Chapter 2

Complicating Governmentality

Colonialism, Protestantism, and Greenland

The relationship between the individual and the social structure is one of special importance in regards both to Hveyssel's tasks and Mary Magdalene's behaviour within the pastorate, and an important corrective to the traditional emphasis on the theological content of the whole affair. That the events surrounding Mary Magdalene have a theological import is evident. This is indicated by the references to God, Christ, and Jesus, which Hveyssel snatches from Mary's teachings, which are subsequently recast in terms of Roman Catholicism and Moravian Christianity as a way to take control of the situation. The theological import is further reflected in Hveyssel's attempts to refute the teachings through a stream of biblical exegesis. Presumably, Hveyssel never dreamed that Mary Magdalene would be taken seriously because he himself found her teachings so utterly ridiculous and unbelievable. But I propose that as the task of the missionary goes beyond that of making Christian subjects of the Greenlanders to making Christian subjects of them, so the resistance takes on a much broader sense. To theorise the relation between the individual and social structure in a way that takes the systemic role of religion seriously, Foucault's theory of governmentality and the central role of pastoral power works well, albeit with a few adjustments. This short chapter serves to introduce the theoretical apparatus of my analysis.

Pastoral Power and Governmentality

Simply named “Governmentality,” Foucault’s essay was originally one of the lectures from the Security, Territory, Population lecture series at the Collège de France between 1977 and 1978. This lecture was subsequently published as a discrete essay in Aut Aut in 1978, and later reprinted in the anthology on governmentality, The Foucault Effect, published by a number of Foucault’s co-workers (Burchell, Gordon, and Miller 1991). The major points of Foucault's essay revolve around the notion of governmentality as signifying a certain type of power, an art of government, which “has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument” (2007, 108).
What Foucault sets out to do in this essay is map the difference between sovereignty and governmentality, as well as the development of the “art of government.” The problem of government was particularly acute in the sixteenth century at the crossroads of two processes:

[T]he one that, shattering the structures of feudalism, leads to the establishment of the great territorial, administrative, and colonial states; and a totally different movement that, with the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, raises the issue of how one must be spiritually ruled and led on this earth in order to achieve eternal salvation.

2000d, 202

The issues of government are thus situated within the social and spiritual upheavals of the sixteenth century. In that context, Foucault traces questions of government and its focus on the various engagements with Machiavelli’s *The Prince*. Foucault argues that the “reason of state” developed in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and its institutional structures, acted as an obstacle to the development of the art of government for historical reasons (2000d, 213). The historical impediments were the great upheavals of the seventeenth century—wars, rebellions, and financial crises. “The art of government could only spread and develop in subtlety in an age of expansion, free from the great military, political, and economic tensions that afflicted the seventeenth century from beginning to end” (2000d, 213).

Another obstacle was sovereignty and its institutions, which was the centre and purpose of all development. The outflanking of these obstacles was aided by a number of processes:

[T]he demographic expansion of the eighteenth century, connected with an increasing abundance of money, which in turn was linked to the expansion of agricultural production through a series of circular processes with which the historians are familiar.

2000d, 215

Here we see the difference between modes of government. Sovereignty is an end unto itself, with laws as its instruments. Its workings are centripetal, drawing things towards the centre. Governmentality, on the other hand, is decentralised, oriented towards the management of things, the welfare of the population, and perfecting the processes through multiple tactics (2000d, 211).

The separate publication of the essay makes it easy to overlook the place of pastoral power within the genealogy of governmentality and its central place