use to insulate its own market from competitors in the United States. As already noted, he sold bibles printed by the British and Foreign Bible Society rather than bibles printed by the Methodist Book Concern. And, in addition to taking on contract printing jobs where he could, as early as 1830 Ryerson also began to advertise the availability of his own denominational titles, most significantly an Upper Canadian edition of one of the Concern’s most lucrative titles: the Doctrine and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church (CG 12 December 1830; Fleming UC Imprints no. 441). The Canadians needed their own edition of the Discipline in part to excise from it declarations about the virtues of republicanism in the United States. But they also hoped it might generate a small

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256 In spite of its success, the Guardian was in deep debt by 1832, with more than $5,000 in unpaid subscriptions (CG 16 May 1832: 106).

257 Although the Canada conference did not formally establish a Book Room at York until 1833, Ryerson’s advertisements in the Guardian as early as September 1830 indicate that he regularly sold books through his York office both to Methodists and members of the wider Upper Canadian public. Neil Semple misses these transnational tensions entirely when he writes “In November 1829 the connexion welcomed the weekly Christian Guardian as its denominational newspaper under the vigorous editorship of Egerton Ryerson. It quickly became one of the most widely circulated and influential newspapers in the province. The Christian Guardian complemented the Book Room, which distributed religious publications from the United States and Britain and acted as a clearing-house for important information” (76).

258 Shortly after arriving in England, probably at Egerton Ryerson’s instigation, Jones met with the secretaries of the British and Foreign Bible Society to arrange for the printing of what would be culturally suited editions of his biblical translations for sale in Upper Canada (Jones Life and Journals 299).

259 A partial record of job printing undertaken at the office of the Christian Guardian can be found by consulting the Trades Index in Fleming’s UC Imprints. See also Friskney “Methodist Book and Publishing House” 39-40. Ryerson appears not to have fretted overmuch about the political implications of such printing, even accepting work from reformer David Willson after his repudiation of Mackenzie and his followers in October 1833 (UC Imprints no. 906).

260 The 1829 edition of the Discipline printed in New York declared, “The president, the congress, the general assemblies, the governors, and the councils of state, as the delegates of the people, are the rulers of the United States of America, according to the division of power made to them by the constitution of the United States, and by the constitutions of their respective states. And the said states are a sovereign and independent nation, and ought not to be subject to any foreign jurisdiction” (17). Appended in a footnote of smaller type was the following concession for Upper Canadian Methodists: “As far as it respects civil affairs, we believe it the duty of Christians, and especially all Christian ministers, to be subject to the
profit they could use to defray the costs of publishing the Guardian. Although the conference minutes indicate that Methodists were aware that printing such a large document on their own press might result in financial losses, they preferred to take this gambit rather than hazard the cultural risks associated with printing a Canadian edition of the Discipline on the Concern’s presses. It paid off and Ryerson was able to report that a profit of £37.10.11½ had been realized by the time of the 1831 Canada conference (UCA, Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada, Minutes, 1829-1832).

But while Canadians held out their hands to receive yet another annual dividend payment from the Methodist Book Concern, it seems not to have occurred to Ryerson or any other Methodist that their own profits should be similarly shared. That would, after all, have violated the economy of the Concern’s own rhetoric since payments were the consequence of patronage. And, for obvious reasons, the Americans had not bought copies of Ryerson’s edition of the Discipline. By the same token, however, the Methodist Book Concern had probably not shipped a single copy of its own 1829 edition of the Discipline to Upper Canada. As a consequence, a cleavage in the transnational market for Methodist printed commodities began to grow wider as Canadians, at least for now, enjoyed both the annual dividend payments and the profits from the sale of their own books “to aid in paying the debts of the printing establishment” (UCA, Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada, Minutes, 1829-1832).

John Emory and Nathan Bangs, meanwhile, who continued to receive the Guardian in New York and who would have long before noted a decrease in the number of Christian Advocate subscribers in Upper Canada, would have found in every advertisement Ryerson ran for Canadian editions supreme authority of the country where they may reside, and to use all laudable means to enjoin obedience to the powers that be; and therefore it is expected that all our preachers and people, who may be under the British, or any other government, will behave themselves as peaceable and orderly subjects” (17-8). Far better for Canadians, and even Americans, to dispense with the complexity of this transnational formulation in favour of a more simple statement of national allegiance.

261 Although the Guardian office would later willingly accept job printing for much larger and therefore riskier projects, perhaps most notably 10,000 copies of the Upper Canada Christian Almanac in 1834 and 1835, potential losses would presumably have been borne by the customer, in this case the Upper Canada Religious Tract and Book Society, and not by the Guardian office (Fleming UC Imprints nos. 812, 898).

262 Ryerson also began printing the Canada conference’s minutes in 1829 (Fleming UC Imprints nos. 442, 533).
of the *Discipline*, conference minutes, British and Foreign Bible Society bibles, and other such commodities, additional evidence to explain why the volume of books being shipped north of the border was also beginning to decrease.

Emory and Bangs were not the only Methodists outside the colony reading the *Guardian* with dissatisfaction. In London, the British Wesleyans found themselves increasingly embarrassed by Ryerson’s political strivings on behalf of a denomination they believed should be far more acquiescent to the claims of the Church of England in British North America. The editorial stance of the *Guardian* after October 1830—one which they ironically attributed to the latent influence of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States—was among the reasons Wesleyans would later cite for their return to the province (Webster *History* 257; French 136, 139-40). Their patience with the *Guardian* finally ran out when Ryerson took it upon himself to challenge not only Strachan and the proponents of colonial church establishment, but the lieutenant governor himself over his handling of the province’s Native missions. It is a conflict that was long in the making and one in which John Colborne and other conservative members of the colony’s government had long sought the help of the politically-congenial British Wesleyans. Although decreasing levels of patronage certainly diminished the degree to which Upper Canadians could claim to support the Concern as members of a single transnational religious body—however configured ecclesiastically—it was the arrival of British Wesleyans in the province that had the greatest potential to subvert Canadian claims against the Concern by altering the religious identity of Methodists north of the border so thoroughly that it threatened to place their acts of patronage entirely outside the rhetorical boundaries of the Concern’s consecratory framework. Unlike the adoption of a more mainstream print culture, however, the return of the British Wesleyans was something that Upper Canadian Methodists, at least at first, had little control over and vigorously resisted.

When John Strachan finally accepted that Anglicanism would never have the strength to defeat Methodism on its own, he quietly set about encouraging the Wesleyans to resume their preaching stations in Upper Canada in 1827. Peregrine Maitland, Colborne’s immediate predecessor, has also promised the Wesleyans the support of his administration if they sent preachers west of the Ottawa river (French 134-5, Semple 79-80). Although little happened as a result of these efforts, Robert Alder,
a prominent British Wesleyan who worked for several years as a missionary in both the Maritimes and Lower Canada before returning to England in 1827, openly expressed a desire on the part of his brethren to return to the upper province in the summer of 1828. As one of the witnesses called by the Imperial Parliament’s Select Committee on the Civil Government of Canada, Alder was asked whether Methodists in the province fell under the direct supervision of British Wesleyans. Admitting they did not, Alder added that, since they were no longer under the direction of the General Conference, he expected “that an arrangement will soon be made, by which the Methodists of Upper Canada will be brought to act under the direction of the British conference, as the Methodists of Lower Canada have done for several years” (British House of Commons, Report from the Select Committee on the Civil Government of Canada 297). Although Alder’s comment was prescient, British Wesleyans would not finally rouse themselves for another several years. In the meantime, the province’s Native missions became the chief locus of contention between the colony’s administrators, Methodists, and British Wesleyans.

In the spring of 1829, just months before the appearance of the Christian Guardian, Colborne made his first serious attempt to gain control over the province’s Natives when he advised the Colonial Office to adopt his new “Indian policy” (Cooper 95, Allen 180-1). In addition to collecting Natives into newly erected villages, thereby obliging them to abandon buildings the province’s Methodists had already constructed for their use, the policy attempted to bring the education of Natives under the purview of the government, and “to introduce Wesleyan Methodist missionaries from England to counteract American influence over the province’s Methodists” (Cooper 97). Unaware of the terms of this new policy, and the potential danger it posed to their Native missions through the agency of the British Wesleyans, William Case authorized Peter Jones to make his first transatlantic voyage to raise funds for the support of these

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263 Support for such an arrangement was already on the ground in Upper Canada. In December 1828, a mere two months after the Canada conference had formally declared its independence to Colborne, Wesleyans purchased a lot in York and began gathering subscriptions to pay for the erection of a competing “Wesleyans Missionary Meeting House.” They justified their advance on the grounds that, because Upper Canadians had reportedly sought a bishop south of the border, they remained under the dangerous influence of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States (Sissons 1.96-7).
missions in early 1831. In the context of these wider developments, it was a fatal miscalculation on Case’s part. British Wesleyans, though fascinated by Jones, interpreted his appeal for funds as an admission that Upper Canadian Methodists were not equal to supporting their own missions. George Ryerson, who had accompanied Jones overseas as the representative of a new reformist group in Upper Canada known as the Friends of Religious Liberty, foresaw the consequences. On 13 June 1831, after meeting with Jones and Ryerson, the London Missionary Committee wrote to William Case to inform him that “the Committee have decided upon commencing their long contemplated mission to the Indians” (Ryerson Wesleyan Methodist Conference 52-3). George Ryerson, in a confidential letter to Egerton written later that summer, lamented the development and described his own strenuous efforts to avert it. “I have reason to know, “ he wrote, “that they would gladly govern us. I was, therefore, very pointed and explicit on this subject. I rejoice that our country lies beyond the Atlantic, and is surrounded by an atmosphere of freedom” (Sissons 1.135-40, Hodgins Story 140).

Meanwhile, new conflicts were breaking out between Methodists and the colony’s government agents over Native missions that would lead to the Ryerson’s eventual denouncement of Colborne in the pages of the Guardian.

At about the same time Jones and Ryerson were meeting with the London Missionary Committee, James Evans, a Methodist preacher who would later achieve recognition for his pioneering work with Native syllabics, was busy denouncing the colony’s administration to an audience of Native converts in the Canadian backwoods. Although under orders to build a military road, these Natives laid aside their shovels to attend a camp meeting where Evans condemned the “evil influence” of government

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264 Peter Jones set sail for England on 24 March 1831. The next day Colborne wrote to the colonial secretary with a warning about Jones. “He was educated (I believe) at New York by the Methodists,” Colborne asserted, “and is entirely under the control of the Ryersons” (qtd. Cooper 99). He advised the secretary not to cede any concession to the Methodists that might allow them to consolidate their already pervasive influence over the province’s Native converts.

265 Shortly after the Guardian adopted its new editorial stance in October 1830, Egerton and his brother George attended the first meeting of Robert Baldwin’s Friends of Religious Liberty and, with Jesse Ketchum, drafted a petition to the British Parliament calling for equal religious rights and the sale of the Clergy Reserves for the benefit of public education (Wilton 51-3, French 118-9). George was selected by the group to present the petition overseas. In what appears to have been an afterthought, in early 1831 Ryerson invited Jones to accompany him overseas to raise money for Native missions (Jones Life and Journals 292, CHC 3.280ff.). John Carroll notes that “Mr. Jones’s visit [was] the first in a chain of events which led to the Union between the two Conferences” (3.315).
employees and urged his listeners to reject all the “presents” Colborne was sending them in the form of carts, oxen, and agricultural implements. “The British want to enslave you,” he admonished, “by giving you these things. What use have you for them?—throw them all in the lake at once” (Alexander Transatlantic Sketches 1.165, Cooper 100). When Colborne learned of Evans’s exhortation, he was furious, redoubled his efforts to expedite the return of the British Wesleyans to the colony, and placed himself on a collision course with Ryerson. Perhaps not coincidentally, the British Wesleyans were then in the process of writing to the Canada conference with an offer to assume complete financial responsibility for Native missions in the colony in exchange for absolute control over those missions. The offer, contained in a missive written by James Townley of the London Missionary Committee, was finally read to delegates attending the Canada conference in the late summer of 1831. According to William Case, Townley’s offer “gave much dissatisfaction” (CHC 3.317) and was soundly rejected.266 Later, John Ryerson, in his capacity as head of the Canada Missionary Board, wrote to the London Missionary Committee to argue that, if British Wesleyans could not be dissuaded from returning to the province, their energies would best be spent concentrating on work further north in the Hudson Bay region. He also added, perhaps somewhat naively, that “You are perhaps not apprised that there are many persons in this province who would rejoice to witness party disputes among the Methodists, and would recommend any measure and do all in their power to create and foment them” (Ryerson Wesleyan Methodist Conference 55-9).

Aware that the return of British Wesleyans to the colony might complicate their relationship to the Methodist Book Concern, William Case wrote to Peter Jones in late November to urge circumspection on Jones’s part as he passed through the United States on his way home to Upper Canada. “My advice, Brother,” he explained, “to those who inquire, except to the principal friends in New York, is to say little by way of comment, and even to those, such as Bangs, &c., only state the facts and leave comment

266 No mention of Townley’s letter is contained in Anson Green’s printed minutes of 1846 (MAC 41-5). The Canada conference, though in debt, was not desperate for the money. Although Elizabeth Cooper attempts to argue that a lack of money for Native missions drove Upper Canadians into the arms of the British Wesleyans, she fails to note that the Americans had, only three months earlier, more than doubled their financial support for Native missions in Upper Canada from $700 to $1,500 annually (Cooper 93, CG 20 June 1832: 126).
to others” (CHC 3.317). Case’s mention of Bangs by name, who had just completed his second term as senior book agent and who continued to edit the Christian Advocate, perhaps signals a desire on Case’s part to keep word of these developments out of that newspaper. Similarly, until this time Ryerson had published nothing in the Christian Guardian to indicate that changes in British Wesleyan policies might be in the offing. That changed in late November, however, when, meeting with the lieutenant governor on another matter, Ryerson and his coreligionists were subjected to a humiliating lecture in which Colborne resurrected old accusations about the influence Americans continued to exert over Canadian Methodists and, through them, over the colony’s Natives. Had the conduct of Canadian Methodists not been so suspect, Colborne went on, “a desire for the return of the Wesleyan Missionaries to resume their pastoral labors in this Province would not have been generally expressed” (Sissons 1.145). Ryerson responded the following month by printing Colborne’s lecture and his own response in the Christian Guardian. In it Ryerson argued, far from there being a widespread desire to see the Wesleyans return to Upper Canada, the coterie who did desire it only did so “to divide and destroy [the Episcopal Methodists’] influence, and to erect high church and political toryism on its ruins” (CG 21 December 1831, Sissons 1.148, Hodgins Story 98, Wilton 97-8). Ryerson’s rebuke of the lieutenant governor appears to have galvanized the British Wesleyans at last. On 15 February 1832, the London Missionary Committee wrote to John Ryerson and the Canada Missionary to complain,

with affection but regret that the publication of a paper expressly by the Canada Conference entering warmly and in the spirit of partizanship into the local politics of the province was not in the spirit or according to the practice of British Methodists, and contrary to that abstinence from which points which they enjoined upon their Missionaries, a circumstances which had created prejudice against the acceptableness of the Canadian Brethren on the part of the population of Canada. (Ryerson Wesleyan Methodist Conference 63; see also French 136, Friskney “Methodist Book and Publishing House” 48)

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267 In a letter written ten days later, Strachan conflated the interests of British Wesleyans and the Church of England while dismissing Canadian Methodists out of hand. “In regard to the Episcopal Methodists of this Province their rancour against the Church of England and all the Colonial institutions and all persons in authority & Methodist Preachers from England are too notorious to require an additional proof at my hand” (Clark Church and Sect 222, Cooper 101).

268 On 6 April George Ryerson wrote to Egerton with further complaints about the British Wesleyans and the disapproval with which they read the Guardian. “If you knew with what sneer contempt,” he
All the justification the Wesleyans needed to return to the province was now in place. Only sufficient funds were wanting. That final component was supplied when, that spring, the Colonial Office, in accordance with Colborne’s wishes, agreed to indemnify the British Wesleyans from any financial losses that might result from their return to the province (Cooper 101-3, French 138). By the spring everything came to a tumultuous head.

In the shadow of these developments, William Case, Franklin Metcalf, and William Ryerson arrived in Philadelphia on the first day of May 1832 to represent their Canadian brethren at the General Conference and to seek a financial settlement against the Methodist Book Concern. They were welcomed as delegates and “invited to take their seats within the bar as honorary members” (JGC 1.363).

The same month John Ryerson, chair of the Canada Missionary Board, received a final letter from Robert Alder informing him that a British Wesleyan return to the upper province was now inevitable (Ryerson Methodism 299-300). Although this decision had clearly been coming for some time, John Ryerson alleged that Alder’s letter struck him and his coreligionists “like thunder-claps” (Ryerson Methodism 307). He would later claim to have foreseen in the establishment of “rival Methodist congregations” inevitable ruin for the denomination’s colonial interests. “Ohl,” he opined, “the darkness! What a cloud seemed to spread over the whole Methodist family in Upper Canada!” (ibid. 308).

Nathan Bangs only notes the presence of William Case and William Ryerson as delegates from the Canada conference (Bangs History 4.99).

explained, “Mr. Watson speaks of the American Methodist Episcopacy & ordination, and ‘That Christian Guardian’ you would let his praises rest till they were awarded by Him who judges not ‘by the sight of the eye’” (Sissons 1.162-5).

269 In the late summer of 1831, the Canada conference selected these preachers to represent Canadian claims against the Concern. Their appointments appears to have been calculated to bring about the best possible results. Case had, through his responsibilities as a presiding elder and his involvement with the province’s Native missions, worked more closely with the Concern over a longer period of time than any other Canadian preacher. Metcalf, like Case, was also an American by birth. And William Ryerson, though less experienced, had, like his brothers, quickly risen to become one of the most prominent Methodist preachers of his generation. “The Conference,” John Carroll wrote later with circumspection, “[was] anxious to preserve fraternal relations still with the General Conference of the M. E. Church in the United States, though it now exercised no longer exclusive jurisdiction in this country” (CHC 3.314).
Although William Case and his fellow representatives in Philadelphia may not have learned of Alder’s latest missive until their return to the colony, they could not have been unaware, despite John Ryerson’s protestations to the contrary, that British Wesleyans were on the verge of a decision. Showing the same circumspection in these matters that Case had enjoined on Peter Jones some six months earlier, however, none appears to have breathed a word about any of the more recent developments to their American brethren attending the General Conference (CHC 3.317). If John Ryerson and his fellow Methodists felt backed into a corner by the Wesleyans, they apparently agreed that it would be imprudent to turn to the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States for help. Indeed, Case, Metcalf, and William Ryerson appear to have had their hands full simply convincing delegates—without the confusion a British Wesleyan presence in Upper Canada might mean for Methodist religious identity in the province—that the Concern’s declining colonial market did not in itself invalidate Canadian claims against the stock and worth of the Methodist Book Concern according to the terms of its own transnational rhetorical framework.

The formal claims of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada against the New York Methodist Book Concern were submitted on 4 May (JGC 1.373). On motion, the claim was referred to the Committee on the Book Concern for consideration. Although the Committee was large and extraordinarily diverse, consisting of one delegate from each of the Church’s nineteen annual conferences, the Canadians had at least one committed advocate among its members in the person of Wilbur Fisk (JGC 1.365, 1.369). Fisk, president of the Wesleyan University, had been one of the most outspoken supporters of Canadian independence in 1828, and had only recently declined an offer to become Canada’s first Methodist bishop (CHC 3.215). Before the Committee was able to report back to the Conference, however, John Emory used his report as senior book agent to raise serious doubts in the minds of delegates about the validity of the Canadian claims (JGC 1.381). Emory, it will be remembered, had been instrumental in finding a way around the supposed constitutional obstacle to Upper Canadian independence when he proposed that preachers had been sent north of the border strictly on a voluntary basis (Bangs History 3.390-1, Emory Life 107-8). He was also a part of the Committee that had proposed the ongoing payment of annual dividends to the Canadians “so long as they may Continue to support & patronize our Book Concern”
(JGC 1.407). But the Canadians, according to Emory, had not entirely lived up to that condition. His report to the General Conference merits close attention.

Under the resolution of the last General Conference, we have continued to pay an equal dividend to the conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada, yet not without some doubt, to say the least, whether the condition annexed by the General Conference has been complied with on the part of our brethren in Canada. We judged it best, however, in the existing circumstances, to incur the responsibility of paying the dividends up to the time of the session of the last Canada annual conference, presuming that the General Conference would take such order on the subject as may be proper for the guidance of your agents in future. In consequence of the establishment of a separate weekly paper, under the control, and for the exclusive benefit of the Canada annual conference, the subscriptions for the Christian Advocate and Journal, which were once respectable within the bounds of that conference, have been almost wholly discontinued; nor, indeed, has the patronage extended to the General Book Concern, on the part of that conference, been anything like equal in amount to what it formerly was, although the numbers of its ministers and members have been increased, and also the dividends from the Book Concern. Whether this is equitable or just in its effect on those who do continue a devoted support to this Concern, without any separate establishment of their own, it is for the conference to judge. This case, which necessarily presses itself upon our attention, may also well serve as an occasion for an impartial inquiry how far the conferences remaining in our union yield a thorough and an undivided support, both as regards our periodicals and our books generally, to an institution in which they have an equal interest, and from the proceeds of which they claim and receive equal dividends. (Emory Life 333-4)²⁷⁰

For Emory, the justice and equity with which Upper Canadians might be said to have an enduring claim against the Concern—the legitimacy of which was symbolized by the ongoing payment of annual dividends—hinged upon the continued existence of a common religious identity that was defined by a shared market, not a shared episcopacy. Between 1828 and 1832, the number of Methodists north of the border had grown from 10,000 to just under 15,000 formal members (MAC 18, 47). Emory, who understood the Concern’s domestic market in rhetorical terms that were exclusively denominational, expected growth in ecclesiastical membership to be accompanied by an inevitable and proportionate increase in the sale of the Concern’s printed commodities.

²⁷⁰ This report is not contained in the JGC and was not reprinted in the Christian Advocate.
The payment of annual dividends, in fact, was wholly premised on this belief. Although this logic, for the most part, held in the United States, where the Concern’s products functioned as unproblematic denominational status objects, this was increasingly less true in Upper Canada. Emory put his finger on the cause of the problem when he singled out the Christian Guardian in his report. The substance of his objection to the introduction of this newspaper flowed not from its contents—which often declared with force the ecclesiastical autonomy of Upper Canadian Methodists—but its very existence as a commodity rhetorically situated to benefit only Methodists living in the province. Unlike the Methodist Book Concern’s commodities, the Guardian was a product with no symbolic transnational appeal. Methodists in the United States, even if they did subscribe, would not thereby confer any financial benefit on their own church. And because it was not part of a common market, it could not be tied to a common religious identity that spanned the border. Thus its existence signaled a new division in what had been until this time a single transnational market—and a single transnational religious identity predicated on that market—that united Upper Canadian Methodists, irrespective of their local polity, with their American brethren in a common community of religious interest. For these reasons, the introduction of a newspaper “for the exclusive benefit of the Canada annual conference” did much to undermine the rhetorical grounds on which Upper Canadians might make a claim against the Concern. For Emory, it demonstrated the willingness of Canadian Methodists to set themselves apart from their American brethren by appropriating what had been a common rhetorical framework to further interests that were as much political as they were denominational in character.

As noted earlier, Ryerson and the Christian Guardian were also largely to blame for the fact that the Concern was also selling fewer books in Upper Canada relative to its expanding Methodist population. Emory’s report implies that Canadians, by eschewing the Concern’s products in order to avoid accusations that they continued to exist under the shadow of American cultural influences, failed to properly acknowledge the rhetorical claims the Concern made about the exceptionality of its own products in the market. This in turn undermined the bonds of a common religious identity instantiated in a uniquely privileged relationship the Methodist Book Concern insisted on maintaining with its denominational customers. The independence achieved in 1828, by comparison, appears to have been wholly abstract in character—undertaken merely...
to suit antithetical political demands operative in the colony. That independence, from a cultural and financial perspective, would remain perfectly superficial—and therefore unproblematic—as long as Canadians maintained their “union” with the Methodist Episcopal Church by participating in the Concern’s North American market. But by placing the demands of a colonial public market for Methodist texts ahead of the interests of the Concern’s extensive Upper Canadian denominational market—something Emory must have believed Ryerson did every time he sold a book or newspaper that had not been printed on the Concern’s presses—Canadian Methodists slowly eroded, one purchase at a time, a shared transnational Methodist religious identity predicated more on the consumption of denominational symbolic commodities—the Concern’s books and periodicals—than the distant oversight of a common episcopacy. The only question that remained, in May 1832, was whether that erosion had advanced so far as to invalidate Upper Canadian claims against the Concern by negating their status as members of a single transnational community within which the Methodist Book Concern’s products were not mere commodities but symbolic goods whose exchange burdened sellers as well as purchasers with responsibilities—responsibilities that the Canadians hoped would be recognized by the General Conference through the payment of a financial settlement large enough to compensate them for the “undivided support” they had offered the Concern in years past.

The report of the Committee on the Canada claim was called up on 18 May. Initially, assurances were demanded by Conference delegates that any funds the Canadians received from the Book Concern would not, according to the logic of the Concern’s rhetoric, be applied to any other purpose “than for the benefit of the travelling, supernumerary, superannuated, and worn-out preachers, their wives, widows, and orphans” (JCG 399). This, however, was withdrawn—perhaps in recognition that different, less denominationally-bound, rhetorical strategies were already being used in Upper Canada. The following day, John Emory and William Ryerson, probably representing widely different perspectives, addressed the delegates for some time (JGC 1.400). Despite Ryerson’s efforts, Emory’s contention that declining levels of patronage in the colony complicated the Upper Canadian claims appears to have hit its mark. An indication that things were not progressing as the Canadians hoped came two days later when William Case asked Wilbur Fisk to address the
delegates. His remarks were unavailing. When a vote was called on the subject the
Canadian claims were rejected by Conference delegates by a wide margin: 75 in favour
and 130 against (JGC 1.400, Bascom Church Property 38). John Emory then suggested that
the report of the committee be revised and it was submitted to a much smaller
committee for examination. Canadians were doubtless worried that the committee
included Emory but not Fisk. When the new committee’s report was read on 23 May,
Emory, William Case, William Ryerson, and several others addressed Conference
delegates. Joshua Soule, a former book agent and now bishop, also spoke to the matter
at hand. Although it is not known precisely what happened to the proposals of the
Canadians as they underwent the scrutiny first of the large Book Committee, and then
the smaller committee on which Emory was the leading voice, there can be little doubt
that they failed to receive all that they had hoped. But when a vote was called for on the
revised report and terms, it passed 152 in favour and 34 against. Although this cleared
the first hurdle, a constitutional objection was also raised by delegates. “Though it was
generally agreed by the members of the conference that the Canada brethren had a just
claim upon a portion of the Book Concern,” Nathan Bangs observed several years later,
“yet, after a full examination of the subject, the conclusion was drawn that the General
Conference had no constitutional authority to make the apportionment without first
obtaining the concurrence of the annual conferences” (History 4.99).

To overcome this objection, a majority comprising “three-fourths of all the
members of the several annual conferences” was required to ratify the terms of the
agreement (JGC 1.405). Only then would the Methodist Book Concern’s agents be
authorized to divide its assets, including “a full proportion of the unsalable and saleable
stock, as of the bad as well as good debts,” in proportion to the “number of travelling
preachers in the Canada Conference” relative to the number of “travelling preachers in
the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States” (JGC 1.405). The total amount to
be divided, though enormous, was calculated beyond the last penny: $413,455.93½.
Although Case, Metcalf, and Ryerson were probably disappointed by a number of
factors—the delay a vote by the annual conferences would entail; the necessity of
accepting one last large shipment of the Concern’s commodities in Upper Canada; and
the fastidious, even penurious, way in which the worth of the Concern was calculated
with such precision—the amount of the final settlement was considerable enough to
assuage these irritants. Anson Green estimated that Canadians expected to receive from
New York some $27,000 after ratification by the annual conferences—an amount so large it would have been enough to purchase a new press for every printer operating in Upper Canada at that time (Life and Times 177, 315). Such a settlement would have conferred an almost incalculable advantage on Methodist interests north of the border, allowing Egerton Ryerson not only to underwrite the costs associated with selling British books to the Upper Canadian public through the Guardian, but also to expand his own publishing enterprise at a rate far faster than the province’s market conditions would otherwise have allowed. It would take almost a year, however, before the votes from the Methodist Episcopal Church’s nineteen annual conferences could be tabulated. Until then, the Canadians were entitled to continue receiving “the same equal annual dividend of the profits of the Book Concern as heretofore” (JGC 1.405, Bascom Church Property 39). Despite the importance of these negotiations, affairs with the British Wesleyans back in Upper Canada were not standing still. In fact, John and Egerton Ryerson were about to have a dramatic change of heart.

Scholars have found many reasons to account for the choice British Wesleyans made to return to the colony at this time—they were encouraged by the colonial administration, they were embarrassed by the political stridency of the Christian Guardian, and they were promised that all financial losses associated with their return would be absorbed by the government. None, however, has offered a compelling explanation of the sudden shift in attitude that took place in the late spring of 1832 among Upper Canadian Methodists themselves, beginning with the chair of the Canada Missions Board and the editor of the Christian Guardian. In part this is because evidence to document this critical though confined period is scanty. All that can be known for certain from surviving Canadian sources is that the radical shift began sometime in the middle of May while the General Conference continued its deliberations in Philadelphia. John Ryerson provides the fullest extant account and credits himself with first proposing some form of cooperation or “union” between Canadian Methodists and British Wesleyans:

271 John Carroll mistakenly notes the amount of the claim to have been $2,700 (CHC 4.5).
One day, while walking along Bay Street, pondering in my mind what would be the result of pending matters, and that if there was any possible way by which the impending evil could be averted, it came into my mind suddenly, as though some supernatural power had suggested it, whether or not some arrangement could not be entered into by which the Two Conferences could be united, and thus mutually help and strengthen each other, instead of devouring one another, as the enemies of Methodism were seeking that they should do, and thus prevent the further schemes and evils of divisions. (Ryerson Methodism 309)

This passage, read in isolation, has been used to support the view that fear was the chief factor that motivated John and Egerton Ryerson, as well as other Methodists, to drop their opposition in the face of Alder’s unyielding resolve. Goldwin French writes, for example, that “to those in the Conference and in the Societies who were concerned primarily with the survival of Methodism, some form of collaboration with the Wesleyans was bound to appear necessary” (137). Elizabeth Cooper implies that Upper Canadians were financially ill-equipped to compete with their wealthier cousins across the Atlantic (94, 102). And Todd Webb argues demographic shifts in Upper Canada’s Methodist population, as British Wesleyan laypersons immigrated to the province from overseas in growing numbers, rendered continued opposition impracticable (165-6).

