

**"The Faith of the Fathers:"
Evangelical Piety of Maritime Regular Baptist Patriarchs
and Preachers 1790 - 1855**

by

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**A thesis submitted to the Department of History
in conformity with the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores a Maritime Canadian evangelical pietistic tradition from the 1790s to the 1850s. Rooted in the enthusiastic New Light religion of the First Great Awakening in Nova Scotia, this Christian spirituality was transferred to the Regular Baptist experience in the Maritimes during the first half of the nineteenth century. This transition was directed by a group of “founders,” later known as “Fathers,” of whom three – Harris Harding, Joseph Crandall, and Edward Manning – are examined in detail. The piety advocated and modeled by these “Patriarchs” – which became known as the “Faith of the Fathers” – was characterized by the revival, the New Birth and its ritualization in immersionist baptism. In spite of the denominational structures created around this collection of beliefs and practices, the “Faith of the Fathers” remained largely intact and continued to embody many characteristics of late eighteenth-century New Lightism.

It fell to the second generation of Regular Baptist preachers to defend and advance this religious tradition in the post 1820 period. The piety and ministerial practice of Charles Tupper, Ingram Bill and Samuel Elder – all second generation preachers – during the 1820s, 1830s and 1840s reveal a remarkable continuity and faithfulness to the spirituality of the patriarchs. During the Maritime Baptismal controversy (1811-1848) a number of key second generation Regular Baptist preachers engaged in both “popular” and “academic” debate to defend immersionist baptism, their identity-giving ritual. Although many preachers became confident and polished denominational apologists during this period, the “collective” confidence and identity of the Maritime Regular Baptist community was shaken by the 1850s when the “Fathers” began to die in quick succession. This “crisis” was largely

resolved by the mid-1850's as the denomination renewed its commitment to the "Faith of Fathers" and recognized within their tradition a wide-ranging and multi-faceted approach to piety and church life.

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I have been blessed with the help of many people during the researching and writing of this dissertation. I initially came to Queen's University to study under George Rawlyk, who gave me the confidence to pursue this research topic. His life of scholarship, Christian love, and commitment have impacted me greatly. Following his untimely death in November, 1995, Jane Errington graciously agreed to be my dissertation supervisor. I am grateful to her for penetrating criticism and editorial prowess, and for frequently "going beyond the call of duty." In addition, gratitude is extended to the School of Graduate Studies for financial support. Thanks are also due to Lorraine Coops and Doug Hessler of Queen's and Kingston, and the Baptist Churches of Athens and Delta, Ontario, for friendship and unfailing encouragement.

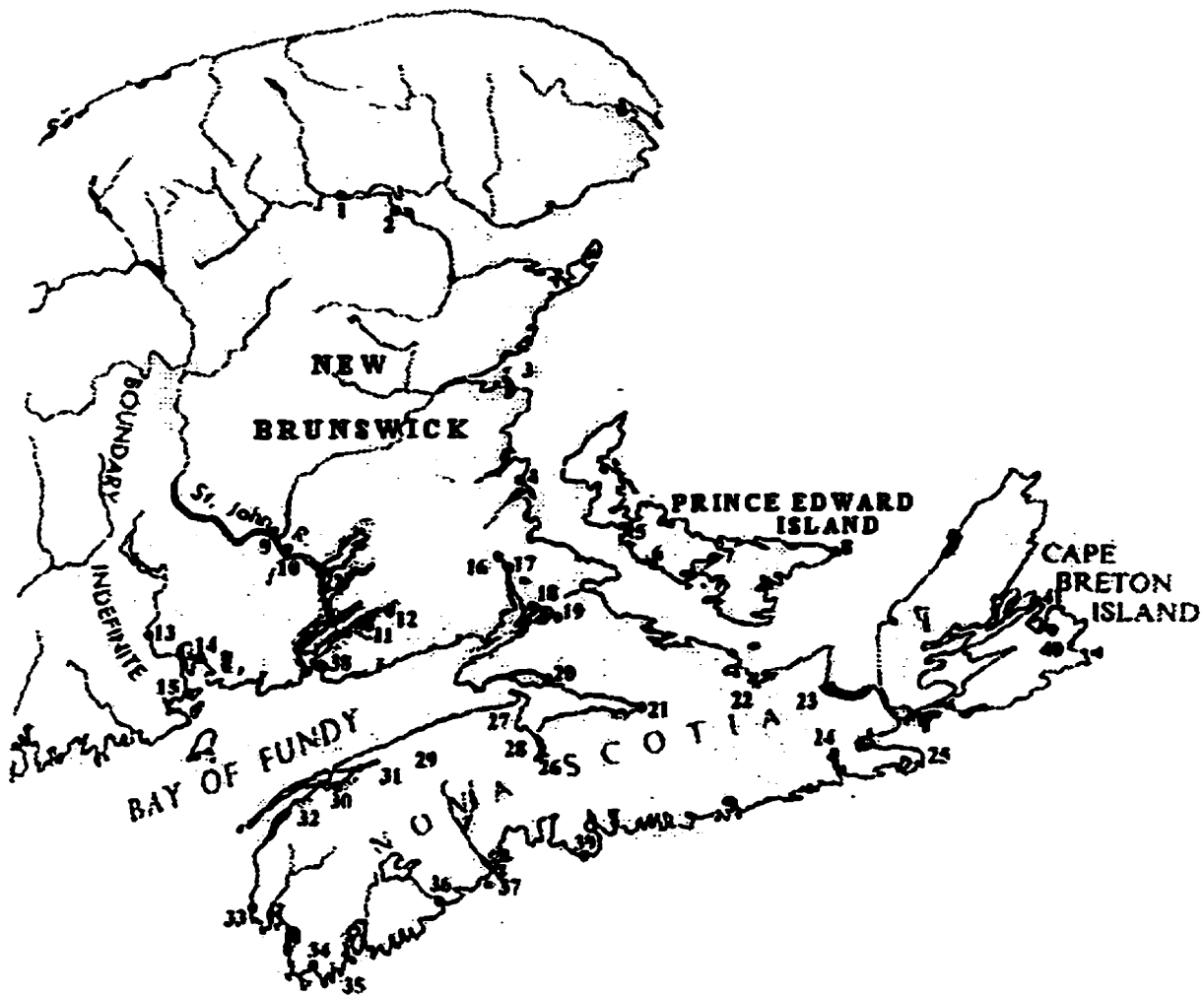
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ABBREVIATIONS

AUA	Acadia University Archives
BMM	<u>Baptist Missionary Magazine of Nova Scotia</u>
CM	<u>Christian Messenger</u>
CV	<u>Christian Visitor</u>
NSHR	<u>Nova Scotia Historical Review</u>



- | | | |
|------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1. Campbellton | 15. St Andrews | 29. Aylesford |
| 2. Dalhousie | 16. Salisbury | 30. Digby |
| 3. Miramichi Bay | 17. Moncton | 31. Annapolis Royal |
| 4. Bouctouche | 18. Sackville | 32. Sissiboo |
| 5. Summerside | 19. Amherst | 33. Yarmouth |
| 6. Tryon | 20. Parrsboro | 34. Barrington |
| 7. Charlottetown | 21. Truro | 35. Shelburne |
| 8. East Point | 22. New Glasgow | 36. Liverpool |
| 9. Fredericton | 23. Antigonish | 37. Lunenburg |
| 10. Maugerville | 24. Guysborough | 38. Saint John |
| 11. Norton | 25. Canso | 39. Halifax |
| 12. Sussex | 26. Windsor | 40. Sydney |
| 13. St. Stephen | 27. Cornwallis | 41. North Sydney |
| 14. St. George | 28. Horton | |

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Introduction

This is a history of a Maritime evangelical pietistic tradition as it was transformed over a sixty-five year period. It is not, per se, an old-style church history which focuses upon the institutional growth of a religious denomination. In fact, such developments are given only passing attention in an effort to explore the enthusiastic spirituality of the First Great Awakening in Nova Scotia as it was transferred to the Regular Baptist experience in the Maritimes during the first half of the nineteenth century. This transition was directed by early Baptist leaders or "Patriarchs," of whom three -- Harris Harding, Joseph Crandall, and Edward Manning -- will receive detailed attention. They advocated a body of beliefs and religious practices which became known as the "Faith of the Fathers." It fell to the second generation of Regular Baptist preachers to defend and advance this religious tradition in the post-1820 period. The lives and ministries of Charles Tupper, Ingram Bill, and Samuel Elder -- all second generation preachers -- will be examined in order to understand the transformation in Regular Baptist spirituality during the 1820s, 1830s and 1840s. Essential to the evolution of this Christian tradition was revival, the traumatic "New Light-New Birth," and its ritualization in believer's baptism by immersion. This public ritual became central to Maritime Regular Baptist identity and church life.¹ In spite of all that has been written on late eighteenth century revivals and Henry Aline -- the charismatic revivalist who almost single-handedly brought the awakening into being -- very little

¹ Essential to understanding the New Birth is the "Acts of the Apostles" in the New Testament. For the North American context consult: Alan Heimert, Religion and the American Mind (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), and George Rawlyk, Ravished by the Spirit: Religious Revivals, Baptists and Henry Aline (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984).

attention has been directed to this intensely emotional spiritual tradition as it was carried into the next century.

In the nineteenth century, denominational historians such as J. M. Cramp, I. E. Bill and E. M. Saunders cast the history of the Regular Baptists in the Maritimes into a progressive and even post-millennial framework in which their churches' humble New Light origins, characterized by ecstatic piety, and intense revivalism were quickly shed (or hidden) in favour of order, organization, privatized religious experience and social respectability.² Interestingly, S. D. Clark in his Church and Sect in Canada written in 1948, argued that "internal differences within the New Light movement led to the shift to Baptist doctrines and to the organization of the Baptist Association" because the "sect inevitably had to grow into the church if it were to avoid the prospect of disintegration."³ While his thesis was far more conceptually informed than his nineteenth-century predecessors, Clark's conclusions are very similar to those of Bill and Saunders. Clark merely substituted the "providential

² Among the most important studies dealing with the First Great Awakening in Nova Scotia are Maurice W. Armstrong, The Great Awakening in Nova Scotia 1776-1809 (Hartford, Ct: The American Society of Church History, 1948); J.M. Bumsted, Henry Alline (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971); Gordon Stewart and George Rawlyk, A People Highly Favoured of God: The Nova Scotia Yankees and the American Revolution (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1972); G.A. Rawlyk's Ravished by the Spirit: Religious Revivals, Baptists and Henry Alline (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984) and The Canada Fire: Radical Evangelicalism in British North America (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994). A somewhat dated, but useful, review of the literature is D.G. Bell, "All Things New: The Transformation of Maritime Baptist Historiography" NSHR 2(1984): 69-81. The earliest published history of Maritime Regular Baptists is found in David Benedict, A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America and Other Parts of the World (Boston: Lincoln & Edmonds, 1813). This was followed by Charles Tupper, "History of the Baptist Churches in Nova Scotia" BMM 1(1829): 287-288, 315-319, 346-352, 375-377. J.M. Cramp, "Baptists of Nova Scotia" was serialized in CM between January 18, 1860 and September 23, 1863 and can be found in the AUA in photo-copied and bound form. See also I.E. Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches of the Maritime Provinces (Saint John, NB: Barnes & Co., 1880); E.M. Saunders, History of the Baptists of the Maritime Provinces (Halifax, NS: John Burgoyne, 1902); G. E. Levy, The Baptists of the Maritime Provinces, 1753-1946 (Saint John, NB: Barnes-Hopkins, 1946).

³ S.D. Clark, Church and Sect in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1948),

hand of God" (identified in the hagiography) with a deterministic typology which posited that simple or unsophisticated "frontiers" produce sects which "inevitably" are transformed into churches as the society becomes more complex. Although organizations, and not spirituality, were the focus of these theses, the unstated assumptions are that the essential "radical," "uncontrolled," and populist expressions of religious experience were eliminated or at least buried by many preachers and lay persons as the nineteenth century unfolded. For the denominational historians, this perceived shift from an embarrassing past to "religious respectability" represented a watershed in Regular Baptist history. Similarly, Clark regarded this sect to church transition as one of the necessary preconditions to building what he called, the "Canadian Community."⁴

It was not until 1984 that another serious scholar (George Rawlyk) examined the New-Light-to-Regular-Baptist tradition very closely. In his Ravished by the Spirit: Religious Revivals, Baptists and Henry Alline, Rawlyk attempted to explain why revivalism had become less and less important for Maritime Baptists in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century.⁵ This work along with Wrapped Up in God: A Study of Several Canadian Revivals and Revivalists makes the case for an "explicit . . . sense of decline since Alline."⁶ Essentially embracing the Bill-Cramp-Saunders-Clark interpretation Rawlyk, argued that the spirituality of the late eighteenth-century Maritime revivals was essentially jettisoned by the Baptists in their search for religious and social respectability. David Bell agreed. In his "The Allinite Tradition and the New Brunswick Free Church Baptists 1830-1875," he explored the history of the Free Christian Baptists in

p.197.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Rawlyk, Ravished by the Spirit, pp. ix-xi.

⁶ See George Marsden's forward to G. A. Rawlyk, Wrapped Up in God: A Study of Several Canadian Revivals and Revivalists (Burlington, ONT: Welch Publishing, 1988).

New Brunswick who, along with the Regular Baptists considered in this study, had New Light origins. He argued that the Free Christian Baptist leadership consciously dismantled their denomination's religious heritage. Bell concluded that by 1880,

Free Baptists were at last respectable. But they had succeeded in detaching themselves from their unserviceable past only at the cost of jettisoning the very thing which made them distinctive and justified continued separate existence. Respectability in the eyes of the world had been achieved, but only through the entire negation, suppression and abandonment of the tradition of Henry Alline.⁷

While Bell implied that the Free Christian Baptists of New Brunswick more faithfully and fully represented the region's New Light heritage until mid-century, the conclusions about the Calvinistic "Regular Baptists" reached in this thesis suggest that the "Arminian" Free Baptists, though differing somewhat in polity and organization, shared not only a common origin but continued to embody a piety that endured despite the efforts of their denomination's leaders. In fact, while a full comparison of the Regular and Free Baptists is outside of the parameters of this thesis, the preliminary evidence suggests that they both sustained a commitment to many key elements of Allinite spirituality well into the nineteenth century. It is the explicit argument of this study that many essential aspects of late eighteenth-century Maritime evangelicalism became the defining characteristics of Regular Baptist piety in the nineteenth century.

This theme of continuity was first put forward by Rawlyk in 1994 in his Canada Fire, in which he rejected the declension thesis he had advanced ten years earlier in Ravished By the Spirit. In Canada Fire Rawlyk explored the radical evangelical paradigm as it developed in all of British North America to 1812. Responding to The Democratization of American

⁷ D.G. Bell, "The Allinite Tradition and the New Brunswick Free Christian Baptists 1830-1875" in Robert A. Wilson (ed.), An Abiding Conviction: Maritime Baptists and Their World (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot Press, 1988), p.87.

Christianity by Nathan O. Hatch who argued that the rise of populist evangelical Christianity in antebellum America was fueled by democratic or republican ideals,⁸ Rawlyk attempted to demonstrate that evangelicalism in British North America -- to which the Maritime Regular Baptists belonged -- was even more radical, more populist, and more democratic than in the twenty-five years after the revolution in America. In fact, he states that the Second Great Awakening, as it began in the "Burned Over District" in upstate New York, was imported from Upper Canada.⁹ Although the Canada Fire may not be the final word on evangelicalism in late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century British North America, it does point to the difficulty of applying American historiographical models, which link Christianity to republican ideology, to the Canadian scene. Consequently, in spite of the resurgent interest in religious history in North America over the past twenty years, much of it is of little direct relevance to this thesis.¹⁰

One American work which does inform this present study is Curtis D. Johnson's Redeeming America: Evangelicals and the Road to Civil War.¹¹ In this volume he argues that three different expressions of evangelicalism permeated the religious landscape including formal, antiformal and African-American evangelicals. The first two categories are especially relevant to this study as it seeks to examine the breadth of options within Maritime Regular Baptist spirituality. In the antebellum period, formalists comprised about

⁸ Nathan O. Hatch, The Democratization of American Christianity (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

⁹ G.A. Rawlyk, The Canada Fire: Radical Evangelicalism in British North America, 1775-1812 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), pp.102-123; 143-161.

¹⁰ For a comprehensive discussion of the historiography of American evangelicalism consult L.I. Sweet, "The Evangelical Tradition in America" in L.I. Sweet (ed.), The Evangelical Tradition In America (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1984), pp. 1-86. For surveys of American religion see Sydney Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973) and Mark Noll, A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans, 1992).

¹¹ Curtis D. Johnson, Redeeming America: Evangelicals and the Road to Civil War (Chicago:

one-fifth of evangelical church members in America and tended to be from the Congregational, Presbyterian, Low Church Anglican, and English-speaking Reformed traditions. They drew their strength from the white middle and upper classes and sought for an “orderly” faith with orthodox beliefs and practices. “Their ultimate goal was to create a self-disciplined Righteous Republic whose laws reflected the edicts of God.”¹² According to Johnson, antiformalists made up three-fifths of evangelicals and were usually Methodists, Baptists, and Disciples of Christ. Coming primarily from the lower and middle classes, they preferred a more emotional faith than the formalists. Furthermore, they were “deeply suspicious of elite attempts to Christianize society, to reform the nation, or in any other way to improve America.”¹³

The Regular Baptist leaders analyzed in this study include both formal and anti-formal evangelicals¹⁴ who reflected in their lives and ministries the New Light piety of the

Ivan R. Dee, 1993).

¹² *Ibid.*, p.7. While many African-Nova Scotians were in fact Baptists, they have not been included in this study as they remained largely isolated from the White Regular Baptists during the first half of the nineteenth century. See G.E. Levy, Baptists of the Maritime Provinces, pp. 130, 228, 283.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.8. While these categories do not neatly fit the Maritime British North American context, they are suggestive and used occasionally as a means to describe the piety of specific individuals examined in this study. I have relied upon D.W. Bebbington’s definition for evangelicalism as set forth in his Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p.3, 4. He argues that the four distinguishing marks of evangelicalism have been “conversionism, the belief that lives need to be changed; activism, the expression of the gospel in effort; biblicism, a particular regard for the Bible; and what may be called crucicentrism, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.” It must be acknowledged that the first three of these “marks” were central to the evangelicalism of the “Fathers” and the second generation of leaders while the fourth was assumed but seldom became a matter of debate and discussion since it was not closely tied to their religious identity. For an insightful discussion of the many ways this evangelicalism has been expressed in the United States consult: Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnston (eds.), The Variety of American Evangelicalism (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991).

¹⁴ Harris Harding most fully represents the anti-formalist ethos of the Maritime Regular Baptists while Charles Tupper and Samuel Elder reflect the formalist camp. Joseph Crandall, Edward Manning and Ingram Bill embodied both formalist and anti-formalist

First Great Awakening in Nova Scotia from 1790-1855. In September 1783, Henry Alline left Nova Scotia for New England -- where he died in February the following year -- having preached and led revivals in the colony for eight years. He left behind a spiritual tradition which shaped Maritime Calvinist Baptists well into the nineteenth century. While his message had resonated almost exclusively with New England Planter communities in the colony, Allinite preachers successfully preached his radical New Light gospel to the Loyalist populations of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick from 1784 to 1800.¹⁵ According to Ann Condon, this period was characterized by “a high degree of religious toleration” as “ordinary English-speaking inhabitants . . . flocked indiscriminately” to various Christian denominations.¹⁶ Given the relative freedom from religious oppression or dominance from the Church of England and government, the Allinite tradition began to explore the limits of New Light anti-formalism and its tendency toward antinomianism. As a result, New Light preachers such as Harris Harding and Edward Manning by 1791 led many Allinites into the New Dispensation Movement, a dualistic expression of Christianity which maintained that ecclesiastical structures and established norms of faith, such as the authority of the Bible, inhibited the Holy Spirit from directing the lives of believers. By 1794 this manichaen-oriented heterodoxy was beginning to fizzle out. New Light preachers, such as Edward Manning, were becoming increasingly disillusioned with the excesses of “religious

characteristics.

¹⁵ Among the most important works on the New England Planters are J.B. Brebner, The Neutral Yankees of Nova Scotia: A Marginal Colony During the Revolutionary Years (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937); Margaret Conrad (ed.), They Planted Well: New England Planters in Maritime Canada (Fredericton, NB: Acadiensis Press, 1988); Graeme Wynn, “A Province too Much Dependent on New England,” Canadian Geographer 31(1987): 98-113.

¹⁶ Ann Gorman Condon, “1783-1800: Loyalist Arrival, Acadian Return, Imperial Reform” in Phillip A. Buckner and John G. Reid (eds.), The Atlantic Region to Confederation: A History (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), p.198.

freedom” and longed for an increased emphasis on order within the Allinite community.¹⁷ Furthermore, many New Light preachers also rejected Alline’s insistence that the sacraments were “non-essential” and embraced believer’s baptism by immersion as the norm and one of the essential elements of their faith. In 1798 the New Light preachers formed “The Baptist and Congregational Association” in an effort to distance themselves from their antinomian past.¹⁸ Structure, it was believed, was necessary to establish formal boundaries in belief, religious practice, and morality, which were lacking in Allinism. In 1800, the association dropped ‘Congregational’ from its official name in an attempt to jettison its embarrassing New Light past. This decision effectively removed John Payzant - one of the most influential followers of Alline -- and his Liverpool Church from membership. Clinging to Alline’s notion that the sacraments were “non-essential”, Payzant rejected the exclusively immersionist stance of the association.¹⁹ However, the move to order did not alter the evangelical spirituality of the late eighteenth century.

The first decade of the nineteenth century witnessed what contemporaries called the “Great Reformation” and present day scholars have coined as the Second Great Awakening in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Anglican Bishop Charles Inglis termed this “religious outpouring,” perhaps more accurately, as the “rage for dipping.” From approximately 1798 to 1806 a series of local revivals convulsed the townships along the south shore and the Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia, the Sackville area and the St. John River Valley. These revivals married New Light spirituality and immersionist baptism, and this ensured that part of the Allinite legacy would be carried in the Regular Baptist tradition. Indeed, the “Great Reformation” was a time when New Lights requested and received believer’s baptism by

¹⁷ G.A. Rawlyk, *Ravished by the Spirit*, pp. 81-85.

¹⁸ G.E. Levy, *The Baptists of the Maritimes*, pp. 70-71.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

immersion by the hundreds. This evangelical ritual became the glue and key identifier of the Maritime Regular Baptists and one of their most important means to propagate the “Faith of the Fathers.”²⁰

Not surprisingly, by 1809 only those churches which practised close communion were permitted to remain in the “Nova Scotia Baptist Association.” Those churches which allowed unimmersed people to receive the Lord’s Supper were perceived as being too attached to Allinite anti-formalism and thus dropped from membership. As a result, the churches in Yarmouth and Chester, led respectively by Harris Harding and Joseph Dimock, were separated from their spiritual cousins.²¹

If the New Light-cum-Baptist preachers of the “Nova Scotia Baptist Association” sought respectability during the first decade of the 1800s, it was a respectability based not on social acceptance, but rather on basic church order, theological orthodoxy (Calvinism), and Christian morality.²² The optimism of these preachers in trying to create a “pure” or

²⁰ The first scholar to explore the Second Great Awakening in Nova Scotia using the “awakening paradigm” popularized by William McLoughlin in his *Revivals, Awakenings and Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), was George Rawlyk in his “From New Light to Baptist: Harris Harding and the Second Great Awakening in Nova Scotia” in B.M. Moody (ed.), *Repent and Believe: The Baptist Experience in Maritime Canada* (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot Press, 1980), pp. 1-26.

²¹ G.E. Levy, *The Baptists of the Maritime Provinces*, pp. 70-71.

²² “Regular” or “Particular” Baptists officially held to the reformed doctrines of the Protestant Reformation, especially those of John Calvin. They also embraced the truth of believer’s baptism of the Anabaptists, though insisting upon full immersion as the mode. Maritime Regular Baptists, while officially adhering to Calvinism and immersion, were especially attracted to the Regular Baptist position because of its close communion and close membership position. In an attempt to shed their radical New Light past, it was believed that these principles would allow these Maritime evangelicals to achieve a semblance of structure if not order. For a broader discussion of the believers’ church tradition, see Donald F. Durnbaugh, *The Believers’ Church: The History and Character of Radical Protestantism* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1985).

untarnished denomination coincided with what Graeme Wynn has identified as a general belief among Nova Scotians and New Brunswickers that "better times were ahead."²³

The War of 1812, which generally stimulated the Maritime economy and increased the population size of urban centers such as Halifax and Saint John did not create a prosperity that lasted into peace time.²⁴ The Regular Baptists experienced steady numerical growth and geographical expansion during this decade, while still clinging to their "New Light - Baptist" gospel.²⁵ Maritime Regular Baptist history of the second decade of the nineteenth century tends not to support Nancy Christie's assertion that "as evangelicals in the Maritimes became more prosperous they also tried to temper the more disorderly components of popular religion, and progressively allied themselves with the more conservative elements there."²⁶ In fact, Regular Baptist structures were firmly in place before the War of 1812 and their evangelical piety persisted well beyond the second decade of the nineteenth century.

By 1821, the association divided into two "sister" organizations creating the New Brunswick Baptist Associations and the Nova Scotia Baptist Associations. It was believed that associations which covered smaller geographical areas would be more efficient in promoting the interests of their respective churches.²⁷ As the Regular Baptists of the Maritimes attempted to expand their influence in society, they participated in a broader

²³ Graeme Wynn, "1800-1810: Turning the Century" in Phillip A. Buckner and John Reid (eds.), The Atlantic Region to Confederation (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), pp. 214, 215.

²⁴ David A. Sutherland, "1810-1820: War and Peace" in *ibid.*, pp. 234-262.

²⁵ G.E. Levy, The Baptists of the Maritime Provinces, p. 93.

²⁶ Nancy Christie, "'In These Times of Democratic Rage and Delusion': Popular Religion and the Challenge to the Established Order, 1760-1815" in G.A. Rawlyk (ed.), The Canadian Protestant Experience 1760-1990 (Burlington, ONT: Welch Publishing, 1990), p.42.

²⁷ G.E. Levy, The Baptists of the Maritime Provinces, p. 82.

cultural movement which D.C. Harvey called the intellectual awakening of Nova Scotia.²⁸ Between 1812 and 1835 Nova Scotia -- and arguably all three of the Maritime colonies -- began the process of developing an indigenous press, libraries, and educational institutions which not only served the needs of these growing colonies, but also stimulated the emergence of a distinct perspective in politics, literature and theology. The Regular Baptists participated fully in the intellectual awakening as they entered into a lively theological debate with Anglicans, Methodists and Presbyterians over the issue of baptism.²⁹

The Regular Baptists had very few formally educated leaders at the beginning of the debate. However, if they were going to present the Regular Baptist gospel to a changing society it became clear to many that they needed to develop a better educated leadership and constituency. To that end, the denomination began to publish the Baptist Missionary Magazine in January, 1827. It was the first periodical issued under the auspices of a denomination anywhere in British North America. The purpose of this paper was not only to inform its readership of denominational advances but also to educate and inform its readers about news, and to inspire them to greater depths of spiritual commitment. The desire among some Regular Baptist leaders to increase their denomination's influence upon society was greatly assisted by the founding of the Granville Street Baptist Church, Halifax, in 1827. This church was composed of a number of disgruntled formal evangelical Anglicans from St. Paul's church in Halifax who embraced Regular Baptist principles.³⁰ Among its most prominent members were J. W. Johnston, a lawyer and politician; his

²⁸ D.C. Harvey, "The Intellectual Awakening of Nova Scotia" in G.A. Rawlyk (ed.), Historical Essays on the Atlantic Provinces (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967), pp. 99-121.

²⁹ Throughout this thesis, "pedobaptist" refers to those Protestant denominations which regularly baptized the infants of their church members, especially the Anglicans, Methodists and Presbyterians.

³⁰ E.M. Saunders, History of the Baptists of the Maritime Provinces (Halifax, NS: John

brother Lewis, who was a physician; J. W. Nutting, a lawyer; E. A. Crawley, a lawyer who would later become a leading Baptist; John Pryor, a recent graduate of Kings College, who would also become a Baptist preacher and educator; and John Ferguson, a wealthy importer and merchant in Halifax. These men were of a different class and social standing than their largely revivalistic, poor and uneducated Baptist cousins.³¹ In fact, they represented the attitudes of the genteel elite in Halifax and proceeded to attempt to remake the Nova Scotia Association in their own image.

This urban elite worked closely with Edward Manning – one of the leading Regular Baptist “Patriarchs” – in promoting the cause of education and this collaboration led to the founding of Horton Academy in 1828 and Acadia College ten years later.³² In New Brunswick, a similar series of events led to the founding of the Fredericton Seminary in 1836.³³ Educational efforts indicated that Maritime Baptists in general participated in the “intellectual awakening” of the period.³⁴

If the 1820s and 1830s were decades in which Maritime Regular Baptists created institutions in order to forge a place for themselves in colonial society, the 1840s witnessed

Burgoyne, 1902), pp. 188-191.

³¹ For a discussion of the class to which these high-profile Baptists belonged, consult David Alexander Sutherland, “The Merchants of Halifax, 1815-1850: A Commercial Class in Pursuit of Metropolitan Status” (PhD thesis, University of Toronto, 1975). See also, D.A. Sutherland, “Johnstone, James William” *DCB* 10(1972): 383-388; B.M. Moody, “Crawley, Edmund Albern” *DCB* 11(1982): 214-216.

³² See especially Ronald S. Longley, *Acadia University, 1838-1938* (Wolfville, NS: n.pbr., 1939), and Barry M. Moody, “Breadth of Vision, Breadth of Mind: The Baptists and Acadia College” in G.A. Rawlyk (ed.), *Canadian Baptists and Christian Higher Education* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1988), pp. 3-29.

³³ Alison A. Trites, “The New Brunswick Baptist Seminary 1835-1895” in B.M. Moody (ed.), *Repent and Believe: The Baptist Experience in Maritime Canada* (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot Press, 1980), pp. 103-123.

³⁴ For a general introduction to the 1830s consult Rosemary E. Ommer, “The 1830s: Adapting their Institutions to their Desires,” in Phillip A. Buckner and John G. Reid (eds.), *The Atlantic Region in Confederation: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), pp. 284-306.

the immersionists engaging in foreign mission work. On April 20, 1845, Richard Burpe and his wife set sail from Halifax to Boston where, six weeks later, they embarked on a long journey to Burma, their mission field. This event confirmed in the minds of the denomination's leadership that such endeavours would only be possible if the two associations, which had functioned separately since 1821, formed themselves in a "Convention." This organizational restructuring was achieved in 1846 when the Baptist Convention of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island was created. It was believed that this union of associations would promote not only the cause of foreign missions, but also "domestic" mission activity.³⁵ Although the Burpe's efforts did not lead to "success," commitment to united efforts among Maritime Regular Baptist persisted throughout the nineteenth century. By the 1850s, the denomination had developed structures and institutions in keeping with an increasingly complex colonial society. The Regular Baptist organizational framework had not destroyed the essential nature of the denomination's spirituality, however. On the contrary, the fundamental character of Maritime Calvinistic Baptists was far more intricate than the development of ecclesiastical structures might suggest. The persistence and gradual transformation of eighteenth-century New Lightism into nineteenth-century Regular Baptist piety remained the key to religious identity, motivation and thought among the Maritime immersionists. And this is evident when one explores the lives and beliefs of some of those "Fathers" and second generation preachers who shaped the denomination.

At first glance this thesis would seem to be a narrowly defined collective intellectual biography. This is not the case. Each of the six ministers considered at length in this study represented a specific expression or option within Maritime Regular Baptist piety. Their

³⁵ G.E. Levy, Baptists of the Maritime Provinces, pp. 153-155.

approach to the faith was acceptable to the churches they served and the denomination of which they were a part. Hence, they are mirrors of the breadth of alternative expressions of Regular Baptist piety for the first half of the nineteenth century. The criteria for selecting these men include the availability of primary sources, the period in which they lived and preached, and their public and private “religious” practices and thinking.³⁶ As chapter one illustrates, what came to be known as the “Faith of the Fathers,” rested on the central tenet of believer’s baptism by immersion. It was the ritual which linked the denomination’s elite and laity. If the early church had its Peters, Pauls, and Timothys, Maritime Regular Baptists also claimed to have “apostles” by the 1820s. They included Harris Harding, Joseph Crandall and Edward Manning among others. The first section deals with these three Regular Baptist “Patriarchs.” The exalted title of “Father” was given to a group of first generation Regular Baptist leaders who gave life, theology and identity to the followers of Henry Alline and other people attached to the principles of revivalistic Christianity. While all founders were given this title, those who lived into the 1840s and 1850s were especially regarded with great respect and awe by an often adoring denomination. There is no evidence that this position of “Father” was one to which the Patriarchs aspired. Rather, as a second generation of preachers, which began to emerge in the 1810s and 1820s, sought the wisdom, direction and example of the founders, they came to think of them as spiritual Fathers who seemed, in many ways, to be the equivalent of New Testament Apostles.

It is argued that the ecstatic experience which surrounded the “New Light - New Birth” paradigm of the First Great Awakening came to be ritualized in immersionist baptism in the Second Great Awakening under the influence of the “Fathers.” Far from

³⁶ The sources for this topic are rich including newspapers, letters, diaries, denominational records, local church records and a host of theological tracts and pamphlets. Much of the data has not been used in any systematic historical analysis, leaving little historiographical

breaking with the radical evangelical tradition of Henry Alline, the Regular Baptists forged a multifaceted religious identity which centered upon this evangelical ritual. By 1809 some Baptist leaders, such as Edward Manning, believed believer's baptism, accompanied by close communion and a membership exclusively for immersed Christians, would allow the New Light Baptists to distance themselves from the antinomian and emotional excesses of Allinism and what was known as the New Dispensation. However, the evidence suggests that the ritual came to be understood in a variety of often conflicting ways by its adherents. Nevertheless, the very ambiguity of immersionist baptism proved to be the foundation and unifying glue of the Regular Baptists. Descending into the "watery grave" as a visual representation of the "New Light-New Birth" was the intensely personal experience common to all Calvinistic Baptists of the Maritimes. While heterodoxy abounded in the area of baptismal theology, the ritual gave Regular Baptists their identity as a unique people with a divinely determined future. This was, without doubt, the greatest contribution made by the "Fathers" to their denomination.

The chapter on baptism and religious identity is followed by chapters which deal with Baptist Fathers Harris Harding, Joseph Crandall, and Edward Manning. These men belonged to a larger group of early Regular Baptist "Patriarchs" who laid the foundation of their denomination's religious beliefs and traditions.³⁷ While promoting the New Birth, expressed in believers' baptism by immersion, which was performed often in the context of revival, these men reflected quite distinct expressions of Regular Baptist piety. Indeed, it must be remembered that these three "Fathers" represented the spectrum or boundaries

support or challenge.

³⁷ Other "Fathers" included Thomas Ansley, John Burton, Thomas Handley Chipman, Joseph Dimock, Theodore Seth Harding, James Innis, and James Manning. Brief biographical sketches of these men may be found in I.E. Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches of the Maritime Provinces (Saint John, NB: Barnes & Co., 1880).

of faith and religious behaviour for Maritime Regular Baptists in the first half of the nineteenth century. Therefore, they have been chosen for detailed study, not just because they adhered to the basics of conversion, revival and immersionist baptism, but because they differed in their approach to the faith in some significant ways. Harding was without question a New Light evangelist who never became fully comfortable with the strict church organization of Regular Baptist polity. Far more committed to a religion of the heart than the head, he valued and promulgated a spirituality that included divine visions, dreams, and other ecstatic religious expressions during the countless revivals he preached through his long life. He longed for his parishioners to feel the presence of God rather than merely understand the biblical or theological dimensions of orthodox Christianity. In this respect, Harding reflected a grassroots' preoccupation with being "wrapped up in God." Perhaps more than any other Regular Baptist preacher of the nineteenth century, his expression of "vital Christianity" was closest to that of the people in the pews. Reluctant to pour his New Light inheritance into a Regular Baptist mold, he resisted the practice of close communion in his Yarmouth church, which excluded unimmersed believers from the Lord's supper and church membership, until 1828. Clinging to the Allinite belief that the ordinances and church order were "non-essential" he was a reluctant Baptist Patriarch. Although he was an avid baptizer by immersion, the ritual was never as central to his ministry or religious identity as it was for others. Ironically, while never deviating far from the New Light position, Harris Harding became a highly respected religious leader in Yarmouth during his long ministry without ever striving for it. He demonstrated that one's standing in society at mid-century did not, necessarily, depend upon jettisoning New Light spirituality. He continued to promote the radical revivalistic piety of the First Great Awakening. And his spiritual road was one much traveled by the laity.

In contrast to Harris Harding, Joseph Crandall spent most of his preaching career trying desperately to shed some aspects of his New Light past. Converted in the midst of a New Light revival, which was dramatically re-enacted in immersionist baptism, he discovered soon after that he could be an effective evangelist. As Crandall embarked upon a career as an itinerant preacher he strove for religious and social acceptability for himself and his denomination. In spite of his efforts, which included embracing a mild Calvinism and a stint in the New Brunswick legislature, he was unable to shake the enthusiastic spirituality of his youth. He remained throughout his life a New-Light-style evangelist who achieved the status of a Regular Baptist "Father," not because of uncommon abilities as a revivalist or thinker, but because of his longevity, his many baptisms, and the fact that he was the only Patriarch who spent his ministerial career in New Brunswick. Ironically, Crandall aspired to a position of social prominence which he achieved only as an old man, while Harris Harding was granted the same respect and veneration without striving for it. Crandall's piety demonstrates the hold which New Lightism had on the Maritime Regular Baptists during the first half of the nineteenth century. What he failed to understand was that his spirituality, in spite of the trappings of respectability and order, was essentially Allinism filtered through believer's baptism by immersion and Regular Baptist polity. The shift from New Light to Regular Baptist was not a solid break with the past, as Crandall imagined, but rather a redefinition or a marriage of Allinite piety with immersionist baptism -- the very life blood of his denomination.

Edward Manning was the best known and the most theologically informed of the "Fathers." He experienced personally the antinomian excesses of New Lightism in the 1790s and, unlike Harding, spent the rest of his life trying to ensure that they would not be repeated in his denomination. He attempted to distance himself from all aspects of New

Lightism as he rejected Henry Alline's often confused Arminianism and lack of church order, and adopted instead the mild Calvinism of Andrew Fuller.³⁸ Although clearly charting a course toward religious and social respectability, his main preoccupation was to develop a balanced evangelicalism among his co-religionists which stressed the importance of the New Birth and other forms of religious experience within the context of church discipline and Christian morality. He demanded that deeply-felt expressions of piety should be tempered by self-control. Nevertheless, his own ministry in the areas of preaching, baptism and revival reveals a remarkable tolerance and encouragement of a spirituality which remained in the tradition of the First Great Awakening. Manning's personal piety, so forcefully represented in his massive diary, also reflected New Light emphases on dream interpretation and an all-consuming desire to help individuals experience the New Birth.

It might be argued that in many ways "Father Manning" appeared to have successfully deconstructed the New Light paradigm by encouraging the creation of an educated, respectable, settled ministry in the context of Regular Baptist close communionism. However, his style of ministry, his longing for revival, his avid promotion of believer's baptism by immersion as the dramatic public portrayal of conversion, and his personal spirituality betray a remarkable continuity with the days of Alline. While Manning broadened his philosophy of ministry to include Christian higher education, serving the dispossessed in society, and temperance, the motivation continued to be the desire to see people encounter the living God in the New Birth. Manning, and to a lesser extent Crandall and Harding, may have broadened the New Light tradition; however, their lives and ministries demonstrate that their religious heritage was malleable and capable of assuming a variety of forms without losing its essential elements. Furthermore, they showed to their

³⁸ See the discussion on Fuller in chapter four.

constituency that Regular Baptist piety could be legitimately expressed in a variety of authentic ways.

If the "Patriarchs" were responsible for fusing the spirituality of the First Great Awakening with immersionist baptism during the Second Great Awakening, it fell to the second generation of Regular Baptist leaders to defend the "Faith of the Fathers" and adapt it to the 1820-1850 period.³⁹ The second generation of leaders faced the challenge of launching a defence for their central ritual, believer's baptism by immersion, during the baptismal controversy in the Maritimes from 1811 to 1848. In this debate the Anglicans, Methodists and Presbyterians formed a coalition against the Regular Baptists, whom they believed to be growing at their expense. The controversy was a religious dimension of what D. C. Harvey called the intellectual awakening in Nova Scotia. When the first baptismal tract was published in 1811, the Regular Baptists did not have any leaders with the necessary background and education to respond to the pedobaptists. Not until 1822 did the immersionists enter the debate in an attempt to defend their best known and hotly disputed ritual. And the responsibility of defending the identity and piety fell to the brightest minds of the second generation of preachers including William Elder, Alexander Crawford, E. A. Crawley, and Charles Tupper. As the debate raged, the Baptist writers became increasingly confident and more scholarly in their approach.⁴⁰ However, while the controversy helped move the Regular Baptists toward the religious mainstream, their commitment to experiential piety and believers' baptism by immersion remained firm.

³⁹ The second generation refers to those Regular Baptist preachers who were either mentored by one of the "Fathers," or who began their ministry between the late 1810s to the early 1840s. Unlike the first generation of leaders, those who followed were not singled out collectively as a recognizable group.