But such arguments seem less compelling when viewed in the context of wider religious and political developments taking place in Britain and North America during these years. Much had changed in the colony since the last time Episcopal Methodists and British Wesleyans competed for converts in the province before 1820. Egerton Ryerson, never one to shrink from a fight, had successfully challenged both John Strachan and John Colborne in the public sphere and, as the editor of the Guardian, steadily moved his denomination toward the province’s religious mainstream. According to Ryerson’s own testimony, Methodism had never been stronger. “[T]he circulation and influence of the Christian Guardian (then the leading newspaper in Upper Canada),” he observed, “increased daily; the number and power of the

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272 None of the letters written or received by Egerton Ryerson between the middle of April and the middle of November 1832 survives to explain what was unfolding north of the border (Sissons 1.166-7). John Carroll also fails to shed light on this critical change of heart, simply alluding to pervasive fears of “collision and strife that might arise from the presence of rival altars” (CHC 3.353).

273 See also Semple 81 and Grant Profusion 75-6. Surprisingly, William Westfall is entirely silent on the subject in Two Worlds.
Methodist Church grew more and more every year; so that the greedy few felt that their prey was in great danger of being lost” (Ryerson Methodism 304). Those “greedy few,” whom Mackenzie had dubbed “the Family Compact,” though not moribund, had become steadily less influential since Peregrine Maitland left the colony in 1828. Whig forces in Britain, moreover, were stronger than ever and the Reform Act was on the verge of being passed into law. Nor was the financial health of Upper Canadian Methodism anywhere near as desperate as Cooper argues. Although ecclesiastically independent after 1828, the financial support Canadian Methodists received from south of the border had, far from ceased, actually grown considerably since that time. Money the American Methodists provided for the support of Native missions in Upper Canada had more than doubled from $700 to $1,500 per year (CG 20 June 1832: 126). Canadian preachers and presiding elders continued to receive the same commissions they had before 1828 and the annual dividends paid by the Methodist Book Concern to the conference as a whole had also increased. In 1831, for example, the conference received a dividend of $500. In 1832 that figure increased to $800 (UCA, Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada, Minutes, 1829-1832). And, at precisely the moment when John and Egerton Ryerson began to entertain seriously the possibility of a cooperative effort with the British Wesleyans, they stood on the verge of receiving a settlement from the Methodist Book Concern large enough to eliminate all financial worries for years to come. So confident, in fact, was Ryerson in the successful outcome of those claims, moreover, that he publicly adverted to it in the Guardian for the first and only time in the middle of May. In response to a call for more books and the establishment of a “general depository […] under the direction of the Editors” on the part of the Sabbath School Union, Ryerson attributed the lack of such a depository to the “unsettled state of the Financial affairs of the Methodist Conference, in respect to the Book Establishment” and suggested that the “inconvenience and evil” associated with a lack of suitable books would be “remedied at our ensuing Annual Conference, to be held in August” (CG 16 May 1832: 106).\footnote{Ryerson’s silence on the topic of the Canada claim against the Concern persisted even after the close of the General Conference. In his report of its proceedings published on 20 June 1832, there is no mention of the matter. One can only conclude, since so much depended on the outcome, that Ryerson continued to eschew the topic to prevent the Guardian’s non-denominational reading audience from learning of it.}
As this response suggests, Ryerson was attentive to the lasting consequences the outcome of the Canadian claims then being pursued would have on the material welfare of Upper Canadian Methodism. Indeed, it seems highly probable that John and Egerton would have both consulted with their brother William, one of the three Canadian delegates attending the General Conference in Philadelphia, on how best to convince their American brethren to agree to a financial settlement. At the same time, despite the dark view John Emory took of Ryerson’s appropriation of the Concern’s rhetoric to promote the *Christian Guardian* in a discrete colonial market, Ryerson probably understood that any formal association with the British Wesleyans, particularly if it were undertaken before the General Conference of 1832, would likely endanger Canadian claims against the Concern by altering British North American religious identity and weakening the legitimacy with which Canadians could continue to claim to be members of a single transnational market bound by common religious and financial interests. His activities in the colony’s public sphere, however, had also taught Ryerson that, as long as the claims against the Methodist Book Concern remained unsettled, the establishment of a “general depository”—notwithstanding his unofficial activities as a bookseller—would be too politically dangerous to undertake with any vigour. A merger with the British Wesleyans, on the other hand, with a financial settlement from the Concern all but in hand, would open up an alternative supply of culturally suited printed commodities from the London Book Room that could be openly sold in a public market without fear of political censure.

These thoughts were probably not far from Ryerson’s mind when his brother John approached him to discuss ways “by which the Two Conferences could be united.” Although the editor of the *Guardian* had maintained an unyielding opposition to British Wesleyan advances up to this time, even writing a letter of protest to leading British Wesleyan Richard Watson on behalf of his colonial coreligionists (French 135-6), the timing of events occurring south of the border may help to explain why John was able to convince his brother to reverse his entrenched opposition with such apparent ease. Although no record survives of the private conversations that took place between them that May, John later wrote that “After several interviews and conversations on the subject, we agreed upon the outlines of a plan of pacification, or one to prevent strife” (Ryerson *Methodism* 309). In order to “prevent strife” the plan called not only for a possible merger with the British Wesleyans, but also left the door open to accepting
British Wesleyan leadership in the colony, turning over control of Native missions to Wesleyans missionaries, and beginning to import books and periodicals from the London Book Room (Sissons 1.154). What neither man could have known, as they prepared to convince their fellow Methodists of the merits of their plan, was that negotiations in Philadelphia were not moving along as smoothly as Ryerson’s confident remark in the Christian Guardian indicates he believed they would. Had the General Conference not referred the Canadian claims against the Methodist Book Concern to the annual conferences for ratification, a return of the British Wesleyans to Upper Canada at this time would have had no material transnational implications. Ties to the Concern could have been neatly severed and the monies realized from the settlement used to establish a “general depository” whose shelves could be stocked with locally produced texts and subsidized commodities imported from overseas. Ryerson’s desire to move Methodism ever closer to the colonial mainstream by shedding lingering suspicions about disloyalty tied to material and textual practices, together with his faith that Canadian delegates attending the General Conference would have secured a settlement from the Methodist Book Concern by the end of May, cannot have weighed lightly in the balance. The moment to rid himself of all the dangers associated with selling the Concern’s products in a public market was now at hand. Not surprisingly, Ryerson played a key role in the ensuing negotiations. His plan would have been perfectly executed had not the British Wesleyans moved too quickly—or the annual conferences voted too slowly—to permit the eventual ratification of the Canadian claims Ryerson’s brother William and others had won with such difficulty in Philadelphia. As those events continued to unfold, Robert Alder was already making his way across the Atlantic.

On 7 June, Alder and a dozen other British Wesleyan missionaries arrived in Lower Canada. Three days earlier, the New England annual conference, the first annual conference to meet and vote on the Canadian claims, overwhelmingly approved the terms recommended by the General Conference with 73 in favour and 1 against (Bascom Church Property 39). Alder probably knew nothing of the votes that were being held in the United States at this time. He was equally in the dark about John Ryerson’s recent epiphany about the importance of cooperation and even union between the two bodies. Accordingly, Alder immediately appointed two British Wesleyan missionaries to begin the competition by taking up positions on two preaching circuits already
occupied by Canadian Methodists in the upper province (CHC 3.351-2). Americans, meanwhile, who knew as little of Alder as he knew of them, continued to vote on the Canada claims at their annual conferences. Not surprisingly, the claims were debated with the most energy in the New York annual conference held early that June. That conference, within which the Methodist Book Concern was located and where the current and many former book agents resided, had the most at stake. Although the vote was not close—142 in favour and 13 against—it passed only after two hours of debate and was accompanied by an ambiguous resolution that cast a moral shadow over the legitimacy of the entire claim. “That this Conference,” the resolution read, “concur in the resolutions recommended by the late General Conference in the negotiation with the Delegates from the Canada Conference respecting their claims on the Book Concern, provided, that nothing here is to be construed as an admission or denial of a claim founded in right” (UCA, Journals of the New York Conference, 1800-1839).275

Reservations of the sort expressed in this resolution underscore the fact that, even in view of the General Conference’s recommendations, the approval of the Canadian claims were far from assured. Alder’s presence, meanwhile, placed the rhetorical linkages between patronage and denominational identity in Upper Canada, linkages that were essential to the achievement of a successful outcome, under further stress.

About two weeks after the New York vote, Alder and his missionaries arrived in the upper province’s capital and inadvertently provided Ryerson and his Canadian brethren with a powerful demonstration of how a closer association with the British Wesleyans might literally open doors that had previously been impassable. No less a figure than John Strachan was on hand to welcome the new missionaries and to invite them to make use of the district grammar school for their religious services. “No instance had ever occurred, ” John Carroll complained, “of any Methodist minister preaching in one of these school houses; and no one believes that they would have been granted, if asked, to any Canadian preacher; but now the Metropolitan school-house, under the direction of the Archdeacon of York himself, is thrown open to two newly-

275 Bascom mistakenly records a date of June 1833 for the New York conference at which this vote was held. The ms. minutes, however, confirm that the vote took place a year earlier in June 1832 (Bascom Church Property 39). This is an important point since by June 1833 the proposed union between the British Wesleyans and the Upper Canadian Methodists was well known throughout the United States.
arrived Wesleyan ministers” (CHC 3.352). Ryerson moved quickly to staunch any resentment this might cause—and to signal to Strachan and his coterie that their plans to divide Methodism in the colony would not bear fruit. In the Christian Guardian on 27 June he proposed

the union of Wesleyan Methodism throughout the British Empire, as far as circumstances will justify; the incorporation of the whole into a common system of Christian conquest, upon a common principle and under a common management. It is an event which was anticipated by even American preachers, (particularly Dr. Fisk,) who advocated the separation of the Canada Connexion from the United States, at the Methodist General Conference in 1828, and which constituted a strong argument for that measure. It is an event to which we have often adverted, publicly and privately, with a feeling of strong desire, during the last four years...; an event which will afford a practical illustration of that glorious principle, that the Wesleyan Methodists are one in every part of the world. (CG 27 June 1832)

These statements were calculated to steer a middle way between the competing interests of three distinct religious communities. This one and only reference to a union—before it was formally approved at the Canada conference later that summer—appears to have been taken by Ryerson’s colonial and transnational readers alike as an expression of sentiment rather than a statement of desired polity. No evidence followed the publication of this notice to hint at the violent colonial protests that would follow a formal declaration of union with the British Wesleyans the following autumn (Semple 86-7). But even this allusion was a dangerous one—one that Ryerson would not repeat. With implications for Methodist religious identity in the province, the potential impact of such statements on developments south of the border were at least as consequential as those north of it. Ryerson’s invocation of Fisk by name betrays his awareness that this text would be read with as much interest in New York as in York. British Wesleyans, for their part, as yet knew little of what Ryerson was planning and may have been as surprised by these words as Methodists in the United States. Ryerson’s claim, however, that the Americans had, in granting separation in 1828, foreseen an eventual union between Canadian Methodists and British Wesleyans would have puzzled his readers south of the border. It will be remembered that when John Ryerson negotiated the terms of separation at the General Conference of 1828, he expressed a consistent and
unambiguous desire, in both his original and revised proposals, that British Wesleyans should remain outside the province according to the terms of the 1820 agreement with the Methodist Episcopal Church (Emory *Life* 85-110). Preachers who had attended the General Conference that year, or even read the minutes in the *Christian Advocate*, would have been surprised at Ryerson’s claim. They may have even resented it. But, without some formal action on the part of the Canada conference itself, they appear not to have allowed it to interfere with the way they perceived Upper Canadian Methodists as a body. When the Maine annual conference voted on the claim about a month later—enough time for at least some Methodists south of the border to have read Ryerson’s editorial—the vote carried easily with 71 in favour and none against. The Genesee conference met the same month with a similar outcome: 69 in favour and 1 against. Finally, in early August, the New Hampshire annual conference met and voted to approve the Canada claims with 71 in favour and none against. But by the time these final votes were being counted, Ryerson and his collaborators had already set in motion a series of events that would alter Methodist religious identity in the colony so thoroughly that Americans were free to no longer recognize them as members of a transnational community bound by a single market rhetorically situated to shore up common denominational interests.276

Alder attended a meeting of the Canada Missionary Board at the end of June. Although it began tempestuously enough, the Ryersons worked to calm the anxieties of their brethren and by its conclusion an invitation had been extended to Alder to attend the upcoming Canada conference. Meanwhile, the Board, under John Ryerson’s direction, left no ambiguity about its position and prepared “a memorial for the Conference itself, requesting it to take the matter of an organic union of the two sections of Methodism in the Province into its earnest consideration” (CHC 3.353, French 138). Alder, for his part, continued to maintain a close correspondence with Colborne, probably without the knowledge of the Ryersons (Cooper 100-2). On 5 July, the day after the opening of a new Wesleyan Chapel in York, Colborne expressed his confidence

276 Bascom records that the Oneida annual conference, which voted in favour of the claim, did not meet until sometime in 1833. This, like the date he gives for the New York annual conference, is probably incorrect in light of the evidence of other sources. Why would this single conference, meeting on 12 July, defer its deliberations while all the other annual conferences meeting at this time elected to discuss the matter? See also Anson Green *Life* 177-8.
that the Wesleyans would soon, through competition and not cooperation, have matters under control. “The Rev’d Mr. Alder,” he wrote, “the Minister sent out by the British Conference, informs me that in future they will supply the Province with Missionaries qualified to take charge of the congregations which may be established in every district” (qtd. Cooper 102). Uppermost in Alder’s mind, whether through cooperation or competition, was his goal to diminish the “Yankee influence” American Methodists, he believed, continued to exert over the colony through the Canada conference. In letters to the London Missionary Society written that July, he expressed his anxiety about securing adequate financial resources to proceed, conjecturing, “If we are to do anything with the Yankees, we must be Lords of the Treasury” (qtd. Cooper 103, Semple 82). Although he makes no mention of it in the letter, perhaps by now he had heard whisperings about the enormous amount of money Canadians continued to hope they would receive from the Methodist Book Concern and was worried, if union did not proceed, that he, not the Canadians, would be the poorer Methodists in the colony. Had events unfolded differently, had Ryerson not been so keen on finding an alternative source for printed commodities to offer to the public through the Guardian office, that would certainly have been the case. Alder’s presence in the colony, and his close connection with Colborne, however, only further complicated the Concern’s access to its denominational market in Upper Canada because Alder was both an insider and an outsider. He, unlike any conservative before him, would be in a position to discern the implications of the Concern’s rhetorical strategies for Methodist religious identity in the province. In reference to the upcoming conference to be held that August, he wrote to Colborne, “I don’t like Yankeeism. There will be no oxygen at the Conference but I mean to prepare a little to improve the atmosphere” (qtd. French 165 n27). If a union with the British Wesleyans was not possible, the Concern’s rhetoric would become more dangerous to Methodist interests than at any time before.

When the Canada conference met in Hallowell on 8 August, John and Egerton Ryerson persuaded their brethren to accept a formal union between “the English and the Canada conferences” (MAC 50). Delegates concurred, “with the Board of Missions on the inexpedience of establishing two distinct Methodist Connexions in Upper Canada” and passed a series of twelve resolutions designed to bring about a formal union between themselves and the British Wesleyans. The last of these ordered that “a Representative be sent home to England, to negotiate with the Wesleyan Committee
and Conference on the several subjects embraced in these resolutions” (*MAC* 50-2). Not surprisingly, Egerton Ryerson was appointed to be that representative (Sissons 1.154-5). But the Ryersons were not able to persuade everyone. It is significant that among the three dissenting voices—William Case, Franklin Metcalf, and Thomas Whitehead—two had represented the Canadian claims against the Methodist Book Concern in Philadelphia that past May (Green *Life* 161, French 139). William Ryerson, who had attended the General Conference with Case and Metcalf, apparently yielded to the combined suasion of his brothers. Perhaps Case and Metcalf believed, after witnessing how Emory’s observations about declining levels of patronage in Upper Canada threatened the rhetorical foundation of the Canadian claims, that the annual conferences would reverse their position if word of a Canadian union with the British Wesleyans got out. Or perhaps they believed it was fundamentally disingenuous on the part of their colonial brethren to accept a large settlement from the Methodist Episcopal Church with one hand, while surreptitiously embracing British Wesleyanism with the other. Their discomfort was doubtless increased when a letter from Beverley Waugh, John Emory’s successor as senior book agent, authorized Canadian Methodists to draw an annual dividend of $800 from the Methodist Book Concern.

Any qualms Case and Metcalf may have felt about the legitimacy with which Canadians could continue to claim a settlement in recognition of “undivided patronage”—and the damage Canadian duplicity might inflict on their own reputations south of the border as those preachers who had represented the Canada claim only three months earlier—did not dissuade their brethren either from proceeding with the “union” or from incorporating into the very fabric of their plan a means for supplying themselves with books and periodicals produced by the London Book Room. Carroll notes that “Minute ‘instructions’ were drawn up for the guidance of the representative, which were approved by the Conference” (*CHC* 3.362). In addition to a number of stipulations, including that local preachers already working in the province would experience no reduction in rights as Methodists ministers, Ryerson was “authorized to negotiate with the Wesleyan Committee and Conference respecting a Book Concern and the establishment of a depository in this province with special reference to the interests of Sabbath Schools” (*UCA, Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada, Minutes*, 1829-
Although some of the money from the Concern would doubtless be used to fulfill that purpose, Ryerson, it seems, intended to pay it to the London Book Room, not the Methodist Book Concern, to supply him with those commodities. Thus, at long last, Ryerson would be able openly to sell Methodist books and periodicals in a public market without fear of political censure. A certain duplicity, however, had been required to achieve the desired outcome. In a letter written near the end of the conference, on 17 August, Ryerson confided to Alder, “We have given your Conference greater power than the opposition itself is at all aware of … I framed all the resolutions with a view to this, so as not to destroy or weaken the effects of its operation. I therefore appeared very liberal and seemed to concede to the opposition a great deal when in fact I knew were giving them nothing” (qtd. French 139, not in Sissons).

Ryerson was coy with more than his fellow preachers. As his gaze remained fixed on events unfolding south of the border, he mentioned nothing of the proposed union—with the one noted exception—in the pages of the Guardian. His silence appears to have been undertaken strategically to prevent Americans from learning the full extent of what was transpiring in Upper Canada. His caution was borne out when the annual conferences swiftly turned against the Canadian claims when word of the union spread across the border. News of the union was finally made public in the Christian Guardian on 29 August—ten days after the Canada conference had concluded its deliberations. John Durbin, elected to succeed Bangs as editor at the 1832 General Conference, rushed an announcement into the Christian Advocate shortly after receiving

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277 These “stipulations” were never made public, either in the Christian Guardian, or in the printed minutes of the Canada conference. The wording is reminiscent of the only time, last May, that Ryerson publicly acknowledged the implications a settled claim might have on Upper Canadians by allowing for the establishment of a “general depository […] under the direction of the Editors” at York with a special eye to the needs of the province’s Sabbath schools (CG 16 May 1832: 106).

278 Webster adds that, not only were the disadvantages of union not adequately explored, but some of the most “objectionable features” were deliberately concealed to all but “a few” (History 259-60).

279 Despite Ryerson’s sustained efforts to shroud the union in secrecy until the last possible moment, however, the news seems to have reached at least some American Methodists before a formal announcement appeared in the Christian Guardian. On the 23rd of August, shortly after negotiations in Upper Canada had concluded, the Pittsburgh annual conference became the first to not only deny but to reject overwhelmingly the claims of the Canadians against the Concern in a vote of 62 against and only 6 in favour. (Bascom Church Property 39). They would be the first of many.
this issue.\textsuperscript{280} The 21 September issue of the \textit{Advocate} contained almost an entire page on Methodist affairs in Upper Canada. Aware that votes on the Canada claim were then underway, Durbin drew the special attention of “the members of our annual conference” to the “Union of Methodists in Canada and Great Britain” and reprinted from the \textit{Guardian} all twelve resolutions passed by the Canada conference on that matter the previous August (CA 21 September 1832: 15). The effect of the announcement was, as Ryerson doubtless feared, devastating. Every conference that voted after the appearance of this notice overwhelmingly rejected the Canadian claims. Although many of these were southern conferences, whose members may have been less inclined from the outset, they also included the Philadelphia and Baltimore conferences. The first of these rejected the claim on 24 April 1833 with a vote of 89 against and 1 in favour while the second, voting on 5 April 1833, unanimously rejected the Canada claim with 90 votes. In the end, far from achieving the required three-fourth majority, the total number of votes against the claim amounted to 758 with only 599 in favour (Bascom \textit{Church Property} 39). The part Durbin’s announcement played in bringing about this outcome was not lost on Canadian Methodists. “Every Conference,” Anson Green noted with some bitterness in his journal, “before which it was laid by the Bishops, voted yea, until the \textit{Advocate} called their attention to our proposed union with the British Conference; after that significant hint, they all voted nay” (Life and Times 178).\textsuperscript{281}

Meanwhile, back in Upper Canada, Ryerson’s strategy of keeping word out of the \textit{Guardian} to prevent an American backlash against the Canadian claims was having negative repercussions of its own. Chief among the complaints raised by dissenters was the fact that the Canada conference had refused to consult Methodist societies across the province before acting. Some even called the legality of the resolutions into question on these grounds. “The matter had not been laid before the societies,” the argument ran, “…and therefore that the preachers composing this Conference had merely legislated themselves.” The proposed union, as a consequence, “was therefore not binding upon

\textsuperscript{280} It would have taken about two weeks for the \textit{Guardian} to reach New York. In addition, type for the \textit{Advocate} had to be set well in advance to allow enough time for printing.

\textsuperscript{281} John Carroll echoed Green in a later assessment, writing that ratification seemed favourable until “news of our proposed union with the parent body in England was announced in the columns of the \textit{Christian Advocate and Journal} … and from that out, all the Annual Conferences negated our claim” (CHC 4.5).
any excepting those who chose to accept it” (Webster History 285). This reversal had come about primarily because, back in May, when he and his brother first began to lay plans that would lead to eventual union, they had no reason to suspect that the Canadian claims would take so long to be ratified. As Ryerson’s notice in the Guardian suggests, he fully expected the Canadian delegates to the General Conference to return from Philadelphia a settlement in hand. Instead, with a protracted vote among annual conferences taking place over the course of an entire year, Ryerson had been obliged to remain silent on the matter of a proposed union with the British Wesleyans for as long as possible—failing not only to notify his colonial coreligionists of what was transpiring, but also passing up an opportunity to offer to Upper Canada’s reading public compelling evidence, through the mere willingness of Upper Canadians to merge with the British Wesleyans, of Methodism’s loyalty to British institutions. Ryerson’s failure to inform his denominational readers of what was transpiring inadvertently laid a solid foundation for a schism among his colonial brethren that would endure beyond his own lifetime.282

Although doubtless disappointed with their reversals south of the border, Canadian Methodists lost no time making alternative arrangements to supply themselves with printed religious commodities from overseas. As Ryerson explained in a letter written to Alder that November, he was already, albeit with difficulty, raising money to pay for his passage to England where he would negotiate terms for the importation of books with the London Book Room (Sissons 1.169-70). In the meantime, even William Case, whom Ryerson criticized in his letter to Alder, began urging Peter Jones and James Evans to make arrangements with the British and Foreign Bible Society, rather than the Methodist Book Concern, to print their Native translations of the gospels (CHC 3.367-70). As the year moved towards it close, Canadian Methodist preachers did what they could to contend with opposition to the proposed union on their own circuits and a fear that the loss of financial support from the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Book Concern might permanently damage Methodist fortunes in the upper province. Most of these concerns were reflected in a letter written in October to both William Case and William Ryerson in which a local

282 The locus of opposition was centered in the Local Preacher’s District Conference which passed a series of ten resolutions opposing the proposed union. For more see Webster History 267-70.
preacher, Justus Williams, decried the lack of consultation not only with lay Methodists, but also with quarterly and district meetings—a “courtesy at least required in a matter fraught with such mighty consequences as the contemplated union.” Among the many dangers of union, Williams cited a suspension of “further payment of funds from the American Church” as well as “hazard to the ownership of church property” flowing from changes in polity attending the union (UCA, Egerton Ryerson correspondence, Justus Williams to William Case and Egerton Ryerson; not in Sissons). Both concerns proved prescient. That month, moreover, two more annual conferences unanimously rejected the Canada claims against the Concern: Indiana in a vote of 36 to 0 and Kentucky in a vote of 66 to 0. It would seem that leading British Wesleyan Richard Watson’s promise to the colonial secretary, Lord Goderich, was all but assured. “The influence of the United States,” he wrote in November, “will therefore be utterly shut out and the whole of the Methodists in Upper Canada become integral parts of our general body and subject to its general rules” (qtd. French 140). This “shutting out” of American influence applied, especially for Ryerson, as much to print culture as it did to polity.

The following March, Ryerson left York for England by way of Kingston and New York (Sissons 1.171, Case 3.362, Parker Beginnings of the Book Trade 123). Somewhat surprisingly, and perhaps a little disingenuously, Ryerson reported a “friendly” meeting between himself, Nathan Bangs, Wilbur Fisk, and others (Hodgins Story 115). “I have conversed with them all,” he wrote to his brother John, “and they seem to approve of the proceedings of our conference in the affair” (Sissons 1.175-6). Durbin even asked Ryerson to provide him with regular reports of his work in England for publication in the American newspaper. Ryerson, who agreed but did not comply, must have known that the approval Bangs, Durbin, and even Fisk, expressed about the proposed union was contingent on the rejection of the Canadian claims against the Methodist Book Concern then underway. Indeed, as Ryerson prepared to disembark, the Virginia annual conference met and, like those before it, unanimously rejected the

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283 Methodist opposition to the proposed union had made the raising of funds for Ryerson’s journey difficult. Dissatisfaction was so strong, writes Webster, “that the Methodist people generally refused to contribute sufficient means to defray the expenses of the delegate to and from England. He therefore had recourse to other measures in order to raise it” (History 267).
Canada claims in a vote of 84 to 0. Ryerson left New York on 22 March and one week later Durbin, in the wake of Ryerson’s visit, reminded his readers once again about the proposed union between the British Wesleyans and the Canada conference, even publishing a letter written by Alder outlining some of its terms (CA 29 March 1833: 124).

By the time Ryerson met with the Missionary Committee in June 1833, at least five more annual conferences had met and rejected the Canada claims. In early August the British Wesleyans in England wrote to the Canada conference to supply them with formal Articles of Union (MAC 58-60, 63-6). Among other things, they insisted, presumably with Ryerson’s agreement, that “the Christian Guardian become strictly a religious newspaper like the New York Christian Advocate and that it shall not attack the principle of receiving aid from Government for the extension of religion” (French 140). It is surprising that Ryerson, so active in the colony’s public sphere, would agree to this stipulation. Indeed, just over a year earlier, Ryerson had explained in the Guardian that it was different from the Advocate not in conviction but only in context. But Ryerson, apparently, was willing to set such arguments aside in order to smooth the way towards union and secure a supply of printed commodities that he could sell in York without fear of censure. With these terms in hand, Ryerson undertook the return voyage to Upper Canada towards the end of the summer, through New York, in the company of two more British Wesleyans, incoming president George Marsden and Joseph Stinson. In mid-September a notice describing the successful outcome of Ryerson’s negotiations in England appeared in the Christian Advocate. “It is a matter of much joy,” the Advocate reported, “that we learn from all parties, that there is reasonable prospect of adjusting this important matter to the satisfaction and mutual

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284 These were the Holstein annual conference on 29 March in a vote of 34 against and 8 in favour, the Baltimore annual conference on 5 April in a vote of 90 against and 0 in favour, the South Carolina annual conference in 22 April in surprisingly close vote of 26 against and 24 in favour, the Philadelphia annual conference in a vote of 89 against and 1 in favour, and the Mississippi annual conference in a vote of 15 against and 7 in favour (Bascom Church Property 39).

285 The Guardian differed from the Advocate, he wrote, “Because the evil against which we contend and are compelled to defend ourselves, does not exist there. There is no dominant church there,—the form of religious faith is not made a test of loyalty there—there are no political churches there … The N. Y. Ch. Advocate has always been most watchful and zealous in detecting and exposing any measures that had the least tendency towards a union of Church and State: and our polemic’s argument from that example is like a sword in [the Guardian’s detractor’s] own bowels” (CG 6 June 1832: 118).
advantage of all ... These English brethren have been in our city for a few days, and are now proceeding to Canada. May heaven guide and protect them, and send success to their good and excellent mission” (CA 13 September 1833: 10).

Highly disingenuous, the notice was perhaps published only to confirm with members of the annual conferences that they had indeed done the right thing when they rejected the claims of the Canada conference even before a union with the British Wesleyans could be formally enacted in polity. After all, what may have been an agreement for the “mutual advantage” of the Upper Canadians and the British Wesleyans was most certainly not calculated for the advantage of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States. As Ryerson worked to move the colony’s Methodist print culture ever further toward the religious mainstream by negotiating terms with the London Book Room to supply Upper Canadians with books and periodicals, the Methodist Book Concern’s colonial market threatened to dwindle away to almost nothing. But cost he and his coreligionists paid for severing these inconvenient linkages was undeniably high as Canadian Methodists found themselves deprived of a financial settlement that would have equaled almost seven years of full government support for British Wesleyan missions in the colony.

With that money Upper Canadians would have been able to establish the Upper Canada Academy on the firmest of financial footings. Without it, they were obliged to beg the British Wesleyans, as Ryerson had done while in England, for financial rescue (French 152). Indeed, as the dust settled, it would become apparent even to the Ryersons that the only real winners were the British Wesleyans who gained both a new mission field and opened a new market for their printed commodities in Upper Canada.

None of this was yet clear when Ryerson first unveiled the agreement he had reached with the London Book Room at a special meeting of the Canada conference that October. Containing a detailed summation of precise terms by which Canadian

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286 This notice was published together with a short letter written by Ryerson to the Advocate excusing himself for not fulfilling his earlier promise to write weekly with his “observations on English Methodism” (CA 13 September 1833: 10).

287 The figure later settled upon, though always contentious and not reliably paid, was £900 per year (Cooper 103, French 138, Semple 83). The $27,000 Green estimated as the amount of the Canadian claims roughly equaled in value £6,000 at the time Ryerson negotiated this agreement with the London Book Room (Green Life 177, 315). Rates of conversion are based on tables provided in Francis Grund’s 1834 edition of The Merchant’s Assistant published in Boston (301).
Methodists would begin to import books, periodicals, tracts, hymn books, stationary, and other such commodities from London, Ryerson’s report merits close attention.

The next object to which I was instructed to direct my attention was to negotiate some plan by which we might procure a supply of English Books, both for Sabbath Schools and the Connexion at large. It may be remarked, that English Editions of Books are in general sold at a higher price than American but they excell [sic] as much, if not more, in quality than they are higher in price. Hence those of our friends and of the public, who wish to procure the best editions of valuable books, will purchase the English; whilst those to whom the mere cheapness of a book, and not the quality and style of its execution, is the principal consideration, will purchase the American Editions. Upon this plan our purchases of the New York Book Room will not be materially lessened, and we shall possess the additional advantage of being able, to supply the Connexion with English Editions of any Book published in England. This I think we can do even at the London retail prices, from the very liberal terms on which the Methodist Book Agent & Committee in London have agreed to answer our orders. These terms were first agreed upon by Mr. Mason, the Book Agent, and myself, & sanctioned afterwards by the unanimous vote of the Book Committee, at one of its regular Meetings. The terms of agreement are as follows: -

1\textsuperscript{st} All orders for Books, &c., to be considered bone fide sales, and to be regularly paid for according to subsequent agreement, and not liable to be returned to the Book Room in London.

2\textsuperscript{nd} The Canadian Conference to be held responsible for the payment of all Books, or sent to the Order of their Agent at a credit of 12 months, and the amount to be settled either by Bill in London, or order upon the Treasurers of the Missionary Society. The first payment to become due at the Canada Conference in 1834.

3\textsuperscript{rd} The Books to be delivered in Quebec or Montreal free of freight, to an Agent to be appointed by the Canada Conference, and they to take all further charge upon themselves. The Packing cases to be charged in the Invoices.

4\textsuperscript{th} Rates of discount to be allowed.

(1.) A discount of 35 percent to be allowed upon the Magazine, Youths Instructions, Childs Magazine, Sunday School Record Books, and all other Books, either in numbers, parts, or volumes in Boards, which are the property of the Book Room, (Books and Tracts Excepted,) 13 copies of each to be charged as 12 copies.
Acceptance of these terms by Canadian Methodists had the desired outcome of providing Ryerson with a ready supply of books and periodicals that were culturally suitable for public sale in the colony. Although Ryerson did not foresee with equal clarity all the consequences that would eventually follow, it seems obvious that his desire appears to have been eventually to supplant the Concern’s products with those from the London Book Room in both public and denominational markets. Thus conference delegates also passed a resolution that “the English Wesleyan Hymn Book be introduced into our congregations as soon as circumstance will admit” (UCA, Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada Annual Conference Minutes 1833-1840).

And yet the border could not abruptly be closed to the Concern’s products without seriously damaging Methodist print culture in the province. Ryerson admits as much when he concedes that some may be obliged to choose commodities printed in
the United States on grounds of economy. This appears to have been a deliberate effort on his part to oversimplify the demands of the colony’s denominational market. Ryerson well knew that the colony’s Methodists, as participants in the Concern’s transnational market, had long been conditioned to understand the purchase of Methodist books as something more than a straightforward exchange of goods. On the other hand, Ryerson imputes to members of the wider public market motivations that transcend the purely economic. These consumers, he argues, will prefer the London Book Room’s not only for the “quality and style” of their execution but also the social status their ownership would confer. By contrast, and despite the conference’s resolution about British hymnbooks, Ryerson knew that the majority of the province’s Methodists, particularly those who resided in many of the colony’s least developed regions, would have had little money to afford such luxuries and would have been far less attentive to the social distinction promised by a British imprint than to the religious status the Concern’s commodities had conferred on Methodist readers for decades. Consequently, the preference of such consumers for books from the United States, as Ryerson well knew, ran much deeper than their “mere cheapness.” Although premature, this early attempt on Ryerson’s part to portray the Concern’s books and periodicals as straightforward commodities, rather than denominational status objects,

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288 A comparison of several core titles offered by both the London Book Room and the Methodist Book Concern throughout the 1830s may suffice to illustrate the kinds of pricing disparities that existed. Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress, for example, was sold by the Methodist Book Concern for 25¢ while the London Book Room offered the same item in 12mo for a costly 6s, or approximately $1.50. Joseph Alleine’s Alarm to the Unconverted with Richard Baxter’s Call to the Unconverted were offered bound together by the Methodist Book Concern (probably in 12mo) for 50¢. The London Book Room, on the other hand, sold these titles in 18mo bound in sheep separately, Alleine’s Alarm for 1s 6d and Baxter’s Call for 1s 3d for a combined price of 2s 9d or approximately 69¢. A narrower gap in pricing can be observed with Baxter’s Saints’ Everlasting Rest which was offered in 12mo by both the Methodist Book Concern for 75¢ and the London Book Room for 3s 6d, or 87½¢ (“General Alphabetical Catalogue of Books” CA 18 April 1835: 111, “A new edition of Baxter’s Saints’ Everlasting Rest” CA 31 March 1837:127, John Mason Valuable Books London 1838). Comparisons of this kind, it must be admitted, are difficult to make with absolute certainty since information relating to format and binding is not always provided, particularly in the Concern’s newspaper catalogues. As a general rule, however, it seems that only hymn books and tracts were regularly offered in sizes smaller than 12mo. and sheep bindings appear to have been fairly standard for canonical texts of the variety noted here. Rates of conversion are based on tables provided in Francis Grund’s 1834 edition of The Merchant’s Assistant published in Boston (301).

289 British Wesleyan Frederick Jobson, on a tour of the American Bible Society’s enormous printing facilities in New York in the 1850s, similarly noted that “there, as elsewhere, the general inferiority of the paper upon which their printing is executed by the Americans, and also the want of breadth and fullness in the type. We had each presented to us a large octavo copy of the Book of Psalms, in the very best style of the society’s printing; but while superior in itself, yet, when placed beside an English copy of the same size, and challenged to say which was the American, I had no difficulty in doing so” (America and American Methodism 31).
foreshadowed later developments that would more effectively sever linkages between the ongoing purchase of these products and developing Methodist religious identity in Upper Canada. It also may have helped to reduce the rhetorical advantages the Concern’s products might continue to have over the London Book Room’s commodities. Because Wesley’s cultural capital had not declined in Britain as it had in America, British Wesleyans had never been obliged to insulate the London Book Room’s products from the editions of competitors but situating them in the market as religious status objects. This left British Wesleyans at greater liberty to dispose of profits from the sale of Methodist books than American Methodists. But it also prevented the sale of such commodities from being used to strengthen nascent bonds between Methodist societies in Britain and Upper Canada at a critical time when the union was being called into question on all sides. In other words, the printed commodities of the London Book Room were not rhetorically situated to foster transatlantic denominational cohesion with the same efficacy that the Concern’s books and periodicals had reinforced the transnational religious identity of Methodists in North America. Unless the Concern’s products were stripped of their function as denominational status objects, then, the London Book Room’s commodities would continue to seem pale substitutes in comparison.

The complexity of these cultural considerations was matched by the economic difficulties attendant on displacing the Concern’s products. Although he was anxious to put a good face on it, the London Book Room’s commodities would not be nearly as affordable as Ryerson’s report implied. The vast majority of what Ryerson would import from the London Book Room would be regulated by the terms of the second clause of the fourth paragraph and sold to him at a discounted rate of 35%. By comparison, the Methodist Book Concern offered a standard discount of 18% directly to

290 For this reason, British Wesleyans held Wesley in higher veneration than their colonial counterparts. While in England as a representative of the Friends of Religious Liberty, George Ryerson complained of the “blind veneration for the writings of Mr. Wesley” he encountered among British Wesleyans. Although “excellent in themselves” Ryerson objected to placing them above the writings of other Methodists on the grounds that they were “not inspired & contain[ed] much of human infirmity & the prejudices of a High Church education” (Sissons 1.137)

291 The situation was further exacerbated when Ryerson and the British Wesleyans indicated in their agreement that books would be shipped at a higher cost through Quebec and Montreal rather than New York.
preachers on the sale of its books. These figures, however, can be taken only as starting place when calculating overall affordability. Some of the books written by Methodism’s most popular authors, for example, appear not to have been the “property” of the London Book Room and were offered at the much less significant discount of $17.5\%$. It is rather astonishing, for example, that Adam’s Clarke’s very popular commentary (though offered at the higher discount of $25\%$) appears to have fallen into this category.\(^{292}\) The colony’s preachers, moreover, were no longer permitted to place orders directly with suppliers, but only from Ryerson who was placed at the head of a new depository that interposed itself between both the London Book Room and the Methodist Book Concern and those who would sell their products throughout Upper Canada. Thus with a newfound supply of products suitable for sale in the colony’s public market now secured, the Canada conference resolved “That a depository of books be established in York” under the direction of William Case, Egerton Ryerson, and the newly arrived British Wesleyan Joseph Stinson (MAC 57). Ryerson’s power to control the supply of printed commodities to the public as well as to all the province’s preachers was stipulated in another resolution that read, “[N]o Preacher shall order, or in any way procure books for sale, except through the Book Agent or the Committee” (MAC 58). These resolutions not only resulted in a sweeping reduction in commissions paid to preachers on books and periodicals sold along their circuits, but also decreased the potential vigour with which they would continue to carry out their work as colporteurs. Until October 1833, preachers had filled their saddlebags by placing orders either through their presiding elders or directly with the Concern’s agents themselves.\(^{293}\)

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\(^{292}\) This circumstances appears to be reflective of the relatively important position that authors continued to occupy in the religious field of cultural production overseas. In America, by contrast, the Concern’s rhetorical strategies, and the terms of the Federal Copyright Act, helped to relegate the author to a position of secondary importance next to the publisher. The Concern did not make a similar distinction between books it owned and those it did not own. Such distinction only came into play when the Concern acted as an intermediary between Methodist preachers and other publishers to acquire books printed by others as commodities—not as containers for the intellectual property of British writers.

\(^{293}\) Anson Green, then assigned to the Dundas circuit, noted in 1828 that “the people very much depend on us for their books. The agents in New York send them on sale to the Presiding Elder, and we get them from him and supply our people as best we can” (Life and Times 111-112). Other Canadian preachers appear to have dealt directly with the Concern. Around the time Green recorded this observation one can also find the names of a number of Canadian preachers listed in the Advocate as the direct recipients of orders including Avah Adams (14 September 1827, 21 September 1827, 28 September 1827, 18 January 1828), George Bissell (31 August 1827), David Breakenridge (14 September 1827), William Brown (7 September 1827, 23 November 1827, 7 December 1827), Sylvanus Keeler (28 September 1827), Thomas Madden (4 January 1828), Francis Metcalf (9 November 1827, 14 December 1827, 11 January 1828), George Poole (21 December 1827), James Wilson (24 August 1827, 19 October 1827, 28 December 1827), and David
Since the General Conference of 1812, the margin preachers could claim on the sale of these products hovered around 12-18%. Presiding elders also received a 6% commissions on books sold throughout their districts (JGC 1.118-9). Occasionally commissions could be much higher. In 1824, for example, Bangs noted midway through his tenure as senior book agent, that the difficulties in making up preachers’ salaries were so pronounced that "the conference stewards usually settle[d] with the preachers at a discount from thirty to sixty per cent" (History 3.265). And in 1828, commissions on the sale of books already in the hands of presiding elders and preachers were increased to 40% in order to liquidate some of the Concern’s debt. Of this, 26% went to the preacher making the sale and 13% to his presiding elder (JGC 1.349). Finally, books purchased by a preacher for his own use were sold at a discount of just over 33% (JGC 1.287). Under the arrangements adopted by Canadian Methodists in October 1833, however, a standard discount of only 10% was offered on the sale of “all the books they order” (MAC 58).

Under these new terms, then, individual preachers were left with more expensive commodities to sell, smaller commissions, and no recourse to supply themselves with cheaper products by placing orders directly with the Concern. It is not difficult to discern signs of Ryerson’s confidence that his denomination was at last beyond reproach in its newfound polity and that its print culture was securely within his own power to regulate after his reelection to the editorship the Guardian in October 1833. That month the Guardian took a sharp turn to the right with the appearance of a provocative condemnation of British radicalism in an article Ryerson innocuously entitled “Impressions Made By Our Late Visit to England.” Its publication strongly

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Wright (2 November 1827, 30 November 1827). These preachers, presumably, would not have had to share the commission the sale of these books with their presiding elders.

294 Perhaps Ryerson believed this would be an adequate discount on the ground that he had offered a 10% the sale of locally produced Discipline in 1830 (UCA, Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada Conference Minutes, 1829-1832). The Discipline, however, was one of Methodism’s best-selling titles. The Canadian edition, moreover, provided colonial Methodists with a unique text. Other books were not comparable.

295 This eliminated earlier problems Ryerson had encountered regulating his inventory after the Canada conference in 1830 required him to accept any surplus books preachers could not sell in York (UCA, Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada Conference Minutes, 1829-1832).
suggests that he had finally ceased to care about what either the province’s reformers or Methodists in the United States thought. Equating Joseph Hume’s atheistic radicalism with republicanism, Ryerson, though warning readers to be wary of all political “parties,” clearly put the best face on what he termed British Wesleyanism’s “moderate toryism” (CG 30 October 1833, French 142-3, Semple 89-90, Wilton 155). It seems likely that Ryerson published this piece at least in part to please the British Wesleyans. If so, however, he missed his mark. It was, after all, a political statement of sorts and on those grounds Stinson wrote Alder within two weeks suggesting that the Christian Guardian must either be discontinued entirely or devoted exclusively to religious and scientific subjects from that point onward (French 146). Mackenzie denounced Ryerson as a traitor and declared that the Guardian had “gone over to the enemy, press, types & all, and hoisted the colours of a cruel, vindictive tory priesthood” (Colonial Advocate 30 October 1833; French 144, Friskney “Methodist Book and Publishing House” 59, Wilton 155). Although the Christian Advocate was more circumspect, Durbin knew that his readers could be counted upon to deplore Ryerson’s sentiments without much encouragement from him. When he reprinted the “Impressions” a month later, rather than condemn Ryerson as Mackenzie had, Durbin simply pointed out that Ryerson was no longer one of them. Instead, he was to be understood as “a British subject writing of British affairs” (CA 29 November 1833: 53). As someone writing outside their community of interest—denominational and national—Ryerson simply could not be expected to share the same opinions. The rhetorical bonds that had formerly linked Upper Canadian Methodism with its parent in the United States through a common market for printed religious commodities seemed at last to be well and truly severed.

Ryerson, who continued to receive the Christian Advocate at the Guardian office, probably cared little when he learned that Durbin had reprinted his article. With an alternative supply of books arranged from the London Book Room, and the border fortified against the Concern’s products, he appears to have believed that the Concern’s access to its colonial market had entered a period of irrevocable decline even without a financial settlement. In any event, he had more than enough to worry about simply

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Sissons reproduces the first part of Ryerson’s “Impressions” as well as Mackenzie’s response and Ryerson’s response to Mackenzie in the CG of 6 November 1833). Ryerson concluded his response by dismissing “Mr. Mackenzie from our columns” (Sissons 1.193-205).
dealing with the fallout his declaration of conservatism caused in Upper Canada. William Ryerson wrote to complain that publication of Ryerson’s “Impressions” had noticeably diminished the Guardian’s popularity in the province (Sissons 1.206-9). “I should much regret its appearance,” John Ryerson also admitted, were it not for the fact that it helped set Methodism apart from radicalism in the colony (Sissons 1.210-2). And Ryerson’s younger brother, Edwy, complained that the article had made it difficult not only to collect money owed on existing subscriptions, but impossible to solicit new ones (Sissons 1.217-8). As subscription money dried up, the cost of books Ryerson imported for sale at the Guardian office began to weigh more heavily in the balance. Soon even Ryerson’s denominational market—a market whose needs he had neglected in his rush to acquire printed commodities more suited to Upper Canada’s wider reading public—began to shrink under the political pressures that flowed from his efforts to distance colonial Methodism from reformism. In the years immediately following, a large proportion of Upper Canadian Methodists responded not only by abandoning their subscriptions to the Guardian, but by forswearing their membership in the new Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada altogether (MAC 75-85, Semple 86-90). None of this, moreover, was helped by the uncertain state of the province’s denominational market for Methodist texts. Because the London Book Room’s products did not function as denominational status objects, their sale did little to consolidate Methodists into a single community of common religious interest across the province. In addition, individual preachers had lost much of their incentive to operate as enterprising colporteurs when their connection to the Methodist Book Concern was severed by the Canada conference in October 1833. Not only could they not avail themselves of the Concern’s less expensive products and higher commissions, they could no longer promote the purchase of those commodities as acts of denominational solidarity.

297 Edwy Ryerson also signed a letter written by himself and four other Methodists protesting Ryerson’s change in editorial policy. “[O]ur political views,” the letter explained, “are decidedly the same which they were previous to the visit of the Editor of the Guardian to England; and we believe that the views of our brethren in the ministry are unchanged” (Sissons 1.214-5).

298 The new Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada recorded Methodism’s largest decline since the War of 1812 in June 1834 with a loss of 1,109 members. In a show of strength by those opposed to union, moreover, James Richardson was elected editor of the Guardian. Only after his refusal of the post did Ryerson secure re-election (French 149). Far more seriously, an entirely separate Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada was formed on 25 June 1834 in the provincial capital (Webster 314).
Despite Ryerson’s expectations to the contrary in 1833, Upper Canadian dealings with the Methodist Book Concern were far from concluded. Although the London Book Room’s commodities were culturally suited to meet the demands of the colony’s public market, it soon became clear that they would remain beyond the reach of many of the province’s poorer Methodists. Subsequent efforts to publish their own books for denominational consumption, moreover, despite Ryerson’s early success with a Canadian edition of the *Discipline*, did little to assuage these problems. Unable to rely either on their own books or commodities imported from London, Canadian Methodists found themselves unable to sever their relationship with the Methodist Book Concern. Instead, they began to develop a variety of strategies for decoupling the material and cultural aspects of the Concern’s products in order to continue availing themselves of the Concern’s cheap commodities without undermining the political gains they had achieved through union. This study’s final chapter will consider the competing cultural and economic demands these strategies imposed on the religious identities of Canadian Methodists at a time when internal and external pressures resulted in the movement’s most pronounced statistical contractions since the War of 1812.
Chapter 5

The cultural unmaking of the Concern’s commodities in Upper Canada

In the autumn of 1837, James Evans, the same preacher whose opposition to government agents in the colony’s backwoods had precipitated a public confrontation between Methodists and the lieutenant governor in the early 1830s, returned to Upper Canada after a three months’ absence in New York. He brought with him nine large boxes of books from the Methodist Book Concern, seven bundles of Ojibway spelling books in sheets, and seventeen boxes of stereotype plates that would be used to produce the colony’s first Methodist hymnbook (CHC 4.174). Four years earlier, John and Egerton Ryerson hardly could have imagined an event less likely. At that time their combined efforts to insulate Methodism from the criticism of political conservatives had just yielded a formal ecclesiastical union with the British Wesleyans. Egerton Ryerson had also returned from England bringing an agreement with the London Book Room to supply him with Methodist books and periodicals that he intended to use to supplant the Concern’s rhetorically-encumbered products in a market that was no longer neatly divisible into denominational and public segments. And yet, by 1837, Evans’s dealings in New York were undertaken not only with the full knowledge of the colony’s most prominent Methodists, but as an official agent operating on behalf of the Canada conference’s Book Committee. The two leading voices on that Committee, moreover, were none other than those of John and Egerton Ryerson (UCA, “Book Committee Minutes” 15 July 1837). What had changed?

The years following the union of the British Wesleyans with their Methodist counterparts in Upper Canada were particularly unsettled ones in the political and religious life of the province. The strivings of an increasingly radicalized reform movement kept the colony in a state of almost continuous political turmoil that culminated in the mounting of an armed rebellion in December 1837 (Wilton 189-93, Mills Idea of Loyalty 107-8). This was followed by several small but worrying invasions of the province by American patriots in subsequent years (French 176, Craig 256, 258).
The failure of the Rebellion, and the public executions that followed it, exacerbated political differences (McNairn 203-11). Lord Durham’s famous report, though intended to assuage these differences, was instead initially greeted with suspicion and outright resistance on the part of those who remained skeptical about the prospect of responsible government in the Canadas (Wilton 194-220). During these fractious years, the value of real estate plummeted, and many colonists permanently abandoned Upper Canada for brighter prospects in the United States and Britain (Scrope, Memoirs of the Life of Sydenham 1.552). The union of the Canadas, effected in February 1841 by an act of the British Parliament, instigated yet another period of political uncertainty as many of the colony’s moderates, among whom Egerton Ryerson then counted himself, continued to fear that it embodied too little in the way of democratic reforms (Sissons 1.576-7).

Relations between the colony’s own Methodists and British Wesleyan missionaries during these years were at least as stormy. From its inception, the ecclesiastical union was marred by small but stubborn pockets of resistance on both sides. The most serious of these soon evolved into a rival ecclesiastical entity, the Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada, whose members set about claiming title to several of Methodism’s most valuable chapels across the province (Ryerson Methodism 274-280, Semple 90). To make matters worse, open dissent erupted between some of the province’s leading moderate Methodists and the consistently more conservative British Wesleyan leadership over the treatment of rebels in the wake of the 1837 Rebellion (CHC 4.179; French 161-2, 171). This was followed by mounting dissatisfaction on the part of British Wesleyans with the Christian Guardian’s unyielding calls for the disestablishment of the Church of England and the secularization of the Clergy Reserves (Ryerson Canadian Methodism 324ff., Semple 92). These disagreements reached a critical point when the British Wesleyans unilaterally dissolved the union with their Canadian brethren in the summer of 1840 (French 196, Webb 170-1).299 This left the British Wesleyans free to wrestle with a variety of internal controversies related to growing strains that Tractarianism and Puseyism

299 Although French claims the union did not collapse until Canadian Methodists met in October 1840, British Wesleyan resolutions resulted in their own complete withdrawal in July (196). By the time the Canada conference reconvened in the autumn, in fact, British Wesleyans had already established a rival, though short-lived, periodical, The Wesleyan, in Montreal. Although Todd Webb notes that The Wesleyan was relocated to Toronto in 1841, he does not mention that it ceased publication the following year because of financial losses (Webb 174, Semple 96). For a detailed account of British Wesleyan proceedings to dissolve the union, including excerpts from the conference minutes, see Benjamin Gregory’s Side Lights on the Conflicts of Methodism, 1827-1852 291-295.
were placing on their continued support for the principle of church establishment in England and Scotland (Webb 178-180). After a hiatus of seven years, Canadian Methodists and British Wesleyans, weary of competition and both changed by the events of the intervening years, embraced terms for reunification that endured on a more permanent basis (Semple 98-9).

Recent historians of religion in Upper Canada have tended to concentrate much of their attention on tracing what they argue was, despite the temporary suspension of the union between 1840 and 1847, a steadily increasing British Wesleyan influence over the development of Methodism’s colonial religious identity throughout the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Todd Webb correctly observes, for example, that, “The union of 1833 was more a matter of absorption than an agreement between equals” (167). Whether from a perspective of polity or print culture, it is beyond dispute that at that time the Ryersons and their followers were willing to accept British leadership at every level of institutional Methodism. In the years immediately following ecclesiastical union, British Wesleyans assumed direction of the Canada conference and the Upper Canada Academy, and exerted an increasingly profound influence over the daily operations of the Book Room and the Christian Guardian. When the union collapsed in 1840, Webb argues that Canadian Methodists found themselves obliged to further develop an identity that, though distinct from British Wesleyanism, was fundamentally British in character and outlook. In order to avoid losing political ground to their British coreligionists turned competitors, Webb writes, “the Canadian Methodists, like other settler groups in those colonies and across the British Empire, eventually found themselves claiming to be as British as the British themselves, if not more so” (171). When reunion occurred in 1847, Canadian Methodists, despite the fact that British Wesleyans had throughout the intervening years redefined their own identities to exclude the support of church establishments from their concept of loyalty to the British crown, “freely accepted a subordinate position within a larger British connexional organization” (183). As proof Webb points to the fact that, between 1847

300 In a similar vein, Christopher Adamson observes that by the time the union was suspended in 1840, “it was too late to regenerate the popular, revivalistic Methodist church in Upper Canada” (438). Although Methodism was undergoing similar social changes as Nathan Bangs and others worked to increase its social respectability in the United States, Adamson attributes this colonial change to “the religious politics of anti-republicanism and Anglicization” that were unique to Upper Canada.
and 1862, British Wesleyans alone occupied the role of conference president. Although Webb admits that internal developments in British Wesleyanism, reflected primarily in the softening of Jabez Bunting’s uncompromising conservatism, contributed to this outcome, he concludes that the unity achieved by Methodists in the Canadas by 1854 was “thoroughly British Wesleyan in culture” (187). Goldwin French, though less attentive than Webb to the internal developments shaping British Wesleyanism overseas, agrees that “the [Canada] Connexion was essentially British in outlook” (189). Like Webb, French also suggests that by the time of reunification the Wesleyans were in a better position than at any earlier point to influence the cultural development of Methodism in Canada. “The way was open,” he writes, “in principle for an even greater infus ion of Wesleyan influence than under the previous union.” Not only would the president be British Wesleyan, but, he continues, “[t]here was nothing to prevent the Society from sending out additional men to augment the strength of these officials and of the preachers who returned to the fold in 1847. Through these men it might be possible to shape the Methodist outlook along Wesleyan lines” (254). That British cultural hegemony was never fully realized in the colony French attributes to several causes including the poor calibre of British Wesleyan representatives in the colony and, more vaguely, to “the provincial environment” (254). Absent from his narrative is any suggestion that North American transnational forces may have also been at work.

Whether writing from a teleological perspective animated by nationalistic preoccupations, or with an emphasis on transatlantic linkages between Upper Canada and the British metropole, recent scholars appear to share a general consensus that in the years following union with the British Wesleyans in 1833, including those during which the union was suspended between 1840 and 1847, the cultural influence of American Methodism atrophied to almost nothing. Yet Upper Canadian Methodists, sometimes accompanied by their British Wesleyan brethren, consistently sent delegates to every General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church from 1836 until the middle decades of the nineteenth century and beyond (JGC 1.427, 2.25, 3.10-11, &c.).

301 Neil Semple, anticipating here as elsewhere the emergence of distinct forms of nationalistic religion, offers a more moderate assessment of British Wesleyan influence by pointing to the later federation of Methodism in British North American and observing that, after 1847, “British missionary authorities were…increasingly determined to transfer all their North American operations to a self-sufficient Canadian church” (98).
When the union between Canadian Methodists and British Wesleyans was dissolved in 1840, moreover, Canadians made a belated attempt to have “the entire question” subjected “to the arbitrament of the American Bishops” (Green Life 250-1). And just when things seemed darkest on the eve of the dissolution of the union, no less a figure than Egerton Ryerson mused openly about relocating to the United States and taking a church in New York City (Hodgins Story 269-70, Sissons 1.543-4). All this suggests something more than a defunct transnational attachment between Methodists in Upper Canada and their coreligionists south of the border. Nowhere were these attachments more evident than in the continued existence of a shared Methodist print culture centered in New York that extended throughout the United States and north into Upper Canada. Although Ryerson made a serious and sustained effort to displace the Concern’s products in Upper Canada with those from the London Book Room after 1833, an effort that was continued by British Wesleyan Matthew Lang after his election as Upper Canada’s first official book steward in May 1835, logistical complications and the higher costs of these commodities set this end beyond practicable reach. The anecdote that opens this chapter describes events as they were unfolding precisely when Upper Canadian Methodists were reasserting control over the province’s print culture and reinvigorating their material, if not their cultural, transnational relationship with the Methodist Book Concern.

This chapter will attempt to shade the assertions of recent scholars, particularly those of Todd Webb, about growing British Wesleyan cultural influence in Upper Canada by foregrounding aspects of this transnational relationship, and exploring how Canadian Methodists were able to resume their patronage of the Concern’s products without compromising their religious identities as loyal Methodists north of the border. At the centre of this reassessment will be an analysis of the material and cultural implications of the second claim that Upper Canadians made against the stock and value of the Methodist Book Concern at the General Conference of 1836—a crucial development in transnational relations whose significance historians of religion have not only failed to appreciate, but an event that has been written out of their narratives almost entirely. Janet Friskney, the only recent scholar to comment on the claim in any length, concludes, on the strength of mistaken testimony offered by nineteenth-century Methodists Anson Green and John Carroll, and echoed by William Briggs and Lorne Pierce, that the claim was utterly unsuccessful since it did not result in an outright cash
settlement but rather with the institution of a system of discounts (Friskney “Methodist Book and Publishing House” 44, Green Life 315-6, CHC 4.5, Pierce Chronicle of a Century 72). But it was precisely these discounts that allowed Upper Canadian Methodists to empty the Concern’s commodities of their power as denominational status objects and to void their rhetorical claims on the religious identity of Upper Canadians who continued to participate in the Concern’s transnational market. This not only opened up divisions in Canadian and British Wesleyan print culture that foreshadowed later divisions in polity, but also became a critical component in destabilizing the union itself. When reunification occurred in 1847, Upper Canadian Methodists had become so successful in decoupling aspects of material and cultural production by resituating the Concern’s books and periodicals as straightforward printed commodities in an open market, that only the most perfunctory of efforts was made to renew a relationship with the London Book Room. Instead, Upper Canadians moved to strengthen their participation in a transnational market for Methodist books and periodicals whose commercial boundaries were no longer coterminous with the rhetorical boundaries of Episcopal Methodists’ religious identity. This not only blunted the cultural influence of British Wesleyanism in the colony after 1847 by fostering an ongoing cordiality between Canadian and American Methodists, it also helped to define a truly unique Methodist religious identity in Upper Canada that embodied a polity that was British Wesleyan but a print culture that was decidedly North American in orientation. Ironically, as Upper Canadian Methodists placed increasing emphasis on the cheapness, rather than the religious character, of the Toronto Book Room’s commodities, they would find themselves progressively more dependant on the Methodist Book Concern as the only supplier willing to provide sufficiently steep discounts to allow them to offer consistently lower prices than their competitors in the colonial market.

302 This erroneous impression seems to have flowed from the view held by at least some Canadian Methodists that the system of discounts extended to the Toronto Book Room in lieu of a cash settlement by the General Conference of 1836 was no more generous than those offered to other non-Methodist wholesalers. As a close reading of the relevant polity documents show, however, for the duration of the agreement Canadians were to enjoy a discount 7% greater than that extended to any other bookseller. So generous were these terms, in fact, that they were accompanied with a clause prohibiting Canadians from selling their stock back to American booksellers who might compete directly with the Concern in its own domestic market. In 1848, moreover, Anson Green used this mistaken argument, perhaps deliberately, to secure a further agreement with the General Conference to purchase the Concern’s products at cost. The details surrounding these various agreements and the motivations of the actors involved are considered below.
Just as Egerton Ryerson was sitting down in London with his British Wesleyan counterparts to negotiate terms for the importation of books and periodicals from the London Book Room, agents of the New York Methodist Book Concern were busy filling a flurry of orders from preachers stationed across Upper Canada. In the last week of May, the Concern dispatched a box of books to Methodist preacher Ephraim Evans on the Stamford circuit in the Niagara district (CA 31 May 1833: 159, MAC 47). One week later, another three boxes of books left the Concern bound for Canadian preacher David Wright on the Yonge Street circuit (CA 7 June 1833: 163, MAC 48). The following week saw yet another shipment of books bound for Upper Canada, this time to Thomas Bevitt on the Belleville circuit in the Bay of Quinte district (CA 14 June 1833: 167, MAC 48).