⁴⁰ It is important to recognize that the "Fathers" never felt comfortable assuming the role of denominational apologists or published writers. While Patriarchs such as Edward Manning encouraged the second generation to write polemics, they never wrote any published tracts

Along with defending their religious tradition, the second generation of leaders also expanded the definition of Regular Baptist ministry without compromising their central tenets. This development is seen very clearly in the lives and careers of Charles Tupper, Ingram Bill and Samuel Elder. Perhaps the brightest mind produced by the Maritime Regular Baptists in the nineteenth century, Charles Tupper became the editor of the first denominational periodical in British North America, the Baptist Missionary Magazine of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Although converted through the influence of New Light lay persons and Edward Manning, Tupper's cognitive approach to the faith did not resonate widely with the constituency during the 1820s and 1830s, which frustrated him greatly. However, his ability as an apologist, and effective pastor and teacher enhanced his reputation in a denomination which needed individuals who could defend the faith and articulate the Regular Baptist perspective to colonial society. In spite of his success as a scholar and denominational leader, Charles Tupper felt incomplete as a minister until the 1850s when he led an extensive revival in Aylesford, Nova Scotia, his last pastorate. In the midst of this revival, he was invited to assume the editorship of the denominational paper, The Christian Messenger, a position for which he was ideally suited. However, his philosophy of ministry was committed to the New Birth, and its ritualization in immersionist baptism and revival. Therefore, he declined the prestigious offer of editor in order to advance the "Faith of the Fathers."

If Tupper's ministry, which was founded upon the revivalistic tradition of the late eighteenth century, demonstrated that a religion of the head did not destroy the "Faith of the Fathers," Ingram Bill's ministry showed that the New Light-New Birth paradigm could be transferred to denominational structures. Beginning his career as a proponent of

or pamphlets which defended the Regular Baptist faith.

unrestrained emotional evangelicalism, his ability to adapt his revivalistic faith to an urban genteel context as well as a rural grassroots environment allowed him to advance a balanced evangelicalism. In many ways, Bill's greatest accomplishment was to model a flexible evangelicalism that accommodated anti-formal and formal approaches to the faith, including those which stressed primarily a religion of the head, as well as those which advocated a religion of the heart. Bill did not really redefine the piety of his youth or the philosophy of ministry of Edward Manning, his mentor; rather, he demonstrated that as long as the essentials of the faith -- conversion, its ritualization in immersionist baptism, and revival -- remained intact, the expression of that piety could be expressed in a variety of ways.

Samuel Elder's ministry, though short, is included in this study because it represented, in the minds of some Regular Baptists, a radical departure from the past. The only college-educated person explored in depth in this study, Elder was one of the first graduates of Acadia College to enter the pastoral ministry. The world of literature, history and theology inspired him, as well as the desire to become a genteel professional minister who deserved respect every bit as much as any lawyer, doctor, or Anglican cleric. As his experience in the pastorate grew, however, Elder came to rely more on the philosophy of ministry witnessed in his youth in the person of William Chipman, who had been mentored by Edward Manning. Eventually, Elder concluded that respectability needed to come not from one's position in society, but rather from one's Christian character. Although he laboured diligently to bring about conversion in his congregation and general revival in Fredericton, he was by all counts a failure as an evangelist and promoter of the "Faith of the Fathers." His inability to trigger revivals was due, in part, to his professional aspirations which insulated him from successfully connecting his ministry to the populist evangelical tradition of the region. Ironically, while Elder was as committed to the New Birth,

immersionist baptism, and revival as Tupper and Bill, he never fulfilled his own sense of divine calling nor the expectations of many in his denomination.

While feeling inadequate as an evangelist, Elder attempted to institutionalize revivalistic principles through Christian education. He advocated a rejuvenation of the Sabbath School system so that well prepared and dynamic teachers might not only “civilize” children but, more importantly, prepare the way for their New Birth experiences. Elder understood that as the Regular Baptists grew numerically, the proportion of converts from “Baptist families” would rise. However, even Elder found that his “teaching ministry” left him cold and unfulfilled as a Baptist minister of the second generation. Teaching children the books of the Bible could not compare with helping people experience the ecstasy of conversion.

If the second generation of preachers enlarged the possible expressions of Regular Baptist piety and ministry, they did so without opposition from the “Fathers”. However, as the Regular Baptist Patriarchs began to die in the late 1840s and early 1850s, a crisis of identity occurred in the denomination. Many people had placed their “Faith” in the “Fathers” to direct and approve ministerial innovations and expressions of piety which were unfamiliar. There was a fear that their absence would usher in a denominational elite that would stress the need of a professional, genteel and educated ministry at the expense of vital piety and the neglect of poor rural churches which had come to rely upon the itinerant model of ministry for their survival. The crisis was allayed, to a large extent, when the hagiographic biographies of the “Patriarchs,” published in the 1850s, challenged the denomination to place their trust in the “Faith of the Fathers.” By pointing out that the founders did not articulate a homogeneous expression of Regular Baptist spirituality and ministry practice, J. M. Cramp and others challenged their denomination to cling to the

essentials of their heritage and to allow freedom of expression beyond that foundation. The New Birth, believer's baptism by immersion, and revivals had come to form the basis of Regular Baptist identity. The nuance of its expression, it was argued, was in itself a continuation of the founders' example. Furthermore, it was believed that the tension caused by often differing expressions of piety and ministerial practice was potentially creative and might assist the Maritime Regular Baptists to permeate colonial society without jettisoning their heritage.

While it is conceded that , superficially, Maritime Regular Baptists in 1800 appeared to be very different by 1855, the overwhelming evidence suggests that the transformation was one of degree, not kind. This was the legacy of the "Faith of the Fathers." And in 1850 as in 1800 -- the "Faith of the Fathers" rested on the essential ritual of their tradition, believer's baptism by immersion.

Chapter One "The Liquid Sepulcher of the Gospel"

On 6 December, 1833, in his 75th year William Bishop died in Nictaux, Nova Scotia - in the Baptist heartland of the province. The son of New England Planters, Peter and Elizabeth Bishop, William grew up in Horton Township where as a young man he became influenced by the charismatic preaching of Henry Alline. The words of the Falmouth evangelist, it was noted in the obituary carried in the Baptist Missionary Magazine, had "powerfully arrested his conscience, and his mind became solemnly and deeply impressed with a sense of his lost condition as a sinner before God; and he began anxiously to inquire, what he should do to be saved."¹ With an "aching heart and burning conscience" unable to find immediate solace for what William James once described as the sick soul, Bishop had become increasingly convinced that he would never share the ecstasy of conversion.² However, in due course, the troubled William Bishop experienced the purifying of his soul as he cast himself upon God for all eternity. His was a classic New Light-New Birth in the Allinite tradition.³ "His tongue broke out in unknown strains," it was recorded, "and sang [with] surprising grace."⁴

After the fire of his New Birth experience had cooled, William Bishop found that "he was still in a world of conflict, and exposed to many temptations."⁵ Longing to recover the ecstasy and assurance of salvation he had experienced at conversion he began to pray,

¹ Baptist Missionary Magazine of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick (hereafter BMM), September, 1834.

² William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience (New York: New American Library, 1958), pp. 112-139.

³ See G.A. Rawlyk, The Canada Fire: Radical Evangelicalism in British North America, 1775 - 1812 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University press, 1994), pp. 1-18.

⁴ BMM, September, 1834.

⁵ Ibid., p. 170.

study the Bible, and keep company with New Light Baptists. Although Bishop's search for a deeper spirituality has not been specifically dated, it almost certainly occurred during what Anglican Bishop Charles Inglis has called "the rage for dipping," and what New Lights and Baptists referred to as the "Great Reformation." In 1800, the Anglican leader lamented:

...a rage for dipping or total immersion prevails over all the western counties of the Province, and is frequently performed in a very indelicate manner before vast collections of people. Several hundreds have already been baptized, and this plunging they deem to be absolutely necessary to the conversion of their souls. On the Saturday preceding these solemnities the preacher sits above the congregation with a number of select brethren on lower benches appointed to assist him.⁶

Bishop Inglis did not understand that the "rage for dipping" was more than just a period in which literally hundreds of New Lights rushed to the watersides of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick to receive baptism by "plunging." He could not have known that immersionist baptism was being fused with conversion and revivalism in the minds and experiences of many Maritime evangelicals to produce a resilient and broadly-based religious identity for those who would eventually call themselves Regular Baptists.⁷

As William Bishop was baptized by immersion in the "name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit" he entered into a completely new realm of the "spirit."

⁶ E. M. Saunders, History of the Baptists of the Maritime Provinces (Halifax, NS: John Burgoyne, 1902), p. 115.

⁷ This chapter will explore the ritual meaning of believer's baptism by immersion and its importance to the formation of the Regular Baptist community in the Maritimes. It is not intended to chart the changes in practice or understanding of the ritual. In fact, I am suggesting that the ambiguity over meaning and breadth of experiences surrounding the ritual were crucial in creating a sense of Baptist belonging and the glue that held together an often diverse people. One of the most important studies which explores an evangelical ritual is Leigh Eric Schmidt's Holy Fairs: Scottish Communion and American Revivals in the Early Modern Period (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); See also Dickson D. Bruce, Jr., 'And They All Sang Hallelujah': Plainfolk Camp-Meeting Religion, 1800-1845 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1974); Paul K. Conkin, Cane Ridge: America's Pentecost (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990); Rhys Isaac, The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790 (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1982).

In this way, the Lord was pleased to proceed with a work which having already effected the connexion of this redeemed soul with the church militant, was finally to result in his happier union with the church triumphant.⁸

Shortly after his baptism and what must have seemed to him a second work of grace, William Bishop began a life-long career as lay-preacher, exhorter, and deacon. Although his abilities as a preacher were never considered great, his capacity to appeal to “sinners for salvation” was very effective indeed. In the Allinite tradition, lay-exhortation was a key ingredient in successful revivals and would be for many Maritime Regular Baptists throughout the nineteenth century. “It was no uncommon thing to see the pious saint and hardened sinner equally bathed in tears, when Deacon Bishop arose to bear his testimony to the gospel proclaimed by the minister, and to persuade the people to love and serve the Saviour.” For several generations, Bishop was the catalyst for the conversion of many people in Regular Baptist churches in the Annapolis Valley.⁹

That the practice of exhortation among the New Lights was grafted into Regular Baptist spirituality is not surprising since many former Allinites became key players in the churches of the Calvinistic immersionists.¹⁰ In typical New Light fashion, William Bishop continued to “embrace in the arms of Christian love and fellowship, all persons who gave evidence that they were the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus.”¹¹ Although committed to the Regular Baptist position, Bishop felt at home among Methodists, Free Baptists and New Light Congregationalists. As long as people had experienced the New Birth, Bishop felt that doctrinal differences were not sufficiently important to hinder co-

⁸ BMM, September 1834.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ For an excellent discussion of the role of exhortation in New Light religion, see G. A. Rawlyk, Ravished by the Spirit (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984), pp. 112-119.

¹¹ BMM, September 1834.

operation and fellowship. Nevertheless, Bishop would have regarded his baptism by immersion, in what A.M. Gidney called "The Liquid Sepulchre of the Gospel," as the day his salvation became fully realized.¹² It was a formative religious experience where Bishop believed he was wed to Christ and the Regular Baptists for all eternity. So profound was the ecstasy of baptism that his religious identity was firmly cast in the Regular Baptist mold for the rest of his life. While much of his New Light spirituality remained intact, the ambiguity of Allinism over the externals of religion was largely jettisoned.

If William Bishop's baptism by immersion became as important to him as his New Birth experience, the same can be said for many other New Lights and evangelical pedobaptists who were looking for more in their spiritual pilgrimage. Charlotte Prescott Boyle of Chester is another example of a New Light-turned-Baptist in this period. She was converted during a revival led by John Payzant and Thomas Handley Chipman. Under the powerful preaching of these two Allinites, Boyle experienced the "dark night of the soul" as she concluded that her sins would never be forgiven. "My heart sunk within me under a load of guilt. I knew that God would be just if I were sent to hell; but how he could save me consistently with the claims of justice I knew not." In a way similar to William Bishop, and even Henry Alline, Boyle felt abandoned by God as she cried out for mercy and the solace which she believed would accompany the New Birth. Her period of gloom was soon ended by the experience of great joy and peace as "I beheld by faith the bleeding suffering Saviour, bearing my sins on the cross."¹³ So profoundly affected by this experience was Charlotte Prescott Boyle that she began the life-long practice of public service to God as an

¹² A. M. Gidney to Edward Manning, Pleasant River, Nova Scotia, 19 May 1834. AUA. Gidney was a well educated lawyer and teacher who promoted the Regular Baptist cause in the Annapolis Valley. He also wrote a number of early articles for the BMM.

¹³ BMM, January 1835.

exhorter and lay-evangelist. Joseph Dimock, the Regular Baptist Patriarch from Chester, recalled:

Religion was the business of her life - her house was a house of prayer, where ministers of the Gospel and the pious of every name, found a welcome and quiet retreat. Her conversation was savory, imparting instruction to the young, comfort to mourners, and edification to all her friends. In religious conversations, her affections would often kindle into a flame of holy extacy, that she appeared as one on the borders of Heaven.¹⁴

Some time following her conversion, Boyle underwent a second crisis of faith. In her diligent reading of the New Testament she discovered the words of the Apostle Peter in Acts, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," along with other similar passages. These verses raised the question of whether or not she had appropriated the fullness of God's salvation. If conversion plus baptism were necessary to be saved, she feared that she would not spend eternity with God without believer's baptism by immersion. Joseph Dimock records that Charlotte Prescott Boyle was "baptized about the year 1788, by T.H. Chipman, whom she always respected as her spiritual father."¹⁵ Even if some of the Baptist Patriarchs would not have accepted the populist "sacramental" understanding of baptism, Boyle and others in late-eighteenth-century New Brunswick and Nova Scotia seemed to have shared, what George Rawlyk once called, "a growing popular belief...that without both conversion and believer's baptism, one could not 'enter the Kingdom of Heaven'."¹⁶

There are certainly other examples of New Light lay people who participated in the rage for dipping and became Baptists, for example, Isaac Whitman, Loran DeWolf, Hannah Smith, and Timothy Weatherby.¹⁷ However, the stories of Bishop and Boyle are

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Rawlyk, *The Canada Fire*, p. 165.

¹⁷ *BMM*, November 1835; April 1835; April 1832; and *Christian Messenger* (hereafter *CM*), 1 October 1852.

representative of the widespread phenomenon of the New Light to Baptist transition which many experienced in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. But, what these memoirs do not reveal is why baptism by immersion became the identifying evangelical ritual for so many New Lights when “speaking in tongues” or “divine healing” or “intense sanctification” were possible options. George Rawlyk has recently argued that baptism became the defining ritual because it was practiced by the primitive New Testament Church and was laden with folk belief and permeated by “a sense of almost medieval magic” as can be seen even in the heavily-edited memoirs of Boyle and Bishop.¹⁸ Rawlyk further argued that the increase in the practice of this evangelical ritual was exacerbated in 1800 by millennial expectations popularly held in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick that the physical return of Jesus was imminent.¹⁹

If there was a willingness at the grassroots to adopt immersionist baptism because of millennial anticipation there was also the desire of many New Light preachers to break with the past. This evangelical ritual had the potential to provide a new identity for disillusioned Allinites. During the 1790s, the freedom granted to New Lights because of Allinite ambiguity over the externals of religion led to an extreme form of antinomianism which became known as the New Dispensation. Following his exit from the New Dispensation movement, Edward Manning, who would become one of the Regular Baptist Patriarchs, recorded:

Mr. Alline's lax observance of divine institutions fostered in the minds of his followers such ideas, as these; that the ordinances are only circumstantial, outward matters and not mere non-essential; that the scriptures are not the only rule of faith and practice; and that no person is under any obligation to perform any external duty until God immediately impresses the mind to do so...Several began to question the propriety of having anything to do with external order or ordinances, and soon refused to commune with the

¹⁸ Rawlyk, The Canada Fire, p. 163.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 165-166.

church...As they have no rule to go by but their fancies, which they called 'the Spirit of God', great irregularities ensued.²⁰

The “great irregularities” which ensued culminated in the 1796 public confession of New Light preacher Harris Harding to impregnating Mehetable Harrington, a teenage resident of Liverpool, Nova Scotia. Six weeks later a child was born to the couple. Not surprisingly, since most of the New Light preachers sought to distance themselves from the antinomianism of the New Dispensation, there emerged an increased desire to create a new identity within religious respectability.²¹

If there were New Light leaders in 1796 who were still undecided about the potential for antinomianism behaviour within Allinite freedom, the “Babcock Tragedy,” in the winter of 1805, removed any doubt. Following the 1804 New Light revival in Shediac, New Brunswick, Sarah Babcock began to prophesy the imminent return of the Lord which would immediately follow the conversion of the nearby Acadian population. So affected was Sarah's father, Amasa, by his daughter's message that it drove him insane. In a rather bizarre religious ritual he fatally stabbed his daughter, for which he was tried and hanged.²²

In the minds of many Maritimers, the antinomianism of the New Dispensation movement and the “Babcock Tragedy” remained forever connected, in their minds, to uncontrolled enthusiastic religion and the Allinite ambiguity over order or the externals of religion. Even John Payzant was forever characterized as a radical antinomian New Light. Although he never participated in the New Dispensation Movement and had always sought to establish, it may be argued, a certain degree of order in his congregation he and his Congregational church in Liverpool, Nova Scotia, never adopted the key Regular Baptist

²⁰ J.M. Cramp, “A History of the Maritime Baptists.” AUA.

²¹ See G. A. Rawlyk, Wrapped Up in God: A Study of Several Canadian Revivals and Revivalists (Burlington, ON: Welch Publishing Co., 1988), pp. 76-95.

²² G. A. Rawlyk, Ravished by the Spirit, pp. 100 - 101.

scheme of immersion only. And, as late as 1834, the respected Baptist layman Angus M. Gidney wrote about the “antichristian” nature of the “pedobaptist newlightism” which pervaded Payzant’s Congregational Church in Liverpool.²³ The evidence suggests that at least some Baptists came to regard the excesses of New Lightism as the result of ambiguity about the ordinances. It was believed that if the New Lights had adopted the Regular Baptist principles of believer’s baptism by immersion and church order, the embarrassing events of the 1790s and 1805 certainly could have been avoided. By consciously distancing themselves altogether from Allinism and pedobaptism the early Baptist leaders, including T.H. Chipman, Edward Manning, T.S. Harding, and Joseph Crandall, forged a new identity with the aid of Calvinistic Baptist leaders from Maine such as Isaac Case and Henry Hale in the post-1800 period. This shift in direction by the leadership consolidated the Regular Baptist position in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and insured the institutional adoption of immersionist baptism.²⁴

What it is clear, however, is that although the first third of the nineteenth century witnessed a remarkable shift toward order and religious respectability among Regular Baptist leaders, there was also an equally strong spiritual dimension to the Maritime Regular Baptist ethos. A popular radical evangelical spirituality rooted in New Lightism endured well into the nineteenth century within the parameters of church discipline and order. In fact, had there not been a firm continuity with the religious practices and experiences of the First Great Awakening it is doubtful whether the former Allinite and new Regular Baptist preachers would have been able to lead so many former New Lights and Congregationalists into the Baptist fold. A spirituality characterized by rapturous conversions and intense

²³ A.M. Gidney to Edward Manning, Pleasant River, Nova Scotia, 19 May, 1834. AUA.

²⁴ This theme has been explored in G.A. Rawlyk, *Ravished by the Spirit*, pp.118-119.

ecstatic religious experience was not only transferred to the Maritime Regular Baptist experience, but was recast into a distinct framework centered around the evangelical ritual of believer's baptism by immersion. The marriage of Allinist religious experience and immersionist baptism created an almost irresistible baptismal spirituality. And it was clearly this hybrid of two traditions and not only the move to order and religious respectability that would resonate with many Maritimers throughout the first half of the nineteenth century.

The outdoor baptismal service was a complex, multifaceted evangelical ritual laden with richly textured layers of personal, social and spiritual meaning. While it would seem that the Maritime Regular Baptists did not produce a manual for baptismal services, the extant evidence points to a dynamic religious ritual which could be easily adapted to a host of variables such as the seasons, time of day, and geographic setting. One of the most poetic, if not complete, accounts of Regular Baptist baptismal service is found in Angus M. Gidney's 11 June, 1834, letter to Edward Manning. Gidney was a well-educated Regular Baptist layman from Cornwallis Township who often wrote theological pieces for the Baptist Missionary Magazine. In his letter to "Father" Manning, Gidney depicts the familiar sight of a late afternoon baptismal service in Nictaux, the heart of the Annapolis Valley. Although Gidney did not recount all of the common features of that evangelical ordinance, the letter nevertheless serves as an appropriate basis for a broader ritual analysis.

The day was one of uncommon loveliness and beauty. The sun shone on green fields and bright flowers - the birds sang - and indeed, all nature seemed dressed in its sabbath-day clothing, that it might in its best attire, behold the holy ceremonies of the christian religion. On both sides of the clear stream were multitudes standing of all ages, whose solemnized appearance plainly indicated that they were not indifferent spectators. Every cloud seemed to be rolled away, that nothing, on this occasion, might intercept the intercourse between earth and heaven.

The eye, as it looked upward into the bright blue vault above, seemed lost in the unclouded purity of boundless ether, stretching far away towards the peaceful mansions of everlasting blessedness. The water was so pure, so

calm, and unruffled that it reflected all above it. When the first recipient arose from the watery tomb, a swallow, making a perpendicular descent from above, almost touched him, and then glided away through the soft air, rejoicing in the sunshine, and seemed to twitter its praises to Him, who was thus blessing man with unmerited Mercy. This little incident led my mind back to the banks of Jordan, when the whole Trinity eighteen hundred years ago, sanctioned this ordinance; and when the Spirit, like a dove, descended from on High and perched upon the Saviour, bearing from his Father a message of divine Love and approbation. During the performance of the ceremony, ever and anon, a loud sob of either grief or joy would burst upon the ear, and when looking around among the multitude, to ascertain by the countenance from whence it proceeded, a hundred faces deeply imbued with a kindred solemnity met the view.

The scene before me naturally drew my contemplations far back into Ages and Centuries that have passed like morning dreams away; and are only embalmed in the Eternal Divinity of Sacred Writ. Man's primitive state - his transgression and fall - the promise of the woman's seed - the judgments and mercies of Heaven - God's dealings with his ancient people - the birth of the Saviour, his Baptism - his ministry - his sufferings and death - his resurrection - and the prophecies of both the old and new Testaments nay fulfilling mankind brought unnumbered images of the Lord's glorious Sovereignty to my view...

After returning to the Meeting-House, there was 'a feast of love'; for the christians all seemed drinking of that 'river the streams whereof make glad the city of God.' It was sunset before the people would go away; and many a heart, hitherto careless, was deeply solemnized under the presence of Jehovah!²⁵

It is clear that the site for the baptismal service on that warm sunny day in June of 1834 had been carefully chosen. A small stream had been selected so that eager spectators could line up on both banks, giving ample space to stand for a sizeable crowd if necessary. Indeed, some consideration had to be given to the size of the community in which the baptismal service was to take place. For example, if outdoor baptisms were to be performed in Saint John or Halifax, it might be necessary to choose a site that would allow room for some three thousand onlookers. Even in remote and sparsely populated areas, crowds of one hundred were not uncommon. One report of a May 1834 baptismal service

²⁵ A. M. Gidney to Edward Manning, Nictaux, N. S., 11 June, 1834. AUA.

in Liverpool states that onlookers watched the “solemn proceedings” closely from a number of boats which created a circle of spectators on land and sea.²⁶ The ritual site would also require at least four to five feet of water in order to baptize adults with ease. The depth of the water was as crucial a factor as any in choosing a place for the sacred event. If it was winter time, ice would often have to be cut out before the ritual could take place. The Fredericton, New Brunswick, preacher Samuel Elder recorded on 3 December 1848, that as “the [Saint John] river is frozen over to the depth of a foot or more, a place for baptism had to be cut through the ice for a considerable distance from the shore. The labour thus imposed on the brethren who volunteered its performance was great.”²⁷

Although baptismal celebrations could last an entire day, they could also be very brief indeed. In a manuscript fragment dated 4 February, 1834, it is recorded that during harsh winter conditions twenty people could be properly baptized in about twenty minutes. “... on Lord’s day morning, the 4th, we repaired to the water (a beautiful lake). the ice was cut and twenty candidates, with brother Porter and myself, surrounded the baptismal waters in the presence of a large concourse of spectators. It was a solemn sight. We sang, prayed, and addressed the people very briefly on account of the coldness of the day, and in little over twenty minutes the whole number was buried with Christ in baptism... The reformation advances gloriously on the mountain and the valley.”²⁸

A somewhat less tangible, though no less important, factor in choosing a site for outdoor baptismal services was its “otherworldliness.” These rites were most effectively orchestrated when water, shorelines, trees and sky merged to create a sense of sacred space. In reading Gidney’s romantic account, it is clear that all of nature “seemed dressed” for the

²⁶ A.M. Gidney to Edward Manning, Pleasant River, N. S., 19 May 1834. AUA.

²⁷ Samuel Elder Diary, 4 December 1848. Provincial Archives of New Brunswick.

²⁸ Manuscript fragment, 4 February 1834. AU A. I am grateful to G. A. Rawlyk for this

occasion so that nothing might "intercept the intercourse between heaven and earth." One gets the impression that for many at the waterside, the beauty found in nature was more than just ornamental but a means of communing with God directly, a means of grace. In an anonymous letter published in the Christian Messenger, January 8, 1841, the author captures the romantic, if not pantheistic, quality found at an unidentified baptismal service held at the height of a Maritime summer.

It was a Sabbath morning; one of those hushed...seasons when the functions of the soul cannot operate save to adore and worship. Summer wore her richest garniture of leaves and flowers, and the glorious sunshine was abroad with its softest and holiest influences.

In a wild and secluded spot, shut in by surrounding hills, and occupying the shore of a small lake, so very small that it scarcely merited the name, was collected a congregation...to the number of nearly two hundred. The rich and interwoven foliage of the trees formed their canopy, and the mossy banks afforded easy and convenient seats. The services were performed quietly and devoutly. The knees bowed upon the verdant and , the clasped and elevated hands, the...imploring eyes were but the visible expressions of a deep and fervent adoration.²⁹

Since many candidates for baptism would remember their baptismal day as long as they lived, the thoughtful choice of a site could enhance the other worldliness of the occasion. Speaking to his fellow Regular Baptist pastor, Ezekiel Masters, William Chipman recalled in 1829 the "blessed" day in Billtown, Nova Scotia, on which they were "buried with Christ." "Pointing to the lovely lake, I said, 'Brother, you remember the great baptismal day when you and I were baptized by Father Manning, in that placid sheet of water, into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?' Masters replied with great emotion, "I do." And with big tears swelling in his eyes he added, "I shall meet you above." Chipman replied "God grant it my brother." Many years after this baptismal service, both Chipman and Masters were emotionally moved at the mere recollection of that day. The

citation.

“beauty of the lake,” the “placid sheet of water” in which they were baptized, the Baptist Patriarch, Edward Manning, who performed the ritual, and the words of institution created an event that for a few stirring moments brought heaven on earth.³⁰

As time went on, repeated baptismal services in the same place created a sacred sense of permanency about the space itself. (This was similar to clearings which were continually used for camp meeting sites.) The extant evidence suggests that previously immersed onlookers would often experience a reenactment of the day they had been “buried with Christ.” Ellen Weiss makes the point that the ongoing use of space for evangelical rituals often transformed an area physically, and in the minds of the people it became a mystical place where God was intensely present.³¹ It is only within the context of sacred space that the choreography of the outdoor baptismal service itself can be properly understood.

Since baptism was the “visible gospel” dramatically portrayed, all who participated in the service had special and clearly defined roles. Orchestrating the ritual was, without exception, a properly ordained Baptist minister. There is no known evidence in Maritime Regular Baptist church records, for the nineteenth century, of a single baptism being performed by anyone except an ordained preacher. In spite of an unyielding commitment to the priesthood of all believers, baptism remained the sole responsibility of the clergy. It would seem that at the popular level there was a commitment to clergy-controlled baptisms for heterodox reasons. It was quite emphatically believed by many people that baptism by immersion needed to be performed by an ordained Regular Baptist minister because of its

²⁹ CM, 8 January 1841.

³⁰ I. E. Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches of the Maritime Provinces (Saint John, NB: Barnes and Company, 1880), p. 77.

³¹ Ellen Weiss, City in the Woods: the Life and Design of an American Camp Meeting on Martha's Vineyard (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

sacramental, almost regenerative quality. During the spring revival of 1834 in Liverpool, Nova Scotia, led by I.E. Bill -- a young preacher from Nictaux -- it is recorded that "...the Lord, in vindication of an ordinance in which Christ participated came down and hushed all around into reverential silence; and the Holy Dove rested on Bro Bill, while he stood in the permanent footing of Bible ground and delineated the design and divinity of the Lord's mode of Baptism."³² Ordained men, it was believed, had been especially endued by God with the Holy Spirit to make effective the spiritual blessings of baptism by immersion. A baptism performed by a lay-person was considered to be without power and therefore worthless and to be avoided. The authority of the ordained preacher, it was believed, was the key to the ritual's spiritual power. This was a central tenet of the faith embraced by the Fathers of the denomination. It became a way for Patriarchs such as Edward Manning to exercise more control over their people.

These heterodox beliefs, while wide-ranging, may be referred to collectively as grass-roots baptismal spirituality. The ambiguity of meaning and varieties of religious experiences surrounding the outdoor baptismal service proved to be key factors in the formation of Regular Baptist religious identity. Men, women, and converted youths would hold often conflicting notions about immersionist baptism but they were nevertheless bound together by a common ritual that united them and identified them as belonging to the Baptist community. Indeed, baptism, for many Regular Baptist lay people, was far more than an outward sign of inward spiritual grace. From the very beginning of the transition from New Light to Baptist, a firmly established connection was maintained between baptism by immersion and the coming of the Holy Spirit. While it was readily acknowledged that a certain measure of the Holy Spirit was given by God at conversion, a second portion or

³² A. M. Gidney to Edward Manning, Pleasant River, N.S., 19 May 1834. AUA.

work of the Spirit was believed by some to be present in the ritual itself. Writing about the baptism of the New Light preacher, Harris Harding, on August 28, 1799, James Manning -- a leading New Light Baptist and brother of Edward Manning -- recorded, "It seemed as though he had a double portion of the Spirit."³³ This is not to suggest that Regular Baptist ministers no longer considered conversion to be a prerequisite for baptism. In fact, the evidence strongly supports the long-held practice of the candidate being interviewed by the ordained minister before baptism. Maritime Regular Baptist ministers also tried to squelch the often antinomian evangelical in their communities by withholding the rite from some who had not been sufficiently "changed in heart." By controlling who was baptized and who was a church member -- through church discipline -- preachers believed they could effectively preserve the pure church ideal.³⁴ Heterodoxy and immoral behaviour could thus be monitored by ordered leaders. And it was only when the preacher was satisfied that the candidate was indeed converted and committed to basic Christian morality that baptism was permitted. While most Regular Baptist ministers during the first half of the nineteenth century would have rejected outright the notion of a baptismal regeneration, the evidence suggests that a modified form of this understanding of baptism persisted at least at the grassroots with the knowledge, if not consent, of some preachers. This suggests that while baptism became a means to bring some semblance of order to New Light Baptist churches, it provided a way for ordinary evangelicals to pursue the limits of Allinite spirituality within the confines of church structures.

³³ Cramp, "History of Maritime Baptists," p.73. See also D. G. Bell (ed.), New Light Baptist Journals of James Manning and James Innis (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot Press, 1983).

³⁴ The pure church ideal consisted of ensuring that only converted, orthodox, and morally upright individuals were included in membership.

“The Lord gave her much of his presence in the ordinance” of baptism, wrote an itinerant Baptist preacher about a woman he had baptized from “Bucktush” in 1840.³⁵ Earlier in the century an angry Bishop Inglis had stated “this plunging they deem to be absolutely necessary to the conversion of a sinner.”³⁶ After a February, 1837 baptismal service at the Granville Street Baptist Church in Halifax, Nova Scotia, it was recorded that baptisms were “seldom administered without being honoured in a greater or lesser degree, by the effusion of the Holy Spirit.”³⁷ In February, 1858, “J.B.” of Lower Stewiacke, Nova Scotia, expressed in verse the role of the Holy Spirit in baptism.

How sweetly solemn is this sacred scene!
 Surely the Holy Spirit hovers near -
 His dove-like form to mortal eyes unseen,
 But humble hearts must feel his presence here -

Descend then heavenly Messenger of peace -
 Shed o're our souls the beams of sacred love;
 Here let all doubts, and fears, and conflicts cease,
 And holy joy pour on us from above.³⁸

In Gidney's detailed description of the Nictaux baptismal service recorded earlier, he notes that when “the first recipient arose from the watery tomb, a swallow, making a perpendicular descent from above, almost touched him, and then glided away through the soft air, rejoicing in the sunshine, and seemed to twitter its praises to Him who was thus blessing man with unmerited Mercy.” Indeed, for many Regular Baptists, God was performing an additional work of grace through the waters of baptism.³⁹ While Henry Alline may have been the “spiritual Father” of many Baptists in the early nineteenth

³⁵ *CM*, 18 September 1840.

³⁶ *Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches*, p. 190.

³⁷ *CM*, 17 February 1837.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 14 April 1858.

³⁹ While it must be acknowledged that Gidney may have romanticized or embellished the baptismal account, his stylization still confirms my contention that the “otherworldliness” of the scene was a crucial aspect of this ritual.

century, they rejected the Falmouth preacher's contention that the sacraments were non-essential.

In 1836, a concerned Calvinistic Baptist from Cape Breton wrote an extended letter "To Unbaptized Believers" and took issue with those pedobaptists who regarded the sacrament -- as understood by the Regular Baptists -- as "non-essential." One major point of the letter was that unbaptized believers -- those not immersed -- had denied themselves a more complete experience of God.

Let us again advert to the sacred Scriptures, and endeavour to inform ourselves of the views our Lord had of that ordinance which, at the close of his own earthly ministry, he concluded in the general commission, 'Go ye therefore, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;' and at the same time for their encouragement annexing the gracious promise, 'Lo !, I am with you always even unto the end of the world.' Let us then bear in mind that when the ordinance of baptism is scripturally administered, we may look with confidence for the especial presence of the Redeemer - and dear Christian Brethren is this a nonessential? is it of no importance?⁴⁰

Implicit in this baptismal spirituality was an experienced closeness with Jesus through the Holy Spirit that profoundly moved many candidates into a life-long devotion to Regular Baptist piety and identity. If conversion had transformed sinners into believers, baptism by immersion made believers into Regular Baptists. The enthusiastic response of many Maritimers to the "gospel made visible" in immersion sparked (as shall be discussed later) a vigorous debate in pulpits and print, especially in the 1820s and 1830s, between Regular Baptists and those who accepted pedobaptism.

While the theology of this "second blessing" of the Holy Spirit was never fully developed or articulated, the extant reports clearly indicate that Maritime Baptist beliefs about baptism approached a sacramental view not unlike those of the Anglicans and Roman Catholics.

In this ordinance we [Halifax Regular Baptists] believe that God is especially present with his people; and that as in the baptism of our Saviour, the Holy Ghost descended in the form of a dove, so in the baptism of his followers now the Holy Spirit descends, though not in a visible shape, to bless and sanctify and enlighten the minds of men.⁴¹

According to this anonymous Baptist writer, there was a three-fold benefit to be received in the waters of baptism. The simple blessing of a greater degree of the Holy Spirit in one's life meant that Baptists would be closer to God than pedobaptists. Secondly, the sanctifying work of the "dove come down" meant that the likelihood of the baptized person sinning would be significantly reduced. Since sanctification implied holy living, baptism by immersion was believed to actually wash away not only sins, but the very desires that led to breaking God's command. In the instant that the baptismal waters rippled over the body of the candidate, the Holy Spirit, it was believed, cleansed the soul and purified the will. The third benefit of "dying with Christ" was an enlightened mind which was enabled to oppose more effectively the untruth of pedobaptism, among other things. "Without the aid of the Spirit of God, we can do nothing; it is through his influence and grace, that we are brought to repentance, and by the same spirit are enabled to persevere unto the end," stated the same 1837 report from Halifax. If the conversion experience changed one's status before God, the baptismal experience granted to the convert power to live a holy and productive Christian life and rewarded the individual with an assurance that he "that hath begun a good work in us, must carry it on until the day of Jesus Christ." Although it is nowhere explicitly stated, the implication seems to be that apart from "scriptural" baptism, these "blessings" from the Holy Spirit could not be received. This was the power of immersionist baptism. This was the "Faith of the Fathers."

⁴⁰ BMM, May 1836.

⁴¹ CM, 17 February 1837.

The connection between obeying "God's call" to be immersed and effective Christian service was often made, as can be seen in verses in the apostle "Paul's Baptism," written by J.D. Casewell, a British Baptist who served in New Brunswick in the 1830s and 1840s.⁴² Casewell implies in these lines that the New Testament evangelist was successful in converting people to Christianity because "obedience brought more strength to him."

1

Obedience to his Lord's command
Did Saul of Tarsus rise;
Went to the limpid waters, and
In them was baptized.

2

Obedience brought more strength to him
To cheer disciples eyes
He lov'd his Lord and hated sin,
Arose and was Baptized.

3

The people saw the wondrous change
And asked as much surprised,
"To kill he did not come?" how strange!
He arose and is Baptized.

4

He preached the Saviour crucified,
And sinners that despised,
Call'd from the refuge of their lies,
To arise and be Baptized.

5

The more in strength he did increase,
Proving the Lord is Christ;
Believe! and with him be at peace,
Arise and be Baptized.⁴³

What is remarkable about Casewell's argument is that the New Testament text of Acts 9:18, upon which these verses are based, makes only passing reference to Paul's baptism.

⁴² See E.M. Saunders, History of the Baptists of the Maritime Provinces, p. 475.

⁴³ Christian Visitor (hereafter CV), 15 July 1853.

Many accounts of nineteenth-century Regular Baptist baptismal services point to the deeply spiritual meaning surrounding believer's baptism. Why would the very young and the very aged risk their health, which was constantly threatened, to be baptized in the frigid winter waters of the Maritimes? William Chipman -- a preacher from Cornwallis Township -- recorded in 19 March 1829:

unwilling to delay their baptism longer...we had the ice cut out, and proceeded through snow and storm, to administer the divine rite. After the baptism, we returned to the house to give the hand of fellowship. There the presence of the Redeemer was...manifested.⁴⁴

If the power "unto salvation and holiness" was often experienced in the "watery grave," the "power of healing" was at least occasionally encountered. In James Trimble's 14 December, 1849 letter to the Christian Visitor he described the nine week long revival in Waterborough, New Brunswick. "Our baptismal seasons are solemn the spirit of God rests on the congregations at the waterside; one dear sister so infirm that she was very seldom out of her house for nine years, felt it her duty to follow her Lord in the ordinance of Baptism, and although many thought she would die in the water, yet the love of Christ constrained her, and she was carried to the water in a chair, and after she was baptized she felt happy in the Lord, and her health is improving since."⁴⁵ What makes this account so remarkable is not just the improved health of the infirmed woman, but that she risked further physical decline by being immersed in the chilly waters of a late New Brunswick autumn. For some Maritimers it would seem that baptism by immersion could also mean an opportunity to experience the "healing power of God," even if improved heath was sometimes only for a short duration, as it was for Isaac Titus, a 26 year old resident of Weymouth, Nova Scotia.

⁴⁴ Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches, p.77.

⁴⁵ CV, 14 December 1849.

During the revival here in the spring of 1858 he experienced a change of heart. Although extremely weak at the time, he was very desirous to follow his Saviour in the ordinance of Baptism; that privilege he was permitted to enjoy: he was taken in a carriage, and seated in a chair at the water's edge during the preliminary services, and then he was baptized in the name of the sacred Trinity. From that time and during the summer months he appeared to rally, so that he was able to attend many of the meetings, but with the return of autumn he began to decline, and with increasing rapidity.⁴⁶

Suffering from "consumption" and apparently near death, Isaac Trites surrendered to the call to repent and be baptized in the healing waters of "Jordan's flood." It seems clear that the young Weymouth resident expected that the Spirit of God would meet him in the water to restore his soul and perhaps, for a time, even his body. For some people, such were the expectations implicit in Regular Baptist baptismal spirituality. Its lack of finely articulated theological dogma permitted individuals to adopt their own understanding of the ritual's meaning and still sustain their religious identity as Regular Baptists in the tradition of the "Faith of the Fathers."

If Regular Baptist baptismal spirituality often included a radical evangelical mysticism, it also incorporated an intensely evangelistic bent from its Allinite heritage. Since services of believer's baptism were public meetings, often lasting an entire day and, in some cases, several consecutive days, they frequently attracted large attentive crowds. In fact, in the early part of the nineteenth century Regular Baptist preachers and missionaries actually relied upon the spectacle caused by outdoor baptisms to obtain a hearing in areas where a small or even no Baptist presence was to be found. Baptisms were often held at night not to avoid detection, but to create a glowing representation of the "gospel made visible." Early Maritime Regular Baptists would select a prominent ritual site and hold the service by torch light which created a spectacle for all to see.

⁴⁶CM, 6 July 1859. Trites died within a few months.

The crowd itself would often contain those individuals who were decidedly unsympathetic. Congregating at the periphery of the “sacred space,” these men and women would mock and scoff and attempt to disrupt and heckle. Although clearly identified as sinners who needed to be converted and baptized, they were, in spite of their hostility, almost always welcomed by Baptist preachers and lay people for it was hoped that the gospel preached and made visible would “soften their hearts” and eventually lead to their conversion and baptism. David Jones, a preacher from the Baptist Missionary Society of Massachusetts, recorded during his February 1826 visit to the Miramichi, in New Brunswick that:

On the Sabbath a great crowd of people came together, and many were in tears. I believe that the Lord was in the place. On Monday, two persons, a man and a woman, offered themselves for baptism. Some of the people threatened to mob me and the candidates. And the woman's mother said that she wished somebody would drown her daughter. I was somewhat afraid of a riot, but the Lord softened the hearts of these persecutors. - On the Sabbath I preached on the subject of baptism, and I think, the Lord blessed the service to many. At the time the ordinance was administered, the persons, who threatened to mob us, came forward with tears and assisted in singing at the waterside, and some that were under concern of mind found comfort.⁴⁷

The sometimes dangerous activity of baptizing believers by immersion in strongly pedobaptist territory was frequently accompanied by evangelistic success for Regular Baptists. Enthusiastic opposition to the evangelical ritual created an atmosphere ripe to “harvest converts” and to baptize them in the “liquid grave.” Although hecklers did not always experience conversion, it was hoped that they might become at least sympathetic and move inward from the perimeter of the ritual and join the seekers.