After Ryerson returned to the province and instituted new rules to prevent preachers from ordering books directly from New York, however, notices of this kind, with one or two exceptions, ceased altogether. About a month later, Ryerson ran a short but nondescript book catalogue in the Guardian advertising “Hymn-Books of different sizes,” a small selection of works by John Wesley, several titles by leading British Methodist authors Adam Clarke and Richard Watson, and a few other items. Titles of this kind regularly appeared in catalogues issued by both the Concern and the London Book Room and were just the sort that Ryerson might have been expected to keep regularly on hand. Despite his enthusiasm for British books, evidence suggests that these books were probably the products of the Methodist Book Concern. Even if Ryerson dispatched an order immediately after receiving the approval of the Canada conference for his new terms with the London Book Room, it could have hardly reached the British Wesleyan book steward by late November, much less been fulfilled by that time. In the meantime, short catalogues of this kind suggest Ryerson quietly set about clearing his shelves rather than lose his investment while allowing the business to languish.

A newly reset catalogue did not appear in the Guardian until early March 1834. Although this delay suggests that Ryerson may have had some trouble securing his first

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303 Evans remained on trial in 1833 and served under presiding elder Franklin Metcalf (MAC 46-7). Metcalf appears to have had strong attachment to American Methodism. It will be recalled that he was one of three voices—together with William Case and Thomas Whitehead—who opposed union with the British Wesleyans at the Canada conference held in August 1832 (MAC 50-1, Green Life 161). If Evans had, at that time, any qualms about ordering books from New York, Metcalf would have overruled them.
order from the London Book Room, its text leaves no doubt that he was as eager to proclaim the British manufacture of these commodities as he had earlier been reluctant to admit his dependence on the Methodist Book Concern in New York. “BEAUTIFUL ENGLISH EDITIONS,” it began in capital letters, “of the following BOOKS are on sale at the Guardian Office, at the London Prices,” adding in smaller type, “with a variety of others, both American and English” (CG 5 March 1834: 67). The catalogue consists of seventeen items, ranging in size from 12mo to 8vo, bound in cloth or in stiff covers, and concludes with a fourteen-volume set of Richard Watson’s works “in cambric; gilt lettered.” Both Ryerson’s tenacity in attempting to sell these British imprints, and the difficulty he had in doing so, is reflected in the fact that this same catalogue ran unaltered in almost every issue of the Guardian until the middle of November that year. Ryerson’s problems flowed not only from the higher prices of these commodities, but also from the fact that his denominational market was rapidly contracting. In April 1834, Joseph Stinson, a British Wesleyan who would play a prominent role in Upper Canadian affairs for many years, wrote several letters to Robert Alder to inform him that significant numbers of Canadian Methodists remained unacceptably radical in their politics and that James Richardson—the same man with whom Ryerson had served a decade earlier when he published his anonymous rebuttal of John Strachan’s toryism in William Lyon Mackenzie’s Colonial Advocate—had become their unofficial spokesman (French 147-9). Ryerson’s public support of the union, evidenced in part by a sharp turn to the right in the Guardian’s editorial policy since his return from England, soon resulted in the polarization of Canadian Methodism around these two men. Although some of their differences were papered over after the intervention of William Case in the spring of 1834, by the time the Canada conference met in June a worrying loss of members—1,109 in all—was recorded in the minutes (MAC 75). To make matters worse, Richardson was elected to replace Ryerson at the Book Room and at the helm of the Guardian—posts that Ryerson was able to retain only when Richardson declined them. The skies continued to darken when, later that same month, Methodists who had never accepted union with the British Wesleyans formed their own Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada with 1,200 members and 25 preachers (Webster History 314-323, French 149, Semple 90-2).

Ryerson’s problems continued to grow when, contrary to his expectations, reformers led by William Lyon Mackenzie, a man who had become a vocal critic of
Methodism since the *Guardian* repudiated his brand of reformism, won a decisive victory in the province’s elections and took control of the Legislative Assembly (Wilton 144). John Ryerson, meanwhile, who had been instrumental in convincing his brother less than three years earlier of the importance of embracing union with the British Wesleyans, was beginning to sour on the whole business. Referring to the work of Joseph Stinson and other Wesleyans, he wrote, “I have not time nor patience to mention one half of the trickory [sic] & abomination of their proceedings.” Perhaps in part with reference to the importation of expensive British imprints from the London Book Room, he further observed that the entire union had been, “dizastrous [sic] and gloomy without a single iota of anything growing out of it that is beneficial to us” (Sissons 1.243-4). Around the same time, William Case took it into his own hands to do something more than issue complaints. From his location on the Credit, and in open defiance of the conference’s rules against it, he placed an order for books directly with the Concern’s agents in New York (CA 24 Oct 1834: 35). Although not repeated, it was a bold act. Case would have known that his order would be noticed by anyone in the province, including Egerton Ryerson at the *Guardian* office, who continued to receive the *Christian Advocate*. Indeed, Case’s action may have even helped to prompt a subsequent change in Ryerson’s approach to his own market—a market that was becoming steadily more denominational in character as many non-Methodists in the province continued to cancel their *Guardian* subscriptions in response to Ryerson’s more conservative post-union editorial policies. Around the same time that Case found himself opening his first large shipment of books from the Methodist Book Concern in almost two years, Ryerson was preparing to replace his “BEAUTIFUL ENGLISH EDITIONS” catalogue with something that Case, James Richardson, Franklin Metcalf, and doubtless many other Canadian Methodists, would almost certainly find more to their liking.

The British Wesleyans, meanwhile, were in the process of making a few adjustments of their own. In response to the deteriorating health of the union and the rise of the schismatic Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada, they dispatched William Lord from London, a man of two-decades’ experience and one Carroll called “admirably adapted to win the confidence of the Canadians” (CHC 3.475), to reconcile the colony’s British Wesleyans and Canadian Methodists with one hand while blunting
the fractious influence of schismatics with the other.\textsuperscript{304} But if Lord’s presence was also intended to reinforce Ryerson’s commitment to the London Book Room, it seems to have had little effect. At around the same time Lord first set foot in Upper Canada, Ryerson ran his “BEAUTIFUL ENGLISH EDITIONS” catalogue for the last time (CG 19 November 1834). No further catalogues appeared for almost a month. Then, on 17 December, Ryerson’s first newly reset catalogue in almost an entire year appeared on the last page of the Guardian. Its content strongly suggests that Ryerson was at last beginning to reconcile himself to the fact that English editions would never be, despite the promise of Lord’s pacifying influence, as saleable as he had originally hoped. Listing 36 items, Ryerson identified 16 as English and 17 as American editions. Of the remaining 3 unidentified items, one was Mark Burnham’s Port Hope imprint the Colonial Harmonist (Fleming \textit{UC Imprints} no. 598).\textsuperscript{305} Ryerson left behind no correspondence to document precisely what was behind this new approach. But there can be little doubt that he was attempting to respond to the changing contours of a volatile market. The emergence of a rival body of Methodists in the colony, together with a resurgent reform movement under Mackenzie’s leadership, had diminished both the size of his denominational market and his ability to reach members of a wider reading public. The appearance of this catalogue suggests that, among those who remained within the ecclesiastical fold, or at least continued subscribing to the Guardian, too few had reconciled themselves to the higher prices Ryerson was obliged to charge for the London Book Room’s commodities. However reluctant he may have been to publish it, the juxtaposition of rival British and American editions in this catalogue marks Ryerson’s first real willingness to operationalize the rhetoric he used when presenting his agreement with the London Book Room to the Canada conference more

\textsuperscript{304} The urgency of Lord’s mission is further underscored by the fact that he was not originally scheduled to arrive in Upper Canada until June 1835 at which time he was slated to assume the presidency of the Canada conference. French also suggests that part of Lord’s mandate likely involved softening the Guardian’s continued calls for the secularization of the Clergy Reserves—the only significant reformist thread that had survived Ryerson’s earlier political reorientation of the paper (151).

\textsuperscript{305} As Fleming notes, Maria Calderisi Bryce suggests that the Colonial Harmonist was actually printed in the United States (Fleming \textit{UC Imprints} no. 598, Calderisi \textit{Music Publishing in the Canadas} 12). Its appearance here, despite Ryerson’s continued reliance on the Concern for much of his stock, suggests that Canadian Methodists were already looking for local alternatives to the American Methodist hymn book—a book whose sale was, perhaps more than any other because of its unrivaled popularity and profitability, encumbered by the Concern’s rhetorical strategies for equating patronage with denominational identity.
than a year earlier. He may have also concluded that it was the only way to keep the Book Room in business by limiting the temptation other Methodist preachers might feel to emulate William Case’s untoward example of dealing directly with the Methodist Book Concern themselves.

Ryerson’s abrupt decision to step aside from his work at the Guardian office sometime between the appearance of this catalogue and the end of January 1835 has never been adequately explained. Historians have generally argued it flowed from difficulties associated with his role as editor of the Guardian (Hodgins Story 146, French 152). Indeed, by his own admission, Ryerson had always found contending for Methodism in the colony’s public sphere wearisome (Ryerson Methodism 322). And with Mackenzie now organizing his Select Committee on Grievances in the reform-dominated Assembly, it would have been easy for the editor to see that new storm clouds were gathering. But Ryerson’s decision would also remove him from managing the affairs of the Book Room. The timing of his decision, moreover, suggests that his recent attempt to steer a middle course at the Book Room may have pleased no one. The Christian Advocate, meanwhile, recorded no shipments of books to Upper Canada as British Wesleyans probably continued to place unwelcome pressure on Ryerson to rely, or at least appear to rely, exclusively on the London Book Room for his stock. In whatever proportion Ryerson may have found his dual roles as editor and bookseller no longer tolerable, it was all his brother John could do to talk him out of resigning both positions immediately. “The more I think of your leaving the office, the more unfavourable I think of it...you had better stop until conference,” he wrote at the end of January (Sissons 1.248). One of his chief concerns was that the business might fall into the hands of Richardson who, though continuing to oppose the union, had not yet joined the schismatic Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada. And while John may have found himself reluctantly ambivalent about the continued expediency of union, he was not yet prepared to see his denomination’s print culture fall to the control of one as

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306 Subsequent events, including the election of a British Wesleyan to fill Ryerson’s shoes at the Toronto Book Room suggest this was the case. This will be considered in more detail below.

307 Richardson finally left the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada in 1836 over his unwillingness to countenance the acceptance of government grants for religious purposes. After a short stint preaching in the United States, he returned to the colony in 1837, joined the Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada. In 1858 accepted an appointment as bishop within that body (Webster Richardson 154-7, 179-80).
decidedly antagonistic to the Wesleyans as Richardson. He need not have worried. British Wesleyan influence proved sufficient not only to replace Ryerson as the province’s chief Methodist bookseller with one of their own number, but also to elect pro-British Wesleyan Ephraim Evans to the editorship of the Guardian.

Ryerson’s last catalogue appeared on 1 April 1835, just two months before the annual meeting of the Canada conference. Consisting of 101 items—74 new items plus the 27 items listed in his December 1834 catalogue—its length suggests it was an effort to salvage the business. Marking a return to an earlier advertising strategy, it also appears to have been deliberately constructed in a way not to offend British Wesleyan sensibilities. Like the short catalogue Ryerson ran in November 1833 before receiving his first large shipment of books from the London Book Room, the new items in this catalogue are identified by title only and include no prices or physical descriptions. That a significant proportion of these books were American in manufacture is suggested both by the terseness of the entries, and the fact that, quietly inserted among the 27 items listed in Ryerson’s earlier December catalogue, is a single new title available only through the Methodist Book Concern in New York: a three-volume edition of Francis Asbury’s Journal. Though only hints, they are enough to suggest that, despite what appears to have been a sincere and sustained effort on his part, Ryerson had learned in the twenty months since his return from England, that displacing the Concern’s products from the Upper Canadian market would require more than the mere availability of rival English editions. What is worse, because his efforts to centralize the distribution of printed commodities through the Guardian office appear to have been largely successful, he had only himself to blame for failing to understand the extent to which the prices of these commodities would influence the willingness of Upper Canadian Methodists to purchase them. Because the Canadian claim against the Methodist Book Concern remained outstanding during these months, moreover, the sale of these products north of the border continued to take place in the shadow of a rhetorical framework that characterized them as religious status objects within a North American denominational market. Thus, despite Ryerson’s efforts to portray the Concern’s products as nothing more than cheap alternatives to superior British editions, the religious identity of Canadian Methodists continued to be complicated by their ongoing participation in this transnational market. Until some kind of settlement was reached with General Conference, no amount of discretion on Ryerson’s part would
wholly obscure this aspect of their cultural production—particularly among those who had converted to Methodism before November 1829 when the Methodist Magazine and the Christian Advocate, periodicals that regularly stressed the relationship between patronage and denominational identity, continued to be widely read throughout the colony. Although British Wesleyans were far less attentive to these rhetorical subtleties than their North American counterparts, they appear to have been at least as committed to severing the Concern’s access to their colonial market. And they would soon find themselves in a much better position to do so.

When the Canada conference met in Hamilton in June 1835, William Lord took the president’s chair with the written endorsement of the British conference as “our long-tried and highly esteemed brother” (MAC 111).308 Perhaps in response to the lackluster sale of the London Book Room’s commodities in Upper Canada since the establishment of union, the British conference also urged Canadian preachers in their written address to attend to their duties as booksellers in the colony’s backwoods and settlements:

> It is very desirable that, in your rapidly increasing population, the standard writings of our body should be extensively circulated. In the solitary and retired parts of the country, where families connected with you reside, they should be furnished with suitable books, that the young people may be trained up in Christian knowledge. And in the small villages and towns also, it is important that our members should be well acquainted with the writing of Mr. Wesley, and with our other works, with a view to increase in piety. (MAC 110)

In pursuit of this end, the Canada conference accepted Ryerson’s resignation and distributed his former duties at the Guardian office among two separate positions. Ephraim Evans became editor of the weekly newspaper and Matthew Lang was appointed to superintend the Book Room as the first official book steward.309

308 Green’s assessment is more moderate. He credits Lord with having a good sense for business but notes he was a man “of little imagination” (Life and Times 192).

309 That there is no record of either Evans or Lang being “elected” to these positions in either the ms. or printed minutes of the 1835 Canada conference suggests that they may have been directly appointed to their posts by William Lord. Some Canadian preachers, lead by James Richardson and Franklin Metcalf, were already deeply dissatisfied with the Guardian’s moderation under Ryerson’s tenure and attempted
Although a preacher among the Canadian Methodists before union, Evans was British by birth, conservative by inclination, and could be trusted to steer the paper away from political controversy in accordance with British Wesleyan preferences. Lang, born in Ireland in 1798, was received on trial by the British Wesleyans in 1823, and served for several years in Lower Canada before being transferred west of the Ottawa river after union (Cornish *Cyclopedia* 113). He was, therefore, well acquainted with Wesleyan conservative Robert Alder and could be relied upon to make every effort to supply Canadian Methodists with “the standard writings” of British Wesleyans from the London Book Room. These appointments were significant because together they placed control of the province’s Methodist print culture directly, or in Evans’s case indirectly, in the hands of British Wesleyans for the first time since union. Some of the challenges facing Lang, however, were different from those that faced his predecessor. Unlike Ryerson, Lang was not obliged to divide his energies between editorial work and bookselling while advocating for Methodist interests in the colony’s public sphere. Nor was he as concerned as Ryerson had been at earlier stages with warding off accusations of disloyalty from readers in the public market. As the address of the British conference makes clear, Lang’s primary task was to supply “families connected with [Methodism]” with books and other printed commodities. As Evans turned the attention of the *Guardian* further away from politics, moreover, the interest among members of the wider reading public in the *Guardian*’s editorial positions would continue to decline. Thus any of the relatively few catalogues that Lang did run during his tenure would reach the eyes of fewer and fewer non-Methodists. Yet this reorientation toward a denominational market posed an ironic challenge of its own. Although this conference reported a small increase in the number of members, Lang would have known that the majority of the *Guardian*’s readers, and therefore the majority of his potential customers,

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310 When the union was dissolved in 1840, Evans abandoned his colonial coreligionists to join the British Wesleyan secessionist district in Upper Canada (MAC 245).
were Canadian Methodists, not British Wesleyans, who were long accustomed to purchasing the Concern’s commodities at relatively low prices.\footnote{The conference reported an increase in membership across the colony of 176 members over last year’s depressed returns (MAC 96). Although this modest absolute increase in numbers actually amounted to a continued decline relative to Upper Canada’s growing population, Green suggests that positive returns of any kind were not anticipated by conference delegates given the “fierce war going on against us both by politicians and seceders” (Life and Times 192). The politicians to whom Green refers are no longer the conservative followers of John Strachan, but William Lyon Mackenzie’s reform majority in the Assembly. A month before Conference Mackenzie’s Committee on Grievances published a report that indicted Canadian Methodists, among other conservative groups, with “plundering the public revenue” (French 151, Fleming UC Imprints no. 892). Printed in 2,000 copies, the report was highly influential (Lindsey, Life and Times of Wm. Lyon Mackenzie 1.327).} To succeed where Ryerson failed, Lang would have to convince these readers to place an increasingly high cultural value on British imprints. That they would be able or willing to pay much more for such an imprint, however, remained a highly doubtful proposition.

Despite these challenges, Lang enjoyed the continued support of many attending the Canada conference to redouble Ryerson’s earlier efforts to displace the Concern’s products from the Upper Canadian market. Such support is particularly evident in resolutions passed by delegates and committee members touching on the supply of books and periodicals to the colony’s expanding Sunday schools. In partial response to the British conference’s call for “young people [to] be trained up in Christian knowledge,” a general resolution was passed requiring that “The Members of this Conference pledge themselves individually to pay increased and special attention to Sabbath Schools, and to the instruction of the children and youth of our congregations, as directed in the Discipline” (MAC 95). Recognizing that little could be accomplished without a ready supply of literature to support such instruction, however, the Sabbath School Committee warned of an “immense deficiency in the number of books in the schools” so acute that “in some schools there is not a solitary volume.” In 1834, a census of such schools numbered a grand total of 3,973 students and 1,944 books in Methodist Sunday schools across the province—or approximately two readers for every book (“Report of the Sunday school Committee to Conference of 1834” Appendices to Conference Minutes).\footnote{The largest concentration of both students and books in the province was located in the Bay of Quinte district where the ratio was more favourable: 1,487 students and 1,280 volumes in Sunday school libraries. The student to book ratio was worst in the Niagara district with 861 students and only 132 volumes in Sunday school libraries. An incomplete census was also submitted by the Sunday school committee in 1835 but contains no comparable data.} To augment the holdings of these libraries, the Committee

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implied a strong preference for books of British manufacture, noting with emphasis that “as we understand that a large quantity of books is expected from England the present year, we recommend that the Superintendents of Circuits as far as possible, see that an early supply be obtained” (UCA “Sabbath School Report 1835” Appendices to Conference Minutes).

Though equally committed to finding alternatives to the Concern’s inexpensive books, the Committee on the Improvement of Singing recommended Lang adopt another course by authorizing him to publish, “a small Pocket Edition of the best tunes, suited to the various meters of our hymns, and familiar to the Methodists, particularly from Europe” (UCA “Committee on the Improvement of Singing 1835” Appendix to Conference Minutes). Hymnbooks, in a way unlike any other book including the Bible, occupied a central place in communal worship and denominational identity formation.313 Because there was no standard transatlantic canon of hymns in use among Methodists in North America and Britain, and because hymns were typically called out by number rather than by title, the displacement of any hymnbook that had already found a wide audience would be particularly difficult to effect. Unless a sufficiently large number of worshippers were willing to bear the costs of individually replacing their own hymnbooks to shift communal practice, resolutions adopted at the conference level would be unavailing. Although a commercially viable Canadian Methodist hymnbook was still several years away, there is a tacit admission in this resolution that, while the London Book Room’s hymnbooks might be culturally superior, their relatively high cost would continue to place them beyond the reach of a large number of Canadian Methodists. It also suggests that Ryerson’s attempts to promote the use of Mark Burnham’s Port Hope Colonial Harmonist among the colony’s Methodists had fallen short of the mark. By the time Matthew Lang assumed control of the Book Room, the lack of an official Methodist hymnbook in Canada, and the uneven sale of American, British, and now Canadian hymnbooks, must have resulted in considerable confusion. Congregations consisting of mixed numbers of British Wesleyans and Canadian Methodists, for example, would be obliged to call out one set of hymn

313 For more on the role Methodist hymnbooks played in the formation of denominational identity in America, see John Tyson’s “The Methodist National Anthem” in Sing Them Over Again to Me: Hymns and Hymnbooks in America University of Alabama Press, 2006, 20-42.
numbers for those possessing the Methodist Book Concern’s hymnbook, another set for those owning the London Book Room’s hymnbook, and perhaps even a third set for those who had recently purchased Mark Burnham’s Port Hope Colonial Harmonist from Ryerson. In addition to remedying this confusion by providing a common body of hymns around which public worship could be conducted, the Committee on the Improvement of Singing was probably not inattentive to the potential economic benefits the production of their own hymnbook might yield. If sufficiently inexpensive, it would almost certainly be a bestseller. Any surplus revenue realized from its sale, moreover, might even help to defray ancillary costs in the forms of duties and fees associated with continuing to stock Lang’s shelves with commodities imported primarily from the London Book Room.\footnote{These ancillary costs, which drove the costs of the London Book Room’s already expensive books and periodicals even higher are detailed by John Ryerson in a letter to Egerton written at the beginning of 1837 (Sissons 1.366-369). The contents of this letter are discussed in more detail below.}

Despite the recommendations of these two committees, the way before Lang was far from clear. Even with a “large quantity of books” on hand from London, Lang would be hard pressed to convince Methodists, particularly those within the denomination’s Sunday schools sprinkled across the colony’s remotest settlements, that a British imprint was truly worth the added financial cost. Costs associated with producing or even superintending the production of a Canadian hymnbook, moreover, might not be so easily controlled that Lang could guarantee the availability of a local alternative that would be as comparatively inexpensive as the Methodist Book Concern’s rival editions. At least until May 1836, however, Methodists north of the border continued to hope that financial challenges of these kinds might be lessened or eliminated altogether by a large financial payment secured from the Concern at the upcoming General Conference in May 1836. With this end in view, the Canada conference selected incoming president William Lord and conference secretary Egerton Ryerson “to attend the American General Conference, to be held in Cincinnati, May, 1836, in order to negotiate on the claims of this conference upon the New-York Book Concern” (MAC 92). A notice to this effect appeared with the rest of the conference minutes in the Christian Guardian shortly after proceedings concluded in the middle of June. The agents of the Methodist Book Concern, who continued to receive the Guardian
in New York, printed a notice of this development in the *Christian Advocate* a month later. William Lord, identified as a member of the “British Conference,” is named as one of two delegates, with Egerton Ryerson, selected to negotiate claims against the “Book Concern of the Methodist Episcopal Church.” The notice concludes with the statement that this information was derived “from the *Christian Guardian*, of June 17; a religious paper published under the direction of the Wesleyan church at Toronto, U.C.” (CA 10 Jul 1835: 42). Although subtle, the notice appears to have been constructed with a particular rhetorical end in mind. The denotation of the denominational publishing house as the “Book Concern of the Methodist Episcopal Church” rather than simply the “Methodist Book Concern” (as it was usually identified), combined with the repetitive use of the word “Wesleyan” to indicate both Canadian and British Methodists seems almost a deliberate effort to highlight differences and to signal to readers that the outcome of the claim must ultimately hinge on the concept of a shared transnational identity. Although Egerton Ryerson had a clear grasp of these issues, William Lord was a poor choice because of his status as a British Wesleyan and because he did not understand the rhetorical subtleties of the issues at stake. John Carroll, writing twenty-five years later, hinted at these deficiencies when he observed that “Mr. Lord was an Englishman, and knew nothing of the arrangement” (*CHC* 4.6). However that may be, with delegates selected to represent Canadian claims at the 1836 General Conference, and British Wesleyans firmly in control of the province’s print culture, the stage was set for major changes in the nature of Canadian Methodism’s transnational cultural and material relations to the Methodist Book Concern. Though a critical turning point in Upper Canadian Methodist print culture, these changes were not at all of the kind that Lord and Lang hoped they might be.

After the conclusion of the Canada conference, Egerton Ryerson relocated to Kingston where William Lord hoped he might be able to persuade a significant body of dissenting British Wesleyans to accept the union.315 During the first six months of his absence from Toronto, Ryerson exchanged several letters with Samuel Junkin, his former clerk at the *Guardian* office. These open a small but interesting window on the daily operations of the Book Room and some of the challenges that Lang, and probably

315 Kingston was notable for being the only Upper Canadian British Wesleyan outpost never ceded to the Methodist Episcopal Church under the 1820 agreement to divide the Canadas between the two bodies.
Ryerson before him, faced as Methodism’s chief bookseller and book distributor in the colony. In his first letter to Ryerson, Junkin noted that he and Lang were “getting on in the old way in the office.” From what follows, “getting on in the old way” appears to have meant that they continued to have difficulty in securing an adequate supply of London Book Room commodities to meet demand in the colony. Apparently William Lord had paid a visit to the Book Room sometime in early July to inquire why Lang had not run any book advertisements in the Guardian since taking over in June. “The reason,” Junkin explained, “is we are not likely to [have] any to advertise before long. Mr. Lang has sent off an order for about £400 worth, which we hope, tho’ late, to get this Fall coming” (UCA, Egerton Ryerson correspondence, S.S. Junkin to Egerton Ryerson, 20 July 1835). During Ryerson’s tenure at the Guardian office, it appears that a reliable system for making regular payments to the London Book Room was never put in place. Complications arising from this deficiency frustrated Junkin’s hopes and choked off the transatlantic supply of books until the following spring. In September, he wrote to Ryerson to complain that the office was desperately short of money (UCA, Egerton Ryerson Correspondence, S.S. Junkin to Egerton Ryerson, 9 September 1835). “We have got no books from Mr. Mason yet,” he opined in yet another letter written in the late autumn, “I suppose because we had not paid the first invoice.” (UCA, Egerton Ryerson correspondence, S.S. Junkin to Egerton Ryerson, 21 November 1835).

Remarking that this delay would occasion not only inconvenience but actual financial losses, Junkin explained that although some £90 had been transferred to Joseph Stinson “on the 1st Sept,” that money had not as yet been “paid over to Mr. Mason by the Missionary Treasurer.” As a result, as Junkin admitted, it was now too late to hope that anything would arrive from London in Toronto before “early in the spring” (ibid.).

Junkin’s November letter was intended not simply to invite commiseration. He also sought Ryerson’s personal intervention with the London Book Room. Two weeks earlier, Ryerson had written to inform Junkin that he had reluctantly accepted a surprise request by William Lord to undertake an urgent fundraising mission overseas on behalf of the Upper Canada Academy. “Nothing but the alternative,” he wrote, “as Mr. Lord deeply feels, of the sinking or success of the Academy could have induced me

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316 Sissons excludes this passage from Junkin’s letter (1.263).
this year to have undertaken such a task” (Sissons 1.270). Although the appointment itself may have come as a surprise to Ryerson, he was well aware of the Academy’s financial troubles. In his own valedictory editorial published in the *Guardian* on 15 June, he had noted that, although between £7,000 and £8,000 had been pledged by Upper Canadians for the Academy, less than half of that amount had actually been collected (CG 15 June 1835, Sissons 1.254-5). When support for the Academy began to dry up as Canadian Methodists became increasingly disenchanted with Wesleyan views of what the Academy should be, Ryerson had even accepted personal responsibility for some of the debt (French 152, 168). The financial health of Methodism in the colony was further strained by several ownership claims that members of the schismatic Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada were just beginning to make to several chapels across the province (Semple 91-2). The fact that the original Canadian claims against the Methodist Book Concern would have been enough to make up all these shortfalls and more, however, must not have been far from Junkin’s mind when he urged Ryerson not to neglect another iron he had in the fire. “[H]owever important the success of the Academy may be,” he cautioned, “it is still more important that you return in time to attend the General Conference on the Book Room business. Indeed, I consider the success of the mission will depend on you. Let nothing prevent you from attending the General Conference” (UCA, Egerton Ryerson correspondence, S.S. Junkin to Ryerson, 21 November 1835). Despite Junkin’s adjuration, Ryerson’s mission kept him away from the colony until June 1837—more than an entire year too long for him to attend the General Conference at which the fate of the Canadian claim was to be decided. This meant that Upper Canadians would have to rely on newcomer William Lord to act as chief advocate for their claim. It also meant that, whatever shadow Ryerson may have continued to cast over the affairs of the Book Room from his station in the eastern reaches of the province, was completely lifted.

Partly in response to the difficulties he and Junkin were encountering in securing an adequate supply of books from the London Book Room, Lang took the bold and unusual step of publishing his own edition of James Everett’s popular book *The Village Blacksmith* within months of taking over at the Book Room (Fleming UC Imprints no. 832, Friskney “Methodist Book and Publishing House” 82). What set this book apart from earlier editions of local minutes, sermons, and Native translations that Ryerson had published for the Upper Canadian market, was the fact that, unlike these texts, *The
Village Blacksmith was already available in a variety of rival British editions, including one published by the London Book Room itself. That Lang’s strategy was fraught with financial risk is suggested by the fact that only a very small number of booksellers in the colony had attempted something similar on their own. Lang’s first advertisement for “This excellent little work” appeared in the Guardian on 21 October 1835. Far from concealing that fact that the work was available in rival British editions, Lang noted in his advertisement that Everett’s book had already “gone through five large Editions in England in a very short time.” In addition to its proven salability in Britain, Lang’s choice of text may have also been influenced by the fact that the Methodist Book Concern had not yet published its own edition of The Village Blacksmith on this side of the Atlantic. In the end, however, neither its popularity in Britain nor the lack of competition in North America were enough to turn Lang’s edition into a financial success in Upper Canada. At one extreme, Lang’s book could not compete with the London Book Room’s reputation for producing commodities of a higher manufactured quality. At the other, although the Methodist Book Concern would delay for another four years before publishing its own edition of the popular

317 Apart from its location of manufacture, all that set Lang’s edition apart from those offered by the London Book Room and other British publishers was the inclusion of “interesting notes” written by William Lord. Although Janet Friskney refers to Lord as the book’s “Canadian editor” (“Methodist Book and Publishing House” 82), Lord’s participation in the project had far more to do with his status as the British Wesleyan president of the Canada conference. Indeed, Lord never made any pretensions about being Canadian during his relatively brief stay in the colony.

318 Niagara printer Henry Chapman made the first serious attempt to produce local editions of works available in one or more rival British editions when he issued four volumes in Murray’s Family Library series in 1831. Evidence suggests that sales were not brisk. Although the size of Chapman’s editions is not known, two years later copies were still being offered for sale in the Hallowell Free Press (Fleming UC Imprints no. 524). Another less ambitious attempt of this kind was made the following year by Hallowell printer Joseph Wilson when he produced a local edition of Susanna Rowson’s Charlotte Temple (Fleming UC Imprints no. 645). Rowson’s novel was an obvious choice: at 73 separate editions, Charlotte Temple went through more editions than any other novel in the United States before 1840 (Barnes 443). Wilson’s book, however, was the last local edition of this kind to appear in Upper Canada until Lang published the Village Blacksmith toward the end of 1835.

319 A review of The Village Blacksmith appearing in the Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine in the summer of 1834 noted both the denominational character of the text and the fact that the book had already reached a wide audience by that time. “This work,” the reviewer noted, “having had an extensive sale, and been favourably reviewed in several periodicals, is, of course, already known to many of our readers. As the subject of the memoir was a Methodist, and the book is likely to be read by many persons of the same denomination it is entitled to a notice in this magazine” (Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine 13 (July 1834): 521). Josiah Condor marveled at its popularity in an earlier review of the first edition published in 1831. “When one large edition of a work is sold off within a month of its publication,” he wrote, “and a second within a few days after its appearance, without any of the modern aids of Bookselling, the Reviewer, although in some degree anticipated in his office, turns to the work with a feeling of expectation seldom excited in these days of monotonous cleverness” (Eclectic Review 6 (Oct 1831): 369).
work, Lang probably feared that the success of The Village Blacksmith in Britain would invite the appearance of an inexpensive New York edition at any moment. Indeed, it may have been with an eye to this eventuality, together with his confidence that success overseas would assure similar success in the colony, that Lang opted to publish The Village Blacksmith in 1,000 copies. Publishing such a large edition would have resulted in economies of scale had the book found a wide reading audience in Upper Canada. When that didn’t happen, Lang was left to regret that he had not taken a more cautious approach to his market. It would be a very long time before the Book Room recovered Lang’s original production costs. Indeed, the union itself would unravel in less time than it would take Lang and his several successors to clear their shelves of unwanted copies at deeply discounted prices. In the end, Lang’s project only put the Book Room under additional financial pressure, exacerbated difficulties associated with relying on an unpredictable transatlantic supply of books, and obliged him to charge the highest possible prices for the London Book Room’s commodities in order to mitigate his own publishing losses. The commercial failure of The Village Blacksmith also made a successful outcome of the Canadian claims against the New York Methodist Book Concern at the ensuing General Conference even more important.

By the winter of 1836, the colony’s supply of Methodist hymnbooks had almost run out. William Case, who continued to work closely with the province’s Natives, complained that his own stock had dwindled to just two copies by the middle of January (CHC 4.68). While Lang spent that winter in Toronto waiting for what he and Junkin hoped would be a large shipment of books from the London Book Room in the early spring, William Lord was directing his own gaze at the future unfolding of events south of the border. By February it seemed increasingly less likely that Egerton Ryerson would return to the colony in time to attend the General Conference in May. To prepare himself for that potential eventuality, William Lord dispatched a letter that

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320 It seems highly probable that the Methodist Book Concern would have published its own edition much earlier had not its New York premises been completely destroyed by fire in February 1836.

321 One of the last advertisements for the “Canadian edition of the Village Blacksmith” appeared in the Guardian on 5 May 1841. By that time, of course, a cheap edition published by the Methodist Book Concern had been on the market for several years.

322 Friskney mistakenly notes that Egerton Ryerson did attend the General Conference in 1836 (“Methodist Book and Publishing House” 43-4). In fact, he did not return to the colony until more than a year later in June 1837.
month soliciting Ryerson’s detailed guidance on how best to represent Canadian claims against the Book Concern to American Methodists. “I expect to be in N. York April 3rd,” he wrote, “afterward I mean to proceed to Cincinnati. If I do not hear from you before, be sure to write to me at Cincinnati [sic]. Let your letters be long & full of Methodistical information. I am daily expecting the paper you promised respecting the Book Questions. I should like well to understand it. If any thing strikes you, write” (Sissons 1.279-81). Lord was not the only one worried about the upcoming General Conference. Methodists across the province were also demanding to have some influence over the choice of Ryerson’s replacement. Although Lord and Ryerson seem initially to have agreed that William Case would be the best choice, John Ryerson wrote to his brother later that month to inform him that twelve or fourteen “preachers at the west are making quite a noise about you or Mr. Lord attempting to appoint your successor & saying that neither of you nor boath [sic] of you had or have any authority to do any such thing &c.” (Sissons 1.286). According to another letter written by John several months later, subsequent protests over the same issue broke out across the Niagara District. It seems that, between the writing of these two letters, Egerton Ryerson had switched his preference from William Case to John Ryerson and that that had opened up a new occasion for dissatisfaction among those who preferred Case. Perhaps to keep the peace, John had voluntarily removed himself from consideration (Sissons 1.332). Although Lord ultimately ignored calls made by some preachers to hold a special session for the election of Ryerson’s replacement, these controversies underscore the extent to which Upper Canadian Methodists had come to believe that a favourable outcome at the General Conference could not be left to chance.

No doubt a great deal of their concern flowed from the fact that money in the colony had become desperately scarce. John Ryerson, like his brother Egerton, had assumed personal responsibility for some of the expenses of the Academy. By the spring, the debt was weighing very heavily upon him. In a letter written at the beginning of May, John Ryerson implored his brother to make every possible effort on behalf of the Academy, writing, “Everything depends on the success of your exertions. Four thousand pounds is the least that will answer…O!! How awfully we have got involved in this most painful & protracted business! O! if you can help us out of this mire the Lord reward you” (Sissons 1.333-4). Indeed, so agitated had he become that he confessed also to entertaining serious thoughts about fleeing to the United States to
escape his creditors. When Egerton Ryerson received this letter in England a month later, he noted in his own journal, “Although I find that collecting for the Upper Canada Academy is a wearisome task, yet I must not slacken my exertions so long as our friends in Upper Canada are in such straits for funds” (Hodgins Story 161). Americans, meanwhile, were occupied by their own, much larger, financial challenges. In the early morning of 18 February 1836, Nathan Bangs stood in the street and watched helplessly as the Methodist Book Concern’s buildings, equipment, and stock were destroyed by fire (Stevens Bangs 301-2, Bangs History 442ff.). The financial losses, as the first chapter of this study notes, were massive. Inadequately insured as a result of another fire that had devastated parts of New York several months earlier, only about 10%, or about $35,000, was recovered through formal indemnity. To make up the shortfall, agents in New York relied more heavily than at any earlier time on their rhetorical strategies for equating patronage—and now support—with denominational identity. A notice describing this devastating event published in the Christian Advocate the day after the fire was copied in the Christian Guardian early the following month (CA 19 February 1836: 103, CG 9 March 1836: 71). The impact the Concern’s destruction might have on the outcome of the Canadian claims was not lost on those north of the border. “I suppose,” Samuel Junkin acknowledged in a letter written to Egerton Ryerson just as the General Conference was getting underway, “there is no probability of getting anything at present, on account of the disastrous fire which destroyed their all at New York.” Still, money had already begun to flow in from all across the United States, prompting Junkin to add, “The loss will, it is supposed soon be made up, as the people contribute largely and generously to that object” (UCA, Egerton Ryerson correspondence, S. S. Junkin to Egerton Ryerson, 1 May 1836). Indeed, some of that money had even come from Upper Canada. A notice appearing in the Christian Guardian a month before the General Conference urged Canadian Methodists to “manifest their concurrence in the sentiment that ‘Wesleyan Methodism is one throughout the world’ by imitating according to their ability” the examples of William Lord and William Case who had both made recent donations to the Methodist Book

323 Sissons omits these passage from the letter, presumably on the assumption that readers would find them of little interest (1.327-330).
Concern in New York (CG 6 April 1836: 86). Although the timing of these donations suggest that they were probably calculated to further Canadian interests at least as much as those of their American brethren, they demonstrate that, despite the circumstances, Lord and Case continued to hope that some kind of favourable settlement, if only they conducted themselves adroitly, might still be within reach. In the end, although not what either had hoped for, the terms of the settlement opened a critical new phase in the cultural development of Canadian Methodism.

When American Methodists arrived in Cincinnati to attend the 1836 General Conference, they had more on their minds than the unresolved claims of Canadian Methodists against the Book Concern. In addition to a worrying decline in membership unprecedented since the War of 1812, delegates also mourned the recent deaths of two prominent bishops: William M’Kendree and John Emory. M’Kendree, a tried veteran of the episcopacy, had served as American Methodism’s senior bishop since the death of Francis Asbury almost twenty years earlier. His death, however, would have meant little in Upper Canada. Concerned primarily with the westward expansion of Methodism for the majority of his tenure, there is no evidence that M’Kendree even once crossed the border into British North America (Simpson, *Cyclopedia of Methodism* 577-8). John Emory was another matter. Not yet fifty years of age, and having served less than four years as a bishop, Emory’s death came unexpectedly when he was accidentally thrown from a wagon in late 1835 and sustained mortal injuries (“Death of Bishop Emory!!” CA 25 Dec 1835: 70, Stevens Bangs 299). Although he had never held a preaching appointment north of the border, Emory was widely remembered for travelling to Britain in 1820 to negotiate the postwar surrender of Lower Canada in exchange for the permanent withdrawal of British Wesleyan missionaries from Upper Canada. William Case would also have remembered how, just four years earlier, Emory

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324 This notice was later reprinted in the *Western Christian Advocate* (“The Book Concern—Canada” *Western Christian Advocate* 22 April 1836: 206).

325 Although the loss of 3,178 members in 1815 was proportionately more severe than the loss of “between two and three thousand” reported at the 1836 General Conference (Bangs *History* 2.381, 4.228), the earlier figure included a large number of losses in the Canadas. By 1836, of course, Methodists north of the border were no longer included in the American Methodist Episcopal Church’s official membership statistics.

326 These reversals were enumerated in an official address to the British Wesleyan Conference delivered by Wilbur Fisk on behalf of the General Conference (Bangs *History* 4. 227-8).
had spoken forcefully against the Canadian claims in his capacity as outgoing senior Book Agent of the Methodist Book Concern. William Lord, who probably learned of Emory’s opposition through letters he exchanged with Egerton Ryerson in recent months, probably joined Case in quietly rejoicing to see the young bishop’s place vacant. Yet whatever small advantages may have flowed from Emory’s death were more than compensated for by the destruction of the Methodist Book Concern by fire just three months earlier. And, as the last issue of the Christian Advocate published before the beginning of the General Conference reported that only $16,047.93 had yet been recovered through voluntary donations (“General Book Concern” CA 29 Apr 1835: 143). Case and Lord, who probably picked up a copy of this issue after arriving in Cincinnati, must have blanched at the figure. A fraction of what was needed to rebuild the Concern’s premises and replace its lost stock, the entire amount was just over half of what Canadian Methodists had claimed for themselves as their rightful portion of the Concern just four years earlier. To make matters even worse, a deputation of delegates from the dissident Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada also arrived at the General Conference and soon set about loudly proclaiming themselves the true descendents of the American Methodist Episcopal Church. Although calculated in large part to strengthen their legal entitlements to church property north of the border, their presence had potentially even wider and more consequential material implications. Since the claim of Canadian Methodists to a share of the Methodist Book Concern had always been premised on the notion of an earlier shared transnational religious identity founded upon participation in a common market, rival claims of this kind threatened to weaken, and perhaps even destroy, the rhetorical basis on which a successful Canadian claim against the Concern must rest.

Lord appears to have understood that success would hinge on the question of identity. “[A]lthough a stranger in a strange land,” he began his address, “I am surrounded by brethren—by those who are peculiarly members of the same family; for we bear, in addition to the common and catholic name of Christian, that of Wesleyan Methodist” (“Address of the Rev. Wm. Lord to the General Conference” CA 24 June

327 These delegates, local preachers John Bailey and James Powley, presented a formal address to this effect on 9 May after which the General Conference appointed a committee of five members to consider their claims (Webster History 324-6, JGC 1.440, 1.442).
1836: 173). Although a good beginning, what followed betrayed Lord’s subtle but fundamental misunderstanding of the rhetorical relationship between publisher and consumer on which the Concern’s North American denominational market was predicated. After recapitulating the same basic arguments advanced by Canadian Methodists at the 1832 General Conference, he shifted the emphasis of his address by stressing the importance of British Wesleyan authors in the field of North American religious cultural production:

We will only remark, that the union of the “Canada Conference” with the “English,” to which they were unexpectedly led by Providential Circumstances … presents an additional security to their continuance in the Doctrine and Discipline of Methodism, and cannot weaken their claims, when it is considered that not a small portion of the profits of the Book Concern arises from the sale of works of our English Fathers and Brethren. (UCA, “Statement of the Questions on the Canada Claim” Appendices to Conference Minutes)

At first glance, the argument appears adroitly to connect the notions of religious identity, market participation, and the disposition of profits. But it does so by making an appeal to the transatlantic cultural ownership of texts that Americans throughout much of the nineteenth century would have found untenable, and that attentive participants in the Concern’s market would have found rhetorically foreign. Since Lord could not make the argument that British Wesleyans had participated in the Concern’s market and had a right to the Concern’s profits on those grounds, he attempts to distort the Concern’s rhetorical framework by urging American Methodists to acknowledge a cultural debt to their “English Fathers and Brethren.” His argument is weak on two counts. First, it fails to recognize that the Concern’s rhetorical strategies had nothing to do with authorship and everything to do with the production of printed commodities that were made to function as religious status objects through an economic—not a cultural—transaction. The place of the author in the Concern’s market always occupied one of secondary importance to that of the publisher. American Methodists were adjured in catalogues, periodicals, and elsewhere to identify not the names of authors on the titles pages of the books they purchased, but to see in the Concern’s imprint a guarantee that the purchase of that printed commodity would benefit the missionary
and charitable interests of the wider church. Thus the cultural production of the Concern’s commodities had more to do with linking patronage and denominational identity in a commercial transaction than in bolstering reputation of any individual author. Purchasing a book authored by non-Methodists such as Kempis, Baxter, or Watts reinforced the religious identities of Methodist consumers every bit as much as purchasing a book by Wesley, Fletcher, or Watson—provided that all those books bore the Concern’s imprint. Second, no publisher operating in the United States at this time, much less the Methodist Book Concern, would have been willing to acknowledge a cultural debt to British authors that might entail attendant financial obligations in the form of payments for intellectual property. The Federal Copyright Act had been providing Americans with a legal antidote to such arguments for nearly fifty years.328 That Lord would advance such an argument betrays not only a faulty understanding of the Concern’s rhetorical strategies, but a rather striking ignorance of the literary and cultural practices in the United States more generally. Had Ryerson been present, he might have saved Lord from making this mistake.329 Not surprisingly, the Methodists who were appointed to a committee to consider Lord’s arguments found them unconvincing.

Five days before that committee made its report to the General Conference, John Bailey and James Powley made their own claim to a common religious identity with the Americans on behalf of the schismatic Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada by casting themselves as representatives of “the true, Original Methodist Episcopal Church of Canada” and “request[ing] to be recognized as the children of the M. E. Church” (UCA, “Report on the Book Claims: Appendix” Appendices to Conference Minutes).

328 By a strange coincidence, about the same time Lord was making his presentation to the General Conference, British publisher Saunders & Otley filed a petition calling on Congress to recognize the right of British authors to collect royalties on the sale of American reprints of their works while still under copyright. No surprisingly, the Senate Committee on Patents and the Patent Office “came down emphatically on the side” of those who denounced the proposal as an attempt to place “American readers in thrall to British publishers” (McGill “Copyright” 209).

329 Evidence of how little British Wesleyans were attentive to these issues, and the concomitant steep learning curve Lord faced in Ryerson’s absence, is implied by the fact that the British Conference omitted any mention of the Canadian claims against the Concern in their formal address to the Americans (Bangs History 4.223-226). For his own part, Lord may have been less willing to defer to Case than to Ryerson on these matters. Though a veteran Canadian preacher, Case was an American by birth and lacked a comparative knowledge of British Wesleyanism. Nor did he have Ryerson’s experience at the helm of Guardian and the Toronto Book Room.
Lord and Case, who doubtless saw the danger such pretentions might pose to their own claims, lobbied vehemently against them. In a later report to the Canada conference Lord described the “delicate part” he and Case played “in reference to the case of the self-styled Episcopal Church” (ibid.). His tone was temperate and reflected his pleasure with the eventual outcome. By contrast, Canadian Episcopal Methodists described the ordeal as a “bitter struggle” where Case and Lord characterized them and their religious brethren as “a set of arrogant, ambitious, dissatisfied local preachers, with a few uninformed people whom they had induced to follow them, almost too insignificant and contemptible to be noticed at all” (Webster History 324). In the end, the committee appointed to consider the matter wisely decided not to intervene. “In view of all the circumstances,” their report concluded, “as far as your committee has been able to ascertain and understand them, they are unanimously of opinion that the case required no interference of this General Conference” (JGC 1.452). Although it is unclear to what extent the rival claims Bailey and Powely made to a shared religious identity with the Americans weighed against them in the balance, by the time this report was tabled the Canadian claims against the Concern had already been rejected. As Lord later reported to the Canada conference, “the Committee reported at length, and strongly against your claims. They considered the decisions of the Annual Conferences a final settlement of these claims, & that it was not competent for the General Conference again to interfere, and the Report concluded with a Resolution to this effect,—That the General Conference could take no further action upon this subject” (UCA, “Report on the Book Claims” Appendices to Conference Minutes).

With their backs now to the wall, Lord made a final appeal to Nathan Bangs—a man who, with Emory dead and Ryerson overseas, probably knew more about the rhetorical underpinnings governing the Canadian claims against the Book Concern than any other delegate attending the General Conference. Although never fully reconciled to either the ecclesiastical independence of Upper Canadians or a permanent British Wesleyan presence west of the Ottawa river, Bangs was willing to intervene on behalf of the Canadian delegates—but not without an eye to furthering his own agenda.330

330 “I have never had but one opinion respecting your separation from us,” Bangs wrote to Egerton Ryerson in the spring of 1841, “and that is, that it was an erroneous step at the time, originating with the ambition of one man—Henry Ryan” (Hodgins Story 278, not in Sissons). Bangs had in fact travelled to
Lord later reported that he and Case had “two interviews with Dr. Bangs, and Mr. Waugh, and finally a Document was drawn up” (UCA, “Report on the Book Claims” Appendices to Conference Minutes). The compromise that Bangs and Waugh, principal book agent since the General Conference of 1832, worked out with Lord and Case appears to have been delicately calibrated to at least leave open the possibility of a reinvigoration of the Methodist Book Concern’s market north of the border. It is doubtful that Lord did not perceive this possibility, but perhaps the thought of returning to Upper Canada with absolutely no concessions from the Americans was an even less palatable alternative by this time. In any event, two days after the committee rejected Lord’s original arguments, on a motion tabled by Bangs, “the report of the Committee on Canada affairs was called up and recommitted, for the purpose of hearing a proposition from the brethren from Canada” (JGC 1.449). Three days after that, a final settlement showing evidence of Bangs’s influence was submitted to a vote. It is worth quoting at length:

Whereas the Canada Conference, now in connection with the Wesleyan Methodists of Great Britain, was formerly united to, and formed part of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and Whereas the union which by mutual consent then subsisted was dissolved at the earnest and repeated solicitation of the Ministers and Members of the Church in Canada, which was definitively determined upon by an Act of the Canada Conference, who thereupon did subsequently form a union with and become a part of the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion, And Whereas there has been a difference of opinion between the Methodist E. Church & the Canada Conference in regard to the claim which has been urged by the Canada Conference of an interest in, and a portion of the Methodist Book Concern, And Whereas the decision of the several Annual Conferences to whom the subject was referred by the General Conference of 1832 has been averse to the claim of the Canada Conference and has thereby precluded any farther action of the General Conference on the ground of claim as

Upper Canada in to help quell Ryan’s rebellion. A description can be found—with only the initials H.R. to indicate Ryan—in Stevens Bangs 259-261.

 Waugh had gained firsthand knowledge of the Canadian claims when he served as junior book agent under John Emory between 1828 and 1832. When Emory was elected bishop at the 1832 General Conference, Waugh was appointed to Emory’s vacated position at the head of the Book Concern. Waugh completed his term as senior book agent at this conference and was, like his predecessor, elected to the episcopacy (JGC 1.416, 478; Simpson Cyclopaedia 903-5).
made by the Canada Conference, but Whereas this General Conference cherishes an affectionate remembrance of the Canada Brethren, and is desirous to manifest its fraternal regards in every suitable way, And Whereas the Canada Conference did at its last session, appoint its President the Rev. William Lord, and the Rev. Egerton Ryerson delegates to this General Conference to negotiate its claims on the Book Concern, and the Rev. William Case, having been duly appointed to take the place of the Rev. Egerton Ryerson in the negotiation, And Whereas the said Rev. Wm. Lord President of the Canada Conference & the Rev. Wm. Case have full powers to bring to an amicable termination the question pending between the two Connexions, therefore it is hereby declared to be mutually understood and agreed that the following plan shall be considered as an arrangement for the full and final adjustment and settlement of the matter at issue between the Canada Conference and the Methodist Episcopal Church (to wit) The Agents of the Methodist Book Concern shall furnish to the Book Steward of the Canada Conference any of the Books which may be issued from its press in the following rates subject to the conditions & provisions hereinafter named –

1st The General Alphabetical Catalogue [of] Books, whether in sheets or bound shall be sold at forty per cent discount from the retail prices, as long as the present discount of one third shall be made to wholesale purchasers, but should the discount be hereafter changed to one fourth then and in that case, the Books sold to the Book Steward of the Canada Conference shall be charged at a discount of one third from the retail prices which shall from time to time be affixed to them respectively. Provided that this discount shall not apply to such Books as may be reduced below the usual prices on account of rival publishers: and provided also, that the Canada Conference shall give satisfactory security in regard to the payment of any debt which may be contracted with the Methodist Book Concern within the year from the time such debt may be created. And it is expressly understood and agreed that no interest shall be demanded or paid on any such debts unless payment should be delayed beyond the period of credit before named, in which event interest shall be charged and paid from and after the expiration of said credit term. It is also further provided that all Books which may be ordered by the Book Steward of the Canada Conference shall be at the risk and expense of the said Conference from the time they shall be forwarded from the Methodist Book Concern.

2nd Sunday School Books and Tracts shall be furnished to the Book Steward of the Canada Conference at a premium of eighteen per cent, to be paid in general catalogue Books of retail prices and it is hereby declared to be understood and agreed that the same provisions and conditions are to be adjudged applicable to Sunday School Books and Tracts, as have been specified above in regard to Books generally.

3rd It is understood and agreed that the privileges herein secured to the Canada Conference shall be binding on the Methodist Book Concern until the first day of May 1852 next ensuing the present date. Provided always that the said Canada
Conference shall regularly and truly make Annual settlements to the satisfaction of the Agents of the Methodist Book Concern and not otherwise.

4th Finally it is hereby mutually understood and agreed that the foregoing arrangement is considered as a full and definite satisfactory adjustment of the question which has arisen between the Canada Conference and the Methodist Episcopal Church in the subject of the Methodist Book Concern. (JGC 1.461-3, Bangs History 4.236-239)

Bangs and Waugh knew that this document, if there was any hope of ever laying the Canadian claims to rest once and for all, must do more than simply establish a temporary program of discounts to offset Canadian interests in the Methodist Book Concern. Although the annual conferences had, by a simple majority vote, rejected the Canadian claims against the Concern, the arguments behind those claims could not be easily brushed aside without eroding the efficacy of the Concern’s rhetorical strategies in its own domestic market just when Waugh and his successor, Thomas Mason, needed them the most. Bangs knew that the Canadians were right to point out that the payment of dividends to annual conferences implied that each conference, as an integral part of the wider ecclesiastical body, effectively owned a portion of the stock and value of the Methodist Book Concern. Since Canadians had always occupied a different geopolitical region of North America, moreover, Bangs could not counter their claims by simply pointing to differences in nationality. And while he might argue that Canadian patronage of the Concern had dropped off precipitously in recent years, that in itself did not void the fact that Canadians had been long and stable participants in the Concern’s market for more than four decades. Finally, since the Canadians had continued to receive annual dividends after 1828, Americans could not assert that the establishment of a separate ecclesiastical entity in Upper Canada materially weakened their claims by diminishing their status as something more than straightforward consumers.  

Bangs and Waugh knew, then, that the only way they could circumvent the arguments of Canadians on one hand without compromising the Concern’s rhetorical strategies on the other, was to somehow place Upper Canadians outside the

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332 Canadians claimed at this conference that they regarded “the annual payment of the Dividend not only as a full and substantial acknowledgement of the Claims, but as a pledge that they would as soon as possibly be met” (UCA, “Statement of the Questions on Canada Claims” Appendices to Conference Minutes).
boundaries of that rhetoric. And the only way to accomplish that end was to redefine the religious identity of Canadian Methodists relative to their American and British Wesleyan brethren.

Lord began his own address to the General Conference by stressing the closeness of the connection between himself and his hearers as “members of the same family.” This document, by contrast, attempts to widen those distances. Canadian Methodists, it begins, were “formerly united” to the Methodist Episcopal Church. Though subtle, this seems to mark a deliberate attempt on the part of the General Conference to undermine the present status of Canadians as partakers in a common religious identity rather than as straightforward consumers. That distance is widened further by the assertion that the Canadians fundamentally altered their own religious identities by not merely “uniting” with the British Wesleyans, but by becoming “part of the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion” (italics mine). While none of this amounts to a direct refutation of the Canadian claims, language of this kind subtly weakens those claims by differentiating the religious identities of those who form part “of the Methodist Episcopal Church” from those who form part of the “Wesleyan Methodist Connexion.” While these bodies may have been of the same family, as Lord asserted, they were nevertheless, as this preamble suggests, of different households. The program of discount that follows, then, is based not on an admission that Canadian Methodists are legally entitled to any portion of the stock and value of the Book Concern, but on the incomparably weaker “affectionate remembrance of the Canada Brethren” and a purely voluntary desire “to manifest…fraternal regards in every suitable way.”

With the Concern’s agents now not only indifferent about, but actually averse to making rhetorical claims about the religious identity of Upper Canadians based on their continued patronage, and with the establishment of a program of fairly steep discounts to stimulate economic demand, the pieces were at last in place for a vigorous reopening of the Canadian market to the Concern’s products as straightforward commodities rather than religious status objects. Since the time Ryerson had negotiated his agreement to import printed commodities from the London Book Room three years earlier, Canadians had been purchasing most of their stock at discounted rates of between 17½% and 35% off London retail prices. The larger discount applied to books for which the London Book Room owned the copyright, while the smaller applied to
books that were “not the property of the Book Room” but that were “sold for the respective authors’ benefit” (UCA, “The Report of his [Ryerson’s] Mission to England” Appendices to Conference Minutes). The Methodist Book Concern, by contrast, was not obliged by the Federal Copyright Act to make any such distinctions in titles authored by British Wesleyans in its catalogues. As Candy Brown has shown, moreover, American evangelicals made few serious attempts as individuals throughout the first half of the nineteenth century to benefit financially from the sale of their works in the United States (240-1). Like Nathan Bangs, who wrote the first authorized history of Methodism in America, these authors tended to look to heaven, not to organizations like the Stationers’ Company, for their reward. Thus complications of this kind are absent from the terms of the Methodist Book Concern’s agreement with Upper Canadians. In addition to selling books that had retail prices that were already substantially lower than those offered by the London Book Room, the Concern offered Canadian Methodists a blanket discount of 40%—a full 7% lower than discounts they offered any other wholesaler. Once the document was prepared and accepted by the General Conference, on motions made by Nathan Bangs, all debts owed by the Canada conference to the Methodist Book Concern were “referred to the Book Agents and the Book Committee at New York for final settlement at their discretion” and copies of all relevant documents were given to Lord and Case for removal back to Canada (JGC 1.463). “Thus,” Bangs wrote several years later, “was this long-pending question brought to an amicable termination, on such terms as to preserve and perpetuate the harmony and brotherly affection heretofore subsisting between the two connections” (History 4.239).

Canadian Methodists, at least initially, did not share Bangs’s optimistic view. Gathering in Belleville the following month for their own annual conference, they were in a decidedly sullen mood. Not only had their claims against the Methodist Book Concern been dashed for the last time, but the Academy continued to teeter on the brink of financial ruin. As a result, at least some preachers had come to share Junkin’s

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333 Surprisingly, the Book Room did not own the copyright for British Wesleyan Adam Clarke’s biblical commentary—one of Methodism’s bestselling titles of the period.

334 At the end of May, after Lord had returned to Toronto, he dispatched an urgent letter to Egerton Ryerson overseas. In it he described that, despite a perilous journey with William Case to the General Conference, their efforts to extract a cash settlement had failed. In the meantime, the debt owing on the
earlier view that Ryerson’s talents would have been put to better use lobbying for Canadian interests in Cincinnati than they had overseas begging donations for the Upper Canada Academy. Lord bore the brunt of the blame—both for keeping Ryerson in England and for his own mishandling of Canadian affairs south of the border. Although perhaps not entirely fair—in addition to Lord’s imperfect understanding of the primacy of the publisher in the Concern’s overall rhetorical strategies, the Canadian claims were also seriously destabilized by forces beyond his control including the destruction of the Methodist Book Concern by fire and the interference of a rival body of Methodists claiming to be the “true children” of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada—Lord may have also inadvertently invited censure when he admitted in his report to the conference that he and Case had accepted the plan for reasons of pure expedience after becoming convinced that “nothing better could be obtained.” It must have seemed doubtful to Lord’s auditors that Ryerson, lionized for his earlier efforts to advance Methodist interests in the Upper Canadian public sphere, would have been turned aside so easily. But, even without John Emory to oppose the claims, Lord’s belated willingness to place Canadian interests in the hands of Nathan Bangs is strong evidence that even he knew that he was out of his depth. Canadian Methodists, for their part, though they must have known it would avail no practical end, passed a resolution complaining about the decision of the General Conference. “[W]e feel it due to ourselves to say that,” it ran in part, “we still entertain the opinions which we have formerly expressed as to the equitableness of our claims on the Methodist Book Concern and we deeply regret that the General Conference has thought proper to refuse to us a participation in the Stock to which we have so largely contributed, and which we

Upper Canada Academy had reached a record £5,000. He urged Ryerson to remain overseas until that figure was raised and also informed him that they planned to draw another £500 against Ryerson’s own credit in Upper Canada (UCA, Egerton Ryerson Correspondence, William Lord to Egerton Ryerson, 31 May 1836; not in Sissons). When the Academy opened its doors mere days after the conclusion of the Canada conference that June, Green, who assumed the position of treasurer, remained far from confident that a way would be found to meet the financial demands. “To me,” he wrote in his journal, “this was a day of great anxiety, requiring strong faith, untiring zeal, and much prayer. I had no books from the former Treasurer to guide me; and the workmen were clamouring for their pay! A debt of more than $16,000, and an empty treasury! Rooms without furniture, and students pressing for accommodation” (Life and Times 207).

Lord admitted as much in a letter to Ryerson written in the autumn of that year (UCA, Egerton Ryerson Correspondence, William Lord to Egerton Ryerson, 20 Oct 1836; not in Sissons).
had been led to expect from the acts of former General Conference” (UCA, Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada. Annual Conference Minutes, 1833-1842).