The seekers were persons who might or might not have been converted, but were curious about baptism by immersion which was an unusual practice -- almost all Christians

⁴⁷ BMM, January 1827.

in this period, except Baptists, were pedobaptists. From their vantage point within the ritual, seekers could participate in the service by singing, praying, listening, and witnessing the “visible gospel” without making a commitment. Indeed, it would seem that during many Regular Baptist revivals there were many who found themselves out on the boundary between pedobaptist and Calvinistic Baptist religion. Thomas Todd, a Regular Baptist preacher writing from Woodstock, New Brunswick, noted “...sinners have been converted to the knowledge of the Lord. I had the unspeakable happiness of baptizing nine willing disciples on the last two Sabbaths, who came forward and gave a scriptural relation of the dealings with God with their souls. The ordinance was administered in the beautiful river Saint John, in the presence of a thousand spectators.” However, while some “have cried for mercy others are halting between two opinion...[as] people have been warned from house to house of the danger and sin of listening to our doctrines.”⁴⁸ While facing opposition, it is clear, however, that the Regular Baptists' baptismal service -- the reenactment of the New Testament salvation message -- was often too powerful for many people to resist. Thus, at the time of “invitation” it would seem that countless numbers of seekers made their way to the waterside and surrendered themselves to Jesus and his “sacred rite,” which was often performed the following week if sufficient evidence of conversion and a desire to live a “holy” life were provided to the preacher.

Those closest to the water's edge comprised the Regular Baptist community. They were individuals who had already been “buried with Christ,” or were about to receive the ordinance. This section of people was responsible to help with the singing of baptismal hymns which were almost always led by the presiding minister. J.D. Casewell, writing from Fredericton in November, 1853, described a moving outdoor service where the baptismal

⁴⁸ CV, 25 May 1849.

hymn “rose upon the air and floated over the broad expanse of our beautiful [St. John] River.”⁴⁹ In his hymn, simply entitled “Baptism,” “J.B.” declared:

How sweet the notes of the Baptismal hymn
Float o'er the stillness of the Sabbath morn!
So to the mercy-seat - between the Cherubim
May grateful incense from our hearts be borne.⁵⁰

Hymns comprised a very important part of the outdoor baptismal ritual. In 1834 the Baptist Missionary Magazine published a series of “Original Baptismal Hymns” which were to be used by the Regular Baptist constituency at the waterside. Taken together these hymns reflect the collective consciousness of those who had made the journey from New Light pedobaptism to Regular Baptist. Rudolph Otto argued in the Idea of the Holy that it is in singing that the rational and existential dimensions of the faith converge, enabling believers to describe the spiritual events of their lives.⁵¹ In the hymn entitled “The Strait Path,” the anonymous author spoke for many who had been inspired by the “unbending path” of Christ which led to “Calvary's fiery tempests” because of single-minded obedience to God. This example of Christ had led many New Lights and others from “Sodom's deluge raining round” to conversion. From the New Birth experience the “unbending path” led to “rites sublime” or the ritual of baptism. In the face of “Frowns of his creatures,” surely a reference to anti-immersionists, “My Saviour's smiles.” The hymn culminates in a plea to follow the “Father's voice,” through conversion and baptism, “to counsels all divine.”⁵²

The Strait Path

1. Unbending was the path he trod,
Who, scorned of man and bruised of God,

⁴⁹ CY, 18 November 1853.

⁵⁰ CM, 14 April 1858.

⁵¹ Rudolph Otto, The Idea of the Holy (London: Oxford University Press, 1950).

⁵² BMM, March 1834.

The garden's baptism - tears and gore,
And Calvary's fiery tempests bore.

2. Unbending was the path we faced,
 From Sodom's deluge raining round;
 When Mercy urged our lingering feet,
 And Faith first sought her last retreat.
3. And if unbending still the path
 That leads us from God's coming wrath -
 Foes press us on - and seas our way -
 'Onward' commanded, we obey.
4. Frowns of His creatures, clouds of time,
 May gather round these rites sublime;
 My Saviour's smiles, and truth adored
 Dispel the gloom - "It is the Lord!"
- 5 He leads in love; the Father's voice,
 And Spirit's presence, bid rejoice: -
 Follow in love - your steps resign,
 Ye saints, to counsels all divine.⁵³

In the collection of baptismal hymns, "The Strait Path" was designated number one because it clearly conveyed the religious pilgrimage of so many within the Regular Baptist fold. They had discovered the truth of the Matthew 7:13, 14, the verse upon which the hymn was based, that "short is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life and few there be that find it."

Although, in Calvinistic fashion, some Regular Baptists would have stressed their election to salvation from the "foundation of the world" they nevertheless pleaded for the conversion and baptism of all people at the waterside -- believing those predestined by God to respond would in fact experience the New Birth and be immersed. While several of the "Original Baptismal Hymns" stressed the central elements of the New Birth such as repentance and regeneration, all of the gospel songs contained a call to go beyond

⁵³ Ibid.

conversion to baptism in the watery grave.⁵⁴ As will be seen, for at least the first two generations of Regular Baptists, their spirituality included a rejection of infant baptism and an acceptance of the intense experience of the “liquid sepulchre of the gospel.” Since their religious identity was not tied exclusively to the New Birth but also to its dramatic reenactment in baptism, the evangelistic call to faith during this ritual included a passionate call to obey “the Lord’s command.” Perhaps the best example of this kind of exhortation is encapsulated in the hymn entitled “Unscriptural Delay Examined” in which the singing baptized congregation debates the unimmersed individual. The essential argument is based on Acts 22:16, “And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptised and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

1. Why tarry ye, whose price was blood,
Poured from a dying Saviour’s veins,
To make your best friend’s purchase good,
And yield the fruit of all his pains?
2. Why tarry ye? perdition yawns,
At every trifler’s palsied feet:
Why tarry? opening glory dawns,
The obedient child of grace to greet.
3. Confessors only are confessed
Of Christ, in judgment’s awful morn.
Yield we to God’s own will expressed!
High honour of the doubly born.
4. Arise to seek for guilt a grave’
And bury sin in all men’s sight’
’Tis purity’s own parting wave,
That waits to wash it from the light.
5. Weak in thyself from Him on high
Who braved the roughest deeps for thee,
Seek strength - he heard thy weaker cry,
And turned to love thine enmity.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ The full collection of these original hymns may be found in BMM, March 1834; May 1834; July 1834; September 1834.

⁵⁵ BMM, March 1834.

In these verses of exhortation the New Birth and baptism are so closely linked that it is not clear if sin is washed away by “your best friend's purchase” or “purity's own parting wave, That waits to wash it from the light.” As this hymn was sung at countless baptismal services in the Maritimes it is likely that many unimmersed people “tarried not” as they came forward to receive the sacred rite in order to avoid eternal damnation. The ambiguity over regeneration and immersion was clearly intentional so that the eternal reality of a hell for the “unwashed” might be seen. This theme of judgment would often be tempered by heart-warming exhortations, based on personal experience, of baptismal candidates and members of Regular Baptist churches. The themes of perdition and ecstasy found in the gospel songs contributed a valuable dynamic to the evangelistic effectiveness of the ritual itself.

Perhaps no less important to the baptismal service was the sermon preached by the ordained minister. Although preachers, such as Edward Manning, chose to conduct the ordinance first at the waterside and then “repair to the meeting house,” the majority of surviving baptismal accounts suggest that (for at least the first half of the nineteenth century) the sermon would be offered immediately before the baptisms, or directly after the sacred rite. Depending on the time of year, the minister might preach an entire sermon waist-deep in water and close the service by lifting his hand, dripping with water, and asking “What is to prevent you from being baptized?” Writing to Edward Manning from Halifax, Nova Scotia, on June 9, 1828, A. Caswell reported “I took my stand on a rock which rose above the water and addressed them at some length from Matthew 28:19. The air was quite calm and suppose mostly the whole assembly (a large concourse of people) could hear distinctly. The attention was fixed and the countenances of many not without indication of

deep feeling.”⁵⁶ While the ritual was the “gospel made visible,” it was still necessary for the preacher to explain in simple terms the biblical support for immersionist baptism.

Often the sermon would contain a rather polemical tone such as J.D. Caswell's sermon from the Saint John River in the fall of 1853 when he gave an “address upon the nature of the ordinance and the exactitude of its accordance with Holy Scripture.” Placing “it in contrast with infant sprinkling, which is unmeaning and without any shadow of support and authority from the word of Jehovah,” the Fredericton pastor challenged attentive pedobaptists to break with human traditions and embrace the truth.⁵⁷ This kind of aggressive preaching would often prove to be effective in areas where Regular Baptist presence was weak. The goal of the ritual, however, was to make immersed Christians.

The transformations that took place at outdoor baptismal services were not just personal in nature. As the distinctions of “sinner,” “seeker,” and “saint” began to break down during the religious celebration, a spontaneous sense of community was often created. Even hardened opponents of the Baptist cause were swept up into the fervour of the moment and became convinced of the immersionists' way, leaving pedobaptism behind. At least for the duration of the baptismal service all baptized persons possessed a certain equality, for even women and children were given the opportunity from the water to exhort husbands and fathers to accept this “better way.” If all who were baptized into Christ had equal standing before God, then theoretically, that equality should have manifested itself in some aspect of Regular Baptist church life, but there is little evidence to suggest that it did. Nevertheless, receiving the rite of baptism by immersion built a strong sense of identity and community among the Baptists. That William Chipman and Ezekiel Masters would feel

⁵⁶ A. Caswell to Edward Manning, Halifax, NS, 9 June 1828. AUA.

⁵⁷ CV, 18 November 1853.

spiritually connected to one another after so many years because they were baptized together suggests the social bonding effect the ritual had on many people.

The Maritime Regular Baptists had a very developed sense of a community of committed believers who had been baptized by immersion to form the “visible church.” The doorway through which one had to pass was baptism by being totally submerged under water by a properly ordained minister of the gospel. The leadership of the denomination attempted to sustain the integrity of this “holy collective” by insisting upon the practice of close communion with the recognition that baptism by immersion created this ideal Christian community. That existing relationships within communities were strengthened through baptism by immersion is evident during the spring revival of 1832 in Wilmot and Upper Granville, Nova Scotia. With fifty-three reported to have gone down into the “watery grave,” it was noted by a church observer that personal relationships were strengthened as

Husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, were seen together rejoicing in God, and following him in His ordinances [baptism]. Parents who had long borne their children in the arms of faith and prayer, had the unspeakable satisfaction of seeing them bathed in tears of penitence, and then rejoicing in God's pardoning love.⁵⁸

Wellington Jackson, the Regular Baptist minister from St. Martin's reported in May, 1849, that he had baptized “our sister who...is a married woman, and I have no doubt but her union with the church will prove a blessing to herself and her family, as well as a blessing to the church. Her grandfather is the oldest member of this church...” Jackson was overwhelmed with emotion when, following the baptism, the elderly man took “his grandchild by the hand, and welcome[d] her” into the fellowship of the church.⁵⁹ Indeed, baptism by immersion often became a family affair and a means of identity as one

⁵⁸ BMM, October 1832.

generation followed the next into the “placid sheet.” For example, during a revival in New Jerusalem, New Brunswick, led by the home missionary James Blakeney, John W. Moore of Irish extraction, who had settled in the Saint John area, in 1826, with his parents, would not submit to baptism by immersion until his parents had first experienced the rite.⁶⁰ Very often when a parent received baptism by immersion, the children were powerfully influenced to seek the ordinance as well. One woman in the “Bucktush” area of New Brunswick was baptized near her own place of residence. “When coming up out of the water she prayed fervently that the Lord would have mercy upon her family. This took a great effect on the mind of her children. Her eldest daughter could not refrain from acknowledging it was her duty to follow the example of her mother.”⁶¹

In a somewhat different context, N.S. DeMill of Saint John, New Brunswick, prefaced a lengthy article on his reasons for embracing believer's baptism by immersion. An inquiry from his young son had led him to examine the evidence in favour of the immersionists' claim. “The investigation of truth, through the good Providence of God, is frequently brought about by very slight circumstances - so it was in my case. The asking of a simple question by my little son, Viz.: for one proof from the Scriptures for ‘INFANT BAPTISM,’ led me to examine the word of God upon that subject; and for twenty-three months that examination was closely followed up, and at last, closed by my giving up my adherence to ‘INFANT BAPTISM,’ and consequently my connexion with the Episcopal Church and necessarily my offering myself as a Disciple of Christ to the baptized Church of Christ in this city.”⁶² What is remarkable about this account is that it was the child's

⁵⁹ CV, 25 May 1849.

⁶⁰ CV, 18 November 1853.

⁶¹ CM, 18 September 1840.

⁶² CV, 28 January 1853.

challenge of the religious assumptions of his father, with regard to baptism, which led to the immersion of the parent.

On 8 January 1841, the Christian Messenger recorded the unusual events of a baptismal service that included the wedding of a young couple immediately prior to their “burial with Christ.”

...the minister walked forth...and stood upon the shore of the lake. Immediately from among the crowd followed a young maiden, leaning upon the arm of her lover. They stopped up on a small mound that sloped down from the trunk of a spreading maple. The maiden was young and fair. A sweet spiritual expression rested upon her countenance, which was pale, and almost infantile in its freshness and delicacy. Her eyes rested sometimes pensively upon the ground, and were sometimes turned tenderly upon the face of her betrothed.

The minister, an aged and venerable man, lifted his hands and invoked a blessing upon their love. Their hands were joined, and, in a low but distinct voice, he pronounced them wedded for joy and for sorrow, for sickness and for health, for life and for death, and spiritually, it might be for eternity.

Once more the minister invoked a blessing, but it was upon a new rite. He prayed that the baptism which was about to be conferred by water might be an outward emblem of the more perfect baptism of their spirits in the fountain of eternal life...

Tears gathered into many eyes, and a gentle awe pervaded the lightest hearts. The [minister] arose from his knees, and, taking the bride and bridegroom by the hand, led them into the water. Immediately after the rite was administered, a multitude of voices broke forth...⁶³

The anonymous reporter makes a very strong connection between the relationship-building potential of baptism by immersion and the marriage. In fact the wedding itself takes on a certain “spiritual quality” because it is performed in the sacred space of the baptismal site. In the first rite, the young man and woman were married to each other and in the second, there is a sense in which they totally identified themselves with Christ. In both rituals they were “wedded for joy and for sorrow, for sickness and for health, for life and for death,”

⁶³ CM, 8 January 1841.

and spiritually to Christ for eternity. Indeed it would seem that it was widely held that baptism could bond relationships between people if both had received the ordinance, especially at the same time.

The ritual of baptismal services fostered community, but not without qualifications. The coming together of great numbers of people for worship seldom ended in total solidarity. This ritual that could collapse divisions between individuals could at the same time establish new boundaries. Immersed individuals discovered a new family of baptized brothers and sisters, but often at the expense of straining relationships with siblings and parents. Nevertheless, the Regular Baptists of the Maritimes were able to create during the nineteenth century a religious community that had the capacity to include people from different regions and walks of life because of the identity-creating ritual of believer's baptism by immersion. That this evangelical rite was understood in often radically different ways by its participants cannot be doubted. Indeed, the attraction of the ordinance itself was to be found in its many layers of personal and social meaning. Whether one was a sacramentalist seeking for "more" of the Holy Spirit, an elderly or ill person longing for spiritual and physical restoration, or the only unimmersed member of a family, the ritual as it was popularly understood could effectively accommodate a variety of religious needs and expectations. Regardless of how heterodox the understanding of the ritual may have been, it gave thousands of people in nineteenth-century Maritime Canada a common sense of belonging. The "Faith of the Fathers," and more specifically immersionist baptism, set them apart from their Anglican and pedobaptist backgrounds, gave them a distinctive religious identity, and created a separate Christian community.

During the first sixty years of the nineteenth century the evangelical ritual of believer's baptism by immersion became the definitive mark of Regular Baptist spirituality and

identity. So powerful was this rite that the thousands of pedobaptists and New Lights who sought the Saviour in the “watery grave” were transformed into a dynamic religious community that would profoundly impact the intellectual, social and cultural contours of the Maritime provinces. The variety of folk beliefs and religious experiences associated with immersionist baptism ensured a vigorous commitment to Regular Baptist religion at the grassroots. While this allegiance remained strong it was often accompanied by heterodox beliefs with which many in the emerging denominational elite would become increasingly uncomfortable as the nineteenth century unfolded.

Chapter Two

Harris Harding: A Reluctant Baptist Patriarch

Harris Harding was, in many ways, an unlikely and reluctant Baptist Patriarch. He represented throughout his life what George Rawlyk has perceptively called the “New Light-New Birth” paradigm to an increasingly sophisticated nineteenth-century Nova Scotia.¹ Harding simultaneously bore the traditional marks of a religious outsider sustaining a radical experiential other-worldly spirituality throughout his life, while being accepted as the leading community and spiritual leader of Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, by the 1830s. Harding’s life and ministry were characterized by the tension between the New Light tradition and the shift to an orderly and structured Calvinistic Baptist Christianity. Nevertheless, he almost single-handedly made the Regular Baptists of Yarmouth the largest Protestant group in the area. At the same time he retreated from the most basic administrative and organizational tasks associated with a settled ministry.² At Harding’s death his church had over 700 members; and a decade later it was estimated that there were more than 2000 immersed Baptists in the Yarmouth area serviced by eight pastors. The

¹ G.A. Rawlyk, “From New Light to Baptist: Harris Harding and the Second Great Awakening in Nova Scotia” in B.M. Moody (ed.), Repent and Believe: The Baptist Experience in Maritime Canada (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot Press, 1980), pp. 25-26.

² The literature on Harris Harding includes the following: John Davis, Life and Times of the Late Rev. Harris Harding (Charlottetown: W.H. Bremner, 1866). George Rawlyk, “From New Light to Baptist: Harris Harding and the Second Great Awakening in Nova Scotia” in B.M. Moody (ed.), Repent and Believe: The Baptist Experience in Maritime Canada (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot Press, 1980), pp. 1 - 26; George A. Rawlyk, “Harris Harding (1761 - 1854): An Allinited New Light Indeed” in The Canada Fire: Radical Evangelicalism in British North America 1775 - 1812 (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), pp. 58 - 74; Daniel C. Goodwin, “Advancing Light: Evangelicalism in Yarmouth Township 1761 - 1830” (M. A. Thesis, Acadia University, 1986); I.E. Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers of the Maritime Provinces of Canada (Saint John, NB: Barnes and Company, 1880) pp. 183 - 204. The statistical data is taken from Rawlyk, The Canada Fire, p. 74

1871 census for Yarmouth County reported that there were 9896 who claimed to be Baptist, making the immersionists 62 per cent of the Protestant population, and 55 per cent of the total population. These statistics point not only to the enduring evangelical presence in the area, but also to the presence and work of Harding which placed his indelible mark on the county. He supported the notion of an educated clergy and laity; and yet, chastised his succeeding generation for its preoccupation with education instead of being “ravished by the Spirit.” However, it would not be these tensions that defined this enigmatic Father of Maritime Regular Baptists.

Harding’s worldview and life are best understood through his experiential piety which was formed in Nova Scotia’s First Great Awakening and solidified in the “Great Reformation” of its Second. For example, Harding persisted throughout his life in the New Light conviction that the “externals of religion,” such as views on baptism, should not divide Christians who had experienced the New Birth. Ironically, Harding’s position meant that he and his church were forced to leave the Baptist Association of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick in 1809, because they still permitted unimmersed people to participate in the Lord’s Supper. This disagreement separated Harding from his colleagues and friends for about twenty years. In 1828, Harding and the Yarmouth church reluctantly accepted close communion and they were formally accepted back into the association. He continued to grieve over the divisions within universal Christianity, however. Upon his return, Harding was embraced as one of the “Fathers” who had created the foundation for the Regular Baptist denomination in the Maritimes. His association with Edward and James Manning, T.H. Chipman, T.S. Harding, and Joseph Dimock in the context of late-eighteenth-century Allinite revivalism, his New Light preaching style, his critical

involvement in the “Great Reformation,” and his longevity combined to make him one of the “Patriarchs.”

Harris Harding was born to New England Planter parents in Horton, Nova Scotia, 10 October 1761. Shortly after his birth, his parents returned to Connecticut where Harding spent the next twenty-two years. Supporting the “rebels” side during the American Revolution, he was imprisoned by the British for illegally transporting goods by sea from New York to Boston.³ In 1783, he returned to Horton with his father where he began teaching school. For the next two years he sought a “heaven-born resolution” for his troubled spirit.⁴ During this spiritual phase of the “sick soul”⁵ he actively pursued the ministrations of New Light preachers such as T.H. Chipman, John Payzant and Methodist itinerant Freeborn Garretson.⁶ “Yet he attained not to what he sought” and he plunged into despair. This period of grave introspection and “spiritual dissatisfaction” was characteristic of many New Lights prior to their conversions and tended to create a process or standard against which the conversions of others would be measured.⁷ It was an integral part of the “New Light-New Birth” paradigm and had a profound impact on the region’s religious culture.⁸

“Deliverance” finally did come to Harris Harding. One morning on his way to his school, he experienced a “vision” of Jesus. John Davis, later his co-pastor and biographer, recorded:

³ Davis, Harris Harding, pp.2 -6.

⁴ Ibid, p.7.

⁵ William James, The Variety of Religious Experience (New York: New American Library, 1958), pp. 112- 139. For a suggestive discussion of Puritan spirituality consult Jerald C. Brauer, “Types of Puritan Piety” in Church History 56 (1987): 39 - 58.

⁶ Davis, Harris Harding, pp. 7,8.

He saw at length that, as his own works could not save him, so neither could his own experiences comfort him. Severely did he reproach himself, because he had been so blind to this before. There and then he gave himself to the Saviour, just as he was, to be saved “freely by his grace,” and by that grace alone. Thus he found peace in believing, and “went on his way rejoicing”⁹

This “Damascus Road” experience transformed Harding into a New Light. He believed he had seen Jesus, and for the next seventy-eight years he would exclaim with great joy and with many tears, “I know the very spot in Cornwallis where I first beheld Jesus. I could go to it now. And how clearly did I see my Lord.”¹⁰ Immediately following his conversion, Harding made his way to the schoolhouse, but so overwhelmed was he by the morning’s events that he shook as he bathed himself with the tears which had come from being relieved of his existential angst. His sister Mary, a student at the time, later recorded that the children gathered around him attempting to bring comfort to Harding, believing he was dying.¹¹

Far from dying, Harding now believed he had been given a new life by Jesus. This experience was the defining event of his life and the lens through which he viewed all of life. Subsequently, he employed his personal religious experience as the normative standard for all people. In an 17 August 1790, letter to Thomas Bennett,¹² he counselled:

But if you Cannot yet Say My Lord and My God! Yet Don’t be Discourag’d, he will Come and will not Tarry. I know after I had waded thro them trials for 8 Months, sometimes had Almost despair’d of seeing him And quite Sunk down with discouragements, the day Broke, the Sun of Righteousness arose at Last And O my Dear Thomas How did my Soul walk in the Light

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9, 10.

⁸ Rawlyk, *The Canada Fire*, pp. 5 - 18.

⁹ Davis, *Harris Harding*, pp. 9,10.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.10.

¹² Thomas Bennett was an influential New Light in Horton, NS, who worked and corresponded frequently with its key leadership in the 1780s and 1790s.

of his Bless'd Countenance I really thought I Never Felt trouble, And Ah I feel while I write this that this Jesus will bring you there too. . .¹³

Late in life Harding would regret some of the fervor with which he used his own experiences to measure other conversions.¹⁴ However, this approach did characterize the most active years of his ministry.

Integral to Harding's conversion experience was an explicit call to preach. In a very revealing 27 August 1791 letter to James McClanan, a little known Horton New Light, he ascribed great divine purpose beyond salvation to his "Damascus Road" encounter.

He [Jesus] beheld me when a great way off. All heaven bowed with love to my soul. He met me on the way to destruction with arms extended, and told me he had appeared to me for this purpose to make me a witness for his name unto the Gentiles to whom he has since sent me. Then was a time of love indeed. His dear children received me with open arms; and told me that Jesus who had appeared to me in the way chosen me as one to feed his sheep and lambs. And oh! I can tell you . . . I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision¹⁵

So profound was the effect of Harding's vision that he was prepared to abandon teaching for the "higher" calling of preaching the gospel. Indeed, this conviction of being divinely called would sustain Harding for almost seven decades of ministerial activity.

In response to his visionary call to preach to the "Gentiles" -- surely a reference to Nova Scotia and New England in Harding's mind -- he traveled with the New Light preacher John Payzant to Chester in March, 1786.¹⁶ As an apprentice, Harding assisted Payzant by leading and exhorting people to receive the New Birth in revival meetings. This

¹³Harris Harding to Thomas Bennett, Onslow, Nova Scotia, 17 August 1790, in George A. Rawlyk (ed.) New Light Letters and Songs (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot Press, 1983), p.104

¹⁴ Consult Harris Harding to Edward Manning, Yarmouth, NS, 27 October 1839. AUA.

¹⁵ Harris Harding to James McClanan, Shelburne, NS, 27 August 1791, George A. Rawlyk, New Light Letters and Songs, p. 146.

¹⁶ See Brian C. Cuthbertson (ed.), The Journal of the Reverend John Payzant (1749-1834)

mentoring process had been employed by Henry Alline and would continue among most Maritime Baptists throughout the nineteenth century.¹⁷ Following this rather short initiation, Harding began to preach on his own, traveling to Liverpool (1787), Chester (1788), Annapolis County (1789), Amherst and Yarmouth (1790) and the south-western shore of Nova Scotia (1791).¹⁸

In May 1791, the New Dispensation movement began in the Horton-Cornwallis region of Nova Scotia. Rejecting all church order and authority, various preachers and lay people began to regard the scriptures and church traditions as subordinate to the “spirit-within,” from whom one received divine directions in the forms of dreams and visions. Christian morality and piety were reduced to a completely internal matter, with the “spirit” and the “believer” being the only authorities. While New Light religion had always stressed the necessity of a strong personal piety which was often accompanied by intense emotion and had rejected the “externals in religion,” it had also always maintained the necessity to live holy lives according to biblical precepts. The New Dispensation Movement built upon the implicit freedom within New Lightism and concluded that the working and revelation of the Holy Spirit were all that was needed to live the Christian life.¹⁹

At the center of this movement in 1791 were the preachers Edward Manning, Harris Harding, James Manning, and Joseph Dimock, as well as Lydia Randall -- a

(Hantsport, NS: Lancelot Press, 1981).

¹⁷ Consult Barry M. Moody, “The Maritime Baptists and Higher Education in the Early Nineteenth Century” in Barry M. Moody (ed.), Repent and Believe: The Baptist Experience in Maritime Canada (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot Press, 1980), pp. 88 - 102; Brian Cuthbertson (ed.), Journal of the Reverend John Payzant (1749-1834) (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot Press, 1983), pp. 32 - 36.

¹⁸ Davis, Harris Harding, pp. 21 - 40.

¹⁹ For a more in-depth analysis of the New Dispensation Movement consult George A. Rawlyk, Ravished by the Spirit: Religious Revivals Baptists and Henry Alline (Montreal:

charismatic lay-woman from Cornwallis -- and Thomas Bennett -- a friend of Harding and influential teacher. Within three years it appeared that the Mannings and Dimock had consciously distanced themselves from the antinomian excesses of the movement. As Rawlyk has rightly observed, "Short term ecstasy was one thing; permanent confusion and disorientation was quite a different matter."²⁰ Harris Harding, however, continued to preach an antinomian dualism which, according to John Payzant, contended that:

men were composed of two natures that [of] God and [of] the Divil. And therefore it was imposible for God to fall; and for the Divil to be Saved. Therefore his preaching was that all the Religion that we may expect, is that God will rejoice in himself. . . and for the most part of his preaching, was that when they were not engaged in God, they would be with the Divil and they could not help themselves.

But no wonder that Such Sentiments, should get prosalited [proselytized] for When they] did not, feel themselves happy in the Lord, they might do anything, that they Pleased. . .²¹

This manichaen-oriented heterodoxy had profound social and religious implications if taken to its logical conclusion. From this perspective, one could commit any variety of unlawful or "immoral" acts and ascribe them to the "Divil" while at the same time attributing any "good" behaviour to God. That Harris Harding clearly lived by these principles throughout much of the 1790s there can be little doubt. The ordeals surrounding both his ordination and marriage provide more than ample evidence of this.

In 1794, the New Light Church in Onslow, Nova Scotia, sent for John Payzant to assist in the ordination of Harris Harding. The Amherst-Onslow area had been an

McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984), pp. 81 - 85.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 82 - 83.

²¹ Cuthbertson, *John Payzant*, p.73. I have kept the original spelling of words and made changes in places where it was needed to understand the citation.

occasional preaching place for Harding since 1790.²² Payzant was quite disturbed at the irregularity of such a request, given the fact that the Horton-Cornwallis and Annapolis Churches had not been informed of this plan.

. . . the church of Onslow might be ignorant how to proceed, as they were converted [1794] out of a Presbyterian church, and there the power is in the Ministry, But Mr. Harding ought to have informed himself in the Rules of ordination according to our Constitution, for he might suppose that we act contrary to it.²³

Given Payzant's serious reservations about the leader of the New Dispensation Movement being recognized as a sound minister of the gospel in terms of orthodoxy and orthopraxy, it is not surprising that he tried to prevent the ordination by discouraging other churches in the Maritimes from participating in the service. In spite of Payzant's opposition and while acknowledging the irregularity of this situation, Joseph Dimock traveled with some of his church members from Chester to assist in the ordination at Onslow.²⁴ On 16 September 1794, Harris Harding was ordained as "Pastor and Teacher" of the church in Onslow and set apart "as an able minister of the New Testament."²⁵

Perhaps the most peculiar aspect of this event in Harding's life was not that his contemporaries thought that he was "far from ordination," but rather his negative attitudes towards externals of religion.²⁶ How could one so opposed to church buildings, church order, the sacraments, and discipline consent to ordination – arguably the most formal and

²² Davis, Harris Harding, pp. 21 - 40.

²³ Cuthbertson, John Payzant, p.66.

²⁴ Ibid., p.67. It is ironic that Payzant and his church would, by 1800, were be considered "dangerous" and potentially antinomian by others in the association because they did not embrace believer's baptism by immersion as the only valid form of the sacrament, even though Payzant, himself, had steadfastly refused to indulge in the extremes of the New Dispensation Movement. Immersionist baptism became a way to break symbolically with the religious excesses of past.

²⁵ Davis, Harris Harding, p.68.

solemn of Free Church rituals? After his ordination, when asked if he had modified his views on the religious practice, he said "I am no ways altered, and it is not my doing, but the people of Onslow, for I am of the Same mind as I was before."²⁷ It was potentially easy for Harding to respond in this inadequate, if not deceptive, manner because of his dualistic worldview. If Harding had misled his contemporaries it could be attributed to the "Dive!" in him. From a more pragmatic perspective Payzant proposed:

Mr. H [arding] saw that it was difficult for him to travel without ordination as the [church] of Onslow was remote, and were not acquainted with the difficulties [New Dispensation] that had Resine [risen] in the churches, it was easily [sic] for Mr. H [arding] to be ordained there and Mr. Dimock and the Church [at] Chester like was [wise] were the only [Churches] that did act without any investigation.²⁸

It seems clear that Harding thought ordination would provide the authority and respectability he otherwise lacked. To have an ordained minister as the leader of the New Dispensation Movement -- despite the paradox -- might somehow legitimize the movement.

If Harding was still content to lead the dying New Dispensation Movement after his ordination, the events leading up to his marriage clearly called the wisdom of that commitment into question. In 1796, Harding began to preach once again along the southern shore of Nova Scotia from Liverpool to Yarmouth, propagating "his schemes."²⁹ The following year, a young woman, Mehitable Harrington, was discovered to be pregnant. She insisted that Harding was the father. When confronted with the charge he claimed it

²⁶ Cuthbertson, John Payzant, p.65.

²⁷ Ibid., p.69.

²⁸ Ibid., p.71.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 73.

was false, but later confirmed its truthfulness claiming "the Devil told him to deny it."³⁰ Six weeks after the wedding Mrs. Harding was delivered of their first child. To this point, with his flirtation with the New Dispensation Movement, Harris Harding had been able to live with the antinomian tendencies of his dualistic world view. However, having crossed the acceptable boundaries of Christian morality for his day, he was faced with public censure and disgrace, a disenchanted following in the Liverpool area, an alarmed collection of colleagues who now had further reason to question his suitability as a New Light preacher, and perhaps most importantly a new wife and a young child who needed to be supported.

While the evidence does not suggest that Harding immediately renounced his heterodox antinomianism, it is inconceivable that he did not begin a process of self-examination if only to salvage what was left of his crumbling "calling." In spite of his ruined reputation in the Liverpool area, the New Lights in Yarmouth were eager to have him as their settled pastor. This they thought could only be accomplished if Harding were in good standing with the other New Light churches, and if he could be released from his duties in the Onslow church.³¹ In response, in part, to the embarrassment of Harding and the New Dispensation, Payzant proposed that a formal association be established to unite the New Light churches. Therefore, Thomas Handley Chipman, the Mannings, and Payzant met on 19 July 1797, when the articles of the association were unanimously accepted. It was decided that letters be sent to the churches of Onslow and Yarmouth "Relating Mr. Harding's conduct." The Onslow congregation was directed to deal with Harding according to the established articles of the church, while the Yarmouth church --

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 73 - 74.

³¹ *Ibid.*

to which Harding was already serving as pastor – was requested to send him “to have his trial” on 15 June 1798.³²

At the meeting, Harding confessed to going astray on matters of polity and doctrine and “desired to be restored to the churches favour.”³³ This was perhaps Harding’s last chance to reestablish himself as a recognized New Light preacher in Nova Scotia. It is doubtful that the Yarmouth church would have accepted his leadership if it was seriously questioned or rejected by the association. His request for restoration was granted even though Chipman and Payzant maintained “Suspicion of his Sincerity.”³⁴ He then proceeded to Onslow where the church consented to allow him to remain in Yarmouth “till further directions.”³⁵

Harding’s choice of Yarmouth is somewhat unclear. It had a strong New Light presence and had always welcomed his preaching. Yarmouth New Lights were eager to have a settled, or more constant, ministry with someone clearly in the Allinite tradition, who preached emotional, extemporaneous sermons, and was open to the enthusiastic experiential dimensions of revivalistic Christianity.³⁶ Thirty years after he and his family initially settled in Yarmouth, Harding recalled an event which he believed led him to the community and his final pastoral charge. Consistent with his spirituality, he wrote that God had directed him to Yarmouth in a dream around 1790.

I had a dream about this time which much affected and made a singular impression on my mind. I was at Horton where I had enjoyed sweet

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 75 - 76.

³³ Davis, *Harris Harding*, pp. 70 - 71. George Levy, *The Baptists of the Maritime Provinces 1753 - 1946* (Saint John, NB: Barnes - Hopkins, 1946), pp. 70 -71.

³⁴ Cuthbertson, *John Payzant*, p.76.

³⁵ Davis, *Harris Harding*, p. 71.

³⁶ Goodwin, “Advancing Light,” chapters 2 and 3.

privileges with God's people and where I had seen many brought to Christ my blessed Master as well as at Cornwallis, Annapolis, Falmouth etc. I dreamed I was on board a small sailboat with Deacon Cleaveland and a number of my dear Christian friends at Horton - Me thought I stood on the gunwale of the boat having a spear in my hand. The sun shone with particular brightness we were running before a pleasant breeze, at a little distance from a delightful shore; the water also was clear as crystal, and I could see the white and shining fishes at the bottom, while I was continually catching them with the spear - My friends I thought were sitting speaking of Christ's love to a fallen world, their cheeks bathed with tears and apparently filled with peace and joy - I thought the Deacon said to me "You catch every fish you strike." I replied "I miss none" - Me thought I fished until I had got the boat filled, and then had a delicious feast with my fellow disciples I awoke in a joyful frame.

I visited Yarmouth soon after . . . the first time I preached an old lady esteemed by her neighbours got up as soon as I had ended and said "What I have heard is the Gospel of Christ."³⁷

This incident parallels, in many ways, his visionary experience at conversion in that it ushered into his life a significant change in direction. The "Damascus Road" experience had convinced Harding that his eternal salvation was secure and that God had called him to preach the gospel. This vision of being out on the water catching fish is reminiscent of the New Testament accounts of Jesus sending out a group of fisherman, who had laboured unsuccessfully the entire night, to cast their nets one more time. At this time their nets were so filled with fish that they began to break. With boats weighed low with fish the fishermen returned to shore where Jesus said, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men."³⁸ Although Harding would not settle in the fishing village of Yarmouth until 1798, he took this dream to be a divine directive to "catch men" in the south-western end of Nova Scotia.

³⁷ "Account of the Rise and Progress of the First Baptist Church in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia" in Record of the First Baptist Church, Yarmouth, Vol. I. AUA.

³⁸ Luke 5: 1 - 11.

The biblical imagery of Harding's conversion vision and "directive" dream are not without significance. In a New Testament fashion, Harding fancied himself a Pauline-style missionary sent to the lost "Gentiles" in Yarmouth. While the restorationist impulse among the New Lights and the New Dispensation remains to be explored fully, it is clear that its participants, such as Harding, believed themselves to be involved in a truly sacred period of history when God had poured out his spirit to renew his dead church and the "Gentiles," at least of the Maritime variety.³⁹ The revivals which took place along the south-western shore of Nova Scotia in the 1790s tended to confirm the restorationist expectations of the New Lights.⁴⁰ That Harding had fallen into doctrinal error or even "gross sin" mattered little, for he was carrying on in the preaching tradition of Henry Aline; after 1798 he was in good standing with the association, legally ordained, and a proponent of an enthusiastic, experiential New Light evangelicalism which had captured the hearts and minds of many people during the First Great Awakening and continued to do so in the Second Great Awakening (1790 - 1810).

With a new church, a new family, and a renewed – if qualified – acceptance from his peers in the association, Harris Harding began a new phase in his life. Although he would continue to go on preaching tours until well into his eighties, he was now faced with the realities of having to provide a stable life for his family during a time when churches had little if any, resources to support ministers.⁴¹ To supplement his income, Harding taught

³⁹ Harding initially believed he was "called" to preach in New England. See G. A. Rawlyk, New Light Letters and Songs, pp. 127, 133, 170. Compare to G. A. Rawlyk and Gordon Stewart, "Nova Scotia's Sense of Mission" in Social History, 2 (1968): 5 - 17.

⁴⁰ For a fascinating discussion of the restorationist ethos in the American context consult: Richard T. Hughes and C. Leonard Allen, Illusions of Innocence: Protestant Primitivism in America, 1630 - 1875 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

⁴¹ For an examination of transition in the life of another Baptist Patriarch, see Barry Moody, "From Itinerant to Settled Pastor: The Case of Edward Manning" (paper delivered at the

school for a time and adopted the life of the settled pastor. No longer was his life that of the carefree evangelist.

If Harding had to cope with the new responsibilities of church and family by the beginning of the nineteenth century, he also entered a time when his essentially New Light religious identity was altered, at least in part. Integral to this development in Harding's pietism were the periodic revivals in the Yarmouth area from 1798 to 1808. In fact, these specific "outpourings," in many respects, solidified his identity as a Regular Baptist, with qualifications. During these revivals, baptism by immersion which had always been an option for New Lights (though they contended that the "externals of religion" were non-essential) became, as has been discussed, a preoccupation for many Maritime New Lights.⁴² In the early days of the Second Great Awakening, Harding agreed to receive believer's baptism by immersion publicly. On 28 August 1799 James Manning baptized Harris Harding, the Mannings, Dimock, and Chipman having already received the rite. Writing to his wife, James Manning remarked:

It will not be in vane my Coming. The Christians are as low as the[y] Can be but it Seams as if there would bee a [revival.] a very grate Congregation meat yesterday and by there heareing it seamed as tho the Lord by his Holy Spirit was accompanying the word and in the time the ordinance of Baptism was administered the people looked as Solm as the grave It seamed like Christ Comeing to Jordan. Mr Hardings Comeing to the Water[.] after he came from the Water He prayed with the people in the Street [.] It seamed as tho he Rec'd a doble protion of the spirrit [.] some of the dear christians broke forth in prayers to god and the lamb . . .⁴³

meeting of the Canadian Society of Church History, Halifax, June, 1981).

⁴² Rawlyk, *The Canada Fire*, pp. 165 - 166.

⁴³ J.M. Cramp, "History of the Maritime Baptists," p. 73. James Manning was the brother of the better known Edward Manning. If he had not died at a fairly young age, it is likely that he would have become as influential as his younger brother in the development in the Regular Baptist denomination in the Maritimes. For an excellent discussion of James Manning, consult D.G. Bell (ed.), *The Newlight Baptist Journals of James Manning and*

Whether Harding reluctantly received the immersionist baptism under popular grassroots pressure, or enthusiastically embraced the rite is unclear. Nevertheless, what is fairly obvious from Manning's description is that it was a profoundly moving religious experience for Harding and the onlookers. While still very much a New Light at heart, Harding had begun the journey toward Regular Baptist close communion. Furthermore, he conceded that while he felt closer to God when preaching than at any other time, baptizing now competed for that honoured position. Indeed, the dramatic reference to the presence of the Holy Spirit and his receiving "a doble proton of the spirrit" underscores the richly textured layers of meaning implicit in the ritual.

For Harding, the meaning of the event was undoubtedly very clear. Just as Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River had initiated the beginning of his formal ministry so too, it might be argued, was Harding's baptism a kind of turning point in his life. As many pedobaptists and New Lights had done during the "rage for dipping," Harding left a rather checkered past behind him symbolically in the "washing" of baptism. He determined to forge ahead with the good people of Yarmouth into a glorious and increasingly "Baptist" future. Although Harding was still a New Light, the evidence suggests that the antinomian excesses of the New Dispensation had been left at the bottom of Yarmouth Harbour. Furthermore, it was clear that his revivalist New Light ethos now included outdoor baptismal services which encapsulated the very spiritual essence of New Light spirituality. The baptismal service had become the radical New Light gospel made visible. And it is very likely that Harding recognized this "spiritual" continuity and therefore promoted believer's baptism by immersion.

If the early baptisms of the late 1790s, such as Harding's, indicated the New Light meaning of immersion, the "Great Reformation" -- as it was known -- bound the revivalist ethos with the ritual of baptism. Harding, along with other immersed New Light preachers such as T.H. Chipman and Enoch Towner (an early New Light Baptist who preached primarily in Argyle and Sissiboo) played a key role in breathing life into this intense period of revival. Writing to the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine in 1806, Harding rejoiced that

Previous to the Lord's pouring upon us the gracious effusions of his Holy Spirit there had been a great declension in religion, attended with great discouragement of soul in believers, and coldness, backwardness, and neglect of religious duties.⁴⁴

However, he went on, "Since the fifth of October last one hundred and forty persons have been enabled to obey the Lord in that institution."⁴⁵ For Harding, baptism was now, at least in part, a matter of Christian obedience. "Christians, if your hearts are warm, ice and snow will do no harm."⁴⁶ The Yarmouth revival meetings during the "Great Reformation" were intense spiritual events which often lasted from ten in the morning until eight in the evening. While Harding was not able to immerse all his converts in baptism, the "Rage for Dipping" was such that the majority did consent to this evangelical ritual. More than two decades later, Harding still linked the revivalist ethos of 1806-1808 to baptism. In his "history," recorded in the church minutes, he recalled:

. . . in 1806 it pleased God to pour out his spirit upon my dear people in a most glorious manner Six persons came forward at a conference meeting and were received as candidates for baptism, a large concourse gathered the Lord's Day following, and some were much affected having never seen the ordinance administered by immersion before, and were convinced that none

⁴⁴ Davis, Harris Harding, pp. 87 - 89.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 89.

but such as could give satisfactory evidence of saving faith in Christ were proper subjects of Baptism.⁴⁷

As an evangelist in the Allinite tradition, Harding found it difficult not to embrace immersionist baptism as an effective visual presentation of the evangelical message of salvation. All protests about formality to the contrary, the Yarmouth pastor was becoming increasingly comfortable with a religious form which could ritualize or dramatize the essentials of the Allinite gospel. He noted that the "Church increased in number" and "light also (we trust) increased in our understanding" as we "adopted the Baptist sentiments."⁴⁸

This period of Harding's life may be seen as "an important link between the First and the Second Great Awakenings" as he "succeeded in applying the Alline paradigm of revitalization to another chronological period and to a different mix of people."⁴⁹ Nevertheless, too much of the Harding historiography has located him in the context of the revival of the "Great Reformation," instead of seeing him as principal advocate for immersionist baptism. It was this period of the "Great Reformation" which crystallized in Harding's mind the adaptability of the New Light message. For Harding and other Maritime Baptists, the essential enthusiastic spirituality of Allinism -- with its mystical experiences of dreams, visions, and ecstatic conversion -- remained central; this suggests that Allinite spirituality was malleable and easily molded into different forms. And key to this was immersionist baptism -- the first form or religious ritual into which New Light spirituality was poured. Baptism became the most definitive representation of New Light piety and remained so throughout the nineteenth century. Harris Harding embraced

⁴⁷ Harris Harding, "Account of the Rise and Progress of the First Baptist Church in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia." AUA.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

believer's baptism by immersion because he sought to be a good New Light who had abandoned the antinomianism of the New Dispensation. And from that point Harding operated his life from the vantage point of an all-consuming enthusiastic evangelical piety within a broadly defined Baptist tradition.

It needs to be underscored, however, that if Harding reckoned himself to be a Regular Baptist in 1807, it was only because he embraced immersion as most fully representing the New Light experience of the New Birth. While his church may have "settled upon the Baptist" or "Gospel plan" during the "Great Reformation," Harding was not about to exclude from the congregation those who had not been immersed. To do so would have been to violate the anti-formality implicit in his New Light heritage. Harding's "love and devotion" toward the people could not abide an exclusive-type of "communion" which denied access to the Lord's supper to those not immersed. As a result, Harding instituted, with the support of the people, what became known as "occasional communion," which excluded from membership those who had not been baptized, but allowed them to receive the Lord's Supper if they were converted.⁵⁰ This was consistent with the direction the association of New Light Congregational and Baptist churches had been moving in 1798 and 1799. However, as has been noted, in 1800 the association had excluded any churches which did not require immersion for full membership. This had excluded Payzant, who remained a pedobaptist throughout his life.⁵¹ Harding remained silent about Payzant's exclusion, perhaps not surprising given the broken relationship between the two men. However, Harding's piety could not permit the implementation of a strictly close communion scheme which would reserve the Lord's Table for only those who had been

⁴⁹ Rawlyk, "From New Light to Baptist", p.25.

⁵⁰ For a more extensive discussion consult Goodwin, "Advancing Light", pp. 109 - 112.

“washed.” Thus, the Yarmouth pastor was himself at odds with the same association, one that had reinstated him only a decade before. At the June 1809 meeting of the association at Cornwallis, Harding pleaded for tolerance in his introductory sermon. Nonetheless, when the vote came down, only one person – almost certainly Harris Harding – voted in favour of maintaining “occasional” communion, urging the representative “not to hurt the wine or the oil [or to] wound the tender flock.”⁵²

The association voted to withdraw fellowship from all churches who admit unbaptized Persons to what is called occasional communion. And consider themselves a Regular close communion Baptist Association.⁵³

As a man who went to great lengths to avoid conflict and division within the local church, Harding still held the New Light position that the New Birth was of ultimate importance; and while he certainly embraced immersionist baptism as its most significant public testimony, he was unwilling to exclude “sisters and brothers” from the table because they had not yet seen “all of the light.” Hence, he was clearly not a “Regular” Baptist in 1809, though he was certainly a “New Light” Baptist at that time. The themes of accommodation and reconciliation would always be more important to Harding than discipline and polity. While Harding would feel alienated from his fellow preachers of the Nova Scotia Baptist Association, it was a far better sacrifice than dividing his church and expelling the great “unwashed.” For Harding, people would always be more important than principle; religious experience superior to orthodox Christian belief. In the words of a

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁵² Cramp, “History of the Maritime Baptists,” p.97. While it is clear that the concept of “Baptist Father” did not exist during the first two decades of the nineteenth century, Harding effectively cut himself off from being considered as a “Patriarch” of the Maritime Regular Baptists until 1829, when he reluctantly accepted the close communion position following the “Great Yarmouth Revival” of 1827-1828. During that revival the majority of Harding’s “people” were finally immersed.

⁵³ Minutes of the Nova Scotia Baptist Association, June 26 - 26, 1809.

second generation Regular Baptist preacher, I.E. Bill, Harding “deemed it of far more importance that the heart should be burning with love, than the head stored with matter.”⁵⁴ Harding’s experiential orientation was sometimes misunderstood by “outsiders” and dismissed as antinomianism. However, this dimension of early Maritime Regular Baptist piety was one that continued to permeate, in varying degrees, many aspects of Baptist life to 1855.

That Harding fostered his religious enthusiasm in the Yarmouth area cannot be questioned. All of the available evidence suggests that mystical experiences similar to those which had so profoundly affected Harding’s life also had an impact on the lives of his parishioners. One of the most thorough – if not cynical – assessments of Harding and his people is found in a series of letters written by the Scottish Baptist Alexander Crawford, to the Maritime Regular Baptist Patriarch, Edward Manning. Having been converted in the Scottish revivals of James and Robert Haldane, Crawford had later been trained as a preacher at one of their theological institutes.⁵⁵ His spirituality was shaped by a warm Calvinistic evangelicalism which was theologically-aware and biblicist. Crawford and his family settled in Yarmouth in 1811 and, on first meeting with the Yarmouth “Calvinistic” Baptists, he found them to be “so contrary to divine direction [that] their proceedings appear to me that I can by no means hold fellowship with them unless they change.”⁵⁶ Not surprisingly, he found their beliefs and lack of formal theological understanding to be

⁵⁴ Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches, p. 201.

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 662, 663.

⁵⁶ Alexander Crawford to Edward Manning, Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, 13 February 1813. AUA.

contemptible. "I had not evidence enough to convince me that there was a single Christian in Yarmouth."⁵⁷ Crawford elaborated:

The first of that denomination [Baptist] I conversed with in Yarmouth could give me no reason of the hope that was in them, but dreams, and visions, and feelings of the mind, they had a scheme of salvation totally independent of Christ's person and work. Indeed they seemed to have no idea of either after I had explained it to them as well as I could, except the view they had of his person in their dreams and visions, and the knowledge they supposed they had of his work in their own souls.⁵⁸

Clearly under Harding's leadership, the New Light-New Birth paradigm, with its often exhilarating experiences of dreams and visions, had become normative for the Yarmouth Baptists. And what Crawford failed to understand was that this piety was rooted in what its adherents believed were direct encounters with the living God and decidedly not based on theological arguments and proof-texts from the Bible. Even one generation later, John Davis, the British Baptist minister who succeeded Harding, remarked that the Yarmouth pastor and his people "put their feelings and fancies upon a level with the Word of God."⁵⁹ Indeed, for many Baptists, including those in Yarmouth, the importance of the Bible would approach biblicist proportions only in the 1820s, 1830s and 1840s when the Regular Baptists were forced to defend their sacred rite in a Maritime-wide baptismal controversy.

While Crawford may have had difficulty understanding the nuance of this enthusiastic spirituality, he had no difficulty identifying its major source. Upon hearing Harding preach, Crawford became aware of his antiformal evangelicalism and its lack of systematic theological commitment. Writing to Edward Manning, the frustrated Scottish elder reported that Harding

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Davis, *Harris Harding*, p.196.

. . . did not point out the way of salvation, the ground of a sinner's hope, nor a single duty of a Christian; nor did he warn them of any danger except that of self-righteousness, hypocrisy, and formality; three evils which he jumbled together in such a manner as to lead the hearers to suppose . . . that the three meant the same thing. In short, I could make neither head nor tail, nor body, of what he said; nor did I see that the discourse could serve the purpose of instruction, comfort, stirring up to the performance of duty, reproof, or convictions, but merely to raise their passion which they neither knew nor cared what, provided they were lively enough.⁶⁰

What Crawford did not seem to realize was that Harding believed his preaching provided an opportunity for his hearers to encounter God personally and profoundly. The ecstasy of being "wrapped up in God" was far more important than the finer details of a given doctrine. Harding wanted all men, women, and children to experience conversion and the "New Light reformation of the soul." He had laboured diligently to create an atmosphere ripe for a divine encounter from the very beginning of his ministry. In 1792, Simeon Perkins, one of Harding's harshest critics, had written that his "Extravagant Gestures and wild motions of his Body and hands, etc., is, to me very distressing."⁶¹ While it is clear that Perkins had never been attracted to Harding's brand of the New Light gospel, literally thousands of others were throughout the Baptist Patriarch's career.

A more sympathetic appraisal of Harding has come from the pen of I.E. Bill, who became the leading historian of the "Fathers." Writing in 1880 he noted that the

pulpit talents of Father Harding, intellectually considered, were never brilliant; but they were generally effective and useful. If his sermons were seldom profound, they were always richly studded with apposite biblical quotations. He had never studied theology as a theocentric system; but he had embraced the prominent doctrines of the Bible . . .

Few of his discourses were prearranged - and none of them were written. He went into the pulpit without memorandum or note. In fact in the

⁶⁰ Crawford to Manning, 20 October 1813, Yarmouth, NS. AUA.

⁶¹ C. B. Fergusson (ed.), The Diary of Simeon Perkins, 1790 - 1796 (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1965), p. 117.

strictest sense, he was an extemporaneous preacher . . . He deemed it of far more importance that the heart should be burning with love, than that the head should be stored with matter.⁶²

Far from being the anti-biblicist which Crawford identified, Harding was profoundly convinced that apart from divine “gracious influences, he could say nothing which would profit his hearers.”⁶³ Consequently, there was often a “melting pathos in his utterance, which was overpowering.” In the course of a given sermon Harding would become excited, “words would shoot from his mouth like bullets” until his speech became so indistinct that “at length little was heard but a sound, loud, confused, and intensely earnest: the whole often accompanied with copious tears.” In times of revival and spiritual renewal, Harding’s excitement “would extend to the hearers” as they were “moved to weeping [and similar] exclamation.”⁶⁴

Harris Harding’s long time friend and fellow Patriarch, T.S. Harding, regarded him as having no method to his preaching, for “He dwelt most on the experimental part of religion and greatly excelled in it.”

His great forte was ‘telling stories’. He was full of anecdotes. He was eminently useful in the conversion of sinners perhaps more so than any man in this century. He would sometimes seem to prophesy, and mark out people that he thought would be converted. He seemed to have an uncommon spirit of discernment that way.⁶⁵

Clearly, the nature of Harding’s performance in the pulpit was well understood by his peers. In a letter written to Alexander Crawford, Edward Manning agreed with the Scottish elder that some of the Yarmouth Baptists had “better hearts than heads” and that Harding was “a

⁶² Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches, p. 201.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Davis, Harris Harding, p. 217.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 186.

great Allegorist and extremely zealous” and “a Considerable mystical.”⁶⁶ Nevertheless, Manning accepted Harding as “a man of God” because the Yarmouth preacher had experienced the New Birth, practiced believer’s baptism by immersion, and possessed a vital experiential religion, even if it was at points theologically wanting. This point cannot be overemphasized. The vital enthusiastic spirituality inherited from the First Great Awakening and the Great Reformation would continue to pulsate throughout most Maritime Regular Baptist churches through the mid-nineteenth century. Ironically, the “raw” and “unrefined” spirituality represented by Harding and his church, with which even other Baptist Patriarchs were sometimes uncomfortable, would provide much of the unity and -- in its ritualized form in baptism -- identity for the emerging denomination. Indeed, the tensions between heterodox theology, unrestrained religious enthusiasm and a search for an educated and socially acceptable ministry were relaxed along the baptismal waters of the Maritimes.

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to believe that Harding had no theological commitments. However, by his temperament, his loyalties and commitments were often to people, not systems of thought. This is perhaps best seen in the attempts of Harris Harding and Alexander Crawford to forge a friendship. After hearing the unlearned Harding exhort and preach, Crawford “then thought that much allowance must be made for people who had no other doctrine than this.” Therefore, he determined to suspend his “judgment till further acquaintance.” Following several rather unproductive visits from Harding, Crawford was disappointed that they could not “agree better.” Given Harding’s attachment to the legacy of Henry Alline, the Scot proceeded to read “several of Henry Alline’s writings, and also Jonathan Scott’s review of them: and I could not help, in general

⁶⁶ Manuscript fragment, Manning Collection, AUA.

approving of the latter; for when I saw the manner in which Mr. Alline ridiculed the atonement and intercession of Jesus Christ, I saw that no one could be saved by believing the doctrines which his books contain." On this latter point, Harding would have been in full agreement. One could not be saved by Alline's doctrines or anyone else's doctrine. One needed to experience a traumatic conversion and in that "mystical moment" be transformed into a child of God, saved from the "fires of hell." In Harding's defence of Alline, he said the Falmouth evangelist was "a servant of God, and one who, if he was not infallible, he had an uncommon measure of the Spirit."⁶⁷ For Harding, friendship and Christian fellowship rested on goodwill and an appropriate conversion experience. For Crawford, these relationships depended entirely upon people holding "right" doctrine.⁶⁸

Harding's insatiable desire to be in harmonious relationship with all who knew him prompted him, in December 1814, to stage a social event in which his parishioners "Messrs Patten, Shaw, Chipman and Dane with their ladies"⁶⁹ were brought together with Crawford and his wife. It was clearly Harding's desire to create a congenial atmosphere that would help Crawford see that Yarmouth Baptists were worthy of Christian fellowship, even if their spirituality were suspect. Crawford recorded for Edward Manning's benefit that "We were all very sociable but did not enter on anything particular indeed it was not his design to harrow up any disagreeable affairs but to smooth over all such things by language and behaviour soft as oil and sweet as honey."⁷⁰ This specific incident provides a great deal of insight into Harding's approach to pastoral ministry and its inevitable conflicts. Wanting unity and peace without facing serious issues consistently led him to creating an

⁶⁷ Crawford to Manning, 20 October 1813, Yarmouth, NS. AUA.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Alexander Crawford to Edward Manning, 28 December 1814, Yarmouth, NS. AUA.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

atmosphere of love -- even spiritual love -- where all could be forgiven and forgotten. I.E. Bill recorded that whenever a parishioner came to Harding, "complaining of the personal wrong of a brother , and, after having stated his grievance would ask"

"Now, Father Harding, what course would you advise me to take?" - "Love him" would Father Harding reply. "But he has used me so badly that I have lost all esteem for him." "Nevertheless, it is your duty to love him." "How Father Harding can I love one who has treated me so unkindly?" "Our blessed Lord loved you and me when we were in rebellion against him," would father Harding reply with streaming eyes, "and if we have the spirit of Christ, we, too shall love our enemies."⁷¹

This attempt to achieve reconciliation in Crawford's case proved to be ineffective. While Harding could not see why "brothers in the Lord" could not just agree to disagree, Crawford declared that his disposition was "not one to be coaxed and cajoled like a baby." He had "too much pride" to be an "intimate familiar friend today and have a spatter tomorrow and next day gloss it over without . . . laying any solid basis of durable friendship."⁷² Crawford believed the "solid basis" of friendship to be essential theological agreement while Harding maintained that "Christian love" could cover a multitude of "sins" - even heresy . Near the end of his life Harding declared "Love to my neighbour made me go out, with my sling and stone, as it were, in the name of the Lord my God, to face a fallen world, and tell them, that Jesus willed not the death of a sinner."⁷³

So overwhelmed was Harding by "Christian love" and its role in the local church that he would not exclude anyone who had "professed Christ" at anytime, from the communion table. Differences over baptism, he believed, should not divide the people of God. While baptism was no longer a non-essential, as it had been for Henry Alline, Harding

⁷¹ Bill, *Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches*, p. 203.

⁷² Crawford to Manning, 28 December 1814, Yarmouth, NS. AUA.

⁷³ Harris Harding to A. D. Thomson, 15 April 1846, Yarmouth ,NS in Davis, *Harris*

believed that it was not absolutely necessary for Christian fellowship. In 1814, several years after the Nova Scotia Baptist Association had severed ties with the Yarmouth church, Alexander Crawford noted with alarm that

Mr. Harding invited everyone for whom the church at any time had fellowship saying that they held to no close communion [.] There are I believe very few in Yarmouth for whom some part of the Church sometime or other has not had fellowship so that the invitation included the “bulk of the people.”⁷⁴

Harding’s goal was to bring into existence a Christian community of love where there were no divisions according to sex, age, occupation, or baptismal preference. Squabbles and turmoil in the church erupted from the want of “brotherly love.” “Oh! How apt we are to take our brother by the throat.”⁷⁵ Harding believed that after the soul was “ravished by the Holy Spirit” the result was not just love for God but also love for those who had been similarly converted. This was why, even after his church embraced close communion, Harding would be grieved when “converts” were excluded from participating fully in church life. In his mind, excluding others could not be a “loving” or Christian action. While Harding remained, throughout his life, an advocate of believer’s baptism by immersion, excluding Christians from the Lord’s Table and fellowship because they had not been immersed violated his New Light ethic of love. In this respect, Harding would never be completely comfortable with the more structured, orderly, and restrictive close communion position.

While it might be appropriate to call Harding the “Loving Baptist Patriarch,” he in no way could be known as an “Organized Baptist Patriarch.” In fact, the church records,

Harding, p. 258.

⁷⁴ Crawford to Manning, 28 December 1814, Yarmouth, NS. AUA.

⁷⁵ Davis, Harris Harding, p. 258.

which begin in 1815, reveal a church which operated with very little structure or administration. For its first seventeen years, the Baptist church operated with only one deacon, Nathaniel Holmes.⁷⁶ There is no indication of anyone being excluded from the membership due to church discipline until 2 June 1821, when Amos Hilton and Sarah Ely were withdrawn from communion “on account of intoxication” and “some unfavourable reports” respectively.⁷⁷ Harding’s influence on his church during his first twenty years as pastor is clear. It would seem that he went to great lengths to preserve the unity of the fellowship and to “love” wayward members back into a “holy work.”

In spite of the fact that the church lacked structure and sound pastoral administration, Harding did labour diligently to ensure that the most vulnerable and destitute of his flock were cared for. On 6 June 1817, Nathaniel Holmes was chosen to be “Treasurer of the funds to be collected for the Poor of the Church.”⁷⁸ It would seem that much of this money was given to “our aged sister Sarah Strickland,” and others whose names were not specifically recorded.⁷⁹ Harding’s ideal community of “love” could not allow its very destitute to go unassisted.

If love not law, people not principle, freedom not organization characterized the person and ministry of Harding, how is it that the church moved slowly, but surely, in an increasingly structured Calvinistic Baptist direction in the 1810s and 1820s? The answer to this question rests with Zachariah Chipman who moved to Yarmouth from Annapolis in 1807. The younger brother of the evangelist Thomas Handley Chipman, he was an avid supporter of the Regular Baptist position which excluded from membership and

⁷⁶ Record of the First Baptist Church Yarmouth, Vol. I, 2 August 1817. AUA.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 2 June 1821.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 6 June 1817.

communion those who had not been baptized by immersion. Although Zachariah Chipman strongly believed in local church structure, he was able to work with Harris Harding. To Crawford, the difference of belief and polity between Harding and Zachariah Chipman was remarkable:

. . . not one of them that I thought to have much judgment in religious has joined except Capt. [Zachariah] Chipman who from weakness of mind is perhaps on the side of accomodating matters or being over powered by members yields to a majority at any rate [.] he either does not attach to his opinions the same importance which I do or he does not weigh the pernicious tendency of the opposite principles for his principles if I understand him are as different from those of Mr. Harding and the church as light is from darkness.⁸⁰

Crawford failed to appreciate, however, that Zachariah Chipman not only understood Harding and his church, but at a deeply “spiritual” or existential level participated, to a large degree, in their piety. Moreover, Chipman saw how the Yarmouth congregation, properly managed, could become one with the emerging Regular Baptist mainstream in Nova Scotia.

Chipman’s experience placed him in an excellent position to lead the Yarmouth church in the Regular Baptist direction without compromising its ecstatic piety. He had been baptized by immersion in 1797 and embraced “baptist principles in church practices” when they “were not popular.”⁸¹ Through his active participation in the Baptist church in Bridgetown, which had New Light origins, and the influence of his older brother Thomas Handley Chipman, who had been instrumental in coaxing into existence a province-wide New Light to Baptist transition, Zachariah Chipman was prepared to help lead the Yarmouth church in a path of Regular Baptist development. Chipman was able to direct church administration and institutional evolution because he respected and participated in

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 7 July 1820.

⁸⁰ Crawford to Manning, 28 December 1814, Yarmouth, NS. AUA.

the New Light, spirituality and he recognized and supported Harding's leadership in evangelism and pastoral care. Gradually he made himself virtually indispensable to the church as clerk and deacon. In his 1 August 1860 obituary in the Christian Messenger, it was noted that

As a faithful Deacon -- he was ever true to the best interests of his Master, his pastor, and his fellow members. As an agent in organizing and managing the Church of God -- he took a leading part in reducing the church under the care of the late Father Harding, to something like order.⁸¹

For Harris Harding, the arrival of Zachariah Chipman in 1815 must have seemed providential. As an administrator, by talent and temperament, he was doomed to failure. Chipman, on the other hand, enjoyed such details as keeping the record books up to date, keeping membership lists current, and calling church meetings to plan a particular course of action. Harding and Chipman made an ideal team. Harding would evangelize, visit the sick and hurting, and preach, while Chipman laboured to create structures to accommodate growth and social change. In the words of John Davis

. . . during the whole period of deacon Chipman's connection with the First Baptist church at Yarmouth, extending to the year 1853, whatever degree of order obtained in the conduct of its affairs, was largely traceable to him, and his management. Mr. Harding, like most zealous Gospel pioneers, was always more of the evangelist than the ruler. It was in kindness, therefore, both to him and to his people, that the Lord of the harvest sent them a deacon Chipman, to terminate the reign of ecclesiastical anarchy.⁸²

The termination of "the reign of ecclesiastical anarchy" did not include any fundamental tampering of the church's essential spirituality. In fact, it may be argued that Chipman's gradual implementation of structure was possible because it did not threaten the very life-blood of the church. The New Light-New Birth paradigm had been meshed with believer's

⁸¹ CM, 1 August 1860.

⁸² Ibid.

baptism by immersion as its most vital ritual and it could be integrated with other structures as long as the essence of Allinite spirituality was not violated.

For example, even though the Yarmouth church began in the 1820s to exercise discipline, it was always with a view to restoration and reconciliation instead of punishment or retaliation. Furthermore, they were very willing to restore “notorious sinners” such as Eliphalet Curry who, on October 5, 1828,

. . . with great contrition of heart, confist the wanderings of his past life, and begd the forgiveness of his Brethern, Sisters and poor sinners, his walk had been verry regular for nine months past, and the Lord has manifested his love to him from time to time and he has been made to declared it in the great Congregation, and it again restored to all privaledges of the church.⁸⁴

Curry was able to be restored after several experiences with “God” and a public testimony to these ecstatic encounters. Herein is seen a blending of essentially New Light spirituality with the biblical practice of church discipline. The implementation of church discipline rested squarely on enthusiastic religious notions of transforming encounters with the “love of the Lord.”

Another example of the marriage of New Light piety and church structure began in 1821, as Harding began to hold separate church meetings in the Chebogue area for those who found it difficult to worship in the town on Sundays. This initiative marked the beginning of the development of a small network of preaching or evangelistic outposts. By 1826, monthly meetings were being held in Chebogue, the Ponds and Beaver River. While this expansion did not produce huge numbers of converts, it did bring the revivalist preaching of Harding, in a systematic and predictable way, to the more remote areas of

⁸³ Davis, Harris Harding, pp. 83 - 84.

⁸⁴ Records of the First Baptist Church, Yarmouth, Vol. 1, 5 October 1828. AUA.

Yarmouth Township. This network of mission outposts would become very important during the Great Yarmouth Revival of 1827-28 as church meetings were increased to accommodate growing numbers of Regular Baptists and adherents.⁸⁵

During the years that the church spread its ministry into smaller communities, Zachariah Chipman raised the question of rejoining the Nova Scotia Baptist Association and gained permission for himself and Harding to speak with the association during its June, 1823 meeting at Clements. Chipman and Harding were informed that the Yarmouth Baptist Church would not be extended membership as long as they allowed unimmersed persons access to the communion table. This the church was unwilling to do.⁸⁶ Not one to give up easily, Chipman invited Isaac Case – an ardent exponent of close communion from the Bowdoinham Association in Maine – to preach to the Yarmouth congregation. According to Chipman, Case was well received.⁸⁷ Case’s “counsel to the church” included discussions of “the experience of a clost communion Church” which was “deferred for prayer and further Consideration on the subject.”⁸⁸ By persuading Isaac Case to visit Yarmouth, Zachariah Chipman was obviously attempting to convince his church to adopt the scheme held by the association. In essence, Zachariah Chipman was attempting to persuade his congregation that believer’s baptism by immersion should provide the exclusive basis for Christian fellowship around the “Lord’s Table.” Without this concession, the Yarmouth church would continue to exist on the periphery of Regular Baptist life in the Maritimes, a distant family relative.

⁸⁵ The gradual development of these outposts can be found in *ibid.*, 1821-1826. I have drawn upon Donald G. Mathews’ much quoted article “The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process, 1780-1830: An Hypothesis” in *American Quarterly* 21(1969): 23-43.

⁸⁶ Records of the First Baptist Church Yarmouth, Vol. I, 23 June 1823. AUA.

⁸⁷ See *ibid.* and Isaac Case, “Extract of a letter . . .” in *The American Baptist Magazine* 4

It seems clear from the church records of this period that there was still a significant number of aging unimmersed New Lights who were being admitted to occasional communion. Despite the clever orchestration of Zachariah Chipman, Harding and the church were reluctant to exclude anyone from communion lest they violate the New Light ethic of love. This attitude prevailed until Thomas Ansley arrived in Yarmouth on 6 October 1827, at the invitation of Chipman, to preach while Harding proclaimed the gospel in the Annapolis area.⁸⁸ This pastor-evangelist of the radical evangelical tradition had a profound impact on Yarmouth Township. It is likely that Harris Harding well understood the intentions of Chipman and Ansley to move the church to the close communion position. However, no one could have predicted the ecstatic revival that would convulse the southwestern end of Nova Scotia during Ansley's visit.

Completely convinced that immersion in the name of the Holy Trinity is the only scriptural mode of baptism, Ansley preached of the benefits to be enjoyed by adopting "the Faith, Practice and Covenant of the churches of Christ composing the Nova Scotia Baptist Association."⁸⁹ Ansley incorporated both of these elements into the traditional revivalist message of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. Using his artful, but simplistic, method of oration, Ansley preached this mixture of grace and church polity to a people desperately searching for security in a time of crisis. During the period of revival, an acute, and frequently fatal, disease was sweeping throughout the township. As Chipman commented on 14 April 1828:

(1824): 347 - 348.

⁸⁸ Records of the First Baptist Church Yarmouth, Vol.1, 4 July, 1823. AUA.

⁸⁹ Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches, p. 192.

⁹⁰ Records of the First Baptist Church Yarmouth, Vol. 1, 6 October, 1827. AUA.

Alarming Diseases still prevail viz, a resemblance of the cold Plague, Scarlet Fever, Cancer Rash . . . with other uncommon Diseases, some are first attacked in the fingers others in the legs, throat and other parts of the Body when imperfect Health, and ends their existence here in some Cases in the course of 2 to 10 days time, 9 funerals were attended in this town in 8 days the Lord has in his great Mercy prepared this people for his Judgments, out of the 104 deaths there were but 4 persons that we can learn who gave no evidence of a saving Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.⁹¹

It is very likely that many people in Yarmouth came to regard “the plague” as God’s judgment on them, and the revival as an expression of God’s mercy. For many Yarmouth Baptists, the judgment was not just for “sin,” but also for not embracing the close communion principle. And yet, Harding and his people were still torn between the New Light ethic of love and what they believed was a divinely-given direction to exclude the great “unwashed” at the communion table. Nevertheless, while many believed that God “spoke” through visions and ecstatic experience, Harding conceded that God could speak through a “plague.”

The judgments of the Lord, by which people learn righteousness, have been abroad among us – a pestilence never known in Yarmouth has thinned the inhabitants, and the mourners are going about our streets, yet the greater part of those who have been the subjects of this afflictions disease, have, in the time of death, left such a testimony of God’s grace abounding with their afflictions, that it has done much towards the furtherance of the gospel . . . in so many instances to see death swallowed up in victory, has constrained spectators to say, “O let me die the death of the righteous.”⁹²

One might make the case that a very important aspect of preparing to “die the death of the righteous” was to submit to believer’s baptism by immersion. As was argued in chapter one, the strong symbolism of spiritual washing and an intimate relationship with the lamb who was slain provided converts in the revival with a heavily experiential means of expressing their faith and hope of eternal life in the midst of social and spiritual crisis.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 14 April 1828.

⁹² *BMM*, 10 October 1828.

While immersion could provide people with a religious identity in life, it could also prepare individuals spiritually for death as a last act of humility and obedience to Christ.

In a desperate attempt to find meaning and comfort during this critical period, people of all stations in life turned to the preaching of Ansley. A statistical analysis of this revival indicates that every level of society was proportionally represented in this “religious outpouring” which indicated that the Yarmouth Baptist Church, by 1828, was almost a mirror image of the township’s social fabric.⁹³ Moreover, the New Light ethos which had been developing since the early days of settlement in the 1760s had so permeated the township that the crisis of 1827-28 forced many unchurched, unconverted, and unimmersed people to seek refuge in the baptismal waters and membership of Harding’s Baptist Church. Such a response makes sense when it is remembered that the Yarmouth Baptists most accurately expressed the radical enthusiastic religious tradition of the township. In the end, three hundred and forty-eight people were received as candidates for baptism, following conversion, while forty people “reunited” with the church; in total there were three hundred eighty-eight respondents.⁹⁴

During this revival, which boasted more funerals than evangelistic meetings, most of those unimmersed adherents of the church who had been extended occasional communion were baptized by Harding or Ansley, or they became victims of “the plague.” Because of this change in the composition of Harding’s congregation, adopting close communion was now possible without compromising the New Light ethic of love. On December 19, 1827, the Yarmouth church adopted the articles of the Nova Scotia Baptist Association without

⁹³ I have developed this theme more fully in my “Revivalism and Denominational Polity: Yarmouth Baptists in the 1820’s” in Robert S. Wilson (ed.), An Abiding Conviction: Maritime Baptists and their World (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot Press, 1988), pp. 7 - 31.

one dissenting vote. If the “Great Reformation” of 1806-1808 had fused baptism to New Light spirituality; the “Great Yarmouth Revival” of 1827-1828 had effectively married enthusiastic piety to Calvinistic Baptist close communion structures. However, Harding and his people had achieved this union on their own terms without violating their inclusive ethic of love, the organizational prowess of Zachariah Chipman notwithstanding. Harding confessed in 1828, “About two years ago, God began to manifest his presence at baptism and conference meetings,” sent “the plague” to convict sinners, and sent Ansley “for the building of Zion and confirming the souls of God’s people.” This had culminated in structural changes without violating essential New Light spirituality.

Our church formerly admitted to occasional communion, members of other denominations, who gave satisfactory evidence of a work of grace; but on the 19th of December last [1827], they, without a dissenting vote, embraced the more scriptural faith and practice of the Nova Scotia Baptist Association.⁹⁵

Harding’s reference to embracing a “more scriptural” polity should be understood in the context of religious experience. Far from embracing a rigorous form of biblicism, Harding and his people believed God had spoken in a dramatic way which they now embraced and declared to be “biblical.” As early as the spring of 1827, Harding had also expressed intense interest in his church joining the Nova Scotia Baptist Association, because he had felt separated from his fellow “Patriarchs.” In spite of his checkered past, Harding longed to be in “complete” fellowship with the aging colleagues with whom he had such a long history. It is ironic that Harding finally embraced close communion for essentially New Light reasons. Zachariah Chipman summarized Harding’s position.

⁹⁴ See Goodwin, “Advancing Light,” pp. 179 - 183.

⁹⁵ BMM, 1 October 1828.

Elder Harris Harding stated to the Church he had enjoyed much consolation in the Gospel, with his aged fellow Labourers in the Baptist connection, in days that were past and gone, he was now drawing near the close of his stewardship and felt himself to be alone, he had a desire to meet with his Brethren, and, thought it would be for the mutual edification of the church, to adopt the closest communion plan and be united with them . . .⁹⁶

Rather than endorsing close communion, Harding spoke from the perspective of reconciling broken relationships with the denomination and “mutual edification.” The New Light ideal of people being more important than polity, which had kept the church from joining the association, was now being used by Harding to justify an alliance with the association. However, Harding and his church’s essentially New Light spirituality had not fundamentally changed. W. Smith, a Methodist circuit preacher reported on 24 June 1828, six months after the Yarmouth Baptists had embraced the articles of the Nova Scotia Baptist Association:

The Baptist course has flourished here exceedingly of late under their Antinomian Minister Mr. Harding – he is an assured enemy to Methodism because [he has] great influence among the inhabitants and the oldest [sic] fanaticism prevails among some of the Members of his church an instance of which I was unhappy enough to witness on Sunday last after preaching and administering the Sacrament in the Morning I went in the afternoon to a place called the ponds where I preached to a congregation composed principally of Baptists after I had concluded a man rose up and told the people he was sorry to have seen their drowsy [?] but he thought it proof . . . that I was not the true Shepherd otherwise the sheep could have heard my voice . . . While he was yet speaking a Bowan . . . with the worst horrid scream declared against me so that I assure you my dear sir I was glad to get away with a whole skin . . .⁹⁷

Smith was rejected by many Yarmouth Baptists because he did not preach in what George Rawlyk has called the “neo-Whitefieldian tradition” and therefore did not stir the emotions

⁹⁶ Records of the First Baptist Church, Yarmouth. Vol. 1, 2 March, 1827. AUA

⁹⁷ W. Smith to the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, 24 June, 1828, Yarmouth, NS: Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society Letters and Notices, Archives of the Maritime United Church Conference, Halifax, NS. Reel no. 6.

or “souls” of the people.⁹⁸ Harding’s flock relied upon the preacher to create the context for ecstatic experience in which God was believed to be intensely felt. If anything, Smith’s letter points to the fact that the Baptists in Yarmouth were still strongly committed to the enthusiastic evangelicalism of their past. Ironically, Harding and his church had moved from being religious outsiders both in their local and provincial context to being the leading denomination in the Yarmouth area and the largest church in the Nova Scotia Baptist Association without having jettisoned their essential piety. Furthermore, Harding returned to the association not just as a maverick preacher, but as a “Father of the Faith,” a Regular Baptist Patriarch.

Harding and his church knew they had been fully embraced by the association when, in 1829, the annual meeting of the Nova Scotia Baptist Association was held in Yarmouth. They also knew that their position within the township was secure, for their membership included such prestigious people as James B. Moody a “valuable member of the [colonial] legislature,” as well as “Isaac Chandler, Hannah Turner and Margart Cornwell,” “all coloured people” -- arguably among the most socially-disadvantaged residents of the area.⁹⁹ Harding’s evangelicalism was apparently no respecter of persons. In fact, Harding and his church participated in several of the reform movements that were sweeping North American evangelicalism during the nineteenth century.

John Davis, Harding’s biographer, suggests that in many ways Harding’s involvement in community and philanthropic organizations was at odds with his

⁹⁸ Rawlyk, *Ravished by the Spirit*, chapter 3.

⁹⁹ Records of the First Baptist Church Yarmouth, Vol. I, 22 October 1828; Vol. II, 10 December 1831. AUA.

“experimental religion.”¹⁰⁰ However, Davis failed to consider that the New Light Gospel had social implications. Surely the “ethic of love” could be translated to a variety of Christian organizations. Harding certainly thought so, for in 1829, he became involved in the “Temperance reformation” and for many years was president of the Temperance Society in Yarmouth. As the town developed as an important port on the eastern seaboard, it is likely that the consumption of “ardent spirits” increased along with the problems of poverty and violence. As a result, Harding and his people began to respond to social problems such as the abuse of drink, which they believed was the root cause for many ills within their community. Consequently, many Yarmouth Baptists embraced the ideals of the temperance cause.¹⁰¹

In a letter to the “Delegates from the different Temperance Societies in Nova Scotia, assembled at Bridgetown, 24 September 1834,” Harding declared:

The cause of Temperance, which you have espoused with a beaming zeal, and in which we cordially and warmly engage with you, and thousands of others, embraces the glory of God, and the spiritual and temporal welfare of all fellow - sinners of every description.

. . . we are pleased to say, gentlemen, that it hath been our mercy to be among the first in these two Provinces to form a Temperance Society; and although like a mustard-seed at first, it has advanced to about seven hundred in the Township of Yarmouth, and the good is still progressing.¹⁰²

While it would be a mistake to regard these early Baptists as “proto-social gospellers,” they clearly had a commitment to exploring the social dimensions of their enthusiastic piety. Harding’s leadership of this movement, which boasted wide support in his own township,

¹⁰⁰ Davis, *Harris Harding*, p. 131.

¹⁰¹ Consult James H. Morrison and James Moreira (eds.), *Tempered by Rum: Rum in the History of the Maritime Provinces* (Porters Lake, NS: Pottersfield Press), 1988 and C. Mark Davis, “I’ll Drink to that: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition in the Maritime Provinces, 1900 - 1930” (PhD., thesis, McMaster University, 1989), pp. 1 - 125.

placed him at the very center of the area's interdenominational work. It is ironic that this iconoclastic evangelical enthusiast became a prominent director of social reform and community leader in Yarmouth. While Harding's critics were often unrelenting in their negative judgments of him and his congregation, he nevertheless achieved a remarkable acceptance in the community.¹⁰³ Furthermore, although never a biblicist, Harding also supported and led the Yarmouth and Argyle Auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society.¹⁰⁴ His acceptance as a civic and religious leader stemmed, in part, from his longevity, his personal concern for people, and his ability to visit and converse with almost everyone who lived in Yarmouth. Harding became an institution which was not easily ignored.

Although always suspicious of education, especially higher education, lest learning be exalted above piety, Harding was an ardent advocate of Sabbath schools. By 1830, the Baptists of Yarmouth established a Sabbath School to teach basic biblical concepts and to impress upon the children the necessity of conversion. During a time of revival in 1850, an aging "Father Harding" informed the readers of the Christian Messenger that "not a few of the youths from the excellent Sunday School at the Ponds, which is conducted by judicious and godly members of the church, who have taken no little pains impressing the sense and spirituality of the scriptures upon the minds of the children, and in the present revival the Sunday scholars have been so exercised in their minds from these things at times, as not to attend to their lessons, being so deeply impressed with the concerns of their undying

¹⁰² Davis, p. 133.

¹⁰³ Ibid., pp. 132 - 133; Records of the First Baptist Church, Yarmouth. Vol. I., p. 262 and Vol. II, p. 9. AUA.