A large part of the dissatisfaction Canadian Methodists felt flowed from a mistaken conviction that they were being treated no differently than any other wholesaler. “The American Conference,” John Carroll would later note with sarcasm, “in lieu of our claim, gave the Canada Book Room the privilege of purchasing books at their Concern at forty per cent., a discount which any publishing house will give to agents who have no vested claims! And this wonderful privilege was to end, if I mistake not, in 1870” (CHC 4.5-6). But Carroll did mistake. The “wonderful privilege” was in fact intended to expire in 1852.\footnote{Later efforts made by Anson Green to extend that deadline were successful in not only prolonging these terms into the 1860s, but in increasing the discount to 50% (Green Life 177, 316). This will be discussed in more detail towards the end of this chapter (infra. 316-7).} Carroll was also mistaken about the terms offered to Canadians relative to other wholesalers. As the agreement indicates, the discount of 40% was to be maintained “as long as the present discount of one third shall be made to wholesale purchasers, but should the discount be hereafter changed to one fourth then and in that case, the Books sold to the Book Steward of the Canada Conference shall be charged at a discount of one third from the retail prices which shall from time to time be affixed to them respectively” (JGC 1.461-3, Bangs History 4.236-239). In other words, while the rate of discount might fluctuate for both the Canadians and other wholesalers for the life of the agreement, Canadians would always enjoy more advantageous terms. That this appears to have been lost on at least some Canadian preachers in their disappointment with the settlement, only made it that much easier to see the Concern’s products as straightforward commodities no different from any other. All this meant that, while the Concern’s books and periodicals continued to be set apart from the products of competitors by their value as denominational status objects, in Upper Canada these aspects of their cultural production became largely irrelevant.\footnote{Egerton Ryerson had already made an a premature attempt to do just this when, in his report to the Canada conference on the negotiated agreement with British Wesleyans for importing books from the London Book Room three years earlier, he suggested that “mere cheapness” was the only attraction any product sold by the “New York Book Room” could have to an Upper Canadian (UCA, “The Report of his [Ryerson’s] Mission to England” Appendices to Conference Minutes). But that claim belied his own cultural reasons for negotiating his agreement with the London Book Room in the first instance. As Ryerson well knew, the sale of the Concern’s products in Upper Canada at this time continued to be an...
Canadian Methodists soon realized that the Concern’s program of discounts, together with the accompanying suspension of rhetorical linkages between patronage and denominational identity north of the border, opened up a new supply of cheap books that would not compromise their religious identity as loyal Wesleyans—a circumstance that, in the long run, would prove perhaps even more valuable than the single financial payment Canadians had originally hoped to secure. Even Lord seemed to have intuited these possibilities. This, together with a probable desire to place his own contributions to this outcome in as favourable a light as possible, prompted him to conclude his report by suggesting that the agreement promised to “open at once a friendly intercourse between the two Connexions, and…afford considerable pecuniary benefit to the Canada Connexion” (UCA, “Report on the Book Claims” Appendices to Conference Minutes). All of that, however, would depend on Matthew Lang’s willingness to take full advantage of these new terms. The following month, the same month the Methodist Book Concern resumed shipping books from New York after the fire, Lang, accompanied by John Ryerson and Ephraim Evans, travelled to New York to settle the debts owed by Canadian Methodist to the Concern. In some ways it must have been a galling experience. Only two months earlier these preachers had hoped that such a journey might be undertaken to collect money from, rather than pay money to, the Concern’s agents. In any event, there is no evidence to suggest that when they awkward exercise given the rhetoric with which these products were situated throughout the entire North American market. As long as the Concern continued to deal with Methodist preachers directly, or to afford Ryerson at the centre of a distribution network in Upper Canada, only those discounts afforded to any other preacher operating in the United States, profits from the sale of those items would continue to shore up the interests of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Ryerson, under these conditions, could not function as a wholesaler of straightforward goods, but as a Methodist preacher whose purchases on behalf of others, continued to have implications for the religious identities of his colonial coreligionists.

338 Later that month the Christian Advocate noted, “It will be recollected that in providing for a final settlement of the question between the Canada conference and the M.E. Church, on the subject of the Book Concern, by the late General Conference, an adjustment of the debts due the Concern from said Canada conference was referred to the book agents and the book committee of New-York, for settlement at their discretion.—On the 22nd, Rev. Messrs. J. Ryerson, E. Evans, and M. Lang, duly authorized by the Canada conference to effect a settlement, appeared before the agents and book committee for that purpose. The subject was taken up and disposed of in a manner mutually satisfactory, we believe, to all concerned; and the brethren parted, cherishing for each other much good will and brotherly affection. Thus has this difficult matter at last terminated. May grace mercy, and peace, with much success in the good work, attend this young branch of the Methodist family!” (“Final Adjustment of Canada Affairs” CA 29 July 1836: 195).
returned to Upper Canada they brought a shipment of books with them. Instead, Lang seems to have conducted the business of the Book Room in much the same way he had before the settlement. Despite the fact that *The Village Blacksmith* was not selling well, plans were soon laid for the production of more local editions including a hymnbook, as well as an “edition of the life of Rev. J. Smith, as also that of John Nelson” (UCA, Journal of the Proceedings of the Book Committee, 15 August 1836, 17 October 1836). In the meantime, the months passed without any notices appearing in the *Christian Advocate* to indicate that even a single shipment of books had been sent to Lang in Toronto. During that time John Ryerson, who accompanied Lang to New York and in whose home the Book Committee met at least occasionally in the following months, appears to have become increasingly frustrated with Lang’s unwillingness to take advantage of the terms offered by the Methodist Book Concern. Indeed, when John Ryerson wanted books from the London Book Room, rather than obtain them through Lang, he wrote to his brother Egerton to purchase them on his behalf—shocking conduct considering his role as a member of the Book Committee.339 When Lang finally gave in and placed an order with the Concern in November it was already too late.340 By that time John Ryerson had made up his mind: Lang’s days at the Toronto Book Room were numbered.

It is a testament to the extent to which Ryerson was now convinced that the purchase of the Methodist Book Concern’s products in Upper Canada would no longer compromise the status of his coreligionists as loyal Wesleyans that all of this unfolded in a time of serious political upheaval in the province. With the editorial support of

339 Perhaps because he did not wish to pay the premium Lang charged Methodist preachers in Upper Canada, John Ryerson noted in a letter to his brother Egerton, who remained overseas on his fundraising mission, on 25 September, “You promised to send me the Watchman newspaper as soon as you arived [sic] in London, but it has never come. You also said you would send me the [Methodist] Magazine. I have not received that either. I am ankeious [sic] to have them both [sic]. I hope you will procure me some choice theological works, sermons, etc. I would be glad to get 20 or 25 pounds worth of books of this description of your selection” (Sissons 1.362).

340 On 4 November 1836 Lang’s name finally appeared in a list of correspondents published in the *Christian Advocate* and later that month a new catalogue was issued in the *Christian Guardian* (CG 23 November 1836). Appearing in a separate section titled, “Just received from New York” was a list of bibles and other standard Methodist books all of which—with the exception of Timothy Merritt’s and Wilbur Fisk’s *Reputation of Universalism*, were available in rival editions from the London Book Room and, in the case of the bibles, from the British and Foreign Bible Society. Although Lang appears to have placed no further orders with the Methodist Book Concern in the following months, the same catalogue was reprinted on 7 December, 1 February 1837, and 5 April 1837.
Ephraim Evans in the *Christian Guardian*, the conservatives regained control of the Legislative Assembly the previous June. This led to further polarization, as moderate reformers reorganized themselves in anticipation that the arrival of a sympathetic new lieutenant governor, Sir Francis Bond Head, would further their causes. Mackenzie, for his part, adopted a more radical approach and by the autumn of 1836 was attempting to mount an organized challenge to the results of the previous elections (Wilton 184). Tensions continued to rise, moreover, when Bond Head, after quickly losing patience with the province’s political paralysis, prorogued the Assembly and inadvertently invited an open rebellion by setting himself against the province’s reformers (French 154). Despite this political turmoil, and the fears it stoked among some that American-style republicanism might yet swamp the province and sever connections with the British metropole, John Ryerson, whom Egerton once referred to as a “life-long conservative” (Sissons 1.348-9) in part for the unyielding emphasis he placed on positioning institutional Methodism in a favourable relation to political forces operational in the colony, laid out in detail his dissatisfaction with Lang’s insistence on relying on the London Book Room and his resolve to see the British Wesleyan removed from his post at the Toronto Book Room. “Alder’s conduct,” he began,

is quite in accordance with his promise to us about a 1000 pound from the Contingent Fund & afterwards denying it; & then his encouragements held out at Kingston for assistance from the Missionary Society; indeed it is like every thing of money nature connected with them, we have received nothing from them & have lost much by them. You told me when you returned from England before that the arrangement was, in relation to books, that we should have the privilage [sic] of paying the money to Mr. Stinson here, Mr. Mason would credit us with the amount in London, & that would save us from the great expence [sic] of purchasing bills of exchange, & the amount we would otherwise have to pay for bills we could give to the superannuated preachers if the Book room could spare it. Well so far from this being so, Lang has given Stinson 10 & 11 per cent for bills this year & he said he would let the book room have bills for not a cent less than the *highest* price he could get for them elsewhere. Now purchasing bills at this immense *premium*, connected with the high price of books & the trifling discount which is made on them, the expence [sic] of gitting [sic] them here, together with what I believe they call *velorean* duty which is paid at Montreal of 2 percent, make the circumstances of the Book concern perfectly horrible [sic]. Indeed so far from the book agents or the English preachers who have been, or are, in this country trying to assist us in any way, their principle [sic] object appears to be, to please [sic] us & git [sic] all out of us they can; hence whenever there is a cent of money to be handled, they indeavour [sic] to have a
[sic] English preacher, & they work into each other’s hands. Be sure & bring no more English preachers with you, either young or old … The whole Society in this city [Toronto] in both chapels does not number 200 members; whereas when I was here before, there were 260 in the little chapel. Religion is extremely [sic] low among those that do remain. I am fully resolved next year to have a Canadian preacher here & a Canadian preacher for book agent. (Sissons 1.367-8)  

With these additional duties, premiums, and percentages driving up the cost of the London Book Room’s already expensive commodities as they made their way through the British Wesleyans’ awkward distribution network, it is small wonder that John Ryerson turned to his brother Egerton rather than the Toronto Book Room when he wanted to purchase books printed overseas. As this letter shows, however, the elder Ryerson was not content with finding ways to circumvent these surcharges just for his own benefit. Instead, he was determined to see Canadian Methodists regain control of their own print culture in the colony. Although recent historians have failed to appreciate the cultural implications of this development, and have almost universally excluded these events from their narratives, the resumption of Canadian Methodist control over the Toronto Book Room had enduring cultural consequences for the continued development of Methodist religious identity in the colony. Not only did having “a Canadian preacher for book agent” reopen the market to the Methodist Book Concern’s inexpensive printed commodities in a way that no longer threatened to undermine the political advances Methodists in the colony had achieved after union with British Wesleyans, it also destabilized the union itself by eliminating one of the key material benefits Canadian Methodists had originally hoped to enjoy as participants in the London Book Room’s transatlantic market for books. With proof that British books  

341 William Ryerson wrote this to Egerton in May that year to express similar sentiments. “The Union works badly, very badly, for us, and I am sick, in my very soul sick of it. I wish, most heartily wish, it had never taken place…As to our English friends, they of course can stand and look on without emotion or concern, while we are struggling for life, and are left to sink or swim as best we can, but shew little disposition to remove a burden with one of their fingers, although to us it might prove a mountain’s weight and sink us beyond the hope of redemption; in fact, there is little sympathy felt or manifested.” Perhaps, in a partial reference to affairs at the Book Room, he added, “There are one or two things however that appear to deeply interest the feelings and actions of our friends—to provide for & take good care of their friends—and by all means and in every way to gain and exercise the entire control & direction of all our affairs, and that not so much for our good, as for their own benefit and the advantage of the English connexion” (Sissons 1.376-7).
would remain expensive and difficult to acquire even with a British Wesleyan conducting the Toronto Book Room’s affairs, together with new terms that prevented the Concern’s commodities from functioning as denominational status objects north of the border, the stage was set for Ryerson to blunt the cultural influence of British Wesleyanism by displacing the London Book Room’s commodities with those more readily available and more easily affordable from New York. In the end, the vast majority of books found in Methodist hands from this point forward, whatever fluctuations might occur in Methodist polity, would be unashamedly American in manufacture.

By the time Upper Canadian Methodists gathered in Toronto for their annual conference in June, William Lord had already returned to England. His replacement, William Harvard, had been in the colony since the previous autumn and had already shown an interest in the affairs of the Book Room. When the Book Committee, consisting of Matthew Lang, Ephraim Evans, and John Ryerson as the chairman of the Toronto district, met two days before conference to prepare their annual report they were joined by Harvard (UCA, Journal of the Proceedings of the Book Committee, 12 June 1837). Harvard was older, more experienced, more formidable, and perhaps even more conservative than his predecessor. Ordained by British Wesleyans in 1810, he had already served extensive terms in Britain, India, and Ceylon before accepting a post in Upper Canada. “On this side of the Atlantic,” Carroll notes, “he was found to be commanding in person, almost the *fac simile* of General Washington; dignified in his carriage; polite in his manners; pre-eminently Christian in his spirit; and unusually faithful as a minister” (CHC 4.130-1). Although detailed minutes of this meeting do not survive, it seems highly probable that these men were responsible for drafting an extensive set of rules that appear to have been intended to curtail the autonomy of the editor of *Christian Guardian* and regulate the affairs of the Toronto Book Room. Perhaps Harvard, Lang, and Evans had already heard rumors of what might be in the offing. By this time, John Ryerson was not only resolved to let his name stand for book steward,

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342 Goldwin French describes Harvard as a man “of highly conservative opinions” (159)—an assessment borne out by an unmeasured condemnation of those implicated in the Upper Canadian Rebellion and his accompanying call to “institute an inquiry” to uncover and expel political dissidents from among the ranks of the province’s Methodists (CHC 4.178-9).
but had been actively imploring his brother Egerton, who returned to the province in time to attend the annual conference, to seek the editorship of the *Guardian* as well. With the positions of both Lang and Evans threatened, then, this document created a third locus of authority in the form of a much larger Book Committee with the power to override the decisions of the book steward in matters touching on financial affairs and publications. Consisting of the “President and Secretary of the Conference, the Superintendent of Missions, the Chairman of the Toronto District, the preachers resident in Toronto City, and the superintendents of the Yonge Street and Toronto Circuits” (MAC 159), the committee was required to meet on a monthly basis in order to keep a close eye on the entire business. To facilitate such oversight, members of the Committee were afforded free access to all the offices and warehouses of the Book Room. Should even a single member of the Committee judge the editor or the book steward negligent or “unfaithful to the trust reposed in him,” the Committee was authorized summarily to suspend either or both of these officers until the next Conference at which a formal appeal could be pursued (MAC 153-4).

By any measure these were extraordinary provisions. Once passed, the editor and the book steward became the only officers in Upper Canadian Methodist polity subject to summary suspension should members of a supervisory committee deem their performance objectionable. Perhaps this new structure was itself enough to dissuade Egerton Ryerson from letting his name stand for editor.³⁴³ John Ryerson, however, remained undaunted and appears to have coasted to an easy victory over Lang.³⁴⁴ As it turned out, moreover, the composition of the Committee proved far from unfavourable. Indeed, Ephraim Evans, who was returned for a final year as editor of the *Christian*

³⁴³ Writing many years later, Ryerson cited his desire to return to the Kingston circuit from where he had been so “suddenly removed in the autumn of 1835” (Ryerson Methodism 322). His willingness to assume that role the following year, together with his ready availability to attend meetings of the Book Committee in Toronto when needed, however, suggest otherwise.

³⁴⁴ Some of the strongest objective evidence that Lang’s determination to rely on the London Book Room for his stock was not working came in the report of the Sunday school committee. Between June 1834 and June 1837 the total number of volumes in the province’s Methodist Sunday school libraries had increased only marginally from a grand total of 1,944 to 2,604 volumes (UCA, “Report of the Sabbath School Committee for 1837” Appendices to Conference Minutes). Nevertheless, and in marked contrast to John Ryerson’s earlier scathing assessment of Lang’s performance, delegates in Toronto passed a more circumspect resolution extending “the cordial thanks of the Conference…to the Book Steward, the Rev. Matthew Lang, for his valuable and successful exertions in the Book Room during the past year” (MAC 170).
Guardian, was the only member on whom William Harvard could invariably rely to support his own views. On the Canadian Methodist side, John Ryerson was joined by his brothers William Ryerson as a preacher “resident in Toronto City” and Egerton Ryerson who took over the role of conference Secretary from William Case. And because John Ryerson also served simultaneously as the chairman of the Toronto district, the remaining votes would be cast not only by fellow Canadian Methodists, but his district subordinates Hamilton Biggar and Rowley Heyland of the Toronto and Yonge Street circuits respectively. With the Committee thus dominated by Canadian Methodists, British Wesleyans would find it all but impossible to interfere with the Toronto Book Room until the next annual conference.345 The way could hardly have been clearer for John Ryerson to govern the affairs of the Toronto Book Room as he saw fit.

Despite the role that Lang, Harvard, and Evans clearly played in crafting many of the new policies that placed preemptive administrative strictures on the autonomy of the book steward, one of the clearest indications that change was in the offing can be found in this same document under the section titled “Concerning the Sale of Books.” In addition to reinforcing the rule Egerton Ryerson had instituted in 1833, that “No Preacher shall sell, or publish for sale, any books, but such as are sent regularly from the Book Room by the Steward” the new terms tellingly raise the standard discount extended to the colony’s preachers “on all purchases” from 10% to 16 2/3% “as some compensation for their trouble and responsibility” (MAC 157-8). A blanket discount of this order effectively set every book for which the London Book Room did not own the copyright beyond practicable reach inasmuch as these commodities were offered to the Toronto Book Room at only 17½% exclusive of the duties, premiums, and percentages John Ryerson so bitterly recounted in his January letter to Egerton. It is impossible to imagine that British Wesleyans would have countenanced, much less authored, a clause so decidedly opposed to their own interests. Suggesting that these terms may not have been accepted as they were first drafted by Book Committee in advance of the conference, it seems probable that this particular clause was inserted by John Ryerson

345 Sissons mistakenly indicates that John Ryerson published William Harvard’s 1837 address to the Canada conference as a separate pamphlet later that year (Sissons 379-80). In fact, it was Egerton Ryerson’s address to the conference that John Ryerson published (Fleming UC Imprints no. 1135).
and approved by conference delegates who were as interested as he in permanently preventing Lang and his brethren from “fleasing” Canadian Methodists for the benefit of the British conference and the London Book Room. 346 Whatever may have been the precise nature of its collaborative authorship, the consequences of these terms were beyond doubt. Both John Ryerson and his predecessors, as long as this discount remained in force, would have a strong incentive to stock the shelves of the Toronto Book Room with the Methodist Book Concern’s products at 40% off retail prices rather than the London Book Room’s books and periodicals at discounted rates of between $17\frac{1}{2} \%$ to $35\%$ exclusive of the additional surcharges, duties, and premiums enumerated by John Ryerson in his letter to Egerton the previous January. 347

Although absorbing a modest loss on the sale of some of Lang’s remaining London Book Room stock, Ryerson could not dispense with all the irons his British Wesleyan predecessor left in the fire quite so easily. The failure of The Village Blacksmith meant that, with Canadian Methodists in control of the Book Room, nothing was ever again heard of publishing a Canadian “edition of the life of Rev. J. Smith, as also that of John Nelson,” (UCA, Journal of the Proceedings of the Book Committee, 15 August 1836, 17 October 1836). But work on “a small Pocket Edition of the best tunes, suited to the various meters of our hymns, and familiar to the Methodists, particularly from Europe” was already well advanced by the time the Canada conference met in June 1837 (UCA “Committee on the Improvement of Singing 1835” Appendices to Conference Minutes). After the final report of the previous Book Committee was adopted, a resolution was passed extending, “the cordial and unanimous thanks of the Conference…to Alex Davidson, Esq. for the labour and pains he had taken in preparing the Book of Sacred Music” (UCA, Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada, Annual

346 The conference minutes do not indicate whether these new rules were accepted as presented. If this clause was not added by the conference rather than the committee, the stipulation requiring a steeper discount for individual preachers may also be read as a preemptive effort on John Ryerson’s part to force the book steward, had his own bid for the post been unsuccessful, to rely more heavily on the Methodist Book Concern to supply Canadian Methodists with inexpensive books and periodicals.

347 The conference also passed a resolution supporting efforts on the part of preachers to circulate bibles printed by the British and Foreign Bible Society (MAC 160). This, however, was in no way inconsistent with John Ryerson’s policy of purchasing books from whatever publisher was willing to supply them on the best terms.
Although Ryerson may have been able to let Davidson’s manuscript languish on the shelf for a time without too much complaint from the Book Committee, he and his Canadian brethren probably felt the need for a hymnbook of their own almost as keenly as the British Wesleyans. Uniquely symbolic of religious identity, the continued use of an American hymnbook north of the border, even unencumbered by the Concern’s rhetoric, would be both unseemly and awkward. The only question that remained at this point was not whether the book would be printed, but on whose press. Because musical notation was required, it could not be printed in the colony. Ryerson was therefore obliged to look either across the border or across the Atlantic. There can be little doubt about where Harvard would want the business to be directed, “not so much” as William Ryerson had remarked only a month earlier, “for our [Canadian Methodists’] good, as for their [British Wesleyan] own benefit and the advantage of the English connexion” (Sissons 1.377). Despite his membership on the Book Committee, however, the Ryerson brothers appear to have taken steps to ensure that Harvard’s preferences would not be consulted on the matter.

After assuming control in Toronto, John Ryerson wasted no time in dispatching his first order to the Methodist Book Concern. Agents in New York were in receipt of his communication by midsummer and soon thereafter printed a notice in the Christian Advocate indicating that four boxes of books had been shipped to “J Ryerson, Toronto, U.C. via Rochester” (CA 14 July 1837: 187, CA 11 Aug 1837: 203). Ryerson appears to have used his newfound influence at the Toronto Book Room to encourage James Evans to travel to New York “to superintend the publication of several books made or

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348 The fact that the hymns selected by Davidson for this hymnbook were decidedly Wesleyan in character did not in itself distinguish Sacred Harmony in content from the standard hymnbook published by the Methodist Book Concern for use south of the border. As John R. Tyson notes, “Within American Methodism, the process of consolidation and development of denominational identity influenced the production of the Methodist Episcopal Church’s first standard hymbook in 1836...Ironically, the first official American Methodist hymbook was composed entirely of hymns of European origin” (“The Methodist National Anthem” 29; see also Brown Word in the World 221). Neither Tyson nor Brown mention that this standard hymnbook was published largely in response to the Concern’s loss of copyright control in its legal battles with Azor Hoyt. In an effort to reassert control over its most saleable commodity with no legal recourse, the Concern’s agents were obliged to rely entirely on the rhetorical equation of patronage and denominational identity to exclude rival editions from its denominational market. This helps to explain why Upper Canadian Methodists took the unusual step of effacing anything that would betray the Concern’s role in producing their hymnbook despite the suspension of those rhetorical linkages north of the border. This will be discussed in more detail below.
translated into the Chippeway language” (CHC 4.170). Only four years earlier, when Canadian Methodist anxieties about the dangers of the Concern’s cultural production of its books in Upper Canada was reaching its apogee, Egerton Ryerson had used his own press to publish Evans’s first Native translation at the Guardian office (Banks “‘And not hearers only’: Books in Native Languages” 286; Fleming UIC Imprints no 693). Now, with the Concern’s rhetorical strategies in abeyance north of the border, John Ryerson appears to have let economy of time and money fully govern his choices. Since no special type was required, and since Evans did not have his books stereotyped in New York, there can be no other explanation for why he chose to break with his brother’s earlier practice by not publishing Evans’s new Native hymnbook and speller in Toronto himself. Although their power to influence, much less control, such decisions was now greatly reduced, the British Wesleyans appear to have done what little they could to impede Ryerson’s new policies. Evans could not leave Toronto, for example, until British Wesleyan Joseph Stinson, who continued to control the denomination’s purse strings, advanced him enough money to finance his journey. Anticipating an almost immediate departure, Evans had remained in the capital after the June conference and a week later he wrote to his wife to inform her that he expected to be absent from the St. Clair Mission for only “about four weeks” (CHC 4.171). Deliberate foot-dragging on

349 James Evans, unlike his brother Ephraim, seems never to have repudiated American Methodism. Shortly after the election of Matthew Lang to superintend the Book Room in June 1835, Evans wrote to the editor of the Christian Advocate to describe his work at the St. Clair Mission and to “cheerfully and gratefully acknowledge that [Canadians], in our missionary efforts, have received much aid in a pecuniary point of view from our American brethren, and doubtless much Divine influence in answer to their fervent and faithful petitions at the throne of grace” (“St. Clair Mission” CA 17 Jul 1835: 186). Although the article is dated 27 June 1835, John Carroll mistakenly dates it to 1837 (CHC 4. 85-5).

350 The Methodist Book Concern did not take possession of its rebuilt premises until November 1839. In the meantime, arrangements were made with other printers in New York, including the Harper & Brothers and the American Bible Society (which the Methodist Episcopal Church officially rejoined in 1836), to print material on behalf of the Concern. Thus the fact that Daniel Fanshaw’s imprint, then the senior printer at the American Bible Society, appeared on Evans’s books in no way indicates that he was not working with the agents of the Concern. Since Evans was motivated primarily by economic rather than cultural concerns, moreover, it probably mattered little to him what imprint appeared on his Ojibway hymnbook, Nu-gu-mo-nun O-je-boa an-oad ge-è-se-ùu-ne-gu-noo-du-be-ùng uoo Muun-gou-duuz, and his Ojibway speller, The speller and interpreter in Indian and English, for the use of the mission schools, and such as may desire to obtain a knowledge of the Ojibway tongues. For more on Fanshaw’s reputation as an innovator and his role in having the first steam-powered Treadwell press installed at the offices of the American Tract Society in the mid-1820s, see Charles Sellers’s The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1826 (370).

351 While waiting for Stinson to advance the money at the Credit Mission, Evans had his first falling out with Peter Jones over his retranslation of hymns Jones had already translated for earlier hymnbooks
Stinson’s part, however, helped to increase that delay to something closer to four months. “I have been very much disappointed,” Evans complained in another letter to his wife written towards the end of July, “in not hearing from Brother Stinson, and the Banks all being closed, and money very scare, I have not been able to buy, borrow, or steal enough for my journey...I have nothing to do, and have to watch and pray much to keep from murmuring every moment” (CHC 4.172).

While Evans nursed his frustrations at the Credit Mission, John Ryerson quickly called a “special Meeting” of the new Book Committee before Egerton left town to ensure that the Toronto Book Room would be supplied with its own hymnbook on the best possible terms. In addition to himself and his brothers Egerton and William, only Ephraim Evans, whose daily presence at the Guardian office would have made it all but impossible to exclude, attended. Despite the absence of almost half of the Committee, including the new President William Harvard, important business was transacted:

Resolved,—That an edition of 2,000 copies of the “Sacred Harmony” be published forthwith. That Brother James Evans, who is about to proceed to New York, be respectfully requested to superintend its publication, and to get it printed part in plain, and part in patent notes, if practicable.

Resolved,—That he be requested to procure as favourable terms as possible for the payment of the cost of publication; and that he be authorized to draw upon the Book Steward for the amount required.

Resolved,—That the work, when printed, be imported in sheets. (UCA, Journal of the Proceedings of the Book Committee, 15 July 1837, 83.061C 1-1)

Outnumbered three to one, whatever objections Ephraim Evans may have had to these resolutions would have been easily brushed aside. Although their meeting was not convened directly under the Toronto Book Room’s shelves that continued to groan under the weight of unsold copies of Lang’s edition of The Village Blacksmith, the

(CHC 4.161, 4.170; Jones Life and Journal 392; Banks “‘And not hearers only’: Books in Native Languages” 286-7).
Ryersons must have been attentive to the risks they took in ordering such a large edition of Davidson’s hymnbook. Success, as the second resolution suggests, would depend on nothing so much as price. Despite the fact that many Canadian Methodists continued to believe that their years of steady transnational patronage had never been properly recompensed by the General Conference, the Ryersons well knew that no publisher could promise terms “as favourable…for the payment of the cost of publication” as the Methodist Book Concern. It is only in the third and final resolution that one can discern even the smallest hint that turning to New York for production might fall just short of a perfect strategy. Importing the work in sheets would have reduced the shipping costs and may well have been undertaken for financial reasons alone. But it also gave Upper Canadians control over the binding process and allowed them to insert or remove individual leaves should they so wish. Although the Concern’s rhetorical linkages between patronage and denominational identity were now effectively severed north of the border, the hymnbook was a printed commodity with a uniquely pronounced denominational character. Used in communal worship as well as for private devotion, it was the one book, in addition to the Bible, that could be found in the saddlebags of every Methodist preacher. By importing the work in sheets, then, John reserved the right to include his own locally-printed title page should he wish to make it appear that this one book, so crucially connected to denominational identity even in the absence of the Concern’s rhetoric, was not a product of the Methodist Book Concern’s presses.

352 A year later the Christian Guardian reported that the stereotype plates for Sacred Harmony had cost £300 (CG 25 July 1838: 149). The need to stretch the Book Room’s funds as far as possible likely became even more important when, in August 1837, the Book Committee voted to erect a new building (UCA, Journal of the Proceedings of the Book Committee, 3 August 1837). These considerations were not much complicated by a decision made by Evans to have Sacred Harmony stereotyped in the late summer of 1837. Although it was too late for the Book Committee to do anything but complain by the time they found out, the decision seems not to have caused too much distress. “A letter was read from Rev. James Evans at New York,” the minutes noted, “stating that he had been strongly recommended to get the Music stereotyped, & that he had consented to give the necessary dictions. After examining the letter, and the comparative cost of stereotype and letter press edition, the Committee fully approved of what had been done” (UCA, Journal of the Proceedings of the Book Committee, September 1837). Once again, the Committee’s deliberations seem to have been guided primarily by cost rather than cultural considerations. Nevertheless, when the hymnbook finally appeared in print there was no indication either in its imprint or colophon that it had been produced using stereotype plates manufactured in New York (Fleming UC Imprints no. 1197a). This was in contrast to the Church of England’s A Selection of Psalms and Hymns for Every Sunday and principal Festivals Throughout the Year, for the Use of Congregations in the Diocess [sic] of Quebec (Fleming UC Imprints no. 826). Though its title page indicates that it has been published by Robert Stanton, King’s Printer, the imprint it bore indicated
John Ryerson did not wait for all the denominational, cultural, and commercial complications attendant on the production and sale of the hymnbook to be resolved before directing his energies towards expanding the business at the Toronto Book Room. He did, however, wait for his first shipment to arrive from New York before running his first Toronto Book Room catalogue in the Guardian. In what must have struck some readers as oddly symmetrical to his brother’s 1833 “BEAUTIFUL ENGLISH EDITIONS” catalogue, John Ryerson’s first catalogue consisted of 35 items under the heading “JUST RECEIVED from New York and for sale at the Wesleyan-Methodist Book-Room” (CG 6 September 1837:176). Unlike his brother, however, John Ryerson put a great deal of energy into issuing new and larger catalogues on an ongoing basis. The following week Ryerson issued a truly massive catalogue including hundreds of new titles—so many in fact that it seems doubtful he had them all on hand at the time of publication. Ryerson also demonstrated his willingness to go further than the discount mandated by the previous conference, adding that “A bonus of ten per cent. will be given in Books, on all orders for Sabbath schools, if accompanied by cash” (CG 13 September 1837: 179). Discounts of this kind resulted in a massive expansion in the size of Methodist Sunday school libraries across the colony by the end of Ryerson’s tenure as book steward in June 1842. A census taken at that time showed that the number of volumes had grown over Ryerson’s five-year term from 2,604 to 11,372 (UCA, “Report of the Sabbath School Committee to Conference in 1842” Appendices to Conference Minutes). The following week, Ryerson ran yet another new catalogue along with, for the first time, brief book reviews of items he held in stock (“Book Concern” CG 27 Sept 1837: 187). By late October, the book steward was promising yet another large shipment from New York. “Our friends,” the notice concluded, “especially in distant

that it has been produced by G.P. Scott in New York. This was, however, altogether less complicated a matter for the Church of England from a cultural perspective. Not only had the Church of England never faced charges of sedition and disloyalty to the Crown, but it seems probable that the Stanton, acting in his capacity as King’s Printer, had made the arrangements on behalf of the Church himself. Thus the Church of England, unlike the Methodist Book Committee, would bear no responsibility for its place of manufacture.