¹⁰⁴ Davis, p. 134.

souls.”¹⁰⁵ Consistent with his worldview, Harding regarded Sabbath Schools to have value because of their usefulness in preparing young people for revival and the conversion of their souls. Far from embracing the notions of Horace Bushnell of nurturing children into the Kingdom of God, Harding viewed Sabbath School instruction as a prelude to the ecstatic experience of the New Birth.¹⁰⁶

By 1830 Harding was revered as a Baptist Patriarch in his denomination and an aging, yet respected, religious leader in his community who found that his ability to care for a large congregation -- perhaps over five hundred -- had decreased. Indeed, it was becoming increasingly obvious to the Yarmouth congregation that the venerable pastor needed the assistance of one who was younger and represented the ideas of a second generation of Regular Baptists. Consequently, on 27 July 1830, “Elder William Burton” was extended a call to “labour with us in the gospel as a co-pastor with Elder Harding.”¹⁰⁷ Having been declared by Zachariah Chipman as possessing “sound doctrines and promising talents,” it was suggested that he should work with Harding “on trial” for a period of eight months after which the position would become permanent.¹⁰⁸ A native of Cape Breton, Burton had been converted during a missionary tour of Joseph Dimock, a Baptist Patriarch who, like Harding, bore the New Light mark throughout his life. He preached first in Parrsboro, but after two years was obliged to leave (by mutual consent) because the congregation could not afford to support him and his family. Burton was a good match for Harding, now sixty-nine years old. Although poorly educated, “His creator had endowed

¹⁰⁵ CM, 11 January 1850.

¹⁰⁶ Davis, Harris Harding, p. 135. See also Anne Boylan, Sunday School: The Formation of an American Institution, 1790 - 1880 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

¹⁰⁷ Records of the First Baptist Church, Yarmouth, Vol. I, 27 July 1830. AUA.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 11 July, 1830.

him with physical power and mental energy of a high order.”¹⁰⁹ Moreover, as well as being comfortable leading revivals, Burton was also an able Bible teacher and seems to have been able to mobilize lay people, especially deacons, to work in the area of church discipline. He also worked well with the “defacto” administrator of the church, Zachariah Chipman.

As a second generation Regular Baptist minister who had not been directly influenced by the New Light notions of anti-formalism and almost unlimited religious freedom, Burton initiated the practice of systematic church discipline in the Yarmouth church. This was consistent with a general “ordering” of Maritime society, as institutions such as churches, schools, and benevolent societies became increasingly structured.¹¹⁰ The area of church discipline had always made Harris Harding uncomfortable because of his New Light ethic of love. In fact, Harding was seldom the church representative charged with the duty of exercising “disciplinary measures.” His “ethic of love” motivated him often to seek “repentance and reconciliation;” he avoided being the one who informed members that they were being excluded until certain lifestyle changes and a public confession of sin were carried out. For example, during a visit from Harding in 1833, one Mary Moses “acknowledged that she was guilty of immoral conduct for which she was very sorry.” After deliberating on this issue, the church unanimously agreed to withdraw “our Christian fellowship from her until she shall manifest a gospel repentance to the Church.” Secondly, the church voted that William Burton, and not Harding, be the bearer of the news to Mary Moses. While Harding felt free to speak to Moses about her immoral conduct, it would seem it was recognized that he was not the most appropriate one to

¹⁰⁹ Bill, *Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches*, p. 320.

¹¹⁰ Rosemary Ommer, “The 1830s” Adapting their Institutions to their Desires,” in Phillip A. Buckner and John G. Reid (eds.), *The Atlantic Region To Confederation: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), pp. 284-306.

report or enforce the exclusion.¹¹¹ In other rare instances in which Harding was involved in the process of church discipline, it was almost always Burton or one of the deacons who enforced the will of the church. The thought of “wounding” a brother or sister who had “fallen into sin” was more than Harding’s desire to “love” people could abide. Indeed, it is fair to say that Harding chafed at the implementation of church discipline more than any other aspect of new polity. Though there is some evidence to suggest that he became somewhat more comfortable with discipline as he entered his eighties, Harding was always more confident as the evangelist and exhorter.¹¹²

While avoiding the confrontation of “wayward” behaviour, Harding initiated opportunities “to visit in the different neighborhoods” those who “do not attend at conference [mostly fellowship/ business meetings] meetings and the Communion Table and to exhort them to perseverance in the ways of the Lord.”¹¹³ So committed to pastoral visitation was Harding that he could write to the editor of the Christian Messenger in 1848 that, “I am enabled through much mercy to travel among my dear people. I preach three or four times a week, and constantly visit the sick, although now nearly eighty seven years of age.”¹¹⁴ Indeed, although Harding had made the transition from itinerant evangelist to settled pastor by the end of the “Great Reformation” (1806-1808), he continued the New Light tradition of preaching tours throughout his career. Soon after he and his church were received into the Nova Scotia Baptist Association in 1828, Harding began to receive requests from churches in “spiritual darkness” which needed the services of an evangelist.

¹¹¹ Records of the First Baptist Church, Yarmouth, Vol. II, 11 February 1833. AUA.

¹¹² This assertion is based on a careful reading of ibid., Vol. II, 1831 - 1840.

¹¹³ Ibid., 5 October 1833.

¹¹⁴ CM, 24 July 1848.

Harding made repeated trips to Brier Island, Digby Neck (1832,1837), Liverpool (1836), Barrington (1838), and Sackville, New Brunswick (1831).¹¹⁵

It is remarkable, indeed, to consider that Harris Harding began his ministry in Yarmouth as a renegade New Light determined to preach his ecstatic revivalistic form of evangelicalism and yet, by the end of his life, he had become "Mr. Yarmouth," a respectable, acceptable Protestant minister known affectionately by most people, regardless of denominational affiliation, as "Father Harding."¹¹⁶ It would be tempting to argue that such a transformation was only possible through some form of religious accommodation or declension of vital piety. The evidence suggests the very opposite. Not only was Harding a fervent advocate of the New Light - New Birth revivalist tradition at the end of his ministry, but so were most of the evangelicals in the township. The Yarmouth revival of 1850 is very instructive in this regard.

By mid-century, Harding was well into his eighty-ninth year, and his attendance at conference and Sunday meetings had become sporadic. In an effort to provide assistance for an over-worked William Burton, the church had engaged Richard W. Cunningham's services for several months. During September 1850, people were being converted in increasing numbers and consequently presented themselves as candidates for baptism. The catalyst of the revival came during a Saturday conference meeting on 12 October when ten people "related their Christian experience and were received candidates for Baptist."

¹¹⁵ See the following entries in Records of the First Baptist Church, Yarmouth. Vols. II and III, 4 August 1832; 7 July 1837; 23 August 1836; 5 September 1842; 22 August 1831. Since Harding had been "out of fellowship" with the association for about twenty years, a generation of leaders and churches had emerged which did not know him personally. This explains why he preached primarily in southern and western Nova Scotia. Ironically, Harding's last preaching tour, at eighty years, was in the Liverpool area where he had lost almost all of his credibility forty years before.

Under the leadership of Burton and Cunningham the meeting erupted into what can only be described as a New Light meeting in the tradition of the first Great Awakening.

The house was filled to overflowing and the power of the Lord was present to heal, more especially after the dismissal of the meeting and some had retired, it seemed then that mostly all were affected, some in deep and pungent distress, crying for mercy, others rejoicing in God their Saviour, which continued until mid-night when the meeting separated, some returning home rejoicing and others crying for mercy.¹¹⁷

The great distress followed by cries for mercy and rejoicing going well into the late evening were typical expressions of the revivalist enthusiastic piety which had been so evident to Harris Harding and the township in the early 1800s. The Yarmouth church at mid-century was not a church that had abandoned the "Faith of the Fathers," but rather one which could carry on a revival without the able assistance of "Father Harding." During this revival, which lasted only three months, from October to December, two hundred and thirty-seven people experienced conversion and were received as candidates for baptism.¹¹⁸ So activated was the township during this period that on 4 November 1850 a crowd estimated at 1300 to 1400 people filled the meeting house to overflowing so that "the remainder retired to brother Calvin Wyman's Shop loft where Elder Cunningham preached while Elder Burton preached in the Meeting House."¹¹⁹ This was the first Yarmouth revival in over sixty years in which Harris Harding did not play a crucial role. Nevertheless, the religious tradition he represented and helped create still pulsed throughout the township.

To argue for essential continuity in the piety of Harding and his people is not to suggest that there were no changes or challenges to the "New Light-New Birth" paradigm.

¹¹⁶ Davis, *Harris Harding*, pp. 148-150; 169-171.

¹¹⁷ Records of the First Baptist Church, Yarmouth, Vol. III, 12 October, 1850. AUA.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, See especially the entries from October 12 to December 27, 1850. There were 110 respondents in October, 103 in November, and 24 in December.

On the contrary, just as Zachariah Chipman argued for formalized procedures in the areas of administration and church discipline in an earlier period, so there would be those near the end of Harding's life who lobbied for change. Nowhere was this more true than in the area of hymn singing. On 2 April 1843, it was resolved by the congregation "that the singers be empowered and requested to form a choir to sing half of the Times on the new system so called, and half of the Times on the Old system of singing so called."¹²⁰ The old system referred to the gospel song tradition which had emerged out of the First Great Awakening, during which Henry Alline had written more than five hundred hymns and songs. Other New Lights had also written verse which had then been put to music. What in the 1840s had become the "old system," relied heavily upon the use of well-known tunes and a vital oral tradition. The "New system" referred to the nineteenth-century gospel song tradition in which the hymns were presented in booklets. It is significant to note that in 1842 the Association printed such a song book for use in its churches. The attempt to blend the two systems came to an end on April 3, 1848, when following the death of Joseph Robbins -- the church's key musician -- "on whom we depended for aid in uniting the two systems of singing," it was resolved that "the singers be authorized to conduct the singing upon the principle or system now normally adopted in our Baptist Churches throughout the world."¹²¹ It is possible that as Yarmouth became a port of increasing international

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 4 November 1850.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 23 April, 1843. See also Margaret A. Filshie, "Redeeming Love Shall be Our Song: Hymns of the First Great Awakening in Nova Scotia" (M. A. Thesis, Queen's University, 1983); Sandra S. Sizer, Gospel Hymns and Social Religion: The Rhetoric of Nineteenth Century Revivalism (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978). It is possible that A Collection of Hymns and Sacred Songs: Adapted for Conference and Protracted Meetings and Revivals of Religion (Halifax, NS: The Messenger Office, 1842) which had been sponsored by the Association fueled the debate in Yarmouth over hymn singing and worship styles.

¹²¹ Records of the First Baptist Church, Yarmouth, Vol. III, 3 April 1848. AUA.

importance, its population was transformed into a more sophisticated society which demanded a more “modern” worship experience than the New Light tradition afforded.¹²²

Although Harris Harding seems to have been silent on the issue, there were those who objected strongly to the removal of the New Light singing tradition from worship which had been practised since the 1780s in Yarmouth. One outspoken critic of these changes was Samuel Harris who, in 1847, was “set aside from the fellowship of this church [along with eight others] until he accepted the resolution of the church.”¹²³ While this shift in congregational singing down-played the hymn singing tradition of the First Great Awakening, the revivalist ethos remained the most dominant force within the region’s religious culture. In a letter dated 7 March 1855, a frustrated John Davis, who replaced William Burton and Harris Harding following his death, reported to the Christian Messenger that

Many of us yearn after what is called “the old singing.” Who can wonder? It was the joy of their fathers – their mother’s lullaby – It greeted their childish ear in the sanctuary. It is not without its musical excellencies. There belongs to it an unction and a fervour which it will be difficult to transfuse into our more recent style of singing, whatever may be its scientific value. It is associated with previous remembrances of social worship and gatherings of the churches, and religious revival. Yarmouth has been, I suppose the special home of this “old singing”. It were strange, therefore, if it were not loved here – if its decay and gradual departure were witnessed without regret. But it cannot be recalled.¹²⁴

Davis believed that the Yarmouth church was now too sophisticated to continue in the tradition of the “old singing.” Nevertheless, his unremarkable three-year ministry in the

¹²² For background on the history of Yarmouth Township, consult: G.S. Brown, Yarmouth, Nova Scotia: A Sequel to Campbell’s History ... (Boston: Rand Avery, 1888) and J.R. Campbell, A History of the County of Yarmouth, N.S. (Saint John, NB: J. & A. McMillan, 1876).

¹²³ Records of the First Baptist Church, Yarmouth, Vol. III, 6 June 1847.

¹²⁴ CM, 22 March 1855.

Yarmouth Baptist Church suggests that the speed with which he sought to transform the evangelicalism in the area was unacceptable. In fact, the hymns of Henry Aline and other New Lights continue to live in the area's oral religious traditions to the present day.¹²⁵

As early as 1839, Harding recognized that changes within colonial society would surely challenge the "New Light-New Birth" paradigm. Writing to fellow Baptist Patriarch, Edward Manning, Harding declared "our hearts are not prepared to worship the Lord God of your fathers," because "pride, worldly honour and respectability flowing from a manpleasing spirit make the Elders of the land tremble for the Ark of our God." Despite his concern for his people's piety, Harding found security in knowing that "we have some additions to our church" and "there are hopeful appearances of God's advancing his Kingdom."¹²⁶ For Harding, as long as people were being converted in the tradition of enthusiastic piety, he could tolerate other changes in his church and society. Furthermore, during the last fifteen to twenty years of his life, Harding and his wife were very well provided for by his people. The transformed seafaring economy of Yarmouth had produced wealthy parishioners who were devoted to "Father Harding." One of the many "assistants" of Harding, A. V. Dimock, wrote in 1840

Elder Harding lives in the affection of a numerous and wealthy people who take pleasure in providing for him the comforts of life. No person can say without the basest misrepresentations that our worthy and venerable Pastor suffers from wants of support of the Churches; they love him too well!¹²⁷

Harding had become something of a celebrity in his old age. He was a link to what was often perceived as a simpler, more "spiritual" past with a present that at mid-century seemed complex and uncertain. He, along with the other living Baptist Patriarchs, such as

¹²⁵ See Rawlyk, *New Light Letters and Songs*, p.327.

¹²⁶ Harris Harding to Edward Manning, 27 October 1839, Yarmouth, NS. AUA.

Edward Manning, Joseph Crandall, T. S. Harding, and Joseph Dimock provided a sense of security for their denomination.¹²⁸ The Patriarchs recognized their unique position. Edward Manning remarked to Harris Harding when they were both in their eighties that

You have drank, long, long ago, at a fountain that never, never runs dry; and it is in you a well of living water, that can never be exhausted, which springs up into eternal life; and the old, sacred, New Light union binds us together—a union which neither death, nor hell, nor old age, nor time, nor space can ever disannul.¹²⁹

Even Manning, who had spent much of his life trying to eradicate the New Lightism in his piety, had to concede at the end of the day that this tradition had formed his spirituality and bound the Patriarchs together in a “New Light union.” If Harding did achieve respectability within his denomination he did so on his own terms as a grassroots evangelical enthusiast. Perhaps the greatest and lasting symbols of Harding’s acceptance is his portrait which was commissioned, along with the other living Patriarchs, in 1846. Harding’s “likeness was taken and painted by Mr. Valentine, a distinguished artist, this admirable picture, with others of the Baptist Fathers, graces the Hall of Acadia College.”¹³⁰ When Harding’s wife died in 1860, the editors of the Christian Messenger saw fit to print a lengthy “Sermon on the death of Mehetable Harding,” indicating further the “royal status” the Patriarchs and their families held in their later years.¹³¹

Harris Harding died on March 7, 1854, from a protracted illness he had fought for over six months. In the pain and confusion of his last days he was heard to declare, “I can’t

¹²⁷ A. V. Dimock to Edward Manning, 7 March 1840, Yarmouth, NS. AUA.

¹²⁸ This theme will be developed further in another chapter.

¹²⁹ Davis, Harris Harding, p.124.

¹³⁰ Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches, p. 196.

¹³¹ CM, 7 March 1860.

see Jesus I want to see Jesus.”¹³² Consistent to the end, Harding longed for the ecstatic visionary experience which had so characterized his piety during his long life and which had given him such comfort. And, he died having helped countless numbers of people “see Jesus,” transformed through the New Birth experience and immersionist baptism. In many ways, this Yarmouth Patriarch represented a strain of enthusiastic spirituality that would resonate with thousands of Maritime Baptists throughout the nineteenth century. While exemplifying the more radical fringe of his denomination, his ecstatic piety would prove to be the very life blood of his co-religionists. Harding’s life and ministry demonstrated, to all who cared to see, that the essential spirituality inherited from the First Great Awakening was dynamic and malleable and could be poured into a variety of forms without compromising its basic elements.

¹³² Davis, Harris Harding, pp. 138 - 139.

Chapter Three

Joseph Crandall: The Baptist Patriarch of New Brunswick

Joseph Crandall was the most important Regular Baptist leader in New Brunswick during the first half of the nineteenth century. Often known as New Brunswick's only Baptist Patriarch, he achieved this honour and place in the region's history but not because of theological precision, organizational genius, or charismatic religious leadership. Rather, Crandall became a "venerated Father" because of his longevity, his indefatigable itinerancy, and his preaching of what may be called paradoxically a "calvanized" New Light gospel. Crandall was one who carried the marks of his New Light heritage grudgingly. Longing to advocate an enthusiastic piety tempered by solid ecclesiastical structures, he represented many Regular Baptists' desire to formulate a "balanced" evangelicalism; an expression of revivalistic Christianity which valued order and emphasized the central authority of the Bible in all matters of faith and life. If Harris Harding mirrored those Baptists who wished to sustain the ecstatic enthusiastic dimensions of New Lightism and who reluctantly accepted formal church structures, fearing that too much organization could squelch the moving of the Holy Spirit, Crandall reflected the desire among those who tried to establish a more "respectable" middle ground. It is rather ironic that, in the end, it was not Crandall, who continually sought personal and denominational respectability, but Harding, who achieved recognition. Moreover, Crandall was never able to escape completely the enduring influence of his New Light heritage. While these two Baptist "Fathers" differed in their aspirations for the denomination, they agreed on the essentials of the faith: revival, conversion, and its ritualization in believer's baptism by immersion.

Joseph Crandall was born in 1771 in Tiverton, Rhode Island. About “one year before the revolution,” he accompanied his parents, Webber Crandall and Merry Vaughan, to Chester, Nova Scotia. In an engaging spiritual autobiography, written by him later in life, Crandall recalled an incident which profoundly haunted and directed his future. “When about thirteen years of age I was called to the death bed of my mother. I was much alarmed to see my beloved mother so pale and death-like. She said to me ‘that she had sent for me to hear her last farewell.’ She said ‘she was going to leave us all and go to her saviour where she would be happy’.” After staring at Crandall in his youthful form she declared, “Joseph, the Lord has a great work for you to do, when I am dead and gone.”¹ In the midst of poverty and hardship, Crandall’s mother had prophesied that her young son had a divinely-appointed task and life to live. Crandall, himself, came to believe that “my dear mother [had been] under the influence of the Holy Spirit” at that time.²

If his mother’s prediction touched his life, so too did his father’s discussion of a “strange man that was preaching in Windsor and adjoining places” where the “people were becoming crazy and talked about their souls.” Crandall’s father assured him “that this preacher Henry Allin was a ‘New Light’ and that the ‘New Lights’ were people of god for they were Christians and that none could go to Heaven unless they were converted.”³ At a later date, the “New Light Stir” made its way to Chester, Nova Scotia, where Thomas Handley Chipman and Harris Harding led a revival which resulted in many conversions. Although he attended all of the revival meetings, Crandall revealed, “my heart was hard and unmoved and I thought at the time that the Lord had left me to perish in my own sins.”

¹ J.M. Burnstead, ed., “The Autobiography of Joseph Crandall” *Acadiensis* 1 (1973): 81 (hereafter cited as “Crandall Autobiography”).

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

Through this period of searching and doubt Crandall was experiencing the first stage of an “Allinite” conversion.⁴ “Hardened to sin” and “often in despair,” the young Chester resident began madly [to] trod the path to endless woe.”

Following the death of his father Crandall eventually became involved in the cod fishery out of Liverpool, and the transportation of lumber in the Windsor area. In July, 1795, he went to hear the preaching of Harris Harding, “who was high in my esteem since the time of the reformation at Chester.”⁵ Upon entering the house where the meeting was scheduled,

. . . the glorious majesty of the Divine being appeared to open before the eyes of my understanding (I beheld no object with my bodily eyes) and I saw myself justly condemned to endless misery. I saw no way of escape until suddenly a glorious light shone from the excellent majesty and I saw the way of Salvation was God’s work and not mine. I felt as I had never felt before, although amongst strangers. I could not hold my peace. My hard heart was at last, broken and I had such a view of a perishing world lying in ruin as I never could express.⁶

Written over fifty years after the fact, this conversion narrative bears the marks of its New Light context. Even though Crandall felt compelled to record that his “vision” at conversion was seen in his soul and not with his “bodily eyes,” his experience was very similar to Alline’s and Harding’s. Filtered through the moderate “Calvinism” of the 1850’s, Crandall still made it clear in his autobiography that his ecstatic divine encounter marked the beginning of a very different life. It was the necessary prerequisite for the fulfillment of his

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 80; For an insightful discussion of Protestant conversion see Jerald C. Brauer, “Conversion: From Puritan to Revivalism” in *Journal of Religion* 58(1978): 227 - 43.

⁵ “Crandall Autobiography,” p. 82. It must be remembered that at the beginning of his preaching ministry, Harris Harding was especially appealing to young people – Crandall was no exception.

⁶ *Ibid.*

mother's death-bed prophecy. It was also the necessary pre-requisite in becoming a New Light preacher.

As Crandall entered this new "realm of the Spirit," he began to convey his visionary New Light experience to "the surprise of all present."⁷

It appeared to me that the whole human race ... [was] altogether at the disposal of that Holy Being whose bright glory had so overwhelmed my soul. I saw mercy so connected with the justice of God, that they were both one, that what God had done in the person of Christ was alone sufficient to save all that came to God for mercy through Jesus Christ. I felt that the whole world ought to know what I felt and saw, for indeed appeared of more importance to me than the whole world. I continued speaking (as the people told me after words) for more than an hour.⁸

So compelled was Crandall to speak publicly that he described his urge as "a stream from an overflowing fountain." The world was now seen by Crandall as "a broad field" of "sinners" needing redemption. Having experienced the ravishing of his soul and subsequent assurance of salvation, he now knew that he could share his "divine encounter." Typical of enthusiastic piety, Crandall's conversion experience became the lens through which he viewed all of life. So overwhelming was his exhortation and testimony on this occasion that "Joseph Dimock, and Harris Harding were weeping and many more were weeping with them."⁹ Not only had Crandall been moved to his existential core, but Dimock and Harding -- two of the most experiential New Light preachers -- along with the congregation, had been visibly affected. In the New Light tradition, the "affirmation with tears" and other manifestations of one's exhortations was essential to being recognized as

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁸ *Ibid.* For a suggestive discussion of the role of dreams in Protestant religion in seventeenth-century England see Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic (New York: Penguin Books, 1971), pp. 151 - 173.

⁹ "Crandall Autobiography", p. 83.

one chosen by God to preach. That Dimock and Harding were deeply moved gave further credibility to the death-bed prophecy of Crandall's mother. Indeed, Crandall's early religious experience represents the classic New Light-New Birth paradigm.¹⁰

Even though Crandall's conversion had convinced him that he would "not perish in eternity," he still encountered what might be considered the greatest spiritual crisis of his life. While Crandall reported that "I had no comfort unless I was praying or exhorting ... my trials were great."¹¹ He still confronted the dilemma which most New Light preachers encountered. How could a barely literate fisherman and woodcutter presume to be a preacher? His internal conflict was heightened as "Some of the Christians [in Chester] said I was called of God to preach, others said, 'That poor illiterate boy, preach indeed! It is a shame to think of such a thing.'" Crandall was at an impasse. He felt absolutely certain that he could not return to the waters and forests of Nova Scotia to eke out a subsistence while the world was lost in sin. And yet, he recorded, "I must confess that I thought at the time that the ones who opposed it were right about the matter."¹²

Uncertain about his future, Crandall continued in his quandary well into the fall of 1795 until he received divine direction. In what might be called "a classic cathartic New Light dream,"¹³ not unlike the one which would lead Harris Harding to Yarmouth, Crandall recalled that

I was standing by a broad stream of smooth water. Thousands of men and women were floating down the stream. In a standing position with their heads and shoulders above water. They seemed quite unconscious of their danger. I watched them until they reached the cataract below. When they

¹⁰ Consult G. A. Rawlyk, The Canada Fire: Radical Evangelicalism in British North America: 1775 - 1812 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), pp. 5 - 18.

¹¹ "Crandall's Autobiography," p. 83.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., p. 84.

suddenly disappeared. All below the rocky cataract was dense darkness. I also saw in the dream a man with a long pole and a bow on the end of it: he came to me and told me to wade in and save all the people I could. I thought in the dream that I did so and all that I could throw the bow over I led to a delightful bank covered with green grass and beautiful flowers and they united in singing the praises of God in a delightful manner.¹⁴

The biblical imagery in this dream is striking. No longer was Crandall to be a catcher of fish, but rather a “fisher of men.”¹⁵ In reflecting upon the meaning of this dream – which he surely believed to be of divine origin – he wrote, “the 28th chapter of Matthew came to my mind when I came to the two last verses I was struck with a great surprise.”¹⁶ Among the last words given to the New Testament disciples by the risen Christ was, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit; Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”¹⁷ Applying the scriptures to interpret his dream, Crandall had achieved spiritual resolution for his “anxious soul.” He no longer doubted his conversion, and was further convinced that the next crucial step in his spiritual journey was to be baptized by immersion in the name of the Trinity. “Had I been present when John baptized the Saviour and stood on the bank of the Jordan and witnessed the whole scene I could not have been more convinced from that time.”¹⁸ He had come to see the spiritual necessity of linking the “New Birth” with its ritualization in immersionist baptism. This evangelical ritual was the gospel made visible, a dramatic reenactment of the New Light conversion process for the world to see. Consequently, he reported that on the

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

¹⁵ See the New Testament, Matthew 4: 19 and Mark 1: 17.

¹⁶ “Crandall’s Autobiography,” p. 84.

¹⁷ Matthew 28:19,20.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

very morning following his dream "I was buried with my Lord in a watery grave by Elder Joseph Dimmock [sic]."¹⁹ Here again is seen the marriage of the "New Light-New Birth" with baptism.

For Crandall, immersionist baptism was central to his faith (unlike Harris Harding who considered it an important but not crucial experiential religious ritual.) The New Brunswick Baptist "Father" regarded immersion as a means to wash away the vestiges of New Lightism. (In contrast, Harding regarded the ritual as a confirmation of the New Light New Birth.) What has not been fully appreciated about Crandall by some historians (including George Rawlyk) is that his preoccupation with baptism predated his mystical conversion. Just after the time following the death of his father, when he had been living with a family in Chester, his guardians had informed him that he "had no soul," because he had not been "sprinkled" as an infant. So perplexed had been the young Crandall over such damning information that he had sought baptism by "sprinkling" from the "venerable old Presbyterian minister" John Seccombe.²⁰ This "baptism" had done little to provide any solace for Crandall's anxious state. It was not until he finally received post-conversion immersionist baptism that Crandall experienced what George Rawlyk has called "the defining experiential religious moment" of his life.²¹ Crandall, himself, concluded that his "sprinkling" as an unregenerate youth had had no spiritual benefit and had, in fact, led to confusion and hindered his own conversion process. However, after his own baptism by immersion, he came to reject the New Light position that baptism was a non-essential. In

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 82

²¹ Rawlyk, *Canada Fire*, p. 171.

fact, because he was so committed to New Light conversion, Crandall opposed “infant sprinkling” because it did not fit the “New Light-New Birth” paradigm.

From the perspective of Crandall’s autobiography, it would seem that his baptism by immersion energized his desire to exhort and pray publicly. In November, 1795, he followed Harris Harding on a preaching tour to the Liverpool area, where he assisted his mentor and older friend. In the midst of a revival led by Harding and John Payzant, Crandall learned and attempted to adapt himself to the expectations of a New Light preacher. However, when the opportunity to lead in prayer came to Crandall, he was initially uncertain.

I had not expected to be called upon and felt much cast down in my mind. but I thought it would seem very unkind in me to refuse when invited to pray: besides. I felt a great want in my own soul. It seemed as though a dark gloom of spiritual death surrounded me. but when I commenced to pray the scene changed. the light of heaven shone into my soul. How long I prayed I know not. but when I opened my eyes and looked around all was changed. the two ministers were weeping in the pulpit and the whole congregation seemed to be melted down under an awful sense of eternity.²²

One indication of the divine call to preach, in the New Light context, was the ability to bring people into contact with “an awful sense of eternity.” In one sense, Crandall’s baptism had also been a preliminary “ordination” service or “induction” service to the ministry of itinerant evangelism. Harding and Payzant clearly believed Crandall “had a special call to preach,” which he exercised in Liverpool during the winter of 1796.²³ Following a short stint in Chester in March that year, he began to travel as an evangelist -- a practice which would characterize his ministry well into his eighties. He traveled to the Annapolis Valley, preaching in Windsor, Falmouth, Horton, Cornwallis, and Newport,

²² “Crandall’s Autobiography,” p. 84.

²³ Ibid.

where he came under the careful guidance of Edward Manning. He then went north to Onslow and Amherst where he preached to anyone who would listen, followed by a concentrated period of preaching from Sackville up the Petitcodiac River. This area of northern Nova Scotia and southern New Brunswick would become in essence Crandall's "Baptist bishopric" upon which his view of the gospel would become firmly stamped. In Sackville, he encountered many "New Lights," but "only one in that whole Parish who had been immersed."²⁴ Remaining in the Sackville-Salisbury circuit until the spring of 1797, Crandall established himself as a credible itinerant. He then spent two months under the mentoring of Edward Manning, who was becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the excesses of New Lightism.²⁵

Upon return to Salisbury, Joseph Crandall "was married to the eldest daughter of Mr. Jaimy Sherman," and entered into yet another period of doubt and introspection. With the reality of family responsibilities heavy upon him, Crandall came to question the seriousness of his call to ministry. Had he deceived himself and others? This was a question that led him to "preach no more." Instead, he began a career as a farmer, "with the determination to live like other people."²⁶ However, he could not escape the implication of his religious experiences and the affirmation of his call to preach by other New Light preachers.

Eighteen months later, after preaching occasionally at the request of local residents, a revival broke out three miles from Crandall's home at Pollet River.

There the cloud of darkness that had for so long obscured my mind. disappeared and the Lord so blessed my speaking that a number of the

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

people were brought to cry to the Lord for mercy and the meetings continued for several days. Oh it was wonderful to see groups of people at the midnight hour. returning home from the meetings with their torchlights. And making the wilderness echo with the praises of God Truly these were happy days.²⁷

Although Crandall had preached and exhorted since his conversion, he had never been in a revival where he was the only or principal preacher. This was the first occasion during the period of the "Great Reformation" -- spanning the turn of the nineteenth century -- when Crandall was able to orchestrate a religious outpouring in a way that was truly unique to him. The marriage of New Light spirituality with immersionist baptism was far more solid in Crandall at this time than it ever would be for Harris Harding. As the revival spread, Crandall was able to inject it with his moderate, non-descript form of Calvinism and believer's baptism by immersion. With great pride, he recorded later in life:

The doctrines preached were - Man's total depravity by the fall of Adam. Salvation wholly and alone through the Lord Jesus Christ. Regeneration by the Holy Spirit. and Sanctification progressive obedience to the Lord's commands. which led believers to follow Christ in an immersion in water. then to unite in church fellowship according as the Lord had ordained. that his children should be holy and walk before him in love.²⁸

The success of this revival convinced Crandall that he should remain an itinerant evangelist, and that he had the potential and opportunity to shape significantly the evangelical culture of southern New Brunswick. This revival may have been the most thoroughly orthodox New Light-style "awakening" in the area to 1799. So significant were the number of conversions that these Christians requested the New Light churches in Chester, Horton and Cornwallis to ordain Crandall and form them into a church "on gospel grounds." Joseph

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

Dimock, Crandall's former pastor, recorded receiving a request "from a scattered people in Westmorland in New Brunswick"

to council and assist them in embodying into a church and Ordaing Brother Crandal their pastor & teacher, who was then a member of the Church of Chester, & was agreed that with one of the Brethren, if no more, should go; which we did- & succeed far beyond our great expectation - for oh! the power and grace that was then Displayed is beyond description the saints of God awoke from their long slumbers Baksliiders returned to the fold of a Redeemer & shouted aloud the victory through a Saviours Blood sinners cryed for Mercy while saints went on their way rejoicing what their Eyes saw Ears heard & souls felt of Gods unbounded love through the whole Country & Cumberland County there seems to be a moveing of Gods spirit on the minds both Saints & sinners - ²⁹

In response to this request in 1800, Joseph Dimock, T.S. Harding, and Edward Manning, who represented their respective churches, established a church at Sackville on the open communion plan, creating a "mixed" congregation of immersed and unimmersed Christians.³⁰ They then proceeded to ordain Crandall. Far from being a solemn ritual, this ordination service bore the marks of a New Light revival with shouts of victory "through a Saviours Blood" and cries "for mercy" from "sinners." So overwhelmed was Dimock at this evidence of "God's spirit on the minds both Saints and Sinners" that he prayed "may it speedily reach to Chester."³¹ Just as Crandall's conversion and baptism had been accompanied with ecstatic religious experiences, so too was his ordination. Crandall now had the qualifications to perform the ordinance of baptism by immersion.

Crandall proceeded to place believer's baptism by immersion at the center of his ministry. For example, in January 1800, Crandall felt called to face the harsh conditions of

²⁹ George E. Levy (ed.), The Diary of Joseph Dimock (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot Press, 1979), p. 72.

³⁰Ibid., p.87.

³¹ "Crandall's Autobiography," p. 86.

mid-winter and travel up the St. John River. Following the trail blazed by Edward Manning seven years before, Crandall preached to willing audiences along the river valley. Towards the middle of March, Crandall arrived in Waterborough which was apparently his destination. On his way he had encountered a "Mrs. Case . . . the only person that I found . . . who had been immersed."³² He experienced some success north of Fredericton at Kingsclear, where the wife of Albus Cole asked Crandall "how she should proceed in order to be immersed."³³ After explaining the procedure, a public announcement was given that there would be a baptism in the Saint John River the following day at 10:00 a.m. In response to the notice, a large number of people gathered in anticipation of an event which was almost unknown to the inhabitants.

The ice being open the candidate related a clear experience and was immersed. When we came up out of the water. Two men came forward and related what the Lord had done for their souls. We could not leave the water until fourteen happy converts were immersed in the same manner as our Saviour. Truly this was the Lord's work. Four or five hundred people surrounded the watery grave and it was wonderful to see the young converts going around among the people as they came out of the cold water! praising the Lord and exhorting others to come and embrace the Saviour. Surely this was the beginning of good days. The work of the Lord spread in every direction.³⁴

Perhaps for the first time, Crandall came to see the extent to which the evangelical ritual of the outdoor immersionist baptismal service could attract a huge crowd and effectively convey the essence of the "New Light-New Birth." As the choreographer of this public ritual Crandall's emphasis on the cognitive or theological dimensions of the faith was evident. After witnessing the baptismal candidates' testimonies of faith, and most likely

³² *Ibid.*, p. 87.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

a sermon or exhortation on believer's baptism, and the full immersion of fourteen people into the icy March waters of the Saint John River, the people left saying "the bible was altogether a new book to them."³⁵ Far from abandoning the ecstatic pietism of his New Light background, Crandall had effectively married an emphasis on the Bible with the ritualization of the Allinite conversion experience.³⁶ This synthesis represented not a decline in New Light piety, but rather a refocusing of the spirituality formed in the Great Awakening. The baptismal service had so profoundly changed the worldview of some of the participants that they now possessed a new framework with which to understand the Bible. Jarvis Ring, who would eventually become a lay preacher and then be ordained, commented that during this time Crandall preached "Abought Baptism And that By Immersion, And None But Believers, and Being formed into A Church."³⁷

Crandall's piety demanded that ecstatic religious experience must be evaluated or at least expressed in biblical terms. To varying degrees, this emphasis would characterize the Regular Baptists of New Brunswick. It was not that Crandall tried to devalue the importance of personal religious experience, but rather that he insisted it be ordered and biblical to insure that one's piety conform to the precepts of the scriptures.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 89. Although Crandall obviously got caught up in the religious enthusiasm of this revival in 1800, it is clear that by 1810 he would be far more careful about who he would immerse. Nevertheless, it is ironic that someone who would later be preoccupied about order and church structure in the search for social and religious acceptability was swept away in the frenzy of the revival.

³⁶ This emphasis on biblicism and baptism was one that would play out in the baptismal controversy discussed in chapter five. While neither Crandall, nor any other "Father" engaged in the printed debate, it is significant that he anticipated the nature of the controversy. Crandall seemed to understand that the Bible would be the Baptists' greatest ally in the polemical exchanges of the 1820s, 1830s, and 1840's.

³⁷ See Philip G. A. Griffin-Allwood, "The Sucksess of the Baptist denominatsion in New Brunswick: The Structure of Baptist Triumphalism in 'The Memoirs of the Rev. Jarvis Ring, Baptist Minister'" in Historical Papers 1992: Canadian Society of Church History, p. 45.

In May, 1800, Crandall returned to Waterborough, but so flooded was the area with the spring thaw that he “could not see how the Lord’s work could go forward,” since the people could not attend the meetings. However, word of the “Reformation” had spread like fire and Crandall encountered boat loads of people calling upon God for salvation, and the young evangelist for immersion. With “Bibles” in hand, they “were prepared to yield obedience to the Lord’s commands.” Crandall soon found himself surrounded by “the aged the middle aged. And the youths relating in the language of the Holy Scripture. What the Lord had done for their souls.”³⁸ Crandall was pleased to learn that these Christians were expressing, if not evaluating, their faith from a biblical perspective.

During the Waterborough revival, Elijah Estabrooks – an Allinite lay-preacher -- led the way to the waterside for “washing.” His short biography, printed in the Baptist Missionary Magazine of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, notes that it was during the time that he was “endeavouring to maintain the views [Allinite] which he then entertained.”

. . . his mind was seriously exercised with doubts, as to the correctness of some of his sentiments. He was sensible that they had been adopted without a due examination of the Scriptures. He proceeded therefore, to a prayerful and attentive investigation. This terminated in a full conviction, that salvation is wholly of grace, proceeding from the eternal purpose of Jehovah. On pursuing a similar inquiry relative to the ordinances of the Gospel, he came to the conclusion, that the immersion of a professed believer in Christ is the only scriptural baptism.”³⁹

Although Estabrooks’ biographer seems to suggest that the aging Allinite preacher had come to his mild Calvinistic Baptist views through the diligent study of the Bible, the available evidence suggests that Crandall had a crucial impact on this transformation.⁴⁰

³⁸ “Crandall’s Autobiography,” p. 88.

³⁹ “Memoirs of the Rev. Elijah Estabrooks” in BMM, April 1829.

⁴⁰ “Crandall’s Autobiography,” p. 88; Griffin-Allwood, “Jarvis Ring,” p. 45.

Crandall's "Baptist" revival was not without its critics. There were many New Lights who were not eager to adopt Crandall's immersionist plan. In fact, resistance to baptism by immersion, church order, and a more biblically-oriented faith persisted in some quarters of New Brunswick well into the nineteenth century. For example, Zebulon Estey - an aging New Light Congregationalist -, upon meeting Crandall, said "I see you are going to break up our church." Crandall replied, "Sir, if your church is build on Christ. The gates of hell cannot prevail against it." After revealing to Estey that he believed the Allinite church to be "not walking in the order of the gospel as commanded by Christ," Estey left saying that "his parents had given him up to the Lord in infancy and from that he would not depart." Crandall was astonished to discover the following morning that Estey "was the first to yield obedience to the commands of Christ." As he reflected on this occasion many years later, Crandall still recalled how "heaven and earth" had become one.

Such a day of the Lord's power was I believe rarely witnessed on earth. There was about thirty immersed at that time. This meeting did not break up until after the sun had gone down. and it was truly solemn. and delightful as well. to hear the praises of the Lord sung by great numbers of happy converts. returning home in their Boats from the solemn scene. The work of that day I can never forget. The clear setting sun. the broad expanse of smooth water spreading over a large extent of land. the serenity of the atmosphere. the delightful notes of the feathered songsters and the solemn tone of the hymns from the many happy voices. presented to me an emblem of the very presence of God. It seemed as though the very Heavens had come down to earth and I was on the brink of the eternal world.⁴¹

Crandall organized his revival with what he considered to be theological integrity, order, and yet still provided the context for ecstatic religious experience in the Allinite tradition. This would become a hallmark of Regular Baptist Christianity. What Crandall

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

probably did not understand, however, was that the baptismal ritual was a logical and experientially-consistent next step for many of these New Lights. Baptism by immersion was not a break with the past, but rather the fulfillment of a spirituality born in the First Great Awakening under Henry Alline. George Rawlyk has argued that some New Brunswickers had an overwhelming sense of millennial expectation that Christ would return and only those who had been immersed would be "ready."⁴² While this belief certainly influenced some residents along the Saint John River, it may not explain fully the sizable response to Crandall's New Light-Baptist gospel. David Bell is perhaps more persuasive when he argues that the crumbling "Loyalist consensus [in New Brunswick] at the end of two decades in the wilderness"⁴³ worked to the advantage of Baptist expansion at the turn of the nineteenth century. As the Anglican-dominated hierarchy fell, "Loyalists felt free to demonstrate that they had no more regard for the elite's Church of England than it did for them."⁴⁴ Crandall and other Baptist preachers came at a time when many believed they had nothing to lose by identifying with religious dissent.

Regardless of why New Brunswickers were so open to Crandall's version of the gospel, the impact of this revival on the young evangelist is clear. Having successfully led a major revival without the help of one of the other founders of the Maritime Regular Baptists, Crandall now had the necessary confidence and reputation to direct an often fledging Baptist presence in the colony. Crandall no longer itinerated simply as a junior member in the company of preachers such as the two Hardings and Edward Manning. From this time on he was their equal. He was a founder, a Patriarch, (though none of the

⁴² Rawlyk, *The Canada Fire*, p. 166.

⁴³ "Crandall's Autobiography," p. 85.

⁴⁴ D.G. Bell, *The Newlight Baptist Journals of James Manning and James Innis* (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot Press, 1984), p. 85.

early preachers would be called "Father" until the 1820s.) During the next few years, Crandall, working with other Baptist preachers, founded churches in Barrington and Norton and assisted in the ordinations of James Innis and Elijah Estabrooks.⁴⁵ As an indefatigable baptizer and traveling preacher he maintained the "Parrsboro-Kennebecasis" circuit, making Salisbury his "home base." However, he regularly took extended preaching tours in the Maritimes and Maine.⁴⁶

Confident of his call to preach and baptize converts, Crandall still struggled with his qualifications - especially his lack of formal education. Concern about an educated clergy became a matter of great discussion among Maritime Regular Baptists throughout most of the nineteenth century. Having been heavily influenced by Edward Manning and the Massachusetts' Regular Baptist leader, Isaac Case,⁴⁷ he embraced not only their mild Calvinism, but also their longing for social acceptability. Education was one way to achieve the latter. During his tour of Maine sometime in 1801 or 1802, Crandall went to Columbus, where he met "Elder Daniel Merritt a very learned holy humble minister of Jesus Christ."⁴⁸ As a published essayist and sermon writer, Merrill was known to Crandall through his publications. Securing a place to preach, Crandall was dismayed to learn that Merrill was scheduled to preach directly across the street at the same time.

⁴⁵ "Crandall's Autobiography," p. 90. James Innis and Elijah Estabrooks were two early nineteenth-century Regular Baptist ministers from New Brunswick.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp., 90 - 94. It is unfortunate, but the records from Crandall's church in Salisbury, and other churches he influenced in the general area, have not survived. This leaves a host of questions about him which cannot be answered, especially since Crandall wrote very little about his activities as a settled pastor.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.92. Isaac Case was a Regular Baptist evangelist from Maine who was committed to church order and who attempted to influence Maritime Baptists in this direction. See Rawlyk, *Ravished by the Spirit*, pp. 102, 117.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.92. Daniel Merrill, misspelled as Merritt by Crandall, was an important Regular Baptist leader in Maine and gave direction to Maritime Baptists as they embraced close communion in 1809. See I.E. Bill, *Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches*, pp. 35,41,45,48.

I thought it would have been better for me to have stayed at home for I felt this great man of Science and Literature would look upon me as a poor ignorant young man. But how agreeably was I surprised when I met him at once he appeared like a brother and father to me. He said he had given up his appointment and was coming to hear me. and I could not move him from his purpose. After the sermon he arose and spoke of my discourse in high terms. which greatly surprised me.⁴⁹

Not only did this “father figure” affirm the preaching ability of the young preacher, he also invited Crandall to assist him in a series of services sponsored by the area’s Baptist Association. When it came time for Crandall to preach, “the people began to weep and sob,” including Merrill. Indeed, the New Light ethos of his past remained firmly attached to Crandall so that even the people of Columbus, Maine, were deeply moved. Merrill explained his tears as an emotional response to answered prayer. Five years before this occasion, Merrill had prayed that “these people should have the gospel.” Crandall was God’s answer to his prayer, he contended, “and the sound of Salvation affected my heart.”⁵⁰

With his confidence boosted, Crandall mustered up enough courage to ask Merrill whether, if granted the opportunity, he should pursue formal education and training for the ministry. Merrill replied that “the classics were good in many respects, but he had not received one new idea from the knowledge of the languages.” He told Crandall to “Go on my brother . . . the Lord is with you.”⁵¹ This affirmation from a relatively well-educated “father” in the faith added to Crandall’s resolve to continue on in his present cause as a Baptist evangelist in the Maritimes. As Crandall recalled, “days spent in the company of this

⁴⁹“Crandall’s Autobiography,” p. 92.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.93.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

holy minister of Christ cleared and comforted my mind.”⁵² Crandall was increasingly able to see that the ecstatic piety of his New Light heritage could co-exist with the learned, educated, and theologically-aware perspective represented by Merrill. Indeed, it might be argued that Crandall’s experience in Columbus, Maine, solidified in his mind the necessity of sustaining a “balanced evangelicalism.”

Crandall’s “balanced evangelicalism” included experiential piety which was placed in tension with church order and mild Calvinism. For example, writing to Edward Manning in 1802, George Harding described Crandall’s preaching. “[He] stood before the congregation to preach his countenance imitated immortality and his tears that Rolled Down his Cheeks discovered the Desire of his soul and he had scarcely Began to speak when the house was filled with Cries and tears and praises to god.”⁵³ Crandall’s theological commitments were tested soon after his return from Maine. In 1804, Crandall and Edward Manning led a revival in the Onslow-Amherst area. Although baptizing sixteen, they encountered much pedobaptist opposition to the Baptist cause, “guns were fired” and “Bridges were partially taken up, to the peril of those who had to pass over them.”⁵⁴ These tensions – between the immersionists and the pedobaptists (which would be played out later, in a less violent manner, in the baptismal print controversy) – confirmed for Crandall, the importance of close communion principles. As he encountered more resistance to the Regular Baptist faith, he stiffened his resolve to stress the message of the New Birth, believer’s immersion,

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ David Britton, “Joseph Crandall: Preacher and Politician” in Robert S. Wilson (ed.) An Abiding Conviction: Maritime Baptists and Their World (Hantsport, N. S.: Lancelot Press, 1988), p. 112. See also J. M. Bumsted, “Crandall, Joseph” in DCB 7(1985): 180-181.

⁵⁴ J. M. Cramp, “History of the Maritime Baptists,” p. 81. AUA.

and the necessity for church structure. Herein is seen the integration of Crandall's head and heart, his cognitive commitments and his evangelistic zeal.

The implicit tension in Crandall's worldview – and in the Baptist constituency at large – was dramatically portrayed in the association's 1809 annual meeting in Cornwallis, Nova Scotia. While Harding declared his New Light attachment to open or "occasional" communion and freedom from strict church order, Crandall pled for close communionism and consistent church structures. It did not surprise anyone present that Harris Harding's introductory sermon based on Acts 13:2 argued that the association should "seek after and rely entirely upon that divine influence with which the apostles were favoured" as they determined the nature of church structures and the ministry. Harding begged them "not to be particular respecting external order or outward forms [close communion], which would all perish in the using."⁵⁵ He represented that dimension of the Regular Baptist tradition which would always choose the "heart," over the "head" and "love" over "ecclesiastical dogma." The discussion following the sermon centered around the role of the Bible and theological principles in religious life. One of the most ardent supporters of following the biblical "pattern" was Joseph Crandall who, along with T. S. Harding and James Manning, declared that the Bible's very specific commands were to be followed. Why call upon the Holy Spirit to direct and inspire these proceedings when he had inspired the Bible which clearly laid out – at least in their minds – the principles of "Calvinistic Baptist Close Communism." Although Harris Harding believed such an exclusive approach to church membership would be a "sin against love," the others, including Crandall, believed they were creating what was surely a "balanced evangelicalism."⁵⁶

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.94.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Assuming the role as the association's leading advocate of close communion, Crandall urged his fellow preachers, in the denomination's circular letter in 1810, not to grow weary in "obedience to the commands of the King and Head of Zion." In rhetorical fashion he wrote

Have we not been under the cloud of anti-Christian darkness, respecting the visibility of Christ's Kingdom? Have we not possessed an unchristian accommodating spirit towards those of our brethren in the visible Kingdom of Antichrist? Have we not by our disobedience to the laws of our King held up our brethren's hands in disobedience, by admitting them to commence with us?⁵⁷

Calling for a "pure" church where no "unwashed" person was admitted into membership or to communion, Crandall beseeched his "brethren" to stand firm on their principles, for they "ought to have new motives, new desires, new affections, and ought to show to the world around us that we are Christians."⁵⁸

If Crandall seemed almost militant in his call to "obedience," it was due to his own church's struggle with close communion. In 1809, some of his parishioners in the Baptist church at Salisbury had been chafing at the "narrow passage" through which one had to travel to achieve membership, given the church's new exclusive polity. So divided was Crandall's church over this issue that advice was sought from the association to settle the issue. The association responded by instructing the church to host a "day of fasting and prayer," and that "those brethren who stand opposed to the order of God's house be invited to attend." Secondly, it was voted that representatives of the association meet with the church at Salisbury and "advise, admonish and exhort, in meekness and in much love

⁵⁷ Minutes of the Baptist Association of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, 1810. AUA.; Cramp, "History of the Maritime Baptists," p. 115.

⁵⁸ Cramp, "History of the Maritime Baptists," p. 115.

those unwilling souls who refused to accept close communion.” The association declared that should these measures fail, the church should “exclude them.” However, it seems clear from the denomination’s statistics that the church did not impose strict discipline in 1810. In fact, Crandall, with the help of the New England Baptist Henry Hale,⁵⁹ led a revival from 1810 to 1812. In 1810 Salisbury reported only 46 members. By 1811 the number had grown to 83 with 110 reported the following year; It would seem that the crisis over the communion question did not come to a head until late 1813 or early 1814 when twenty-five members were formally excluded.

Crandall’s approach to communion stands in striking contrast to that of Harris Harding, who would not violate the New Light “ethic of love,” in 1809, in order to comply with the decision of the association. If people were more important to Harding than principles of church order, quite the opposite was true for Joseph Crandall.

The decline in Crandall’s Salisbury church by 1814 suggests that the shift to close communion cost him the loyalty of valuable members. In fact, David Bell has suggested that the move toward order and the Regular Baptist position caused a decline in most New Brunswick New Light Baptist churches.⁶⁰ By consciously attempting to distance himself and the churches under his influence from New Lightism -- although never really succeeding -- Crandall helped to erect a barrier which kept many Allinites from entering the Regular Baptist fold. A letter written to the “Rev’d Fathers in Christ” of the association from the Fredericton Regular Baptist Church in 1814 demonstrates clearly the contempt with which at least some Baptists held the New Lights. It is important to recognize that

⁵⁹Henry Hale, along with Merrill and Case, was instrumental in directing the Baptists in the Maritimes toward the close communion position. See I.E. Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches, pp. 30,35,47.

⁶⁰ Bell, Newlight Baptist Journals of James Manning and James Innis, p. 186.

while church records from the congregations Crandall served have not survived, the Salisbury preacher did have a long-standing relationship with the Fredericton church. One suspects that Crandall would have shouted a loud “Amen” to this letter.

We can but lament that our good, and we believe well-organized Baptist Society is so little known to our advantage in this province. The Dissenters in the Province are generally classed in two societies, say Methodists and New Lights. Not that we wish to speak reproachfully of either; but we know that the tenets and morals of many of the latter (among whom we have always had the misfortune to be classed) are so far from corresponding with his unerring word, and so derogatory to the Saviours Name and Merits, that we feel it our duty, as we are commanded to come out from among them, and touch not the unclean thing.⁶¹

By not convincing the New Lights that the Regular Baptists were the true inheritors of the Allinist revivalist heritage and instead seeking respectability, Baptists in New Brunswick like Crandall hindered their own numerical growth. Instead of trying to demonstrate to those in the New Light tradition that the Regular Baptist faith, with its emphasis on revival, conversion, and its expression in immersionist baptism, was a fair representation of Allinism, they sought to discredit the movement.

In his 1813 “Circular Letter,” published along with the association’s minutes, Crandall, in the style of an Old Testament prophet, proclaimed:

When we compare our sentiments and practice with the doctrine and conduct of Christ, and his Apostles, have we not cause to tremble before god and repent, and do our first works, lest he come and remove the candlestick [the light of the gospel]. Are there not many of us who do not hold fast the form of sound words, but substitute in place thereof the doctrines of carnal men?⁶²

According to Crandall, the Regular Baptists must not yield to the temptation to reestablish open communion. Ironically, in the same discourse, he railed against the poverty of

⁶¹ Records of the Regular Baptist Church, Fredericton, May 24 1814. AUA.

⁶² Minutes of the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Baptist Association, 1814. AUA.

ministers which led them to labour “in the field to gather food for their families, while almost all the duties of their Ministry are neglected” – a situation which was, in part, the result of close communion which reduced the number of donating members in Regular Baptist churches.⁶³ This interpretation gains additional credibility when Crandall’s situation is compared to Harris Harding’s. The Baptist church in Yarmouth grew numerically in this period, as it permitted the “great unwashed” to the communion table and openly embraced the New Light tradition. Furthermore, Harding and his family were well supported by the church. If Crandall had not been so insistent that church order and close communion be imposed upon his congregation, it is possible that church membership and financial support would not have been compromised.

If Crandall was unlike Harris Harding in matters of ecclesiastical polity, he did share the inability to cope with internal problems in the local church. As Crandall faced increasing conflicts within his churches at Salisbury and Sackville, he began to concentrate on itinerant preaching and, by 1818, provincial politics. Not gifted as a church administrator and “shepherd of the flock,” it was said of him by his good friend I.E. Bill – a leading second generation Regular Baptist preacher -- “that steady pastoral guidance, in connection with an individual church, was not his forte.”⁶⁴ In fact, in spite of the lack of church records which might reveal something of Crandall’s approach to the settled ministry, it would seem from the available evidence that the New Brunswick “Father” was most content when he assumed the role as a traveling evangelist. This was true for most of the first generation Regular Baptist preachers. It will be argued in the next chapter that Edward Manning, who was an early influence upon Crandall, was also happiest and most fulfilled as

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ I.E. Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches, p. 214.

the itinerant. All of these men's early ministry patterns involved preaching for only a short time in any given area. Once revival came to an end, or it was decided that the time was not right for the "harvest of souls," these early preachers would move on to another village. This approach did not give these men much exposure to the difficulties encountered in a settled ministry where the minister was often perceived by some as part of the church's problem. It was one thing to be a successful evangelist who impressed the crowds; it was yet another to carry on a long-term ministry facing the same people over long periods of time.

If Crandall sought to escape the drudgery of settled ministry through itinerant preaching, he also regarded political life as a diversion from preaching and tending his "flock." In 1818 Crandall was elected to the New Brunswick Legislature. Ingram Bill said of Crandall's political career that, "probably to him more than to any single individual, this Province stands indebted for the diffusion of correct sentiments regarding the matter of civil and religious liberty."⁶⁵ For more than one hundred years, Maritime Baptists viewed Crandall as a political advocate for human rights who was motivated by an equalitarian evangelical Baptist faith. However, David Britton's important 1988 study convincingly argues that Crandall not only remained silent in the Legislature during the 1818 -1822 period, he actually voted in favour of bills which may have limited civil liberties. Britton essentially portrays Crandall as one who was out of his element in the Legislature, and who did not even object when he was unseated in 1822 by a bill which prevented religious leaders from being elected to the assembly.⁶⁶ Although the sources for Crandall's post-1810 life are very limited, it is possible that his short and unremarkable political career was

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

⁶⁶ Britton, "Joseph Crandall: Preacher and Politician," pp. 110-126.

not just a way to escape the internal strife and stagnant growth pattern of his churches,⁶⁷ but also the means to achieving social and religious acceptability for himself and the Regular Baptists in New Brunswick. To Crandall, it was perhaps an avenue through which his denomination might improve its public image from being religious outsiders to that of religious insiders.

While Crandall may not have been an effective politician, one year after being unseated from the Legislature, it was clear that his abilities as a gifted evangelist had not waned. In fact, he led the greatest revival in the history of the Sackville church. On April 11, 1823, William Sears -- a little-known layman from the Sackville church -- reported in a letter to Edward Manning that as Crandall preached the revival:

. . . the Lord in his great mercy has of late seen meet to visit this town with a gracious downpouring of his holy Spirit. Since 18th January last assession to our Church have been numerous. Since that time 64 in number have been buried in the Cold water and received into the bosom of our Church and a good number more stand ready to come forward as soon as opportunity may offer. And the reformation is still increasing. The oldest persons in our place even those of Henry Aline's day say this exceeds all that ever they witnessed. It appears to be a General call to small and great . . . surely the tabernacle of God is with us. Jesus is riding in triumph through Sackville. We now see. Saints rejoicing, Backsliders returning and sinners crying what must I do to be saved. Our streets resound with praise and prayer. This causeth me to say with David, O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and his wonderful works to the children of men. Elder Crandall since last Sep. has in Peteticodiac and Sackville baptized about or upwards of 200 souls and his soul is still taking deep draughts into the spirit of Jesus. He is now . . . in his masters service. He preaches not himself but Jesus Christ the lord . . .⁶⁸

⁶⁷In 1810 Sackville and Salisbury reported 55 and 46 members respectively. Twelve years later they reported 41 and 58 respectively. These figures, taken from the minutes of the association, suggest that Crandall's work in his own pastorate was not particularly flourishing and that political life might have seemed to be a "way out" or diversion from ministry.

⁶⁸"William Sears to Edward Manning" 11 April, 1823, Sackville, NB, as quoted in Britton, "Joseph Crandall: Preacher and Politician," p. 126.

If anyone believed Crandall had jettisoned his ecstatic pietistic tradition in the Legislature, they now knew he was, perhaps, more committed to revivalistic Christianity than he had ever been. In 1822, the Sackville and Salisbury churches reported 41 and 58 members respectively. One year later Sackville boasted 150 members while Salisbury's numbers swelled to 128.⁶⁹ In fact, neither of his churches would witness such an "outpouring of the Spirit" until 1860. Crandall's revival had superseded, at least in Sackville, even that of Alline during the First Great Awakening, and Crandall had done so on his own terms as a Regular Baptist who insisted on close communion. His own brand of the gospel, including traumatic conversion within the confines of order, moderate Calvinism, and immersionist baptism combined to convulse his pastoral charge.

Crandall's commitment to evangelism and revival continued to characterize the rest of his ministry until his death in 1858. He was frequently invited by the Baptist Home Missionary Board to go on extended "missionary tours." In 1826, he was sent to Prince Edward Island to assess and promote the Baptist cause. The Island was an especially difficult area of the Maritimes for Regular Baptists to evangelize. The Scottish Baptist presence, personified by Alexander Crawford -- who had earlier opposed the experiential evangelicalism of Harris Harding -- was dubious of the experiential nature of mainland Baptist revivalistic piety and disagreed vehemently with its polity. Furthermore, the radical evangelical end of the religious spectrum was enthusiastically filled by the McDonaldites who were known for their ecstatic piety and unrelenting evangelism. Some in the New

⁶⁹Minutes of the Baptist Association of New Brunswick, 1823. AUA.

Brunswick Baptist Association wondered whether there was a place for the Regular Baptists on the Island at all.⁷⁰

During his preaching tour which began early in September 1826, Crandall presented his own brand of the gospel in Bedeque, Tryon, Cape Traverse, Crapaud, North River, Charlottetown, Cross Roads, and on the road to St. Peter's, among other places.⁷¹ Crandall was an appropriate choice for the Missionary Board to send, because his mild Calvinism would be potentially more appealing to people from the Scottish Presbyterian and Baptist traditions than the often disorderly evangelicalism represented by someone like Harris Harding. Crandall reported that wherever he went, he "was treated with attention and respect." Believing that many "of the inhabitants of the island appear to be ripe to receive the pure gospel and ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ," the New Brunswick evangelist witnessed a number of conversions through his preaching and "buried in the watery grave a Mr. B. and wife" in Tryon and later "three happy converts" in Bedeque.⁷² Following his forty-six day tour of the island colony, Crandall concluded:

I can assure you, dear brethren, and all the friends and supporters of true gospel missionaries, that this Island presents a field white unto harvest. The people expressed great gratitude to the Society for sending me to see them, and would be very thankful to be visited again. They contributed to your funds the sum of seven pounds.⁷³

⁷⁰ See the much-neglected study, David Weale, "The Ministry of the Reverend Donald McDonald on Prince Edward Island 1826 - 1867: A Case Study Examination of the Influence and Role of Religion within Colonial Society" (Ph.D. Thesis, Queen's University, 1976).

⁷¹ I.E. Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches, pp. 663-665.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 664.

Even though the religious culture of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia was, arguably, very different from that of Prince Edward Island, Crandall was still able to conclude that there was room or demand for a significant Regular Baptist presence on the Island.

During his long ministry, Crandall became something of a specialist in “Home Mission” work. Consistent with the pattern of the travelling preacher which he established in his twenties, Crandall continued to preach on the Baptist periphery until well into his eighties. In a very telling letter to the Christian Visitor on 1 February 1850, the aging “Patriarch” chronicled how he left home on 27 November 1849, “Although I knew it was too late in the season,” because he had “promised [to] return to those destitute regions of the north [New Brunswick].” Accompanied by his daughter, Crandall arrived in Chatham on the last day of November. Missing the ferry, they made their way through the “floating ice” in a “scow.” After riding horseback for the rest of the day, they spent the weekend in a “Catholic tavern.” On Monday, 3 December, the father-daughter team rode through snowdrifts to the Bathurst ferry. After arriving in Bathurst, Crandall was invited to preach in the Wesleyan chapel, where the “house was filled and Lord’s gracious presence was manifested.” Believing that this “is a great field for Gospel labor” they nevertheless left on Monday, 10 December, for Dalhousie. By Thursday they reached their destination, having “nearly perished” because of the bitter northern New Brunswick cold. After preaching in an old school house, Crandall recorded that his “friends” rented a larger venue to accommodate the growing crowds. So encouraged by the response was the itinerant that he declared, “here is an extensive door opened for preaching the Gospel, I expect to organize a Church here soon.”

From Dalhousie, Crandall preached at Point Lin, Restigouche, and Campbellton until a Mr. Parkes “conducted me across the river into Lower Canada to Brother Moor’s,”

where he preached for at least two weeks. During his time in "Lower Canada," he addressed the "disputing among the Brethren" in Brother Moor's church and was able to achieve the "Union of the Church." In addition, two converts came forward as candidates for baptism. Crandall promised to immerse them upon returning from his trip to Dalhousie.⁷⁴

After six months of preaching in northern New Brunswick, the Baptist Patriarch assessed one of his longest tours on record in a report to the Christian Visitor.

I have been absent from my home six months all but six days. I have preached over one hundred sermons, and traveled about six hundred miles. I worked in the following places, Buctouche, Richibucto, Bathurst, Bell-down, Blackland, Dalhousie-point, and several other places. There is about one hundred and forty miles from Miramichi to Bathurst on the seashore which I have not visited. All this vast area is destitute of Baptist preaching, mine has not been the means of any great revivals, but all denominations have been aroused to sustain their own cause. I believe hundreds have been searching their Bibles for what I am sure they will never find, infant sprinkling. I think the Holy Spirit is moving on the hearts of many. The people in the parts where I have traveled are anxious that I should return to them again, which I have promised to do after the meeting of the Eastern Association.⁷⁵

Crandall "the baptizer" continued to foster Baptist influence in New Brunswick well into the 1850s. Never content to embrace the regularly patterned existence of a settled pastor, he remained the free-spirited itinerant of his twenties -- preaching and imposing his brand of the gospel on the province's Regular Baptist constituency.⁷⁶ Indeed, many Baptists, well into the nineteenth century, were especially attracted to itinerants and their preaching because they saw in these men the personification of their own revivalistic piety.

⁷⁴ The above is based on Crandall's letter to the editor, I. E. Bill, CY, 1 February 1850.

⁷⁵ CY, 28 April 1854.

⁷⁶ See the letters in CY, 31 May 1850; 30 August 1850; 20 September 1850; 1 November 1850; 30 April 1856. And the CM, 29 October 1847.

While Crandall was passionately committed to evangelism and church order, he was also an advocate of a mild Calvinism which was open to revivalistic Christianity. In fact, it would seem that he, along with Edward Manning (as will be seen in the next chapter), tried to impose biblicism and a common systematic theological structure on the Maritime Regular Baptists. The close communion Calvinism of New England Baptists such as Isaac Case and Daniel Merrill did not have an impact on the worldview of Crandall and his flock at the expense of their essentially New Light piety. Nevertheless, it must be conceded that some New Lights did not easily accept the strict polity and church structure of the Regular Baptist tradition.

Near the end of his life, Crandall had no reservation about identifying himself with the "Fathers," even if some of them represented quite different characterizations of themselves and their denomination (such as Harris Harding and Joseph Dimock whose New Light heritage was proudly displayed throughout their lives). According to Crandall, the "Fathers" were "all of one mind, united together in the same judgment."⁷⁷ His sense of unity with the founders was a common perception among many Maritime Regular Baptists - - Crandall's portrait was commissioned by the Convention churches along with the other Fathers in 1849.⁷⁸ Four years later, the New Brunswick Baptists "received from the hand of an Artist" in Saint John "a daquereotype likeness [lithograph]" of Crandall because he was exclusively "our venerable father."⁷⁹

⁷⁷ CV, 30 April 1856.

⁷⁸ E. M. Saunders, History of the Baptists of the Maritime Provinces (Halifax, NS: John Burgoyne, 1902), pp. 328 - 329.

⁷⁹ CV, 4 February 1853.

Although sharing a common spiritual heritage with the early New Light preachers, Crandall quite consciously asserted his doctrinal “purity” throughout most of his ministry. During the last decade of his life, he wrote to the Christian Visitor,

I concluded my remarks by giving my present views of the doctrine which I have held for up-wards of sixty years. The doctrine of Divine Sovereignty, is a mystery beyond the comprehension of men or angels, but it is revealed to redeemed sinners, through the mystery of the Holy Spirit. This mystery is called the Lord’s secret, and it is with them that fear Him, and he will shew them His covenant. Christ’s incarnation, ministry, miracles, sufferings, death, resurrection, and his exhalation on the throne of His Glory, - the regeneration and sanctification of the redeemed by God the Holy Ghost, producing godly living, and a preparation for heaven. His work of grace in the hearts of the sinner, is evinced by separation from the world, and by obedience to all the Lord’s commands. With these sentiments I am going into eternity, having no righteousness of my own to plead, but desiring to come to my Saviour, as I first came, when the Lord convinced me of my sin and danger, and extended to me his pardoning and justifying grace through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ!⁸⁰

Not only did Crandall seek to demonstrate his own orthodoxy, but he also attempted to further his own brand of the gospel, which married the “New Light-New Birth” with his simplified understanding of reformed doctrine. He wanted succeeding generations to embrace a piety which gave equal weight to experience and doctrine. He longed to be the model for New Brunswick Regular Baptist life. In a letter to I.E. Bill, in 1856, he wrote that he had read widely during his life. Relying not just upon the Bible, he boasted that he had read “Dr. Gills complete body of Divinity, Andrew Fuller, the life and Sermons of Whitefield, the writings of Abraham Booth . . . the Life of Judson and Carey.”⁸¹ What is important to note about Crandall’s list -- his philosophy and history volumes notwithstanding -- is that most of the theology he read was written by moderate Calvinists

⁸⁰ CV, 30 April 1856; See also CV, 24 December 1852.

⁸¹ CV, 30 April 1856.

who sought to balance their doctrine and the "Great Commission," theology and evangelism. This had been a preoccupation for Crandall through much of his life. He may not have been altogether successful in his quest for integration; the second generation of Regular Baptist leaders, however, continued to address the issue and leaders such as Charles Tupper and I. E. Bill would further the quest for a "balanced evangelicalism."

Without his longevity, itinerant preaching, and "New Light-New Birth" tradition inherited from Allinism, Joseph Crandall would not have been the "Baptist Patriarch of New Brunswick." While it is clear that he placed his own theological stamp on Regular Baptist evangelicalism in his adopted province, the ecstatic piety of his youth fueled his efforts to expand his denomination. It is ironic that the Allinite New Light fire, which he tried to extinguish in New Brunswick, was the very thing which brought him success as a preacher and allowed him to become a "Father" of the denomination.

When Joseph Crandall died on 20 February, 1858, he left a legacy that would endure. For the previous twenty to thirty years he had been known affectionately as "Father Crandall" because, as his obituary writer noted, "he was emphatically the spiritual Father of the family of Baptist Churches in New Brunswick."⁸²

⁸² CV, 24 February 1858.

Chapter Four

Edward Manning and the Search for a Balanced Evangelicalism

Edward Manning was one of the most important first-generation Baptist Patriarchs in the Maritimes.¹ At his death, it was recorded in the Christian Messenger that “the history of his life is the history of the rise and progress of the Baptist interest in these Provinces.”² So daunted by his contribution to Maritime religious life were his colleagues, that no one was willing to assume the awesome task of writing the standard “memoir” of his life. Although Manning began his preaching career as an ardent follower of the Allinite tradition, he came to regard this “enthusiastic” tradition as implicitly antinomian, and by 1800 sought the necessary corrective of Regular Baptist church order and polity. Nevertheless, he was unable to shake the spirituality inherited from the First Great Awakening in Nova Scotia. In fact, his internal battle between radical evangelical piety and ecclesiastical structures came to characterize not only his life and ministry, but also the two solitudes within the Maritime Regular Baptist denomination during the first half of the nineteenth century. Superficially, it would seem that Manning had successfully shed his New Light past in favour of Regular Baptist close communionism. However, an

¹ In spite of the rich primary sources, surprisingly little has been published on Edward Manning. See Barry M. Moody, “Manning, Edward” in DCB 7 (1985): 611-614; Barry M. Moody, “From Itinerant to Pastor: The Case of Edward Manning (1767 - 1851).” Paper presented to the Canadian Society of Church History, Montreal 1981. Also useful are the biographical sketches in I. E. Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches of the Maritime Provinces (Saint John, NB: Barnes and Company, 1880), pp. 129-141; E.M. Saunders, History of the Baptists of the Maritime Provinces (Halifax, NS: John Burgoyne, 1902), pp. 175-178. The primary sources relating to Manning are massive. His personal diary which spans from the early 1810’s to the mid-1840’s and a collection of over eight hundred personal letters, sent to Manning, represent some of the most complete and insightful sources available for this period of Regular Baptist history. All of these are located in the AUA. The magnitude of his influence and the voluminous nature of his surviving papers have sent even the most courageous historians running in the opposite direction.

examination of his piety reveals many beliefs and practices in keeping with the Allinite tradition. This interpretation attempts to moderate George Rawlyk's contention that "If any one individual was responsible for the significant downplaying of the New Light influence in the Maritime Baptist tradition, it was Edward Manning. Reacting violently against his own New Light ... past, Manning did everything in his power to ensure that the New Light legacy would atrophy into dark oblivion."³ While Rawlyk clearly perceived Manning's desire to be set free from the antinomian tyranny of New Lightism, it must be underscored that Manning was only partly successful in "purifying" himself and his denomination of Allinism.⁴

Edward Manning was born on 16 October 1766 in Ireland, the third son of Peter Manning and Nancy Carroll. The family migrated to Nova Scotia in 1769 or 1770 (during the settlement period of the New England Planters) either directly from Ireland, or after a short stay in Philadelphia. Although rooted in the Roman Catholic tradition, Peter Manning's family was at least nominally Protestant by the 1770s. In 1776 Peter Manning murdered his neighbour, the step-father of the Reverend John Payzant. He was tried and hanged for this crime. Although Edward Manning never wrote about this event, which occurred when he was ten years old, one suspects that the shame born by the family must have been at times intense. Manning certainly seems to have been uncomfortable speaking or writing about it.⁵

² Moody, "Manning, Edward," *DCB* 7(1985):614.

³ G.A. Rawlyk, *Ravished by the Spirit: Religious Revivals, Baptists and Henry Alline* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984), p.87.

⁴ What follows is not an heroic attempt to write the biography of Edward Manning but rather an effort to highlight the nature of the Patriarch's piety, ministry, and wider contributions to religious life in an effort to see if his New Light revivalist heritage was essentially jettisoned or remained significantly intact throughout his life.

⁵ Moody, "Manning, Edward," p. 611.

As Barry Moody has pointed out, very little is known about the Manning family during those years immediately following the murder.⁶ However, it is confirmed that Edward Manning did meet Henry Aline at a young age. This encounter with Aline was a formative first step in Edward Manning's religious development, an experience that remained with him for the rest of his life.

My first awakening was when I was about ten years of age, in the year of our Lord 1776, by hearing that man of God, the late Henry Aline, pray at my father's house. I will remember his addressing me, though but a child, and the tears dropping from his face upon mine, while he exhorted me to flee from the wrath to come. But though much affected at the time, I soon, to my shame, shook it off, and continued very thoughtless till the age of twenty-two. Though at seasons during that period convictions would return and I would feel unhappy in view of death, judgment and eternity.⁷

Although his actual conversion took place twelve years later, it is clear that Manning had already come to believe that New Lightism represented "vital religion," and that only through an ecstatic "New Birth" experience would his soul find rest. During his adolescence and teenage years, he claimed to live a "wicked life." In his sixties, he once remarked "the thought of those days fills me with grief! they were spent in sin."⁸ However, it would seem that his life and behaviour were not unusual for the time. It was standard, in late eighteenth-century and nineteenth century conversion narratives, to overstate one's "sinfulness" so that the moral bankruptcy of humanity might be highlighted and God's grace clearly seen.⁹

Manning's conversion in 1789 fundamentally altered his worldview and changed the course of his life (as it had for Harris Harding and Joseph Crandall). During a revival led by

⁶ *Ibid.*; Bill, *Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches*, p. 129.

⁷ G. A. Rawlyk, *New Light Letters and Songs* (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot Press, 1983), p. 287.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 287; "Edward Manning Diary," 2 November, 1832. AUA.

John Payzant on 26 April, Manning observed "several young converts confessing their Lord and Master" and his "heart was broken." So overcome with emotion was Manning that he began to weep aloud. He determined to seek after God for salvation. "I am determined, if I am lost at last - I am determined to go to hell begging for mercy."¹⁰ During this classic case of "conviction of sin," for four days he realized his total moral inadequacy before God to the point that he thought he would never be converted.

I endured much horror of mind until the evening of the 29th of the same month, when I attended a prayer meeting where I thought the Lord was present to heal, but that there was no hope for me. I was in a most awful state, and thought I was literally sinking into hell. Then I saw the Justice of the Almighty in my eternal condemnation, a most astonishing change having taken place in my views of that justice. If I ever loved any object, either then or since, it was the eternal justice of God. It appeared to me that I could not but love it, even though it proved my eternal condemnation. The view was overwhelming. I was lost for a season to time-things, and when I came to my recollection, God, and all creatures appeared different to me from what they ever did before. An indescribable glory appeared in every thing.¹¹

At some point during this time of spiritual searching, a Christian neighbour gave Edward Manning one of Aline's hymns which, Manning observed, "set forth my condition as it really was." The verses epitomized his predicament.

O hardened, hardened heart of mine
That loads me with distress
And doth like Iron fetters bind
My soul from happiness

O was there ever wretched on Earth
In such a State as I
Exposed to everlasting death
Unwilling yet to fly

⁹ Consult Jerald C. Brauer, "Types of Puritan Piety" in Church History 56 (1987): 39 - 58.

¹⁰ Rawlyk, New Light Letters and Songs, p. 287.

¹¹ Ibid.

Mount Sinai's Thunders doth not wake
Me from this Stupid frame
Nor can the love of Jesus brake
My Soul unto a flame

The greatest grief that I endure
Or trials that I find
Is that I am distressed no more
With this unfeeling mind

I mourn because I cannot mourn
And grieve because not grieved
I think I long from sin to turn
Yet fear I am deceived

Great God Receive me as I am
And let me See thy face
And all my heart and soul in flame
With thy Redeeming grace¹²

As George Rawlyk has rightly pointed out, Manning could identify very well with the first five verses, but he still did not have the assurance of salvation expressed in the sixth verse. Such eternal certainty did not come to Manning until one month later. On 25 May 1789, a thanksgiving day for the renewed health of George III, he made his way to Horton in the company of friends. However, he experienced “a great solemnity” of his “spirit” as he contemplated the “miserable state the world was in” and the reality of “hell.” In his perplexed state his mind turned to Harris Harding -- who had been so popular with the young people in the area -- and he began to weep and cry uncontrollably reflecting upon Christians and non-Christians alike. Finally Manning experienced a “New Light-New Birth.”¹³

My mind turned upon God: - an inquiry arose in my breast, whether, it could be possible that God would be infinitely condescending, or could be

¹² G. A. Rawlyk, The Canada Fire: Radical Evangelicalism in British North America 1775 - 1812 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), p. 80

¹³ Rawlyk, New Light Letters and Songs, p. 287.

possessed of such a nature as to have mercy upon me. I immediately discovered, that it was possible. At this discovery my whole soul was set on fire. I cried out, how loud I cannot tell. I do not recollect what expressions came to my mind, or whether there were any or not. But this I know, my soul was wrapt up in God's eternal love. I felt nothing but that glory.¹⁴

As Manning was "wrapped up in God" he cried out in spiritual ecstasy. Understanding this event, Joseph Bailey, "an eminent [New Light] Christian," came up to Manning to hear the young convert say, "my soul is melted with love to God."¹⁵ Manning was so exhausted by the experience that he could not even lift his head from his horse's neck. As the two men continued on their trip to Horton, Manning shouted "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty" because he could now see through his converted soul that "the whole earth is full of thy glory."¹⁶

In typical New Light verse, in the style of Henry Alline, Edward Manning wrote the following gospel song as a declaration of the spiritual freedom and victory he had experienced in conversion.

1

I've found my Soul Deliver'd
My Joys are from on High,
By God I'm highly favoured
I feel his coming nigh
He's brought me from destruction
And undertook my Cause
From Sin Death and Affliction
My ransom'd Soul he draws.

2

Ah' draws me where or whether
I feel a warm desire

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 287 - 88.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 289.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

My Soul Aspires tither
Up in the Car of Fire
I see my Foes A Falling
My God he goes before
I hear his Spirit calling
Come thread the peacefull Shore.

3

I see all Heaven engag'd
And God within me Reigns
Which makes my Foes enraged
That I have left my Chains
I've left your Dismal world
and call my God my All
While your in Darkness lur'd
Upon this Earthly Ball.

4

Within one theres a fire
That burns with Rapid flame
And with a Pure Desire
Cries Worthy is the Lamb-
Yea Worthy Thou art forever
For thou wast slain for me
And I obtain the favour
To know thy Love is free.¹⁷

Manning's New Birth, according to George Rawlyk, was "the defining evangelical moment of his long and often tortuous religious life."¹⁸ Although he would seek to jettison much of his New Light heritage during his life, Manning, like Joseph Crandall, would continue to advance the New Light-New Birth paradigm well into the nineteenth century. In his gospel song, Manning assured the reader of God's immanence in such phrases as, "I feel his coming nigh," "I hear his spirit calling," "God within me Reigns." God's saving grace is found in expressions such as, "I've found my Soul Deliver'd," "He's brought me

¹⁷ Rawlyk, *The Canada Fire*, pp. 83 - 84.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

from destruction,” “My ransom’d Soul he draws,” “Come thread the peacefull Shore,” and “thou wast slain for me.” With such a rich ecstatic experience, coupled with absolute eternal certainty, Manning could declare “God within me Reigns/which makes my Foes enraged.” It was Manning’s hope that as other people sang this song, assurance of salvation would become theirs.¹⁹

Soon after his conversion, Manning joined the New Light Congregational Church in Cornwallis under the leadership of John Payzant, the stepson of the man his father killed. As Manning’s early days of post-conversion enthusiasm were enjoyed “among the professors of religion in that communion,” the themes of his New Birth which he had so compellingly woven into his gospel song became truths he felt compelled to preach (as Henry Alline, Harris Harding and Joseph Crandall had done). He wrote, “My happiness was . . . greatly integrated by an almost continual impression that I must engage in preaching the gospel.”²⁰ From that point he began the process of “testing his talents” and he prayed publicly and exhorted the people in Falmouth, Windsor, Newport, Horton and Cornwallis. Soon not content with being an assistant, Manning began to itinerate with Thomas Handley Chipman, going to Chester around 1790.

Over the next four years Manning preached at Onslow (1791), Ragged Islands (1792) and along the Saint John River (1793). Writing to Thomas Bennett from Onslow on 19 April 1791, he reported that a small revival had broken out in the settlement with “the outpouring of God’s Spirit upon the inhabitants thereof.” The young evangelist found three categories of people in the revival: those who “found the Lord to be their everlasting portion;” those who “have taken up with something short” whom he feared will “eternally

¹⁹ See Rawlyk’s suggestion in *Ibid.*

²⁰ J. M. Cramp, “A History of the Maritime Baptists,” p. 54.

punish;" and those seekers who "are groaning for liberty."²¹ He had experienced and witnessed in others, to varying degrees, all of these stages which often culminated in "young christians leaning upon their dear Jesus, going hand in hand to glory."²²

In 1792 Manning joined Harris Harding and became an active participant in the New Dispensation Movement which had taken Allinite anti-formalism to such an extreme that it came to reject all church order and to embrace a dualism that led to antinomian extremes. Sometime during that year, while John Payzant was in Onslow establishing a New Light Congregational Church, many in his congregation in Cornwallis began to fan the flames of the New Dispensation. Upon Payzant's return he found his people in dismay and deeply divided.²³ He recorded:

James and Edward Manning were sent by the new party, who came to the church meeting, and begun to dispute, and condemn the Church Rules, and say that all orders were done away, and that the Bible was a dead letter, and they would preach without it and such like things. The Pastor [Payzant] got up and told them that no person for the futer should be allowed to speak in Church meetings that did not walk in its Rules, for we did not dispute its Rules; but them that aposed them. It appeared that Ep' [Edward Manning] in perticular, was insinuating these Eronious Sentiments in yong people minds. So that a young woman by the Nam of A: B: wrote to another, that they had got a new dispensation this fantastical notion soon spread from town to town and many adopted this new Sc[h]eme.²⁴

Leading this new "scheme" were Edward Manning and his older brother James.

²¹ Rawlyk, New Light Letters and Songs, p. 291; Cramp, "A History of the Maritime Baptists," p. 54.

²² Rawlyk, New Light Letters and Songs, p. 291.

²³ Brian C. Cuthbertson (ed.), The Journal of the Reverend John Payzant (1749 - 1834) (Hantsport, N. S. : Lancelot Press, 1981), p. 6.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 47.