354 By this time the Toronto district Sunday school library holdings had, at 3,400 volumes, grown to surpass the holdings in the Bay of Quinte district with 3,149 volumes.

355 Notices of this kind also appeared in the Guardian on 22 November (10), 20 December (26), 27 December (31), and into the new year.
parts of the Province, will please send their orders immediately, that they may be executed before the close of navigation” (“Book Concern New Supply of Books” CG 25 Oct 1837: 203). Early the following month, Evans left New York bringing with him not only, as he noted in a letter to his wife, “nine large boxes of books” from the Methodist Book Concern, but also seventeen boxes of stereotype plates that John Ryerson would use to produce the colony’s first Methodist hymnbook (CHC 4.174). To preachers and customers scattered on preaching circuits across the colony, the changes Ryerson had brought about in the price and availability of books in just less than half a year must have seemed just short of revolutionary.

The final step in Ryerson’s reforms occurred in late November 1837 when, on the eve of Mackenzie’s Rebellion, the Book Committee met to deal with the debt Canadian Methodists continued to owe the London Book Room. Attended by William Harvard, Ephraim Evans, and John and William Ryerson, the Committee authorized the book steward “to borrow the sum of £250 from the U.C. Academy, for the purchase of Bills of Exchange, to pay John Mason and T. Tegg & Co. of London” (UCA, Journal of the Proceedings of the Book Committee, 29 November 1837). It was an astonishing move. Far from having an excess of funds to cover shortfalls at the Book Room, the Academy continued to teeter daily on the verge of bankruptcy as, in the words of John Ryerson, “the income of the institution [did] not more than pay half the expenses” (Sissons 1.366). In fact, as even William Harvard probably knew, all of the £250 the Book

356 Ryerson also emulated in this issue of the Guardian the Christian Advocate’s practice of including a list of correspondents and a small tally of books shipped to various places across the colony throughout the past week. Although he maintained the practice unevenly, it is a method of communications many of the colony’s older preachers would have immediately recognized as American in inspiration.

357 Like Evans’s books, these were probably produced by another firm on behalf of the Methodist Book Concern. There were several businesses in New York that produced stereotyped editions of work for distribution in Upper Canada including R. C. Valentine and Wallis, Hammond & Co, (later Wallis H. & H.). See Fleming UC Imprints nos.1310, 510, 845. Although the Methodist Book Concern had its own stereotyping equipment at least as early as 1829, when it won an award for its stereotyped edition of Adam Clark’s Commentary (Pilkington 215), all of this, like its stock and buildings, was lost in the fire of 1836. When the Book Committee resolved to “procure Stereotype plates of the smallest edition of the Hymn Book” (UCA, Journal of the Proceedings of the Book Committee, 17 April 1844), they again turned to the Concern. The following month, the Christian Advocate noted a shipment of “2 boxes stereotype plates” to Anson Green in Toronto (CA 21 May 1844: 163).

358 John Ryerson blamed much of the troubles at the Academy on William Lord who had induced “the building committee” to undertake “unnecessarily expensive” improvements in the hope that a government grant would clear the debt (Sissons 1.366). Although Egerton Ryerson returned to Upper Canada in June 1837 with a promise of government money, the grant was not finally authorized by the
Committee allotted to pay John Mason at the London Book Room would effectively come out of John Ryerson’s own pocket. Only four days earlier, Egerton Ryerson had written a long letter to Robert Alder complaining that promises made by the government to extend financial support to the Academy had not been met. John Ryerson, meanwhile, had been obliged to secure a personal loan from the province’s Receiver General in the amount of £1,200 (Sissons 1.389-90). Nor did it escape the younger Ryerson that circumstances would have been much altered if he had not wasted so much time attempting to raise money on behalf of the Academy overseas. “It is also the full conviction from leading brethren,” he wrote, “that had I attended the American General Conference, instead of being in England, such an arrangement would have been made as to have secured to our Connexion what was due us from the New York Book Concern, which amounts to more than I obtained in England” (Sissons 1.392).\(^3\) Instead, John Ryerson was now in debt to the banks and to the Receiver General personally for £2,000, Egerton Ryerson for £3,400, and Ephraim Evans for £2,000 (Hodgins Story 181). That John Ryerson, a man on whom debt did not weigh lightly, was willing to make such a payment to Mason under these conditions strongly suggests either that the British Wesleyans were exerting enormous pressure on Canadians to clear their debt with the London Book Room, or that John Ryerson was almost pathologically anxious to be free of it. Whatever the cause, it left Upper Canadian Methodists less dependent on John Mason for books and periodicals than at any time since October 1833. Even more importantly, it seems to have helped raise new doubts in the minds of the influential Ryerson brothers about the continued value of the union itself.

Although the failure of the Rebellion was followed by a strong backlash of conservatism across the province, John Ryerson’s policies at the Toronto Book Room remained largely unaltered.\(^4\) Ephraim Evans, meanwhile, used the Guardian to show

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\(^3\) When Ryerson returned from England in June 1837, he had secured only £1,272.10.6 for the Academy while incurring expenses of £677.5.6½ (Sissons 392n1).

\(^4\) For a summary of Methodist responses to the Rebellion see Sissons 1.395-400.
that the colonial administration had the support of the province’s British Wesleyans in putting down the rebels. Perhaps in part because Canadian Methodists were now less dependent on the London Book Room than at any point since October 1833, however, both John and Egerton Ryerson began to sympathize more openly with an emergent reformism that was more moderate in tone. In March, John Ryerson wrote to Egerton complaining of the Guardian’s gratuitous anti-Americanism and its appeasement of waxing conservatism that threatened to revive claims for church establishment. He argued that the only practicable remedy was for Egerton to step forward “to take the Editorship of the Guardian again” (Sissons 1.434; French 172). Tensions between the Ryersons and British Wesleyan conservatism reached a critical impasse after Samuel Lount and Peter Matthews were hanged for treason on 12 April 1838. “When Lount and Matthews were executed,” wrote one eye witness, “a number of other political prisoners under sentence of death at Toronto, could witness, from the jail windows, a fate which they expected soon to be theirs” (Lindsey Wm. Lyon Mackenzie 1.191). While John and Egerton Ryerson judged the executions inexcusably draconian, Harvard and the Guardian not only applauded the government’s action but published a pastoral letter urging the colony’s Methodists “to institute an inquiry in all their Societies for any who had compromised their character of loyalty during the late events” (CHC 4.178). This was too much for Egerton Ryerson. The following month he published a rebuke in the Upper Canada Herald arguing that “The discipline of the church does not authorize us to become the judge of another man’s political opinions” (French 161). Historians have generally concluded that this public clash marked the beginning of the end of the union. “I regard this as the point,” observed Carroll, “at which the antagonism between the leading Canadian members of the Conference and the authorities representing British Methodism in the Province, which increased, by one means or another, till it issued in the breaking of the Union” (CHC 4.179). Echoing these sentiments, Goldwin French calls Ryerson’s article a “resounding repudiation of Harvard’s tory policy” and argued that it “signaled a decisive shift in the Methodist outlook” (162, 171). But as developments in the affairs at the Toronto Book Room clearly show, that cleavage had begun to open long before the Rebellion. Disagreement over the supply of books and periodicals to the colony’s Methodists, and John Ryerson’s retaking of the Book Room on behalf of his colonial coreligionists, had helped to prepare the ground for this more public break with Harvard and his British Wesleyan brethren. Had John and Egerton Ryerson not
already worked so well together to take advantage of the terms offered by the Methodist Book Concern, and in the process vastly diminished their dependency on the London Book Room, it seems doubtful Ryerson would have responded as quickly as he did. It is ironic, then, that although John Ryerson provided his brother with both encouragement and a model for retaking control of the Guardian—something effected at the upcoming Canada conference in June 1838—it would be John, not Egerton, who would lose his nerve first as the union began to splinter beyond repair.

When the Canada conference met in 1838 tensions were running high between the colony’s Methodists and their British Wesleyan counterparts. Amid some controversy, Egerton Ryerson was returned as editor of the Guardian and later rejoined his brother John at the Toronto Book Room. By March of the following year it was clear that the Guardian’s editorial policies had changed significantly since Evans’s tenure. As John Ryerson continued to publish catalogues offering books for the cheapest possible prices, Egerton wrote editorials demanding the secularization of the Clergy Reserves against British Wesleyan wishes. Robert Alder, meanwhile, was dispatched from Liverpool to Upper Canada to, according to Carroll, “put a quietus on the Guardian—to repress what he would have called ‘agitation’—and to bring the Canadian body into a greater state of submission to the parent Conference” (CHC 4.237). When the Canada conference met the following June, Alder succeeded in having several resolutions passed that allowed British Wesleyans to regain a tight control over the denomination’s purse strings in Upper Canada (Semple 93, French 180-1). Alder was not able to prevent either John or Egerton Ryerson from being reelected to their posts at the Toronto Book Room. And, in a clear signal that John’s policy of relying on the Methodist Book Concern for the cheapest possible commodities had the approval of most delegates, the conference passed a resolution recommending he “allow the Preachers 25 per cent discount on those books which have been a long time on hand in order to facilitate as much as possible the sale thereof” (UCA, Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada. Annual Conference Minutes, 1833-1842). As proof that Alder’s visit did not disrupt the business of the Book Room, John Ryerson published two new catalogues in the weeks following the conference (CG 17 July 1839: 150, CG 24 July 1839: 154-5, CG 31 July 1839: 158). In the face of rising intradenominational tensions, Ryerson, although continuing to import books from New York, ceased to declare that his new arrivals were of American manufacture. It was a small concession. With the cultural implications attendant on
purchasing books from the Methodist Book Concern now in abeyance, Ryerson might have easily argued that his choice of supplier was determined by logistical convenience and economic advantage alone. As subsequent events show, however, he understood very well that relying almost exclusively on the Methodist Book Concern, for whatever practical reasons, continued to place stress on the increasingly fragile union. But his eventual willingness to take more meaningful steps to relieve that stress came too late to exert much influence on wider outcomes.

By the spring of 1840 an impossible impasse had grown up between the Ryersons and the British Wesleyans. Egerton Ryerson in particular was singled out by Alder and the British Wesleyans in London as the cause of most of the trouble. With the union now teetering on the verge of collapse, John and Egerton Ryerson travelled to Baltimore to attend the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church (JGC 2.25). American Methodists, and Nathan Bangs in particular, commiserated with the Ryersons and offered to secure Egerton a church in New York City if his Upper Canadian brethren failed to stand behind him. John Ryerson, for his part, planned to join his brother in a year’s time if things did not improve north of the border. In the meantime, and as a signal of his satisfaction with the existing terms, John Ryerson did not petition for steeper discounts with the Concern. After returning to Upper Canada the following month, and perhaps to their surprise, not only was Egerton Ryerson cleared of all charges by a vote of 59 to 8 at the Canada conference, but he and William Ryerson were selected as representatives to the British conference to be held that August to sort out the difficulties that had grown up between the two bodies (Semple 95, French 187-8, Sissons 1.549-51). The choice was so injudicious as to seem all but deliberately calculated to incite further frustration on the part of the British Wesleyans. Without Egerton and William to shore him up, however, John Ryerson’s resolve failed

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361 In a letter from Baltimore dated 25 May 1840, Ryerson noted, “I am still at the General Conference. Rev. Dr. Bangs says that I ought to remain until the close. After much consideration I have decided upon a step which, for many reasons, appears desirable... I have concluded and have made arrangements to take a station in the city of New York for one, if not for two years. My brother John would have done the same if we could have both left Canada this year. If things in the province do not go on better with us he will do so in another year” (Hodgins Story 269-70; Sissons also refers to this letter 1.543-4).

362 Although John Ryerson was elected to another term as book steward, his brother Egerton stepped down as the editor for the last time to be replaced by Jonathan Scott. Scott, still a young man, was, according to French, under the unofficial supervision of John Ryerson (MAC 225, French 218).
him. The Canadian delegation sailed for England on the first of July and did not return to the colony for almost three months. John Ryerson, meanwhile, scrambled to dispatch an order to the London Book Room as quickly as possible. During the last week of August Ryerson ran a new catalogue in the *Guardian*. “JUST RECEIVED,” it read, “at the Methodist Book Room, No. 9 Wellington Building, the following BOOKS from London” (CG 26 Aug 1840: 175). Although almost a month too late—the union was effectively dissolved by the British conference a month earlier (Hodgins *Story* 272-3, Webb 170, Gregory *Side Lights* 291ff.)—the abrupt appearance of this catalogue suggests two things. First, it demonstrates that John Ryerson was more eager than his brothers to repair the rift with the British Wesleyans and was willing to absorb financial losses at the Book Room to do so. Second, despite the practice Ryerson had maintained over the past two years of advertising books as straightforward commodities without declaring the place of their manufacture, it suggests that latent cultural implications attendant on selling either American or British books at the Book Room continued to linger in John Ryerson’s mind. In any event, the catalogue appeared only two more times. Two weeks later, Egerton Ryerson returned to the colony with the news that the union had been unilaterally and unceremoniously dissolved by the British Wesleyans. The news appears to have shaken John Ryerson badly. He would not run another catalogue in the *Guardian* for almost an entire year.

The ten months following Ryerson’s return to Canada were dark ones for the colony’s Methodists. Despite the passage of several blustering resolutions that roundly condemned British Wesleyan unilateralism, Canadian Methodists must have been astonished when, among the eleven preachers who abandoned them for the Wesleyans, they numbered not only Ephraim Evans but their respected elder in the faith William Case (MAC 245). There was, moreover, a great deal of anxiety among Canadians more generally as the Act of Union to unite the upper and lower provinces came into effect on 10 February 1841. Canadian Methodists, meanwhile, used the *Guardian* to put on a brave face. George Playter, for example, published two influential letters arguing that the dissolution of the union was illegal and that the Wesleyans were in fact behaving as schismatics (French 31, Webb 177). Joseph Stinson and Matthew Richey, for their part, tried to draw the Americans into the debate by writing to the editor of the *Western Christian Advocate* in an attempt to justify their continued presence in the colony. Not surprisingly, they were rebuffed. “We still think that the labors of the Wesleyan
preachers in Upper Canada,” the editors responded, “are not only uncalled for, but that they are a hindrance to the promotion of religion among the Methodists, and others, in Upper Canada; and, with the light we now have, we would say we hope the English Wesleyans will go where they are more needed” (“The Canadian and Wesleyan Methodists” Western Christian Advocate 12 Mar 1841: 186). In the meantime, John Ryerson toured the eastern parts of the province on behalf of the Missionary Society and began publishing extracts from his journal in the Guardian (Ryerson Methodism 430). Despite the air of assurance these entries project, however, Ryerson found himself deeply divided. When not busy shoring up the flagging morale of his coreligionists across the colony, the book steward quietly prostrated himself before Joseph Stinson and offered terms that amounted to little less than complete capitulation in an effort he believed would ultimately save institutional Methodism from ruin. According Stinson, Ryerson promised that, in exchange for reunification, his brethren would place everything—church property, chapels, the Academy, and even the Book Room—“under the control of the British Conference” while Egerton accepted exile in New York (qtd. French 222; see also Ryerson Methodism 314; Hodgins Story 239; Webb 182). Terms this groveling must have struck the British Wesleyans as almost implausible. In any event, they did not remain on the table long enough for the British Wesleyans to take advantage of them.

By the end of June, John and Egerton Ryerson had all the encouragement they needed to harden their resolve against the Wesleyan competition. As French notes, the temper of the Canada conference held that month “was indicated by the election of the eminently Canadian William Ryerson as president, with Anson Green as secretary”

363 These extracts appeared on March 24th and 31st, April 7th and 14th, and May 12th.

364 In an extraordinarily candid letter written to Bangs in May 1841, Egerton Ryerson observed that, “Some conversation has lately taken place between my brother John & Mr. Stinson & myself. I think it possible that a friendly arrangement may be made between the London Committee & our Conference. I have observed by the discussion, especially by a pamphlet lately published by the Committee in London, & also in conversation with Mr. Stinson, that the whole affair is made to appear as much as possible a matter of difference between the Committee & me personally, & epithets have been multiplied against me in proportion to the want of facts.” Ryerson concluded his observation with speculations about moving to New York. ““It is believed by some intelligent men who have talked on the subject, that if I would come out as the advocate of the country, there would be no doubt of success, from my knowledge of the subject, from a general, & as I think overweening, confidence in my concentration, perseverance & energy & from the feelings of the country. It is also thought that if there should be failure of success, I could then honorably retire to the U.S. I am no theorist; but I hate despotism as I do Satan, & I love liberty as I do life” (Sissons 1.576-7).
William was an early opponent of the union and Anson Green an immigrant from the United States. John Ryerson, for his part, was returned as both book steward and Agent of the Missionary Society (MAC 263). Even more important for a denomination that tended to judge success in quantitative terms, membership, despite the loss of members to the British Wesleyans, grew by some 660 to a total of more than 17,000 across the colony (MAC 266). Additional evidence that Canadian Methodists, even without British Wesleyans among their ranks, found themselves situated ever more favourably within the colony’s power field was soon forthcoming. A June petition to reconstitute the Academy as a degree-granting institution under the new name Victoria College passed through both the Assembly and the Legislative Council by late August. Within days, Lord Sydenham, the Governor of the newly united Canadas, gave the bill his royal assent (Hodgins Story 301, Green Life 247). Egerton Ryerson, far from abandoning the colony for a station in New York, was appointed the first president of Victoria College by the Board in early September (Sissons 1.580). With all these victories to buoy him up, John Ryerson published a new catalogue in the Guardian for the first time in almost a year (CG 25 Aug 1841: 175). What is even more striking than Ryerson’s own renewed willingness to rely on the Methodist Book Concern once again to stock his shelves, is the fact that Wesleyans, despite their own sustained reluctance to patronize the Concern, did not once point to John Ryerson’s practices in Toronto as evidence of a compromised religious identity or proof of American cultural hegemony. The absence of such accusations is perhaps the strongest evidence of the extent to which such printed commodities, though they continued to be rhetorically-situated as denominational status objects in the United States, possessed an increasingly benign cultural character north of the border. With, in the words of Anson Green, the “dark night of doubts and fears” now passed, John Ryerson, and his successor Alexander MacNab, carried on the affairs of the Book Room largely in accordance with the policies put in place after the Annual conference of 1837 (Life and Times 267). Indeed, so much confidence did MacNab have in the salability of the Concern’s products that he may have overstocked the shelves. After receiving two large shipments of books from the Methodist Book Concern in August

\[\text{365 This is despite the ample opportunities they had to do so in the pages of their own periodical The Wesleyan.}\]
and October 1843, for example, the editor of the Guardian published a notice, “beg[ging] to direct attention to a Catalogue of Books handed us by the Book Steward on our last page-to-day and to say, that it contains but a very limited selection, from the unusually large, diversified, and valuable stock now on hand, at our Establishment” (CA 3 Aug 1843: 11, CA 4 Oct 1843: 31, CG 1 Nov 1843: 6). The only hard evidence that MacNab may have been overzealous came the following year when Anson Green agreed to take over responsibility for the Book Room. He was surprised to find it “in a ruinous condition...only reporting a gain of nine dollars, and that without making any allowance for shelf-worn books, bad debts, or for paying an appropriation to the Contingent Fund” (Life and Times 278). Green’s efforts to return the Book Room to profitability were concentrated on forging ever closer ties with the Methodist Book Concern as well as opening up relations with any other publisher willing to offer him books and periodicals on particularly advantageous terms. Green also used his catalogues to place an even greater emphasis on the affordability of his products as straightforward commodities. “A LARGE STOCK OF NEW BOOKS, AT REDUCED PRICES” a catalogue printed in October 1844 declared. Eschewing any appeal to Methodists as unique consumers whose purchases spoke to their religious identities, Green even extended discounts of 10%—equal to those offered to Methodist preachers under the terms of the 1833 agreement with the London Book Room—to “Ministers of other Denominations” while stressing for a third time that the prices given in the catalogue were “the cheapest we have ever published” (CG 29 Oct 1844: 7). Linking the purchase of the Book Room’s products to the denominational identities of its customers, it seems, could hardly have been further from Green’s mind.

366 At the time Green and John Ryerson had just returned from attending the General Conference in New York City where they had overseen the stereotyping of a supplement for Sacred Harmony on behalf of the Book Committee. The plates were shipped separately to Toronto in two boxes from New York in the middle of May 1844 (CA 21 May 1844: 163). A week before that, four more boxes of books were shipped from the Concern to “Alex MacNab, Toronto...via Rochester, per steamboat” (CA 15 May 1844: 159).

367 The discounts Green offered here anticipated later, more official, developments in pricing structures. In May 1845, the Book Committee passed a motion recommending that the upcoming Canada conference “order that hereafter the Preachers obtain for their own Libraries the same discount on those they purchase to sell. Also that the Local Preachers of our Church and the Ministers of other Churches be allowed to purchase books for the own Libraries at Ten percent Discount” (UCA, Journal of the Proceedings of the Book Committee, 22 May 1845).
As Green continued to expand his market in Canada West by offering the lowest possible prices and the steepest possible discounts to denominational and transdenominational readers, Sunday school scholars, and those enrolled in the province’s common schools,\(^{368}\) John Ryerson was once again quietly laying plans for an eventual reunion with the Wesleyans (Ryerson Methodism 436, Webb 182). A year later, he and Green made a trip to England to attend the international convention of the Evangelical Alliance. While there they were encouraged to learn that British Wesleyan support for the establishment principle had largely evaporated in the heat of the Disruption of the Church of Scotland, the Oxford Movement, and the refusal of the Church of England to repudiate Puseyism (Webb 181). In response to the changing climate, Green and Ryerson presented a proposal that would form the basis for reunion between the two bodies the following year (Semple 97). This time, however, the proposal contained no allowances for ceding control over the Book Room. With both sides weary of competition, reunion was finally effected in June 1847. Although recent historians admit one or two minor exceptions touching on polity and the religious status of Wesleyan missionaries in the colony, there is general agreement among scholars that the terms were “essentially the same as in 1833” (Semple 98). Todd Webb argues, moreover, that because “[b]etween 1847 and 1862, only British Wesleyans served as president of the Canada Conference” that “in cultural terms, the new union…came to rest on the basis of a commonly agreed upon sense of British and Wesleyan identity among the leading elements of both Conferences” (Webb 183). This conclusion, however, is based almost exclusively on readings of formal polity documents and overlooks the important fact that the terms of reunion were not accompanied by a separate agreement to resume importing books and periodicals from the London Book Room. The uninterrupted dependency Canadians maintained on the Methodist Book Concern for printed commodities, despite the suspension of formal rhetorical linkages between patronage and denominational identity north of the border, set firm and practical limits on the extent to which they could truly be described, however much the two bodies had come to agree on the question of church

\(^{368}\) In June 1847, for example, Green ran a catalogue that read “SCHOOL BOOKS. The following BOOKS, designed for the use of College, Academies, and Common Schools, are consistently on hand at the W. M. Book Room…and offered to the public at very moderate prices. A liberal discount made to those who purchase to sell again. School masters and Country Merchants are invited to sell” (CG 23 June 1847: 143).
establishment in the colony, as authentically British and Wesleyan in character. Although the British Wesleyans reasserted their control over matters of ecclesiastical polity after reunion, Canadian Methodists tenaciously maintained, and even strengthened, their commercial linkages with the Methodist Book Concern. And while Canadians may have had to wait until 1863 to see one of their own occupy the seat of president, never again would a British Wesleyan oversee the affairs of the Toronto Book Room.  

While unwillingness on the part of British Wesleyans to institute steeper discounts on books and periodicals meant that Green had little reason to reinvigorate relations with the London Book Room, some of the most interesting evidence of his willingness to do business with any publisher prepared to mete out the right terms can be found in the Guardian just weeks after the ratification of reunion. “In addition to our usual supply of Sabbath School Books,” began one advertisement appearing in early July, “we now offer to the public those of the American Sunday School Union, at the Society’s prices in Rochester, with the addition merely of the duties and cost of importation” (CG 7 July 1847: 152). In view of the fact that the Methodist Episcopal  

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369 Though an American by birth, Anson Green became the first “Canadian Methodist” to achieve the presidency in 1863 (Life and Times 389).  
370 Those duties, under the terms of the 1847 Foreign Reprints Act, amounted to 12½% on works authored by British writers still protected under copyright. Most of the American Sunday School Union’s books, however, would not have fallen into that category. The appearance of this advertisement, in addition to showing Green’s willingness to patronize publishers other than the Methodist Book Concern under the right conditions, is also striking in view of other developments taking place in the colony. In June 1847, Egerton Ryerson, who since June 1842 had been serving as the Chief Superintendent of Education, issued a special report that attempted to explain his support for a continued ban on American textbooks in the province’s schools. Sounding more like John Strachan than that young Methodist preacher who so brazenly attacked establishmentarianism in the colony’s public sphere some twenty years earlier, he wrote, in part, “that American School Books, unless permitted by the Board, are excluded by the 30th Section of the Statute of 1846;…In regard to the exclusion of American Books from our Schools, I have explained, as I have had opportunity, that it is not because they are foreign books simply that they are excluded…but because they are, with very few exceptions, anti-British in every sense of the word… I believe such books are one element of powerful influence against the established Government of the country. From facts which have come to my knowledge, I believe it will be found, on inquiry, that in precisely those parts of Upper Canada where United States School Books had been used most extensively, there the spirit of the insurrection in 1837, and 1838, was most prevalent…Though impressed with the magnitude of the evil arising from the indiscriminate use of United States Books in our Schools, I have thought it premature to recommend the enforcement of the law excluding them, until a proper supply of equally cheap, if not cheaper books, recommended by the Board of Education, should be provided.” (“Special Report” Documentary History of Education in Upper Canada 7.110; italics mine). Those books were eventually to come from Ireland. In the meantime, as Ryerson’s text demonstrates, his objections to American books were rooted in their content and not to their status as foreign printed commodities alone. When his rhetoric is juxtaposed to Green’s business practices at the Toronto Book Room, however, we are left with
Church continued to maintain its own rival Sunday School Union distinct from this larger interdenominational body to supply the needs of Methodist Sunday schools in the United States, this serves as a particularly striking example of Green’s commitment to place the bare cost of commodities ahead of any lingering denominational allegiances (Pilkington 352). Exceptions of this kind, however, only prove the more general rule that no other publisher could consistently offer Green books and periodicals less expensively than the Methodist Book Concern. Later in September, for example, after the Christian Advocate noted another shipment of books to Green in Toronto (CA 33 Sept 1847: 151), Green issued another new catalogue advertising “that a large supply of new and valuable books has just been received at the Wesleyan Book Room.” But, setting denominational concerns to one side, the advertisement urges readers to buy Green’s books for no other reason than their incomparable affordability. “We have no hesitation,” Green enthused,

in saying that purchases can be made at the Wesleyan Book Room at as low a figure as any reasonable person could expect—or as any unreasonable person could make them in any establishment in the Province. If there be the least doubt on this subject, we suggest that whoever is skeptical should procure the catalogue of any Canadian house and then compare the prices with the prices attached to similar works in the catalogue issued by our esteemed colleague, the Book Steward. (CG 6 Oct 1847: 202)

The distance between these straightforward economic appeals and the denominational rhetoric the Methodist Book Concern continued to employ south of the border could hardly have been more pronounced. Indeed, so eclipsed are religious considerations in Green’s advertisement that it might even be argued to foreshadow what Janet Friskney and Dana Garrick describe was an eventual shift in emphasis throughout the late

an interesting contradiction. Of course, Ryerson would have known that Green was relying primarily on the Methodist Book Concern to supply him with books and periodicals to sell to whomever would buy them including students and masters in the province’s schools. In any event, as the following will show, Ryerson’s public grandstanding had little effect on Green’s practices. For more on the controversy surrounding Ryerson’s public efforts to purge the province’s common schools of American textbooks see Parvin 22-34.
nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that effectively transformed the Toronto Book Room, later the Methodist Book and Publishing House, into a secular publisher in all but name.

About a year after reunion, Green was nominated to attend yet another General Conference in the United States. Anxious as always to maintain cordial relations with his brethren south of the border, Green also hoped to secure an agreement that would extend even steeper discounts on the Concern’s products. Not remarked in the minutes of the Canada conference from the previous year, these claims against the Concern appear to have been undertaken by Green and the Book Committee on their own initiative. Perhaps in part because Ryerson, MacNab, and Green, had all shown a sustained willingness, with a few exceptions, to rely on the Methodist Book Concern to supply the Toronto Book Room since June 1837, the renewed appeal did not fall on deaf ears. The nature of the argument and its outcome are given by Green in his autobiography:

My principal business with the General Conference was to obtain better terms for our Book-room. In 1832 they agreed to divide to us our share of their Book-room stock, amounting to about $27,000...In 1836, Messrs. Case and Lord brought the subject before their General Conference again, when they agreed to allow us forty per cent. discount on their books, as an offset to our claim. I was able to convince the committee that, in reality, they gave us nothing for our stock in their Book Concern. They would sell to any reliable house, at wholesale, on the same terms as to us; therefore, we lost our stock entirely! The committee saw it at once, and unanimously voted to give us books at cost price. This they should continue to do, or divide to us our share of stock. Having finished our work, we all left for home on the 19th of May (Life and Times 316).

In their eagerness to strengthen further their presence in the Canadian market, American delegates attending the General Conference appear to have been willing to overlook the fact that the whole basis of Green’s argument was factually incorrect.