While much has been written about the New Dispensation Movement itself,²⁵ insufficient attention has been given to why Edward Manning fled from the movement after being involved for fewer than two years. In answering this query, the sequence of events in Manning's life are crucial. In the midst of the "movement" in Cornwallis, he began to preach in New Brunswick along the Saint John River. Writing to his brother from Kingsclear on 20 May, 1793, he reported that "nearly seventy souls (if not more) have found God to be all in all and truly live in open pastures."²⁶ By 10 October, he had returned to Nova Scotia with a decidedly increased respect for church order and "rules." As he led revivals in the communities along the Saint John River, it is almost inconceivable that he would not have learned of a break-away New Light group from an Allinite society called the "Hammondites." A group of five extended families, this religious sect, under the leadership of John Lunt, advocated casual sexual encounters among the "lambs" as a religious ritual without sin. Lunt was eventually charged with "rape committed on the body of Sarah Garrison."²⁷ Having witnessed the extremes of Lydia Randall in Cornwallis who had declared that all sexual relations, even within marriage, were unacceptable to God, coupled with the chaos that accompanied the movement's extreme antiformalism, Manning had apparently decided to plot a course for himself that would attempt to integrate the revivalist tradition of Henry Aline to a more orderly approach to church life.

²⁵ For the New Dispensation Movement consult G. A. Rawlyk, Ravished By the Spirit, pp. 81 - 85, 100-101; D. G. Bell, New Light Baptist Journals of James Manning and James Innis (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot Press, 1984) pp. 14 - 20, 185 - 86, 189 -90.

²⁶ Rawlyk, New Light Letters and Songs, p. 291.

²⁷ See Bell, pp. 80 - 83, 142 - 145. The legal proceedings began on 25 June 1793. On 19 August 1833 Manning reflected in his diary on those early days of the new Dispensation Movement: "heard last night of the death of Mr. J. Rand Sen'r who tho' an excentric man a professor of religion about 41 or 42 years ago under my poor ministry, and partook of the evils that time were prevalent in the corrupt system of their day that was particular in this country, and that my animal was poisoned with."

It was with renewed commitment to a more orderly New Lightism that Edward Manning assumed the pastoral leadership of the church at Cornwallis, Payzant having fled to Liverpool to escape the New Dispensation Movement. Manning was ordained on 19 October 1795, even though "At this time a great flood of immorality crept in among professors [of religion], which shocked me very much."²⁸ During his first winter as pastor, Manning's church experienced revival, but he was not content to remain settled. He, together with his brother James, embarked on a tour, in the spring, that took him to New Brunswick and Maine.²⁹ Although cautious of antinomian extremes, Manning's ministrations were characterized by one Maine resident, a "Mr. Jones," as "religious phrenzy" with prayers "bellowed out with the fury of a mad man."³⁰ Furthermore, Jones charged the Manning brothers, "ignorant and unlearned men," "with endeavoring to sow dissension [sic] in the church."³¹ Undaunted, the missionary brothers continued to preach their ecstatic New Light gospel in Maine and New Brunswick with remarkable success. Indeed, it would seem that as early as 1795, Edward Manning had come to realize (as Harris Harding would later do) that he could avoid difficulties in his own church by assuming the role of the itinerant and reinvigorate his own piety by leading revivals.³² As Barry Moody has so persuasively argued, Manning would always be more content touring as an evangelist than being a settled pastor.³³

²⁸ Cramp, "A History of the Maritime Baptists," p. 56.

²⁹ James Manning died in 1818. See D.G. Bell (ed.), The Newlight Baptist Journals of James Innis and James Manning.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 57.

³¹ Ibid.

³² During this trip to New Brunswick, Manning was arrested for preaching without a license.

³³ A point made repeatedly by Moody in "From Itinerant to Pastor".

During the 1796-1797 period, Manning became increasingly uncomfortable with the Allinite compromise of baptizing infants by "sprinkling" and converts by "immersion." As a New Light he had agreed with Henry Alline that the sacraments were "non-essential," and so proceeded to serve both Baptist New Lights and Pedobaptist New Lights in his "mixed" Cornwallis congregation. However, during his 1795 trip to Maine he recorded:

I was called to administer the ordinances of baptism; I had sprinkled, but never baptized, and I had never seen a person immersed. It became a question of great moment to me, -Was I a proper administrator? However, I went forward and baptized as I was required to do.³⁴

In spite of his willingness to "sprinkle" on this occasion, "the propriety of infant baptism" continued to plague Manning's conscience. His preoccupation with the baptismal issue is all the more curious since, to that point, he had not witnessed an outdoor believer's baptismal service. At the meeting of New Light preachers in June, 1797, Manning and others discussed "the desirableness of forming an Association,"³⁵ in a desperate attempt to distance themselves from the New Dispensation and its extravagances. Perhaps more important for Manning's spiritual and ministerial development was the baptismal service which was central to the occasion. Several years later he reflected:

There were two candidates for immersion, and some who desired to be sprinkled. On the Lord's day a large number attended at our baptizing, and Father Chipman, with his usual solemnity, administered the sacred rite. Sacred it was indeed to me. I was then and there brought to bow to the authority of the god-man, our Law-giver and King. I was quite overcome. I could trifle no longer with my convictions, but told brother James, on whose opinion I leaned, that those who had brought their children to be sprinkled must take them away, for that I should never sprinkle another, old or young, while I lived.³⁶

³⁴ Cramp, "A History of the Maritime Baptists," p.58.

³⁵ *Ibid.* See the discussion in chapter two.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

What was so powerful about witnessing immersionist baptisms that would lead Manning to proclaim so dogmatically that he would “never sprinkle another”? Although his recorded thoughts on this transition are quite limited, it needs to be pointed out that since the New Birth was the defining religious movement of his life it stands to reason that immersionist baptism, which would become the central religious ritual for him, would be related to conversion. Since believer’s baptism by immersion was the ritualization of the “New Light - New Birth” experience, it was logical for Manning to embrace it as an ordinance consistent with his own tradition.

I made my mind known to the brethren, and it was agreed by brother Chipman and brother James that I should visit Granville and there be baptized. I did so, and received the ordinance at the hands of brother Chipman.³⁷

It was appropriate that Thomas Handley Chipman perform the “sacred rite” because he, more than any of the “Fathers,” advocated immersionist baptism and pushed his colleagues in the direction of the Baptist position. Furthermore, it is very possible that Manning (like Crandall) regarded immersionist baptism as a means to “wash away” the antinomianism of New Lightism gone awry. In this regard he differed from Harris Harding who accepted the connection between conversion and believer’s baptism by immersion, but rejected the notion that the ritual represented a dramatic break from the past.

Upon his return to Cornwallis following his baptism, Manning came to regret not being baptized by immersion among his own people. It is possible that he had chosen the easier route of being baptized in Granville because the residue of the New Dispensation still

remained in his congregation. However, “any unpleasant feelings” about his baptism subsided “in a revival which almost immediately followed,” where “love and joy filled all hearts.” About seventy persons were converted and most of these new believers were swept away in Manning’s enthusiasm for immersion and were “buried” with Christ “by baptism into death,” and “raised up from the dead by the glory of the father, even so they also should walk in newness of life.”³⁷ This revival helped him demonstrate to his people the centrality of baptism by immersion in revival. Although his congregation was not prepared to exclude the “great unwashed” from membership, the usefulness of baptism in triggering conversions was unmistakable. This Cornwallis revival was part of a series in the “Great Reformation” (1790-1810) which had also affected Harding’s Yarmouth congregation. Immersionist baptism came to represent for many people the “New Light - New Birth” tradition as it was grafted onto the tree of Allinist spirituality.

By 1798, Edward Manning had become a leading New Light Baptist preacher from the grassroots of society who had been converted, ordained, immersed and proven to be an effective revivalist. Turning his back on his New Dispensationalist past, he attempted to direct the New Light movement into a more balanced form of evangelicalism where ecstatic religious experience would always be tempered by order, and by the work of duly approved religious leaders and preachers. In 1798 he was confident, young (only thirty-two), intelligent, and prepared to make his mark on the world. He would become an increasingly important architect to the fledgling denomination to which he was giving leadership.

³⁷ Cramp, “History of the Maritime Baptists,” p. 58 - 59. Moody has argued in “From Itinerant to Pastor” and in his DCB article on Manning that he was baptized in 1798 but Cramp suggests it was in 1797.

³⁸ Cramp, “A History of the Maritime Baptists,” p.59.

Manning was a key player at the second annual meeting of "The Baptist and Congregation Association" at which Thomas Handley Chipman was chosen to prepare the plan of a new association for discussion at the following year. Modeling the plan on the Danbury Association of New England, Chipman proposed that the association be strictly Baptist and that it exclude those ministers and churches which practiced infant "sprinkling," although those congregations which permitted open communion were extended membership.³⁹ The plan was adopted on 23-24 June, 1800. Payzant and subsequently the Liverpool congregation were excluded from the new Nova Scotia Baptist Association. Manning opposed this move, as did Harris Harding, because he felt it dealt unfairly with their New Light Congregational churches. Nevertheless, the "plan" was not changed and most of the New Light pedobaptist clergy eventually accepted the Baptist mode of believer's baptism by immersion. Personally, Manning became increasingly convinced of the need for Regular Baptist close communion.⁴⁰

For a time, Manning (like Crandall and Harding) faced the difficulties of pastoring a mixed congregation of Baptists and pedobaptists. By 1807, the split finally came and Edward Manning, along with his wife, Rebecca Skinner, and seven followers left the "mixed" church and formed a separate Baptist church based on Regular Baptist close communion principles. As Barry Moody has noted, "Over the next few years the New Light Congregational church was virtually destroyed as more and more of its adherents left to join the dissidents."⁴¹ Whether Manning was forced out, or left on his own accord, is

³⁹ See George E. Levy, The Baptists of the Maritime Provinces 1753 - 1946 (Saint John: Barnes-Hopkins Ltd., 1946), pp. 70 - 71.

⁴⁰ Moody, "Manning, Edward," p. 611. Consult also, Congregational Church Records, Cornwallis, N. S. AUA.

⁴¹ Moody, "Manning, Edward," p. 611.

not stated in the church records. However, it was probably no coincidence that his leaving occurred at a time when he had acquired enough capital to buy a house and remain somewhat secure financially for the rest of his life.⁴² He could now begin to build the true biblical "Baptist Kingdom" in Cornwallis, Nova Scotia. It would prove to be an often-discouraging life for the Patriarch as he suffered "for the bread and water of eternal life."⁴³ Manning's decision to create a "new" church based upon "pure" principles contrasts sharply with Harding's approach of "occasional communion," which allowed unimmersed persons to participate in church life. In spite of the division which Manning created in 1807, he became the leading religious leader in Cornwallis Township until his death in 1851.

Given Manning's desire to impose ecclesiastical structures upon his congregation and denomination, it is tempting to apply some sort of declension thesis which charts the degeneration of vital, New Light spirituality as it was swallowed up by the forms and "rules" of Regular Baptist piety. Some historians have gone so far to suggest that Manning embraced immersionist baptism primarily to seek social respectability and to crush his New Light past.⁴⁴ However, the evidence -- much of it from Manning's own pen -- suggests that a great deal of his New Light piety was transformed into a close communion Calvinist Baptist tradition. Spiritual decline can only be argued if one defines the essence of New Lightism as freedom from forms or "non-essential" sacraments. However, by distancing themselves from the utopian libertinism of the New Dispensation, leaders such as Manning and Crandall, and their churches, were not rejecting revivalism, conversionism, ecstatic religious experience, or lay exhortation. Indeed, there was much continuity from the 1780s

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ "Manning Diary," 7 March, 1830.

⁴⁴ See Bell New Light Baptist Journals and Rawlyk, Ravished by the Spirit.

and 1790s, and well into the nineteenth century. How each “Father” adapted his Allinite heritage to the new century depended upon his personality, talents, and immediate pastoral context. This was surely as true for Manning as it was for Harris Harding and Joseph Crandall.

During his ministry in Cornwallis and as an itinerant, Edward Manning baptized hundreds of people. These occasions were often times of “spiritual refreshment” where “people were praising God” and “many tears were shed” as the Holy Spirit was believed to be intensely present.⁴⁵ During one late autumn baptismal service in 1826, Manning was able to choreograph the ritual to his satisfaction, producing the right mixture of religious experience and biblicism:

a rainy morning, but turned fair towards the time of baptizing, and tho' it was late before the people gathered a large number gathered, and we repaired to the water, and after prayer, singing, and an address, I took the candidate Miss H. A. C. by the hand, and moved to the margin of the lake, and she stopped, and addressed the congregation, believers, and unbelievers, particularly her fellow youth in a solemn distinct and impressive manner. many tears were shed, then I baptised her in the [name] of the sacred three, and we both came out of the water rejoicing. prayed at the waterside, and sang up to the [meeting] house.⁴⁶

In a number of ways, this account is similar to a New Light revival meeting. The people gathered in anticipation of a spiritual event. Manning most likely entered the water and faced the crowd. He, and perhaps others, led the people in prayer, which was followed by hymn singing. Hymns on such occasions almost always followed the theme of conversion, exhortation to conversion, or baptism as it dramatically portrayed conversion. Having drawn the people together with prayer and song, Manning reached out and took the

⁴⁵ For representative examples see “Manning Diary,” 14 December 1823; 1 August 1824; 7 August 1824; 13 October 1833; 17 November 1833.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 29 October 1826.

hand of Miss H. A. C. and they entered the water. The woman stopped and began to exhort believers to continue in their faith and she informed unbelievers about the absolute necessity of accepting Jesus as their Saviour and Lord. She undoubtedly recounted her own religious pilgrimage and its climax in conversion. She was especially animated when she urged her young friends to follow her example for it was the example of Christ in the Jordan River. As many present began to weep at the sight of the young woman exhorting in what can only be thought of as a New Light style, Manning would have gently placed his left hand behind her head and slowly moved her body under the water, baptizing her in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁷ Exhilarated, both Manning and the young woman emerged from the water rejoicing and praying.

Not content to have a religious service without the preaching of the Bible, Manning quickly changed his clothes and returned to meeting house where he presented an evangelistic message based on Isaiah 45:17; "But Israel shall be saved in the Lord."

1st. spoke of Israel literally, and spiritually, the one as a type of the other. 2d. What saved from, in a negative way [hell]. Who was their Saviour, and what he saved them to [heaven], possibility, and that they were all in him, and in what sense, and that it was everlasting. 3d. that they should not be ashamed, and why, nor confounded, and why. 4thly. addressed saints and sinners, then addressed the candidates. gave the right hand of fellowship, and prayed, then sang and dismissed the people.⁴⁸

While Manning clearly accepted the necessity of outdoor baptisms, he almost always insisted that the service continue more formally in the meeting house. He had effectively blended the rich piety of the "First Great Awakening" and his orderly Calvinistic biblicism around the two-part baptismal-preaching service. The Cornwallis preacher was so spiritually

⁴⁷ Rawlyk discusses the role of exhortation in New Lightism in Ravished By the Spirit, pp. 112 - 119.

⁴⁸ "Manning Diary," 29 October 1826.

invigorated following the event that he “left the meeting house in love with God, my brethren, and poor sinners.”

Baptismal services were so very important to Manning that he occasionally changed sites to ensure maximum benefit could be gained from nature. On one occasion, he was delighted to find a “pond” where there was “an eminence ... that afforded the spectators an opportunity to behold the solemn transaction.”⁴⁹ Although many of the same heterodox beliefs of the New Dispensation were undoubtedly present among Manning’s people, he was delighted with “orthodox exhortations” at the waterside. On 1 August 1824, Jonathan Loomer stated at his baptism that “I do not come here thinking that this will make me any better, but because it is a command of God and I want to obey him.”⁵⁰ Manning was delighted at such a statement from his parishioner, for he knew that at the popular level many Baptists held unorthodox views of baptism. Nevertheless, in spite of “popular” views of baptism, Manning ensured that baptismal services were central to his ministry. He baptized hundreds as pastor of the Cornwallis church, even in the dead of winter.

Lord’s Day. cold but pleasant . . . many tears shed all around. went to the water. Baptized 3 men, Stephen Lawrence, I. C. Skinner, and S. B. Mills. the ice out about 20 feet wide into the lake, and about 8 feet or 10 at the farther end, and a desirable depth. this was a solemn baptistry and baptising.⁵¹

Manning often lamented when his health prevented him from performing the baptisms of his people.⁵² He immersed very aged people as well as children as young as nine years old.⁵³

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 1 August 1824. Manning’s custom of changing the locations for baptismal services suggests that he was willing to sacrifice the sense of “sacred space,” which was often the result of repeated services at the same site, for improved natural surroundings. One suspects that Manning changed sites according to the time of year.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 14 December 1823.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 30 May 1826.

He felt that nothing should prevent truly converted individuals from following their Saviour's example in "Jordan's flood." On 22 May 1824, Manning ignored the wishes of the Presbyterian father of a nineteen year old woman who had asked to be baptized. He declared to the crowd that while he encouraged submission to parents' instruction, he could not abide "parents commands" when they "were contrary to the command of the blessed god, if they were of age, and manifested that they were true believers, and wished baptism" he thought he "should baptise them if they requested it."⁵⁴

One of the reasons Manning seems to have integrated aspects of the New Light revival into the baptismal context concerned his untiring campaign to develop what has already been identified in Crandall as a balanced form of evangelicalism, where right thinking and moderately restrained religious experience were carefully integrated. Baptismal services were to be orderly, restrained, and painstakingly planned so that religious experiences, while essential, were not the dominant theme. The ritual was the gospel made visible and nothing was to hinder its effectiveness, especially uncontrolled emotion. Manning was particularly attracted to Jonathan Edward's model, believing that if it were integrated into Maritime Calvinistic Baptist life in the 1820s "there wd be less of the wild sin that now prevails among many." He revealed in his diary:

it is lamentable to think how many are seduced by false doctrine and a false zeal, unholy in their lives, and by fits and starts religious, and abettors of the most absurd notions, some denying the doctrine of divine sovereignty, others that of the resurrection from the dead, others the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and substituting the righteousness of faith as they call it, and placing so much dependence upon dreams and

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 10 July 1830.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 22 May 1824. In his diary entry for 21 December 1832, Manning refused to baptize "Mrs. White" because her husband threatened violence if she were immersed.

fancies. O Lord sent out light and truth that thine elect may be led to a city for habitation.⁵⁵

The irony of this entry, dated 29 May 1824, is that it is immediately followed by a discussion of Manning's own dream the previous night. "I dreamed myself this day that I saw my dear child in distress when reading about the precious blood of sprinkling, and I awoke myself in prayer for her and deep distress." While he may have had some serious reservations about those who placed "much dependence upon dreams and fancies" – the residue of the First Great Awakening of 1770s and 1780s and the New Dispensation of the 1790s – he himself fully integrated "divine impressions" from dreams into his own piety. However, he would always judge the dream's message in light of the scriptures (though it must be conceded that even Harris Harding would attempt to use such a hermeneutic). The message from his dream was simple: he was to pray for and seek the salvation of his "dear child."⁵⁶

Manning had a very active dream life upon which he placed great importance (as his diary reveals). One suspects that he seldom spoke of his dreams in public or in casual conversation as Harris Harding did. Manning was not always sure of the meaning of his dreams. On one occasion he declared, "what this [dream] means I know not, it may be that it is nothing more than a common dream."⁵⁷ At other times he was very definite about the "divine message" granted to him during sleep. He dreamed that his mother was alive and

⁵⁵ "Manning Diary," 29 May 1824. See also Jonathan Edwards, Religious Affections: A Christian's Character Before God (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1996). Edwards was a key religious figure in the First Great Awakening in New England. He advocated a revivalism centered around biblicism. This appealed to Edward Manning who wanted to sustain the tradition of revival and dramatic conversion within the confines of order and limits set in scripture.

⁵⁶ Also see the recorded dream of Manning's daughter in "Manning Diary," 25 April 1826.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 5 July 1833. Also see 27 May 1821.

that she “had a pair of fine babes” in her charge. This caused him great anxiety in his dream because the children were being neglected, not only by his mother, but by “all the people in the house.” The interpretation was clear to him. The “church is asleep and young babes are neglected. O this is destroying.”⁵⁸ Because of this dream, Manning resolved to convince his church that new converts or “young babes” be carefully instructed and encouraged in their new-found faith, before they “fell away” or “backslided”.

While some of his dreams may have occasionally given him direction for his ministry, Manning considered that the bulk of his recorded dreams were personally instructive. For example, the following dream seems to refer to the hanging of his father. However, the meaning which he drew from the experience was intensely personal.

A solemn dream. Dreamed that my brother James read the form of succession at or of an execution, which excited my attention somewhat. But how was I surprised when reading the handbill to read the name of the executed, etc. etc. this dream seemed to something more than common drawn. Then I began to inquire if there was not some dreadful pride remaining in me and I suspected there was, and this caused pain, and excited to prayer. Rose early with the weight of the dream mentioned above, and the necessity of searching by prayer the cause, and now in awful silence . . .⁵⁹

In the “silence,” Manning entered into a time of personal reflection and examination of the “evils of my heart.” He then cried out in prayer for “sweet communion with the sacred three, real holy communion with my God.”⁶⁰

Manning relied on dreams, as he did the Bible, to help him achieve “holiness” and “Christ-like” living. There was a sense that dreams had actual divine authority over his spiritual development. The Bible, of course, was always the standard against which his

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 8 September 1829.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 15 August 1826.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

dreams were measured. However, he was determined that his visions, dreams, and ecstatic experiences would not lead him to the excesses of the “Hammondites,” “Babcocks,” and the New Dispensation as it had been manifested in Cornwallis. Nevertheless, dreams and ecstatic experiences continued to play an important role in his Baptist piety. Moreover, his dream life tended to stress the centrality of the Bible in matters of faith. Indeed, he believed that one of his dreams -- where he encountered “Rev. Mr. Forsyth” a local Presbyterian minister -- indicated that he had not been faithful in reading and following the precepts of the scriptures.

Much adgitated as with dreams. dreamed that I was in company with Rev. Mr. Forsyth and that he was scatering [sic] some leaves of the Bible, and that I eat up one half of his small built Bible the same as if I was eating a piece of bread, or cheese, and felt no inconvenience therefrom, but rather comfort, until I recollected that it was his property which gave me some uneasiness, and I asked him to take a walk with me, and when alone I told him I had eat his Bible, and I was willing to pay him anything in reason that he would ask. he seemed cheerful. made no reply, and I could not help thinking of it after I awoke, and something like an interpretation. I hope I have eat as much of the Word of God, and cannot but think as in the dream that that [sic] he takes detached books, and leaves the rest.⁶¹

While it would be a mistake to conclude that dreams formed the basis for Manning’s spirituality during the 1820s and 1830s, it would also be equally unwise to downplay their importance. When life was difficult, with his congregation divided, Mrs. Manning ill, and his financial support waning, Manning would look forward to those dreams in which he was “so overcome with a sense of God” that he “could not contain” himself. He yearned to be “swallowed up with overpowering joy” so that the unpleasant things of life faded in comparison and importance in the light of his “raptured soul.”⁶² While much more

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 25 March 1825; Other examples of dreams which Manning understood as divine correction include 27 May 1821; 25 April 1826; 15 August 1826.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 17 October 1829.

research is required to make generalizations about the perceived role of dreams in the lives of ordinary Maritime people during the first half of the nineteenth century, the evidence suggests that Manning continued the New Light emphasis on dreams, as did Harris Harding, long after the New Dispensation of the 1790s. While the emphasis on the Bible was added by Manning, the function of dreams in his evangelical piety endured. God gave advice, correction, and direction through dreams. Therefore, in spite of his efforts to the contrary, Manning continued to understand spirituality -- as it related to dreams -- in a way consistent with his New Light past.

This is not to suggest, however, that Edward Manning was some sort of Protestant mystic who tried to avoid the realities of everyday life. On the contrary, he believed that one should expect difficulties in life because of one's faith. Poor health, financial insecurity, and ungrateful church members were considered to be "trials" by Manning: part of life and God's "design" for him which he tried to balance with the "mercies" of God. Nevertheless, he believed that the truly Christian life, though composed of both tribulations and blessing, would ultimately be victorious because of the death and resurrection of Christ. The following poem, written by Manning in 1824, shows how he believed that the vicissitudes of life would be swallowed up in divine love in the end.

I am a stranger in the world
Journeying here below,
but soon from earth I shall be parted
And be rid of all my woe.
I sometimes am on the mountain top,
Sometimes I am in the vale.
Sometimes I am almost fit to drop
My dust, and homeward sail.
Sometimes I'm almost free from sin
sometimes I view the harbour where
No death can enter in.
Sometimes I view the mansion where
The Son of God must dwell
Sometimes I feel I am of those

And fear shall go to hell.
Sometimes I've been in serious doubt
Of all that's good or ill.
Sometimes I feel and know the truth
And of love doth drink my fill.
Sometimes I know and love my God,
Thro' Christ my blessed Friend
Who washed me in his precious blood, who lives and keeps
me to the end.⁶³

The contrasting themes of being in this world, but not of it -- mountain top and dark valley, spiritual and emotional experiences, spiritual weakness and "sin free," unhindered strength, the fear of hell and the assurance of heaven -- characterized very much the tensions within Manning's piety. It is perhaps not coincidental that many of these topics are present in the verse and poetry of Henry Alline. What Manning did was place these themes in opposition to each other in order to reflect the realities of the Christian's experience. Alline had tended to identify spiritual "trials" as primarily symptoms of a "pre-converted" state and the blessings as those associated with a "converted" state. Manning's experience convinced him that his faith was perhaps strongest in the midst of the trials and adversities of life, as can be seen in phrases such as "O fiery billows blast of death, I am

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 3 April 1824. Two years later Manning wrote a soliloquy which expressed similar themes: 10 September 1826. "The shades of night are approaching. so are the shades of death. the sky that looked so bright and clear a little while ago, are now dark and lowering. so it be ere long to all the inhabitants of the globe however gay or ground. but especially to those who fear not God, who shall be drawn away in their wickedness. O horrid! the clouds are impregnated with elektrik fir. So the wrath of god is threatened to all that fear not God. the lightnings flash. so tempests of angry fire shall roll to blast the rebel worm, and beat upon his naked soul, in one eternal storm. the thunders are rolling thro' the concave of heaven. (with God is terrible majesty), so the trump of God shall sound shortly, and summons an assembled universe to appear the Bar of an offended majesty, the majesty of heaven. O that those important realities may occupy my thoughts as they ought, while I live. Amen. If I am to go shortly, may my house be set in order -- in every point of view."

preserved still/ On wings of love, and arm of faith I clamber up the hill.”⁶⁴ Indeed, Manning articulated an evangelical piety that recognized the tension between “being wrapped up in God” and “living the life of woe.” He often lamented that when Christians gathered together, they too often wasted time “and dishonored God by spending their precious time ... in conversation upon general topics.” Christian holiness would not be advanced if gossip replaced the confession of sin, fostered “pride instead of humbling it, and the religion of the heart is passed over and the company parts neither edified nor comforted.”⁶⁵

Manning took very seriously his pastoral role as “edifier” and “comforter” of his people. His diary reveals that he could not abide the small talk of everyday life when he believed that Christians were being “deceived by the enemy” and sinners “were going to hell.” Not surprisingly, Manning adopted the entire township of Cornwallis as his natural field of visitation and personal evangelism. Any random reading of his extensive diary reveals him as an indefatigable visitor who was frequently absent from home for several days, visiting the general population of the township. His ministry of pastoral care reflects very much the “New Light-New Birth” tradition of his youth. His major concern when visiting individuals was the state of their souls. Had they received the New Birth? Did they have assurance of saving faith? Were they attempting to walk in “holy ways?”

For example, following breakfast with his good friend and parishioner, Theophilus Sweet, on 10 April 1823, Manning met up with a “poor infamous woman,” a “prostitute” who lived “in adultery with a black man.” Engaging her in conversation, the Cornwallis

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 10 September 1826; Also see M. Filshie, “Redeeming Love Shall Be Our Song: Hymns of the First Great Awakening in Nova Scotia” (M.A. thesis, Queen’s University, 1983), chapter 5.

⁶⁵ “Manning Diary,” 4 February 1829.

pastor read the fourth chapter of John's gospel, the story of a Samaritan woman who had had five husbands and a current partner who was not her husband. He then presented the gospel to her and assured her that God would save her from her sins as he had the Samaritan woman.⁶⁶ While apparently unsuccessful in his evangelistic effort, Manning went on his way. What was important was his passion for helping people experience the New Birth in a straightforward manner. He read them relevant passages of scripture, and often pleaded passionately that they be converted. He almost always prayed with those he visited and would "stand reproved" if he failed in this task.⁶⁷

Edward Manning did not wait for polite invitations to visit folks. In fact, if he heard of someone slipping into heresy or death, he would make it his business to descend upon them. On 2 November 1830, Manning, having spent time with Sylvia "an old servant,"

heard of a young man in dying circumstances in the next house. called to see him. the family, and friends Roman Catholicks. the parents consented that I should pray with him, but the others were furious !!! such a sight I never saw. the youth himself, tho' adying, and delirious, by being instructed said he did not want any of my preaching. I expostulated, but all to no purpose. in a few minutes he expired . . . I left the house, while the screams were rending the air.⁶⁸

The longer Manning preached in Cornwallis, the better known he became as a community religious leader. That Roman Catholic parents would consent to have a Baptist minister pray for their dying son -- given the antipathies between Catholics and Protestants during

⁶⁶Ibid., 10 April 1823.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 2 November 1830.

this period – goes a long way in defining Manning’s broader role in the life of Cornwallis Township.⁶⁹

If Manning was diligent in calling upon non-Baptists, he was untiring in his visitation of his own people. During times of personal crisis, his presence was especially invited. His diary contains countless references to his pastoral work among dying parishoners. Typical of these diary entries is that for 7 August 1826 when Manning, who had been ill with a fever the previous night, decided to remain home because of the rain and the pain in his “side and chest.” Fatigued, he returned to bed to rest, “but I had not lain long before a message came for me to see Rebekah Chipman whom they thought near her end. She was verry anxious to see me.” In response, Manning prepared his horse and proceeded through the pounding rain to the “scene of great trouble.” Finding William Chipman (her father) “composed” and Rebekah “in great distress but not in dying circumstances,” he spoke with her at some length about her soul. She told Father Manning that she was willing to die, “there [being] nothing in the world to tempt her stay,” but she needed “a clear manifestation.” She wanted a more intense religious experience to assure her that she had truly experienced the New Birth. She inquired of Manning if he thought she was converted, to which he replied he believed she was, “but it was God only that knows.” She then began begging him to pray that God would give her a “clear manifestation” or sign of her salvation. Manning complied with her wish and then, at Rebekah’s request, sang Newton’s hymn “O Zion afflicted with wave upon wave.” He recorded, “I did so as well as I could,

⁶⁹ Consult A. J. B. Johnson, “Poverty and Progress: Anti-Catholicism in Mid-Nineteenth Century Nova Scotia,” *Dalhousie Review* 64 (1984): 146-163.

and the poor little creature helped me. This was affecting. I commended her to the Lord.”⁷⁰

Although many have characterized Manning as a cold, hyper-calvinistic, anti-New Light, and someone who could not inspire the allegiance of many of his people,⁷¹ it is clear that “Father” Manning cared deeply for his congregation, even when some of them did not much care for him. One diary entry cogently expressed his philosophy of pastoral care.

a most delightful morning. Our calm in the contemplation of my God, and his blessed word. A sweet season in secret prayer. Sweet and melting to pray for myself, my wife and child, the servants, and all incorporated with us a family, and for the sick, for friends, and more particular for mercies. Have been much exercised for months about praying for and having mercies. Sensible that unless I have that spirit that wd lead to love enemies and pray for them there was a verry essential defect in my spirit. O for the spirit of a Stephen, more particularly of the blessed Jesus.

O that I may feel as I ought to visit the sick, and dying. Most merciful God, look upon the sick and dying. O for the tender spirit of Jesus to mourn with those who mourn, and rejoice with those that do rejoice.⁷²

Sometimes Manning’s commitment to “ministering” to his people ushered him into rather unusual circumstances. On 11 May 1829, he assisted a doctor who operated on “sister D. Woodworth’s breast, to extract the tumors.” Arriving at the scheduled time, Manning read Isaiah 26 from the Old Testament which highlights, among other things, God’s protection and his perfect peace, highly suitable themes for such an occasion. After praying, Manning recorded, “the poor woman was stretched on her table, composed and giving herself to

⁷⁰ The above is based on Manning’s diary entry for 7 August 1826. For other examples consult 27 February 1826; 29 November 1826.

⁷¹ See Rawlyk, *Ravished by the Spirit*, p.87; Moody, “From Itinerant to Pastor;” Bill, *Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches*, pp. 128-141; Levy, *The Baptists of the Maritime Provinces*, pp. 60,70,71,76.

⁷² “Manning Diary,” 20 May 1826.

God.” Then the surgeon explained to the Baptist Patriarch he was “to sit by her, and intertain her with that subject that most agreeable to and take her mind off from the pain of the operation [sic].” As the doctor’s knife pierced her flesh and removed the tumors, “Sister Woodworth” talked “of Jesus” and “her pilgrimage” of over forty years, while Manning sang and reassured her. Both the preacher and doctor were surprised at her “fortitude.” Reflecting on the day’s events, Manning confided in his diary.

I wd not attend that operation for 50 guineas, to be hired, but in point of duty, I did for nothing, and I would again, and again, and I am glad I attended this, and I hope it will prove a blessing to me and to the church of God, and upon sinners. Come home with a thankful heart.⁷³

Having known sister Woodworth, probably for over forty years, Manning had felt compelled to risk being misunderstood, to provide spiritual and moral support at her surgery. Manning had had nothing to gain and everything to lose by assisting the doctor, but with the “tender spirit of Jesus,” he obeyed his higher call to mourn with those who mourned and rejoice with those who rejoiced. Such sacrificial pastoral care probably explains why he was able to remain in Cornwallis for almost all of his ministerial labours. Furthermore, in his attempt to meet not only the spiritual, but also the physical needs of people, Manning often gave money to those in want, or even brought desperate people to his home. Railing against those who would crowd his home for “entertainment,” he believed his home “always ought to be an asylum for the poor, and strangers, as this house always is, and I always mean it shall be.”⁷⁴ Indeed, any casual reading of his diary reveals the presence of widows, children, or poverty-stricken men. One suspects that “Mrs. Manning” was not as charitable as her husband and that may explain, in part, her many lengthy

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 11 May 1829.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 13 August 1825.

“illnesses.” Nevertheless, Manning’s understanding of the Regular Baptist ministry included caring for the dispossessed and needy, as well as evangelism. The settled nature of his ministry necessitated the development of the social dimensions of the evangelical message. How could Manning declare the love of God and the creation of a “Baptist Family” without demonstrating the truth in tangible ways to those marginalized in society?

The extended geographical area within which Manning provided “pastoral care” – perhaps more accurately called “evangelism” – meant that his approach to a settled ministry was still very much that of an itinerant. Although this prevented him from being as close to his people as he might have liked,⁷⁵ since some villages in the township would go weeks without seeing him, his style of ministry, forged in the “First Great Awakening” and in the “Great Reformation,” remained intact. Indeed, it might be argued that the rhythm of his early ministry characterized his entire career. He enjoyed traveling, whether it was within Cornwallis Township, or on an extended tour to Maine or New Brunswick, for his goal was always to help people experience the New Birth and its subsequent ritualization in immersionist baptism. In Manning’s words, “I do not spend much of my time to make Baptists, but Christians and then I am rejoiced to see them become true Baptists.”⁷⁶ At the age of sixty-six, he reflected with satisfaction upon his hard work in the Cornwallis area.

43 years ago when I first traveled this road there were but few that knew the Lord, but now there are multitudes. then scarcely any Baptist ministers and no B. [aptist] churches but now in this country, now there are twelve baptist churches a varying [sic], I think, 100 members in each, and the prospect truly glorious-, and 15 meeting houses, some of them large, and well furnished. O for humility.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 18 August 1828.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 2 September 1828.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 26 August 1833.

If Manning was pleased with the growth of the Regular Baptists in Cornwallis Township, he also became increasingly alarmed in the 1830s at his inability to prevent the break-up of his large township-wide church into smaller formally organized churches. He had enjoyed the exalted and undisputed position of senior Regular Baptist minister in the area. Personal pride, coupled with an intense sense of ownership, made it difficult for him to concede the carving up of his "bishopric."⁷⁸ This trend coincided with internal problems in the church and led him to escape the chaos by preaching on missionary tours for most of 1832, several months of 1834, and almost the entire year of 1835. Barry Moody has suggested that "He ended his active ministry as he had begun it, as an itinerant."⁷⁹ In 1836, when Manning did return to Cornwallis, he was spiritually invigorated and fully committed to the evangelicalism of his youth. While his role after 1836 became increasingly that of an "emeritus minister," his influence persisted long after his death in 1851. However, in his declining years, his interest and promotion of revival never waned. On 20 March 1839, he recorded with delight and at least a tinge of regret that:

The Lord hath visited this town with the outpouring of His Holy Spirit many times within the 50 years that I have been acquainted in it, and of late in the 2d and 3d churches, and now I trust there is a gospel excitement in the First, especially in the Eastern branch of it. O that it may prosper. I am unable to have the management of a revival, and dread it on some acc't of age, and weakness . . . ⁸⁰

While poor health prevented him from leading the revival of 1838, Manning knew that he had placed his own evangelical stamp upon Cornwallis Township. Through years of

⁷⁸ Cornwallis Township covered a large geographical area in which a sizable percentage of residents would have claimed to be Baptist. As the aging Patriarch faced the 1830s it became painfully clear that he would not be able to serve the entire Baptist population.

⁷⁹ The above discussion is based on Moody, "From Itinerant to Pastor".

⁸⁰ "Manning Diary," 20 March 1839.

preaching, exhortation, and evangelistic visitation, he had triggered revivals and conversions among his people, refashioning and casting the cumulative religious ethos of the First and Second Great Awakening in Nova Scotia well into the nineteenth century.

Perhaps a crucial, and often unappreciated, contribution of Manning to the expansion of the Regular Baptists was in the area of mentoring young men as lay preachers, itinerant evangelists, and settled ordained pastors. He knew that by the 1820s there was a shortage of ministers in the denomination and that it was his duty to help prepare the next generation. He prayed on 29 March 1830:

O that every breath, and every word, and every step I take may be to the honour of the sacred ministry, that my last days may shine illustriously to the glory of our common Lord, that the young ministers may be humble and zealous according to knowledge, and many more of them be raised up, to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ among the poor Gentile sinners around them that and perishing for lack of knowledge. May the churches feel their obligations to treat these assention gifts as they ought for the sake of this assended Lord.⁸¹

He referred to his “apprentice program” as “this great day of events” for almost all of his “amiable young men” were converted in the midst of revival. This was important for Manning since he believed that all Regular Baptist leaders had to be able to lead revivals and be “able ministers of the New Testament.”⁸²

Relying upon the apprentice-approach to “education,” which he had experienced under the tutelage of Thomas Handley Chipman and John Payzant, who had in turn been taught by Henry Alline, Manning set out to mold a second generation of Regular Baptist leaders. During his life, he mentored no fewer than twenty-seven men, sixteen of whom

⁸¹Ibid., 29 March 1830.

⁸²Ibid., 19 November 1833 and 30 April 1829.

became ordained ministers in the denomination.⁴³ Manning prepared more men for ordained ministry than all of the other founding fathers put together, and these included a veritable “who’s who” of the second generation of Regular Baptist leaders such as I.E. Bill, John Chase, Joshua Cogswell, Robert Dickie, Anthony Dimock, Hezekiah Hull, Wellington Jackson, Richard McLearn, T.H. Porter, Silas T. Rand, and Charles Tupper.⁴⁴ He was convinced that the only way to prevent unchecked “antinomian enthusiasm” was to select bright, young, teachable men who had experienced the transforming power of the New Birth and immersionist baptism.

The mentoring process usually followed a predictable pattern. Initially, Manning encouraged the young men to exhort and pray in public. If, after a short period, the men appeared comfortable speaking in public and were “useful,” they would request permission from the Cornwallis Church for opportunities to “improve” their gifts within the confines of the local ministry. This often included leading the singing at services, assisting Manning at baptisms, extended exhortations, and occasional preaching. This approval allowed the young men to preach not only in Cornwallis but recommended them to any other Regular Baptist Church. As licentiates, men would preach as circumstances permitted for months, or even years, until a local church called them to be a settled pastor, or they were invited by the denomination to serve as traveling home missionaries. Ordination would soon follow. Manning’s process of evaluating potential ministers reflected his preoccupation with order

⁴³ They include I. E. Bill, William Beckwith, John Chase, William Chipman, Joshua Cogswell, Robert Dickie, Anthony Dimock, hezekiah Hull, Wellington Jackson, Ezekiel Marsters, Richard McLearn, Abraham Newcomb, T. Harding Porter, William Pulcifer, Silas T. Rand, Charles Tupper . These names were compiled from Manning’s Diary and the Cornwallis Baptist church Records Vol. I., AUA.

⁴⁴ Sometimes these “preachers in training” served as Manning’s assistants. See, for example, Manning’s Diary, 26 November 1825 and Cornwallis Baptist Church Records, 9 December 1838.

and ecclesiastical authority. By creating a system which evaluated potential preachers over a period of time, it was possible to determine who would best serve the interests of the denomination and be appropriate for the pastorate. Maverick preachers with no authority apart from inward religious feelings were to be avoided at all cost. Manning's mentoring-style of pastoral training relied upon the wisdom and experience of established ministers, as well as the assessment of the local church. These checks and balances ensured that only men who were committed to Regular Baptist principles and able to lead revivals would be ordained. A personal sense of call to the ministry was considered to be incomplete without the approval of a local congregation and the careful direction of a "Father." In this way, the order and structures put in place by the "Patriarchs" would not be crushed by the generation of leaders who followed them.

Among Manning's papers is found a loose page which appears to have been notes or guidelines for preaching, perhaps used to instruct "his preachers." He stressed in this exhortation that the ultimate goal in preaching was the "conversion of souls." Any style in preaching that exalted the preacher or sought to demonstrate the cleverness of the speaker was "devoid of spiritual power, and seldom produce[d] any lasting effect upon a hearer." He counseled, let "your elocution be natural."