371 The first mention that new claims were in the offing can be found on the minutes of the Book Committee from April 1848. At that meeting a new committee was formed “to draw up a Memorial setting forth the claims of the Canada Conference upon the Methodist Book Room in New York” (UCA, Journal of the Proceedings of the Book Committee, 7 April 1840).
According to the terms of the agreement reached in 1836, Canadians were assured, at least until 1852, a discount that was 7% greater than offered to any other wholesaler—40% rather than 33% (*JGC* 1.461-3). In the end, Green walked away from the General Conference with an unprecedented discount on the Concern’s books of 50% (*CHC* 4.5-6). So advantageous were these terms that he was even obliged to agree that “the books purchased by the Book Concern in Canada shall not be disposed of in such places as will bring them into competition with the Book Concern in the United States” (*JGC* 3.50). After thus easing the financial pressures on the Toronto Book Room considerably, Green was able to remark by 1851 that, “The Book-room is prospering finely. We are paying off our debts, have enlarged our building, prepared a vault for the safety of our public documents, and increased our annual grants to Church funds to $800” (*Life and Times* 334). Prosperity of this kind would almost certainly have been impossible if Green had not taken such aggressive steps to secure steeper discounts and thereby increase his dependency on the Methodist Book Concern in the years following reunion. “This arrangement stood till the American Civil War,” John Carroll observed in 1874, “when their Book Agents said they could no longer afford them at that, and the discount was lowered to forty per cent., at which it still remains, I believe” (*CHC* 4.6).

Throughout the middle decades of the nineteenth century, there is little to suggest that Green made any serious attempts to cultivate relationships with alternative suppliers. Interest in importing materials from the London Book Room, meanwhile, atrophied to almost nothing. Apart from an 1850 resolution passed by the Book Committee directing Green to “write to John Mason, London, requiring of him if he could not furnish the periodicals published by the English Conference at 50 per cent. discount for circulation in Canada” (UCA, Journal of the Proceedings of the Book Committee, 3 July 1850), there is little evidence to suggest that the London Book Room’s

372 Green’s advertisement for “Dublin and Toronto editions of the Irish National School Books” (*Journal for Education in Upper Canada* Jan 1849: 16) indicated one of those exceptions. Egerton Ryerson, in his role as Chief Superintendent of Education in the province had made arrangements for the use of these inexpensive alternatives in order to displace American-authored textbooks from the province’s schools. Green, however, continued to supply the Sunday school market with American manufactured books from the Methodist Book Concern—particularly the Concern’s *Sunday School Advocate* which replaced the defunct Canadian *Sunday School Guardian* in 1855 (Friskney “Methodist Book and Publishing House” 70-2, 101).
relatively expensive books occupied much space on Methodist shelves in Toronto. Indeed, even before Green successfully negotiated steeper discounts with the Concern, it must have been clear that the most important consequence of Egerton Ryerson’s 1833 agreement with the London Book Room flowed not from its intended displacement of the Concern’s products from the Upper Canadian market, but from the nascent strategies Ryerson had begun to develop in its wake to resituate the Concern’s books as cheap commodities with no appeal to aspects of denominational cultural production. And yet, despite Ryerson’s early efforts, the lingering implications of the Concern’s rhetoric could not be entirely thrown off until the General Conference, in its refusal of the Canadian claims against the Concern, rejected the argument that Canadian participation in the Concern’s transnational market amounted to more than a straightforward economic transaction. By accepting this principle, the settlement that Lord and Case reached with Bangs and Waugh in 1836, opened up new opportunities for John Ryerson, Alexander MacNab, and Anson Green to reassert—but this time with complete candour—Egerton Ryerson’s earlier but premature claim that the Concern’s books, though they might be denominational status objects in the United States, were nothing more than straightforward commodities in Upper Canada whose attractions were chiefly economic in nature. If there is any irony in this, it is that the Methodist Book Concern’s scale of operations, and its consequent low production costs, would never have been possible without those vexatious elements of cultural production that Canadian Methodists had been so anxious to shed. Thus Green was free to abandon appeals to denominationalism in the full confidence that no other Canadian bookseller would be able to stock the shelves on comparatively advantageous terms precisely because the Concern’s rhetorical linkages between patronage and denominational identity continued to insulate its own lucrative market from competitors in the United States.

With such a generous program of discounts in place, the commercial relationship between the Toronto Book Room and the Methodist Book Concern would have been enough to ensure the continuance of cordial, even friendly, relations between American

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373 These negotiations appear to have proceeded with the usual difficulties. Almost a year later, in April 1851, the Book Committee was just getting around to drafting “a list of prices of the English Wesleyan periodicals” (UCA, Journal of the Proceedings of the Book Committee, 3 April 1851).
and Canadian Methodists while they endured. Yet, even in the face of Green’s sustained emphasis on the cheapness of the commodities he imported from New York, it seems unlikely that those transnational relations did not run deeper than the niceties a strictly economic relationship would necessitate. The rhetorical context in which the Concern’s market north of the border had operated for so many years would have made it difficult for average Methodists in the colony to view its products in quite the same fundamentally uncomplicated fashion that, for example, John Strachan had when he acquired an American edition of Wesley’s complete works twenty years earlier.\footnote{See W48 TRIS 1-10 in Trinity College’s Strachan Collection at the University of Toronto. A ten-volume set published by D.&S. Neall and W.S. Stockton of Philadelphia and J. & J. Harper of New York, the title page is signed by John Strachan and dated 1829.} For many Methodists, particularly those whose membership extended back more than a dozen years, the imprint of the Methodist Book Concern must have been at least a subtle reminder of their ongoing membership, not in a single denominational body governed by a common polity, but in an imagined community of transnational readers whose integrity had proven to be far more durable than any of Canadian Methodism’s various ecclesiastical arrangements in the past half century. Lingering reminders of this kind, together with the importance both bodies consistently placed on maintaining cordial relations to ease the continued functioning of the Methodist Book Concern’s transnational market, would have set firm limits on the cultural influence British Wesleyans could effectively wield in Canada West.\footnote{As Neil Semple notes, Canadian Methodism’s influence grew to extend throughout the rest of British North America after the union of the Canada Wesleyan Conference and the Canada Eastern District in 1854. (Semple 99). As that influence grew, so did the boundaries of Concern’s market north of the border.} In the post-reunion years, then, with a renewed commitment to British Wesleyan polity, and their dependency on the Methodist Book Concern for books never more pronounced, Canadian Methodists existed in two worlds and likely had a keener sense than either their British or American brethren of that transcendent denominational identity Wesley invoked when he famously insisted, just months before his own death, that “Methodists are one people in all the world” (Heitzenrater 309).
Conclusion

When Canadian Methodists gathered in Brockville for their annual conference in the summer of 1850 they welcomed into their midst a veteran preacher from the United States whose labours in the colony’s backwoods almost half a century earlier had earned him a permanent place in their memories. A record of Nathan Bangs’s last visit to British North America is preserved in a series of articles he penned for the *Christian Advocate* in which he marveled at the many hopeful changes that had taken place since he first preached to the colony’s “thoughtless and wicked” settlers of old. Although Bangs took his earliest sojourns as a point of departure for dramatic effect, he well knew that colonial Methodism’s most important gains had come since he had last crossed the border in August 1826 to secure a commitment from Canadian preachers to promote the *Christian Advocate* along their circuits. At that time the Canada conference still operated under the direct supervision of the General Conference in the United States. British Wesleyan missionaries remained largely isolated on the eastern side of the Ottawa river. John Strachan’s conservative coterie was at the height of its powers under the patronage of Lieutenant-Governor Peregrine Maitland. And Egerton Ryerson, whose rebuttal of Strachanism had only just appeared in the *Colonial Advocate*, remained an obscure figure largely shielded from the general public by the anonymity Mackenzie’s press afforded. By mid-century, Bangs boasted not only that Methodists had achieved “their full share of religious influence,” but that Egerton Ryerson was, “an officer of the government, holding an office of high trust and responsibility, having a general oversight of all the schools in the province.” Nor did Bangs forget to mention the important fact that Canadians also had “their own Book Concern established here, in which they keep a suitable variety of books on religious and scientific subjects on sale,

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376 See CA 4 July (107), 11 July (111), 18 July (115), 1 August (123), 8 August 1850 (127), and 22 August 1850 (135). Bangs’s formal address to the Canada conference appeared in another column on 4 July 1850 (105). A full account of Bangs’s journey with abridged excerpts from the *Advocate* articles appears in Stevens *Bangs* 354-362. See also CHC 5.66-7. On this occasion Bangs was also accompanied by Joseph Sawyer—an even more senior preacher who had in fact been instrumental in bringing about Bangs’s conversion to Methodism in Niagara in 1801 (Stevens *Bangs* 43-5; CHC 1.28). In March 1855 William Case wrote to Bangs urging him to pay one more visit to Canada but was prevented from making the journey by ill health (Stevens *Bangs* 386-9). Case, for his part, died after falling from his horse in October of that year (CHC 5.260-1).
and likewise publish the ‘Christian Guardian,’ a weekly paper which is exerting a
hallowed influence on the community throughout the province” (“A Visit to the
Wesleyan Canada Conference” CA 8 Aug 1850: 127; see also Stevens Bangs 361).

As this suggests, the unyielding grace of God and the persistent efforts of a
dedicated core of preachers were not the only stable forces Bangs likely credited with
the cheering shift in Methodist fortunes north of the border. As the practiced itinerant
quietly perused the shelves of the Toronto Book Room, he could not have failed to
approve the fact that the items making up its stock bore the imprint of the Methodist
Book Concern almost as uniformly as those books and tracts he had filled his own
saddlebags with some five decades earlier as one of the Concern’s first commissioned
salesman to operate in the Upper Canadian backwoods. Bangs’s attentiveness to the
role the Toronto Book Room and the Christian Guardian played in the successful spread
of Methodist influence throughout the province is not surprising. After returning to the
United States to serve as a presiding elder in New York, Bangs assumed control of the
Methodist Book Concern and placed it on its trajectory to become “the largest
publishing house in the world by 1860” (Andrews 230). Under Bangs’s tenure the
Concern acquired its first presses, a bindery, new premises, and a weekly newspaper
that afforded him an unprecedented means for continually reinforcing rhetorical
linkages between patronage and denominational identity on both sides of the border.
Bangs also wrote the first official history of Methodism in America, was the driving
force behind the establishment of a formal program of study for aspiring preachers, and
even served a brief stint as head of the Wesleyan University in Middletown,
Connecticut. Although these occupations removed him far from the colony, he
remained mindful of developments in his “spiritual birthplace” (Stevens Bangs 367) by
taking a sustained, though perhaps not always agreeable, interest in the protracted
efforts of Upper Canadians to achieve ecclesiastical independence from the General
Conference and later to secure financial and cultural independence from the Methodist
Book Concern. Thus for a man of Bangs’s temperament and experience, the mutually
reinforcing character of Methodist polity and print culture must have been obvious.
Many recent historians of religion in the United States have come to share this view.

Beginning with the publication of Nathan Hatch’s The Democratization of American
Christianity in 1989, a profoundly influential revisionist history of religion in the early
republic, a growing number of scholars have begun to map the complicated relationship between print and religion in colonial and postcolonial America. These include, to name a few, Frank Lambert in his work on George Whitefield and the Great Awakening; Peter Wosh in his history of the American Bible Society; David Nord in his study of transdenominational publishing houses such as the American Tract Society and the American Sunday School Union; Candy Brown in her expansive study of the textual practices of evangelical readers, writers, and publishers; and Mark Noll and Edith Blumhofer in their edited collection of essays on hymns and hymnbooks in America. The most interesting of these studies attempt more than a recounting of religious print culture for its own sake. Frank Lambert and David Nord stand out in particular for adroitly situating their work in a wider historical field by demonstrating how developments in print culture affected and were affected by religious practice, and how these interdependencies influenced wider social and political changes in America. Lambert, for example, argues that the Great Awakening was largely a product of the press, and that the revivals associated with it altered the way readers approached texts in an emergent religious public sphere. David Nord, on the other hand, writes persuasively about the way in which transdenominational publishers not only used the press to spread Christian literature throughout America, but also how the unyielding demands of evangelicals for ever cheaper commodities spurred important technological developments in the print trades.

Although religious commodification in a market for printed books, tracts, and periodicals did not stop at the border, scholarship concerned with the religious history of Upper Canada has been surprisingly resistant to these wider historiographical trends. Indeed, only recently have a small handful of scholars, such as Jeffrey McNairn and Carol Wilton, turned their attention to describing how sociopolitical forces and print culture constituted a network of mutual influence in the colony. The present study is an effort to bring this perspective to bear on developments in Upper Canadian religious belief, polity, and practice. For this reason I have attempted to situate my work as a contribution not to book history alone, but, like Frank Lambert and David Nord, to use print culture as a lens through which to pose questions that, in Leslie Howsam’s words, “matter intensely to scholarship in another discipline” (Old Books 45). Thus I have taken historians of religion as my primary interlocutors and placed questions of religious identity, rather than the complexity of books for their own sake, at the centre
of my narrative. It is my hope that this has afforded not only a fresh angle of approach, but has allowed this study to enrich the overall texture of Canadian religious historiography by shedding new light on old questions and perhaps even raising a few novel questions that have as yet gone unasked in the literature.

Drawing on the theories of Pierre Bourdieu, this study has traced a broad rhetorical arc in the cultural production of North American Methodist books, periodicals and tracts that began with John Dickins’s efforts to situate his commodities as denominational status objects in the early republic and concluded with Anson Green’s colonial portrayal of those same products as inexpensive goods largely emptied of denominational appeal toward the middle of the nineteenth century. Between these poles, I have attempted to address the way in which the trajectory of this wider rhetorical arc shaped, and how it was shaped by, Methodist polity in Upper Canada where the Concern’s rhetorical claims increasingly threatened to speak more to national than denominational distinctiveness. By locating religious identity at the contested intersection of Upper Canadian Methodism’s polity and print culture, this study has deliberately set out to complicate the nationalistic assertions embodied in the largely teleological narratives of earlier scholars, while also softening the Pocockian claims more recent historians have made about a steadily increasing influence of British Wesleyanism over colonial religious practices throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. Despite the growing cultural complications the Concern’s imprint implied for Canadian Methodists as the decades passed, North American Methodism’s transnational market for printed commodities ultimately proved to be more durable than any of the several official ecclesiastical unions Upper Canadian Methodists embraced throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. Thus my most basic contention throughout has been that a full understanding of the evolution of Methodist religious identity in Upper Canada can only be achieved by acknowledging the interpenetrating nature of religious polity and print culture, particularly in North America where Methodists, following Wesley, placed an unyielding emphasis on the textual practices of adherents and, going one step further than Wesley, even tied the welfare of their denominational publishing house to the welfare of the movement as a whole.
When Methodists preachers crossed the border from the United States into Upper Canada, they brought with them more than a theologically egalitarian faith and a decentralized ecclesiastical structure ideally suited for planting faith communities across Upper Canada’s thinly settled wilderness. By the turn of the nineteenth century, every preacher who entered the colony was required to carry a saddlebag full of books, tracts, and periodicals whose sale was rhetorically calculated to inform the religious identities of consumers by drawing them into a transnational imagined community marked by common religious and shared material interests. Although recent historians have tended to argue that the commodification of denominational identity did not begin in earnest until religious periodicals began to proliferate in the 1820s and 1830s, this development was anticipated in Dickins’s rhetorical strategies for transforming an economic transaction into a visible and material act of denominational solidarity by some forty years. Thus when Dickins urged his customers in 1793 to “purchase no Books which we publish, of any other person than the aforesaid John Dickins, or the Methodist Ministers and Preachers in the several Circuits,” he significantly made no appeals to the cheapness of his commodities, to their handsome production, or even to their doctrinal purity. It was solely on the basis that “the Profits of these Books are for the general Benefit of the Methodist Societies” that loyal Methodists committed to advancing the religious interests of the body to which they belonged should buy of no other.

Before the War of 1812, the Concern’s market and the spread of Methodism were as easily mutually reinforcing north of the border as south of it. John Dickins, Ezekiel Cooper, and their successors innovated and developed these rhetorical strategies primarily to insulate Methodism’s rapidly expanding denominational market in the United States from the competing products offered by a burgeoning domestic print trade. Although largely superfluous in Upper Canada where rival printers had neither the legal ability, the financial capital, nor a distribution network to offer much in the way of competition, these strategies for cultural production were no less efficacious for informing Canadian Methodist religious identity as they transformed economic

377 See especially Brown Word 144-7, 159-61.
378 This text appeared in Dickins’s first catalogue published on the final two pages of an edition of John Fletcher’s Posthumous Pieces. For a facsimile see Pilkington 102. See also infra 63-4.
exchanges of material goods into symbolic acts of denominational solidarity on both sides of the border. At the same time, reinforced by the practicalities of selling fragile wares and the injunctions of Methodist doctrine to remain a people set apart, the Concern’s denominational distribution infrastructure extended itself throughout Upper Canada in settings marked by such a high degree of denominational homogeneity that its attendant rhetorical underpinnings remained accidentally but critically sheltered from the gaze of the colony’s increasingly anti-American elite. The sequestered nature of this market permitted Upper Canadian Methodists, despite an emergent division in polity in the postwar period, to continue informing their belief systems, religious practices, and religious identities in ways that remained decidedly transnational in bearing for a much longer period of time than historians have generally conceded. Neil Semple, in broad agreement with other recent historians, argues that an increase in the number of native-born Canadians and British immigrants recruited for the itinerancy in the postwar period marked a seismic shift in Methodist religious culture in response to the rising influence of conservatives such as John Strachan and Peregrine Maitland. Yet in the very same year Maitland arrived in the colony to ally himself and his administration with agents of Strachanism, American Methodists introduced the monthly *Methodist Magazine*. The *Magazine* soon found a large and ready audience north of the border as preachers—composed as Semple notes of a growing proportion of British and native subjects—assumed roles as subscription agents. The *Magazine*, and later the weekly *Christian Advocate*, did more than imply the existence of a single transnational religious community in North America by juxtaposing narratives describing the advances of Methodism on both side the border. These periodicals also furnished a pervasive forum for entrenching rhetorical linkages between patronage and the religious identities of denominational subscribers. Thus while an ever larger number of non-American preachers may have patrolled the Upper Canadian backwoods after the War, they did so as agents increasingly well-equipped to frame North American Methodism as a coherent community of common material and religious interest whose transnational boundaries extended to wherever the Concern’s products could be sold as rhetorically-situated denominational status objects.

The denominational insularity of the Concern’s market in Upper Canada remained largely uncompromised until Methodists began establishing successful missions among the province’s Natives in the early 1820s. As those successes became
 commodified in the publication of religious texts in Native languages, circumstances threatened to shed unwelcome light on Methodism’s continued cultural and financial dependency on a transnational market for books and periodicals whose goods were tainted by aspects of their foreign cultural production. These stresses were increased considerably by Egerton Ryerson’s anonymous contribution to the province’s emergent public sphere in 1825. Although the ostensible purpose of Ryerson’s polemic was to exonerate his coreligionists from Strachan’s calumnies that Methodists were “ignorant enthusiasts” who “preach what they do not know, and which from their pride they disdain to learn,” he could not rationally counter the substance of such antagonisms without coming dangerously close to revealing the extent to which he and his fellow believers continued to rely on the Methodist Book Concern to supply their denominational market with books and periodicals. Any disruption in the functioning of that transnational market, moreover, would not only impede the flow of printed commodities into the colony, but also deprive Canadian preachers of much needed commissions on the sale of those commodities while weakening the status of colonial consumers as actors within a market whose rhetorical underpinnings implied a partial ownership of the Concern itself. Although Ryerson was probably unconscious of these risks at the time, as he became increasingly immersed in the colony’s denominational and wider print culture, he became steadily more convinced that the political danger attendant on the continued sale of the Concern’s rhetorically-situated products north of the border constituted as grave a threat to the welfare of his colonial coreligionists as the continued oversight of an American episcopacy.

The reluctance of American Methodists to relinquish access to Upper Canada’s lucrative market for Methodist books and periodicals continued to have a profound, if at times indirect, influence over developments in ecclesiastical polity and Methodist religious identity long after Ryerson began to nudge that market out into the open. Importantly, many of the decisions Ryerson and his fellow Methodists made at the level of polity can be understood only in relation to their anxieties about Methodism’s transnational print culture. There is, for example, no other way to account for the stubborn refusal of Canadian Methodists to declare themselves unilaterally independent of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States years before they were able to reach an amicable agreement with the General Conference. For a man of Ryerson’s experience in particular, as Methodism’s chief public advocate,
denominational colporteur, first permanent missionary on the Credit, and later founding editor of the *Christian Guardian* and first unofficial book steward of the Toronto Book Room, the complex cultural and financial ties binding Upper Canadian Methodists to their American brethren were only too obvious. Thus as Ryerson became increasingly influential, he was in a position to understand better than most the catastrophic financial consequences an abrupt severing of these transnational ties would have on the welfare of Canadian Methodism whatever political benefits might have followed. When viewed from this perspective, the agreement Canadians finally reached with the delegates of the 1828 General Conference to permit an independent polity, but without settling Canadian claims against the Methodist Book Concern or severing access to its market north of the border, must have struck many Methodists as fundamentally hollow despite public declarations to the contrary. As their footing in the colony continued to improve incrementally during these years, Canadian Methodists found themselves uneasily obliged to continue to wait for the General Conference to accord them that elusive desiderata they knew would alone inoculate them from the sustained scrutiny of anti-American outsiders: complete cultural and financial independence from the Methodist Book Concern.

Although Ryerson helped Canadian Methodists take a major step towards cultural autonomy when he became the founding editor of the *Christian Guardian* in November 1829, for several years that newspaper existed at the centre of a tripartite tension between the political, cultural, and financial interests of Canadian Methodists. Initially, the *Guardian* was intended strictly as a denominational organ and even appropriated the Concern’s rhetorical strategies by advertising that its sale would benefit the wider missionary interests of Methodism in Upper Canada. Agents of the Methodist Book Concern in New York, however, took a dark view of this appropriation. As they argued at the succeeding General Conference in 1832, the appearance of the *Guardian* accomplished nothing for them apart from diminishing the circulation of the *New York Christian Advocate* north of the border. And because the *Guardian*’s profits were not shared with the wider Methodist Episcopal Church through the payment of annual dividends to individual conferences, the Canadian newspaper was a product with no symbolic transnational appeal. Every paid subscription to the *Christian Advocate*, by contrast, continued indirectly to benefit Canadian Methodists when they accepted payments of dividends from the Concern at each of their annual conferences...
even after the establishment of their own colonial weekly. Tensions were further exacerbated when Ryerson adopted a reformist editorial policy in the *Guardian* and began to attract a wider reading audience whose sympathies were political rather than religious. Fearing that the continued sale of the Concern’s books and periodicals through the *Guardian* office might demonstrate the degree to which American Methodists continued to exercise a pervasive cultural hegemony north of the border even after the achievement of nominal ecclesiastical independence, Ryerson quietly set about selling books from other suppliers whenever he could obtain them on reasonable terms. With evidence to show that Canadian Methodists were no longer stable and reliable participants in the Concern’s transnational market, however, Americans called into question their material entitlements as partakers of a common religious identity. As Ryerson’s activities at the *Guardian* office as both a bookseller and the publisher of a colonial newspaper continued thus to erode the status of his coreligionists as something more than simple consumers in what remained of the Concern’s Upper Canadian market, the need to obtain a cash settlement against their interest in the Concern became increasingly urgent.

Canadian claims were not helped when the Concern’s agents found themselves obliged to rely ever more heavily on rhetorical linkages between patronage and denominational identity in order to fend off the threat of rival hymnbooks when the Azor Hoyt affair resulted in the loss of copyright control over this their most valuable printed commodity in the early 1830s. While the Concern’s rhetorical arc continued to rise in the United States, Upper Canadian Methodist religious identity was on the verge of a seismic shift of its own as unwelcome British Wesleyan missionaries arrived in the province. The timing could not have been worse. As Canadian delegates attending the 1832 General Conference attempted to mount credible pretensions to a common religious identity with American Methodists and thereby legitimize their claims to a partial ownership of the Methodist Book Concern, Egerton and John Ryerson quietly opened merger negotiations with British Wesleyans in order to avoid unseemly and potentially devastating religious competition within the confines of Upper Canada. But when the Canadian claims against the Concern were referred to annual conferences across the United States for a series of ratification votes that would take place over the course of almost an entire year, even a man of Egerton Ryerson’s political skill found himself unable to hold Canadian Methodism’s conflicting transnational and
transatlantic interests in successful balance. When Ryerson strategically omitted any-thing more than a single hint from the Christian Guardian about the ongoing negotiations with the British Wesleyans in order not to compromise Canadian Methodist interests then being weighed south of the border, he inadvertently provided some of his own denominational readers with the excuse they needed to oppose the union altogether. Beginning with local preachers whose ministerial privileges would be curtailed by the union, small but persistent pockets of resistance emerged on the grounds that Ryerson had failed to inform the colony’s Methodist societies of the proceedings until it was too late to exercise any influence over their outcome. Meanwhile, Ryerson’s silence also failed to prevent the Americans from learning of the proposed union long enough to allow the annual conferences to complete the entire ratification process. When the Christian Advocate drew attention to the proposed union, a stunning reversal took place as Canadian claims were overwhelming rejected on the basis of their much altered religious identity. In the end, Ryerson’s transnational preoccupations did little more than to discredit the union even before it officially came into force.

With the Canadian claims against the Concern still unresolved, Ryerson was left with few resources to subsidize the sale and distribution of the London Book Room’s more expensive commodities at Toronto. This not only made it impossible to sever increasingly awkward relations with the Methodist Book Concern, but also raised tensions between Canadian Methodists and British Wesleyans as the former suspected the latter of placing their own financial interests ahead of the welfare of Methodism in the colony. When Canadian Methodists responded to what they perceived to be British Wesleyan parsimoniousness in the supply of books and periodicals to the colony by reasserting control over the Toronto Book Room and later the Christian Guardian, the union itself became fatally destabilized. Forces hastening this destabilization were further strengthened by an agreement reached with the 1836 General Conference that provided discounts of an unprecedented order to Canadian Methodists. The terms by which these discounts were extended, moreover, not only reinvigorated transnational material linkages between the Concern and the Toronto Book Room, but also opened a critical way for Canadians to resituate these products in a wider public market as straightforward commodities unencumbered by denominational rhetoric. The comparatively modest state of the London Book Room, meanwhile, prevented British
Wesleyans from offering similarly competitive terms. Indeed, by mid-century, no publisher of any stripe could compete with the economies of scale Nathan Bangs and his successors had achieved as American Methodists constructed the largest and best insulated denominational market for books and periodicals in the world. There is some irony in the fact, then, that Canadian Methodists were free to shed denominationalism in favour of a more open market in which they competed strictly on economic terms precisely because American Methodists continued to shelter their own much larger market behind a shield of denominational rhetoric. Importantly, the commercial linkages between the Toronto Book Room and the Methodist Book Concern remained undiminished after reunification with the British Wesleyans in 1847. Thus while British Wesleyans continued to hold the conference presidency until the 1860s, never again would a British Wesleyan serve as Canadian book steward.

When one reflects on the sustained impact North American Methodism’s remarkably durable transnational market for books and periodicals had on the continued evolution of polity, religious identity, and even wider colonial cultural changes into and beyond the middle decades of the nineteenth century, two conclusions emerge. First, the relative cultural influence of British Wesleyanism and American Episcopal Methodism over the development of Methodist religious identity in Upper Canada was far less weighted in favour of the former than has been previously understood. Although Canadian Methodists successfully decoupled aspects of material and cultural production north of the border before the dissolution of the union in 1840, the ongoing commercial linkages between New York and Toronto must have permanently blunted the extent to which Canadian Methodists privately indulged in prevailing colonial prejudices about Americans—whatever they may have said in public to ease their way to further political advancement. Further out, as colonial Methodism shored up its social respectability after the formal disestablishment of the Church of England in 1854, entered yet another phase of rapid expansion throughout the 1860s, and overcame many of its internal divisions in the 1870s and 1880s, Methodism’s cultural institutions inevitably came to exert an increasingly pronounced influence over wider sociopolitical developments. Yet Canadian Methodism’s ongoing reluctance to reject all things American while it maintained its dependency on the Methodist Book Concern may have subtly but pervasively contributed to an overall lessening of anti-American sentiment within and beyond the colony before and after
Confederation. Second, the dismantling of the Concern’s rhetorical strategies in Upper Canada laid a critical foundation on which subsequent book stewards could build to justify an increased presence in Canada’s wider publishing market. Had Canadian Methodists not been obliged publicly to distance themselves from the Concern’s overtly denominational rhetoric as colonial Methodism moved steadily toward the mainstream throughout the 1830s and 1840s, it seems doubtful that the way forward in a increasingly secular market would have been nearly as clear. As the Concern’s rhetorical strategies for equating patronage with religious identity receded in importance, as books ceased to function as denominational status objects, and as improvements in the colony’s infrastructure eroded the need for preachers to continue functioning as colporteurs and subscription agents, it would have become steadily more difficult to think of Methodist print culture as something distinct from the colony’s wider print culture. As those distinctions slowly dissolved, and Canadian culture took on a noticeably Methodistic hue under the influence of figures such as Egerton Ryerson, who shaped and guided the province’s public education system; Samuel Nelles, whose curricular and administrative reforms prepared the ground for the later federation of Victoria College with the University of Toronto; and Alfred Phillips, who used the pulpit as a means to encourage Methodists to engage in widespread social reforms far beyond boundaries of their own denomination, it seems probable that Methodism’s persistent commercial linkages to New York may have even helped to moderate the unwillingness that some of the colony’s wider literary and cultural actors may have felt about seeking out their own relationships with publishing houses in the United States.

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When John Wesley encountered opposition from other clergymen and bishops for preaching in fields and other open spaces without regard to the Church of England’s parish boundaries, he responded that as a Fellow of a College, and as a preacher divinely called to proclaim the gospel, his ordination was not limited by such boundaries. “I look upon all the world,” he summarized, “as my parish” (Heitzenrater 101-2). When agents of the Methodist Book Concern pushed back against Canadian suggestions, implicit in a financial claim that would sever the Concern’s access to its colonial customers, that the boundaries of its market should be largely coterminous with the borders of the United States, their intractability was very much in keeping with
the spirit of Wesley’s earlier statement. More recently, from Northrop Frye to Nick Mount, it has become commonplace for Canadian literary scholars to suggest that the proximity and size of the cultural enterprise in the United States delayed the emergence and stunted the growth of a domestic literary market in Canada. And yet, had the Methodist Book Concern not provided Canadian Methodists with a ready supply of inexpensive stock from New York that afforded them a sufficient opportunity to expand the *Guardian* office into a profitable bookselling, distribution, and later printing and publishing enterprise on a solid financial footing, it seems doubtful that the Methodist Book and Publishing House, as it later became known, would have even survived, much less evolved into a chief cultural agent for supporting the work of twentieth-century Canadian authors within their own borders. Such transnational anxieties continue to haunt actors in the Canadian literary market today where the achievement of cultural autonomy remains as elusive and seemingly impracticable as it did for Canadian Methodists throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. And yet imagined communities of readers are no more bound by national borders than religious communities of believers. When such communities overlap in mutually reinforcing ways, as they did for Canadian Methodists in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, a full and tidy severing of those linkages becomes acutely problematic as religious, political, and literary identities come into conflict. And while aspects of cultural production may not survive such a rupture, the durable material connections binding such communities together seem enough to guarantee the continuance of a market in which printed commodities might plausibly be described as “books for the instruction of the nations.”
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