The grand principle of gospel oratory is simplicity; affectations displeasing in all persons, but in man is it so highly disgusting as in a preacher. A studied attitude, a measured motive, a nice attention to cadences and pauses, a mimicry of theatrical action, may be passable in the recital of a school declamation, but is hateful in the pulpit. Men do, never can, speak thus when they speak from the emotion of their hearts. Where is it possible then for a man who addresses himself to immortal souls, who discourses upon the most important subjects, the love of Christ, the joy of heaven . . . how is it possible for this man to find leasure of disposition for such pompous trifling, if he really believes what he says?⁸⁵

⁸⁵ "Manuscript Fragment," AUA.

If Manning rejected the emotional wailing of overly-enthusiastic preachers, he also decried the practiced eloquence of cultured ministers who sought to draw attention to their education and abilities. He demanded simplicity and a balanced approach to preaching. The question about how preaching should be done became a hotly debated issue, especially in the 1850s. The highly emotional example provided by Harris Harding contrasted sharply with Edward Manning's "orderly" and straightforward approach.

While Manning clearly longed for a better-educated ministry, he was not willing to allow "style" and "learned respectability" to "quench the Spirit" and take away from the centrality of the "New Birth" message. He accepted changes in the way ministry was practised in the denomination, as long as conversion remained central. In a letter to the Christian Messenger 2 July 1847, Manning exhorted his "dear brethren in the ministry." "The more you are devoted to God, the more useful will you be to the church, and the more successful in winning souls from sin to holiness."⁸⁶ The attainment of knowledge was desirable, but only to the extent to which it led to conversions and the extension of God's kingdom.

Manning took great care in instructing, reproving, and evaluating his "young preachers." Joshua Cogswell's experience (who was a little-known Regular Baptist preacher) is instructive of Manning's mentoring process. Cogswell is first mentioned in Manning's diary 4 April 1830. Having preached, Manning recorded:

20 minutes intermission, then brother Joshua Cogswell, a youth that has not professed religion more than 18 months preached from the 46th Psalm, Come behold the works for the Lord. a good sermon for a child. felt comforted.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ CM, 2 July 1847.

⁸⁷ "Manning Diary," 4 April 1830.

Almost two months later, Cogswell was still sharing some preaching services with Edward Manning.

our dear little brother spoke from Isaiah the 4th C, Comfort ye, comfort ye my people saith your god etc. and that but in the 17th year of his age, 18 months of his spiritual life, and a few months of his ministry. he exceeded my expectations. Five native talents, unvarnished. O what can God do. What can he not do! a pretty full congregation and great attention to the boy.⁸⁸

Cogswell's sermons did not always meet with his mentor's approval. Manning recognized, however, that "babes are babes." Nevertheless, the young preacher seems to have been well received by the Baptists of Cornwallis and was effective in the conversion of souls. Under Manning's tutelage much could be forgiven, if the young man could effectively preach a conversionist gospel. For example, Manning said of Hezekiah Hull, another lay preacher apprentice, that he was "verry deficient of literary and theological information"⁸⁹

And yet,

spoke to purpose and prayed charmingly, and addressed the people in the afternoon from Luke the 13th, I, 2 & 3 verses, but certainly from the last verse, Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Zealous and Scriptural, but the language corrupt, the sentiments evangelical [sic] . . . a fine pious young man.⁹⁰

As long as Manning was sure his preachers could lead revivals, preach basic biblical messages, and not "run off" with "Free Will imposters," he was pleased to recommend them for ordination when they were called to serve a church. Such was the case for young

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 30 May 1830.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 10 June 1830; 4 April 1830; 11 January 1824.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 16 May 1824.

Joshua Cogswell, for he was “set apart” on 5 July 1832, being no more than twenty years of age. His mentor recorded:

went to the meeting house, and heard the candidate bro. Joshua Cogswell preach . . . a good discourse, tho' somewhat precipitate, over much zeal, not so composed as I could wish, tho' upon the whole, it was better than could be expected. We each gave a word of exhortation, and then the council formed, Bro. Wm Elder, Moderator, Bro. R'd Cunningham, clerk and then enquiries were made concerning their state, proceedings, motives, etc. found that this church was in a verry cold luke warm state, family prayer much neglected, and it became a question whether such a church were in a state to proceed to ordination. The candidate gave a brief, yet sattisfactory relation of a work of grace in his heart, his lead to the ministry, and to Lower Granville in particular. They the council retired and concluded to advise the church to proceed to ordination, if they would give sattisfaction to the council that they, with the help of god would promise reformation . . .⁹¹

Manning and those on the counsel were very cautious about allowing young Cogswell to assume the leadership of a church that was “not friendly to revival” and evangelical Christianity. Such a church might discourage or dull the evangelistic edge of someone so new to the ministry as Joshua Cogswell. However, since Cogswell was not far from his mentor, he would be able to receive advice from Manning whenever it was needed.⁹²

In most of the instances where Manning instructed young preachers, he laboured diligently to transfer to their ministries his balanced evangelicalism, one not so ecstatic that people would come to love religious experiences more than God, and yet not so structured that they would embrace forms over the Holy Spirit. In other words, he wanted his preachers to have a revivalistic piety kept in check by biblicism and basic church order. The

⁹¹ Ibid., 5 July 1832.

⁹² Ibid., 23 November 1833.

available evidence suggests that most, if not all, of “his preachers” came to articulate Manning’s tempered evangelicalism.⁹³

This emphasis is also seen in Manning’s notions of higher education. Manning supported the establishment of Horton Academy (1828) and Queen’s College (1838; later Acadia); he remained concerned, however, that the education serve God and not be an end in itself. In 1828, he instructed Richard McLearn, one of “his” preachers, to take advantage of studying at Horton Academy, “but to beware of every study, and every pursuit that would have a tendency directly or indirectly to lead the mind away from God.”⁹⁴ Formal training and advanced reading were worthwhile, as long as they did not quench “vital spirituality.” Barry Moody has argued that this concern for maintaining a “New Birth-centered” spirituality became a defining feature at Acadia and the Academy throughout much of the nineteenth century.⁹⁵ This endured in part because of Manning’s impact on the founding of these institutions.

Manning’s role as teacher and mentor extended far beyond his own township and those who came to learn from him. By 1825, he was presenting a loose theological system that avoided “the Arminian and the infidel on the one hand, and the Antinomian [and

⁹³ The role of Acadia college and higher education in training ministers are themes explored in Barry M. Moody’s “The Maritime Baptists and Higher Education in the Early Nineteenth Century” in B. M. Moody (ed.) Repent and Believe: The Baptist Experience in Maritime Canada (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot Press, 1980), pp. 88 - 102; “Breadth of Vision, Breadth of Mind: The Baptists and Acadia College” in G. A. Rawlyk (ed.) Canadian Baptists and Christian Higher Education (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1988), pp. 3 - 30. It would seem that Manning also served the role of mentor to early Acadia theologues. They would come from the college to preach in Cornwallis to assist Manning and to be evaluated by him. “The young men from Queen’s Colledge are a great comfort to me, may the Lord aid them, and sanctify their studying to them, and cause that they may be burning and shining lights in the world.” “Manning Diary,” 10 May 1839.

⁹⁴ Edward Manning to Richard McLearn, Cornwallis N. S., 4 July 1828. This suspicion about the spiritually-deadening potential of higher education persisted in the Regular Baptist community throughout much of the nineteenth century.

⁹⁵ See especially Moody, “Breadth of Vision, Breadth of Mind.”

hypercalvinist] on the other.” He discovered to his great joy that Andrew Fuller – the late eighteenth-century British Baptist Theologian – “guarded against either extreme.”⁹⁶ As a moderate Calvinist, Fuller had helped many of his generation escape the hyper-calvinism of John Gill – the early eighteenth-century English Baptist Calvinist – which had tended to dull evangelistic efforts and squelch missionary zeal. In the words of theologian Phil Roberts, “For Fuller correct doctrine and theology were not the niceties of the faith but indispensable building blocks of the Kingdom of God. In his understanding that meant a Chalcedonian Christology [an orthodox view of Christ], evangelical Calvinism, and a Baptist church order. Each of these was to be expressed with Christian love and applied practically toward evangelization and mission.”⁹⁷ Although critical of Fuller at some points, Manning believed the balanced evangelicalism of the British Baptists could be very useful for Maritime Regular Baptists.⁹⁸ During his 1833 missionary tour to Prince Edward Island, Manning engaged printer James Hazard of Charlottetown to publish, for the association, Fuller’s The Gospel of Christ Worthy of All Acceptation.⁹⁹ This was Fuller’s most influential and best-known work, originally published in 1781. At its appearance, the volume outraged both the high Calvinists and Arminians, which undoubtedly explains why

⁹⁶ “Manning Diary,” 10 December 1825.

⁹⁷ Phil Roberts, “Andrew Fuller,” in Timothy George and David S. Dockery (eds.) Baptist Theologians (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990), p. 133.

⁹⁸ The following are useful introductions to the Baptists in nineteenth-century Britain. H. Wheeler Robinson, Baptists in Britain (London: Baptist Union Publication Department, 1937); Joseph Ivimey, A History of English Baptists 4 Vols. (London: the Author, 1811-1830); A.C. Underwood, A History of English Baptists (London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1947).

⁹⁹ Andrew Fuller, The Gospel of Christ Worthy of All Acceptation: or the Obligations of Men Fully to credit, and Cordially to Approve, Whatever God Makes Known. Wherein is Considered the Nature of Faith in Christ, and the Duty of Those Where the Gospel Comes in that Matter (1791; Charlottetown, P. E. I.: James D. Hazard, 1833).

it appealed to Manning's middle-of-the-road evangelicalism.¹⁰⁰ In 1833, James D. Hazard agreed to publish two hundred and fifty copies of Fuller's work. In addition, he printed an additional two hundred fifty copies, believing they would easily sell, indicating "100 copies will sell on the Island." Optimistic about the sale of the book, both Hazard and Manning peddled The Gospel of Christ Worthy throughout their respective constituencies.¹⁰¹ In an effort to bring more examples of Andrew Fuller to the Regular Baptist reading public, one of his sermons was published in the Baptist Missionary Magazine of Nova Scotia, which highlighted the centrality of the "New Birth" and its foundational importance for extending the Kingdom through evangelism and social involvement. This message resonated with many in the second generation of leaders who were trying to present their inherited evangelicalism to an increasingly complex society.

It is our business to build God's house; it is our highest honour to build up society, to be blessings in our generation, and what we are here directed to as a means, is to attend immediately to those things which are our especial charge . . .¹⁰²

So important was Andrew Fuller to Maritime Regular Baptist thought that excerpts from his work were frequently reprinted in the denominational papers.¹⁰³ Fuller's postmillennial evangelical activism appealed to the pragmatic "New Light-New Birth" paradigm, which persisted into the 1830s.¹⁰⁴ Even Manning felt obliged to chastise himself

¹⁰⁰ Roberts, "Andrew Fuller," p. 122.

¹⁰¹ See James P. Hazard to Edward Manning, Charlottetown P. E. I., 17 June 1833, and 16 October 1833 in AUA. Also see Manning's published journal of his P. E. I. Preaching tour in the BMM, 1 April 1833.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ For example: CY, 24 December 1847 and 7 February 1855.

¹⁰⁴ Other examples of this "soft" Calvinism during the 1830's can be seen in the BMM, 1 January 1832; January 1835; May 1836.

for being “more for speculations than real practical religion in my own soul.”¹⁰⁵ Fuller’s theology possessed the right amount of evangelical zeal and a biblicism mediated through a mild Calvinism. The delicate balance between theology and religious activism was essential, not just for Manning, but also for the many he influenced. While Manning conceded that Arminians could be believers he felt that they were not “mentally” ... real Christian [s].¹⁰⁶ Conversely, one might be a hyper-calvinistic antinomian, as Manning had been during the New Dispensation of the 1790s, and be a Christian, but not in terms of “Christian holiness.” Achieving a balance in his piety had been necessary for his own survival as a preacher of the gospel, and he believed it was crucial for his denomination as well.

Manning’s balanced pietistic model can be seen in the writings of Eliza Ann Chipman and Angus M. Gidney, both of whom were under his pastoral care for a time. Chipman’s extensive “memoir” or journal, though intensely introspective at points, still reflects the mild Calvinism of Edward Manning.¹⁰⁷ Gidney’s corpus of religious writing is perhaps the largest of any Maritime Regular Baptist lay person in the nineteenth century. His poems, letters, and doctrinal essays reveal a warm evangelicalism which surely pleased Edward Manning.¹⁰⁸ If Chipman and Gidney were at all typical of their contemporaries, it is quite possible that even at the grassroots level, there were those in some Regular Baptist

¹⁰⁵ “Manning Diary,” 9 May 1823.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 16 August 1826; The following letters reflect Regular Baptist views and conflicts with Arminians. Robert Alder to Edward Manning, Cornwallis N. S., 24 February 1818; Joseph C. Skinner to Edward Manning, Saint John N. B., 11 May 1832; Job Chase to Edward Manning, Cornwallis, N. S., 9 August 1837, AUA.

¹⁰⁷ Eliza Ann Chipman, Memoir of Mrs. Eliza Ann Chipman Allen B. and Carolene E. B. Robertson (eds.) (Hantsport, N. S.: Lancelot Press, 1989).

¹⁰⁸ Consult A. M. Gidney’s published poems in the BMM, November 1834; January 1835; April 1835; November 1835; July 1836; November 1836. For articles in systematic and practical theology see the following issues in *ibid.* September 1834; September 1835; January 1836; May 1836. For a letter that reflects Gidney’s sympathy with the radical evangelical tradition see A. M. Gidney to Edward Manning, Pleasant River 11 June 1832. AUA.

churches who embraced this evangelical Calvinism. It would be a mistake to believe that the Regular Baptists were swept away in the excitement of popular Calvinism, however. On the contrary, even evidence from Manning's journal suggests that many, if not most, of his people made little distinction between theological systems.¹⁰⁹

Even Edward Manning, all debates of theology aside, argued that conversion was the central and necessary prerequisite for becoming a Christian. It was the crucial foundation for social and benevolent involvement in the world. One good example is Manning's involvement with the temperance movement which swept through the Maritimes from Maine in 1829.¹¹⁰ In a way similar to Harris Harding, Manning became immediately convinced of the correctness of the abstinence position and led in the formation of a temperance society in Cornwallis. This stand became almost an article of faith for most Maritime Baptists for the next century and a half.¹¹¹ Manning's support of the temperance movement was based upon his gospel of the New Birth; that is clearly seen in an undated manuscript fragment, probably written around May 1832.¹¹² His scripture text was Titus 2:11-12.

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, teaching that as denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously, and godly in the present world.¹¹³

In the outline of his temperance address, Manning began with a discussion of "what we are to understand by the grace of God." He placed salvation or the "New Birth" at the

¹⁰⁹ A point made very well in Moody, "From Itinerant to Pastor."

¹¹⁰ The best introduction to temperance in the Maritimes can be found in Jan Noel, Canada Dry: Temperance Crusades Before Confederation (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), chapters 2,3.

¹¹¹ Moody, "Manning, Edward", p. 613.

¹¹² "Manuscript Fragment, Manning Diary," May 1832?

foundation of his justification for the temperance movement. Converted individuals should pursue a “morrallity which . . . inculcates . . . sobriety.” His argument is unmistakable, converted Christians have the responsibility under God of

concentrating their energies in adopting certain rules, and forming societies in order more effectually to impose by conversations, addresses, circulating tracts, and a strict conformity to these rules themselves, in order to exercise salutary influence on the surrounding population.¹¹⁴

Manning’s address went on to extol the virtues and social impact of temperance by citing the number of reclaimed “drunkards,” those released from “moral ruin,” women saved from “brokenness of heart, and premature death,” and children “saved from disgrace, beggary and wont.” In keeping with the general optimism of the movement, he somewhat naively believed that with the disappearance of drink would come happy, healthy, and economically advantaged families which had been rescued from “the fangs of the demon intemperance.” His postmillennial optimism stemmed not from the perfectibility of human beings through their own vain efforts, but rather from “converted” Christians who, through personal example and collective activity, could change society by the grace of God. Such an argument fit neatly into Andrew Fuller’s system of theology which argued that the starting point for Christian activity must be the New Birth. Ironically, a British Baptist theologian had given at least some Maritime Regular Baptist leaders the intellectual tools to cast the essence of the “New Light - New Birth” paradigm into the nineteenth century.

On 12 January 1851, Edward Manning – long recognized as a leading Baptist Father – died as “his ransomed spirit took its flight to the realms of eternal bliss.”¹¹⁵ T. S. Harding,

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches, p. 141.

his contemporary, preached the funeral message from 1 Corinthians 15: 57, "But thanks be to God who gives the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." In his life and ministry, Manning had embraced a piety and worldview which he believed gave him victory for eternity. He may not have known it at the end of his life, but he was victorious in inculcating many leaders and lay people in his denomination with a balanced piety that often walked the fine line between their New Light heritage and church order. Shortly after his death, the "Executive Committee, Directors and Friends of the Nova Scotia Baptist Education Society" -- which Manning had chaired since its founding -- declared of "Father Manning,"

... they think long and intently of the power with which he was called by the one great purpose of his life to seek the souls of men, of the singularly evangelical character of his ministrations, of the giant grasp with which he conceived and held up to the gaze of men the mysteries of godliness, and of the deep and broad foundations which were laid by his hand in these Provinces, for the perpetuation of a pure and authoritative Christian faith, a spiritual and energetic Christian experience.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ CM, 11 February 1851; See also 7 February 1851.

CHAPTER FIVE

“To Wage War Against the Baptists”: The Maritime Baptismal Controversy 1811 -

1848

If the “Baptist Patriarchs” of the first generation held the distinction of founding the denomination and redefining its radical evangelical piety, it fell to the second generation to defend the “Faith of the Fathers” and advance the Regular Baptist cause in the Maritimes. Nowhere was this more evident than in the baptismal controversy which convulsed the Maritime Protestant community for almost forty years. Between 1811 - 1848 the Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians were engaged in an extensive literary debate over the issue of baptism. The controversy centered around two basic questions: “Who is an appropriate candidate for baptism?” and “what form of baptism should be used, sprinkling or full immersion?” Although it produced no fewer than twenty-three published polemical tracts and books, along with numerous newspaper articles and private correspondence, the baptismal controversy has received very little attention from contemporary scholars.¹ This is not surprising since most historians are not theologically trained, and most theologians do not busy themselves with little-known doctrinal debates in nineteenth century British North America.² The controversy was important, however, for Maritime society at large and for the Regular Baptists in particular. It both reflected and had an impact on the piety, worldview, and social standing of the second generation of

¹ The basic chronology of the baptismal debate is in my “The Very Vitals of Christianity”: The Baptismal Controversy and the Intellectual Awakening in Nova Scotia, 1811 - 1848” *NSHR* 15(1995): 72 - 87.

² The literature produced in the baptismal controversy is cited in Philip G. A. Griffin-Allwood, G. A. Rawlyk and J. K. Zeman (eds.), Baptists in Canada 1760-1990: A Bibliography of Selected Printed Sources in English (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot Press, 1989).

Baptist leaders and lay people. And, in the end, the controversy proved to be a vehicle for bringing Regular Baptists into the religious mainstream of colonial society.

Crucial to understanding the context of this literary exchange is what D. C. Harvey called the intellectual awakening of Nova Scotia which occurred between about 1812 and 1835. This period was characterized by an increased integration of once ethnically-diverse communities and churches, and through the emergence of newspapers, magazines, schools and libraries, all of which -- according to Harvey -- contributed to the construction of a collective identity among Nova Scotians. It was a time when residents of the province began to articulate a perspective entirely their own. The emergence of a distinctive literature, at the hand of such a notable author as T. C. Haliburton, and the popular demand for an increased level of responsible government, as promoted by Joseph Howe, served as indicators that an indigenous culture was coming into existence.³ Harvey recognized that the baptismal controversy was part of this, but it is clear that he considered it of marginal significance. The minor emphasis which Harvey gave to this religious debate is curious, given the fact that the climax of the baptismal controversy took place in the 1830s, the crucial decade for the intellectual renaissance.⁴

In studying the Bible for rules of conduct or grounds of controversy, they assimilated its language and were saved from intellectual stagnation. One of these controversies produced several books and pamphlets which were published in Halifax, as early examples of native literature. Though none of these books may be classified as either "literature of knowledge" or "literature of power," they are among the historical muniments that . . . have been . . . placed in our archives.⁵

³ D. C. Harvey, "The Intellectual Awakening of Nova Scotia," in G. A. Rawlyk (ed.), Historical Essays on the Atlantic Provinces (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967), p. 100.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 99, 116.

⁵ Ibid. p. 104.

Moreover, it may be argued that the religious exchanges between 1811 and 1848 excited the minds and passions of Nova Scotians to a degree equal or to a greater than the debates over responsible government. It was within the context of this “intellectual awakening,” as Baptists felt obliged to defend their central and identity-giving ritual, believer’s baptism by immersion, and to bring “the great unwashed sheep of Israel” into the pure New Testament Church, that Maritime Regular Baptists inadvertently began to be transformed from religious outsiders to religious insiders.

The vast scope of meaning in immersionist baptism and its capacity to make “the gospel visible” (as discussed in chapter one), permitted Regular Baptists to expand their mission efforts in areas where the ritual was virtually unknown. And not surprisingly, the effective evangelistic use of outdoor baptismal services by Regular Baptists threatened most Protestant pedobaptist denominations in the Maritimes during the first half of the nineteenth century. One of the most spectacular examples of Calvinistic Baptists penetrating a decidedly pedobaptist community can be found in Saint John, New Brunswick, in 1814. On 13 April of that year, Michael McComb, a soldier stationed in the city, was hanged for the murder of Catherine Trafton. The events leading up to this execution enabled Saint John Regular Baptists to gain greater numerical strength and a higher profile in the city.

Edmund Reis, the local Baptist minister, spent many hours attempting to convert the accused.⁶ After several visits, Reis announced that McComb had indeed experienced the “New Birth,” and had identified himself with the struggling Baptist presence in the city,

⁶ CM, 8 January 1841.

although there is no record of his ever receiving immersion. Within a month of the hanging, Reis published A Short Account of the Life, Conversion and Death of Michael McComb. In his book and public statements to the press, the Baptist preacher took advantage of this unfortunate event to promote his church. While no copy of his book has been uncovered, the available evidence indicates that Reis explored the question of baptism and denounced infant sprinkling as unbiblical. He also attacked as hopelessly fanatical the “crying noise and bodily agitation” believed by the Methodists to be “infallible marks of religion.”⁷ Since the “Babcock tragedy” undoubtedly still lingered in some people’s minds as the ultimate expression of Baptist antinomianism, it was crucial that if Regular Baptists were to flourish in Saint John, Reis would have to distance his work from the 1804-05 events in Shediac. Opposition to Reis and his zealous efforts was quickly launched by the Methodist preacher, James Knowlan, who sought not only to “publish a Review” of Reis’ book for the “purpose of contradicting and exposing the falsehoods which it contains, and to defend the important doctrines of repentance and faith . . . but to debate the Baptist author publicly about baptism.”⁸

The formal debate that ensued was moderated by the Mayor of Saint John which heightened the public’s awareness of the issues surrounding the baptismal controversy. On 4 June, 1814, Reis and Knowlan joined the mayor in the town square for the debate. Knowlan carried with him a large number of scholarly books while Reis stepped onto the platform with only his Bible. Reis objected to Knowlan’s use of “other” sources, since the

⁷ Edmund Reis, A Short Account of the Life, Conversion and Death of Michael McComb (Saint John, N.B.: Henry Chubb, 1814).

⁸ James Knowlan, A Review of Edmund Reis’s Short Account of Michael McComb . . . (Saint John, N.B.: Henry Chubb, 1814), p. 8.

scriptures were surely the foundation upon which to base religious practice.⁹ If Reis was going to convince the public that the Regular Baptists were not a fanatical “enthusiastic sect,” he had to demonstrate that the scriptures, not inward religious compulsions, were the final authority in all matters of faith and life.

This insistence upon the authority of the Bible alone can also be traced to Reis’ background as a former Roman Catholic from France, whose ship had been captured in 1811 and taken to Halifax as a war prize. Deciding to tour the province, Reis had travelled to Yarmouth during the time of revival. Regarding this expression of radical evangelicalism as “religious frenzy,” Reis had decided to host a dance to rival the preaching. However, Baptist historian, I.E. Bill, recorded:

. . . in the midst of this scene of mirth, his convictions returned with redoubled force, and he fell prostrate upon the floor. It was a moment of intense soul agony, and he cried aloud for mercy. Thus the house of dancing, to the amazement and confusion of all present, suddenly became a house of prayer. The result was the conversion of his soul to Christ, his subsequent baptism and connection with the Baptist Church.¹⁰

Since Reis “had never seen or read the Bible” prior to his participation in the Yarmouth revival, he became convinced that the Bible alone could form the basis for Christian truth. This was underscored by his belief that the “tradition-bound” Roman Catholicism of his birth had “kept the Bible” from him. Following his three-year pastorate in Saint John, Reis had embarked upon an evangelistic campaign among the Francophones of New Orleans. After reaping a disappointing harvest, he had become the minister of the First Baptist Church, Baltimore, where he remained until his retirement.¹¹

⁹ *City Gazette*, 9 May 1814.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Bill, *Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches*, pp. 248-249.

Although Knowlan pleaded to have access to scholarly books for the debate, the Mayor ruled in the Baptist's favour. The City Gazette recorded that "Mr. K[nowlan] after having said something upon the singularity of the Baptists, demanded why do you reject infant baptism? Mr. R[eis] replied because I cannot find it in the Bible."¹² As the debate raged on, Knowlan conceded that there were instances of believer's baptism in the New Testament, but that Reis had failed to prove that infant baptism is not in the Bible. At the close of the heated session, the Mayor declared that the burden of proof rested upon Knowlan to demonstrate that pedobaptism was in the Bible. Since the Methodist had failed to demonstrate clearly the presence of infant baptism in "Holy Writ," Reis was declared the victor.¹³

Having performed poorly at the debate, Knowlan turned his attention to writing A Review of Edmund Reis's Short Account of Michael McComb . . . and also a Short Refutation of Some of the Errors of Baptists. In this pamphlet, the author mercilessly attacked Reis' character, describing him as a "miserable physician of souls."¹⁴ While there were undoubtedly some in Saint John who would have agreed with Knowlan's assessment, there were many who clearly felt differently. For the next three years, Reis led a series of revivals in the greater Saint John area and baptized many converts in the harbour. After the events of 1814, the Baptists in Saint John grew at a remarkable rate, not only because the ritual of baptism by immersion had been effectively defended; but, more importantly, because it was being witnessed and experienced by a large segment of the local population.¹⁵

¹² City Gazette, 6 June 1814.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Knowlan, A Review of Edmund Reis's, p. 8.

¹⁵ The History of Germain Street Baptist Church (Saint John, NB: Saint John Globe Pub. Co., 1910), p.7.

So influential was baptism by immersion that, by 1842 it would be recorded by Saint John Baptists that "Our Methodist friends here are now performing the Ordinance by immersion."¹⁶

Baptist home mission efforts, which made effective use of baptismal services in remote areas of the Maritimes also posed a threat to the pedobaptists. One instance of Regular Baptist baptism being used to penetrate a pedobaptist area may be found in the journal of Joseph Alexander, an Anglican catechist who served the communities of the eastern shore of Nova Scotia during 1845 and 1846. It was his task to preach, catechize and baptize those willing inhabitants along the coast east of Halifax. Since there was a serious shortage of clergy in this area, Alexander believed that his efforts might eventually culminate in the formation of an Anglican pastorate able to support its own minister. On Friday, 21 April 1845, the catechist wrote:

Cole Harbour. Held two services, regulated the school, and opened the library to which eleven persons subscribed. The Sunday school I am happy to say has been very regularly attended all winter. And several young persons and married couples who last summer could scarcely read monosyllables are now reading lessons in second and third class books and endeavouring to read the testament. They manifest an evident thirst for religious knowledge.¹⁷

Encouraged as he was by the people's enthusiastic response, Alexander proceeded to baptize as many adults as would submit to his teaching and examination, and subsequently their children. He rejoiced that some "who never had witnessed a Church of England baptism before were heard to remark they had never seen such an effecting sight and that if

¹⁶ *CM*, 18 April 1842. Methodists also turned to immersion in Yarmouth in the 1820s. See Daniel Goodwin, "Advancing Light: Evangelicalism in Yarmouth Township, 1761-1830" (M.A. thesis, Acadia University, 1986), chapter 4.

¹⁷ "Joseph Alexander's Journal, Eastern Shores: 30 March, 1845-December 1846." In the possession of the author.

they had an hundred children they would bring them forward to receive Church Baptism.”¹⁸

As late as 6 June, 1845, Alexander confided in his journal that even “the dissenters at all events pay so much respect . . . as to order themselves according to our forms and customs.”¹⁹

The relative ease with which Alexander was able to promote the Anglican cause ended abruptly late that year. Writing to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, the missionary noted:

Indian Harbour. [Nova Scotia] This is a very interesting station which I have not visited to hold a service during the last four months . . . Shortly after my arrival at the first house I was informed that a Baptist Minister had been there all week, had several meetings and that he had made appointments for the Sunday there to hold (what are called) church meetings. (During the last week in December). I was not surprised to hear when I was last down the River that the Baptist Board had sent another preacher to visit Indian Harbour, that he had already been there four weeks, that the people were becoming very much excited, and that several baptisms by immersion were to take place this week. I must confess it would have been more congenial to my feelings had it been one of our clergymen. However, if souls are truly converted to God and manifest the same in their conduct, we must rejoice. Although I am sorry to say it is characteristic of the Baptists in Nova Scotia, that whenever a good work is begun and going on, they are sure to step in, and often it is to be feared, sow the seeds of discord.²⁰

What Joseph Alexander and other critics of the Baptists never seem to have asked themselves was why so many pedobaptists in the Maritimes were vulnerable to Regular Baptist evangelistic efforts? On one occasion, Alexander had to cancel a scheduled service in Indian Harbour, “which I consider one of our little fields,” because “several adults were to be baptized by immersion” by “Mr. Hobb, the Baptist preacher.” But “now that the

¹⁸ Alexander Journal, 24 December 1845.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, June 1845.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Letter dated 15 January 1846.

baptist had got in among them," the outraged catechist believed his sheep were among "wolves." Throughout Alexander's journal there are recorded laments of his disintegrating work, because Hobbs "laboured hard and effectively to excite the feelings of the people the result of which is in many who have become prejudiced against all who differ from them. Several have been brought to renounce infants baptism."²¹

The discouraged Anglican did not seem to appreciate that if the eastern shore communities were moved spiritually at the baptism of infants they would also be affected by observing an intensely powerful outdoor baptismal service. In baptism by immersion, residents found a new sense of community, and experienced the "blessings and sanctification" of the Holy Spirit. In less than six months "Mr. Hobbs," one of the many little-known Maritime Baptist itinerants of the nineteenth century, had effectively created a permanent Baptist presence along the eastern shore of Nova Scotia.

The aggressive evangelistic efforts of the Maritime Regular Baptists during the first half of the nineteenth century created a sense of panic among the region's pedobaptists. Whether or not the immersionists posed as great a threat to the Anglicans, Methodists, and Presbyterians as they believed is not clear. However, the perception of a "Baptist advance" sparked a debate over baptism, its mode, and suitable candidates, which had a profound impact upon the Regular Baptist community. While the immersionists were able evangelists and church planters, they had yet to prove their capacity to engage in scholarly debate about their most visible ritual and source of religious identity. To defend their sacred rite of believer's baptism, it was clear that the denomination had to produce informed and articulate leaders through the use of educational institutions..

²¹ *Ibid.*, 25 February 1845.

The baptismal controversy began very quietly and unassumingly. Only one tract was published during the first two decades of the nineteenth century in. It was written by Kirk itinerant, James Munro, a prominent Presbyterian minister in eastern Nova Scotia, in 1811.²² Munro's reasons for writing the tract are not altogether clear. A shortage of Presbyterian clergy during this period, and the resulting deficiencies in doctrinal teaching and pastoral care at the congregational level may have moved him to present his work in order to bolster denominational identity, and forestall a further drift into the Baptist fold, where the charismatic leadership of a number of itinerant evangelists apparently held sway.

"I saw the Ordinance [baptism] neglected and despised by some; and abused and misimproved by others: and to rectify these things was my principal design," Munro stated.²³ While his catechetical intent is obvious, his disclaimer that this "is not designed as a book of controversy" is questionable, since his desire not only to inform his constituency, but also to refute the opposing Baptist view, betrayed a polemical intent. Not only was he attempting to inoculate the Presbyterians in eastern Nova Scotia and the Chignecto area from the "pernicious doctrines" of unlearned Baptist itinerants who preached in the radical evangelical tradition, he was also attempting to demonstrate to the reading public the intellectual and biblical superiority of pedobaptism. To this end, the Kirk preacher resorted to a discussion of the New Testament Greek, knowing full well that it was very unlikely that any Baptist in the Maritimes could read biblical languages. Nevertheless, he wrote:

We will let both parties see at once what support they can have in their disputes about baptism from original Greek, as they can now see how far the original is for or against them. Each party, in the dispute about the subjects and mode of Baptism, brought forward a few texts in the original, which,

²² James Robertson, History of the Mission of the Succession Church to Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island: From its Commencement in 1765 (London: John Johnstone, 1847), pp. 59 - 60.

²³ James Munro, A Treatise on Baptism (Halifax, NS: Howe & Son, 1811), p. 33.

they thought made for them. This they did formerly, but now the whole, in a manner, is collected in their hands. And those, who do not understand the Greek language, and can only read the English New Testament may see things in a clearer point of view than formerly, if they read the Appendix with the least attention.²⁴

Monro, it would seem, had had enough of those occasions when both sides of the issue used proof-texts out of context. Believing his exhaustive word study based on the Greek could settle the issue, he challenged his readers to behold the evidence.

While Monro's tract of almost three hundred pages undoubtedly generated discussion and debate, the Regular Baptists were in no position to respond. The "Fathers" were preoccupied with denomination-building and evangelism, and did not feel confident enough, or academically prepared to respond to the Presbyterian. In 1811, Regular Baptists were far more interested in living their faith than defending it. Eleven years passed before another tract on baptism was published in the province. Monro's treatise had nevertheless established, in a significant way, the generic nature of the pedobaptist tracts to come. The author's reluctance to address the various theologies of baptism held by other pedobaptist groups, such as the Anglicans and Methodists, suggests that the perceived threat of a Baptist onslaught proved to be the basis upon which some Anglicans, Methodists and Presbyterians were willing to unite.

The second pedobaptist tract was published by a Methodist preacher in 1822. Born in England and an exponent of English Methodism, George Jackson arrived in the Maritime provinces from the West Indies early in the 1820s.²⁵ The reasons for writing this pamphlet are not obvious in the text, beyond the author's comment that he had been encouraged by

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 3 - 4.

his district chairman. Since there was yet no Baptist work published on baptism, Jackson maintained that he was not trying to stir up controversy. However, most of his contemporaries were well aware of the growing numbers of pedobaptists -- especially Methodists -- who were stampeding to the watersides of the region to be immersed by Baptist ministers.²⁶ Therefore, it was Jackson's two-fold purpose, in his pamphlet, to show the weakness of the believers'-immersionist position and the strength of the pedobaptists'-sprinkling stand, in hopes of slowing Methodist defections to the Baptist fold. Cautious not to criticize Presbyterian and Anglican baptismal theologies, Jackson demonstrated the viability of a broadly-based pedobaptist collaboration in the early 1820s.

Jackson's pamphlet reflected a very modest attempt to address "the rage for dipping," and possessed a basic sermonic quality which did not deal in-depth with biblical Hebrew or Greek. Nevertheless, the appearance of his An Humble Attempt to Substantiate the Legitimacy of Infant Baptism²⁷ greatly troubled the Regular Baptist leadership. Although it had been eleven years since the publishing of Monro's volume, the Baptists still did not have any ministers with formal education beyond an elementary level. Yet it was clear that the denomination had to respond to Jackson and Monro. The essence of their religious tradition -- the "Faith of the Fathers" -- was at stake. Edward Manning had three young men, William Elder, David Nutter and the little-known "brother Spur," under his

²⁵ T. Watson Smith, History of the Methodist Church Within the Territories Embraced in the Late Conference of Eastern British America . . . (Halifax, NS: Methodist Book Room, 1871), p. 114.

²⁶ This assertion is made based on the fact that in 1800, there were very few Baptists in the Maritime colonies. As the Regular Baptists grew numerically, many people from Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian churches abandoned pedobaptism and were "dipped" in the "placid sheet." In other words, the only possible pool of people from which the Baptists could draw new members was pedobaptist.

²⁷ George Jackson, An Humble Attempt to Substantiate the Legitimacy of Infant Baptism . . . (Halifax, NS: Holland and Co., 1822).

tutelage²⁸ and at his direction each of them wrote a response to George Jackson. Both Elder and Nutter were among the brightest of the second generation of Baptist leaders, even though they were largely self-taught. On 14 February 1823, Nutter, being the first to finish, gave his manuscript to Edward Manning for evaluation.²⁹ The Baptist "Patriarch" wrote in his diary "I think it a good reply in substance, but rather too fiery. Advised him to write to him [Jackson] as he wd wish to be written to himself." Manning's concern about the response being too "fiery" or caustic was understandable. If the first Baptist contribution to the baptismal debate was to be taken seriously, it had to be reasoned, readable and most importantly, it had to defend and articulate believer's baptism by immersion. The "audience" for the message was no longer just the unlearned subsistence farmers and fishers in the colonies. The Regular Baptists needed to communicate effectively to a growing urban and educated elite.

Two weeks later, William Elder presented his piece to "Father" Manning who noted "I think a good performance excepting his idea of the covenant. But perhaps I may be rong. May the Lord direct."³⁰ Guiding Nutter and Elder through the writing and revising process, Manning shared his own insights and books to improve the manuscripts. It was crucial that the Regular Baptists publish the very best they had to offer. On 5 March, Elder and Nutter, along with Spur, met with Manning, each with a manuscript in hand. Manning recorded

²⁸ William Elder was a bright second-generation preacher from Bridgetown, who eventually became the first Anglican Rector in North Sydney, after rejecting the Regular Baptist position on the church and the sacraments. David Nutter was British-born and came to New Brunswick in 1816 and became a valued Regular Baptist preacher in the Maritimes and Maine throughout his career. Both men were greatly influenced by Edward Manning in the early days of their ministries. See I.E. Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches, pp.233-242, 283,305.

²⁹ "Edward Manning Diary," 14 February 1823. AUA.

Br. Nutter read his and then they agreed among themselves to print his. I think they are both well done, but Br. Elder's perhaps would be more popular as suit the hasty reader but it is probable that Mr. Nutter's might suit the bulk of readers . . .³¹

It is not known what transpired after this meeting, but the Baptists finally decided to publish Elder's response to Jackson. Manning seems to suggest in his diary that Elder's was better written and, while perhaps not as fully researched, it communicated the major points of the Baptist Fathers' position more clearly.³² At this point in the debate, Manning reasoned that they needed to present a straightforward statement of their view of baptism and a general critique of pedobaptism, a task Elder's Infant Sprinkling, Weighed in the Balance of the Sanctuary and Found Wanting performed adequately.³³

William Elder had been born in 1784 to a Presbyterian family that had migrated from County Donegal, Ireland, to Falmouth, Nova Scotia, prior to 1780. As a young man Elder had left home for Halifax, where he had obtained work in the dockyard, and begun to attend the Baptist church under the leadership of John Burton. Deeply influenced by Burton, he had become an itinerant Baptist evangelist. In June 1821, at the age of thirty-seven, Elder had settled in Granville, Nova Scotia, where he had become the pastor of a small church. Two years later he moved to Bridgetown where he served until 1834. Although not formally educated, Elder was committed to education and was a founding member and later director of the Nova Scotia Baptist Education Society.³⁴ An avid reader,

³⁰ Ibid., 1 March 1823.

³¹ Ibid., 5 March 1823.

³² Ibid., 4 March 1823.

³³ William Elder, Infant Sprinkling, Weighed in the Balance of the Sanctuary and Found Wanting, In Five Letters, Addressed to the Rev. George Jackson . . . (Halifax, NS: The Author, 1823).

³⁴ Franklyn H. Hicks, "Elder, William," DCB 7(1988), pp. 271 -272.

Elder was in a good position to write the first response in the baptismal controversy, since he had abandoned his Presbyterian heritage and embraced Baptist convictions. Indeed in 1823, most Maritime Regular Baptists were first generation Baptists, having rejected the pedobaptism of their childhood. Elder concluded his pamphlet by sharing a bit of his own pilgrimage.

In what I have written, I am not sensible that I have been under any undue bias in favour of the principles and practices which I have advocated. My parents (who I hope are now in heaven,) were pedobaptists; and I was I suppose sprinkled in infancy; and I have relatives and friends who are dear to me, who still continue this practice. Moreover I am sensible that I am acting for eternity, and that all my thoughts, words and actions will be reviewed by the Judge of all the earth; and that such of them as are wrong will be burnt up as “wood, hay and stubble:” even should I be so happy as to be saved, I am willing to acknowledge the piety talents of many excellent men, who practise infant sprinkling; but I cannot follow them any further than they follow Christ.³⁵

Undoubtedly, Elder hoped many pedobaptists who read his book would be convinced of believer’s baptism by immersion and be plunged into the “placid sheet.” His implicit evangelistic invitation was and remains clear.

In his “Five Letters” to George Jackson, Elder wove together sermon, lecture, exhortation, anecdote, Bible verses, and quotations from a variety of “scholars.” In his less-than-systematic treatment of Jackson’s piece and the Baptist position, Elder revealed -- to a surprising degree -- the mind of many Maritime Regular Baptists in 1820’s. He presented the orthodox view of believer’s baptism by immersion by arguing that only those who had been consciously converted could be baptized and join a local Regular Baptist Church. He challenged his readers to search the New Testament for examples of unconverted

³⁵ Elder, *Infant Sprinkling Weighed*, p.56.

individuals who were baptized.³⁶ He then proceeded to explore the meaning of the Greek word baptizo which was (and continues to be) transliterated as baptize.³⁷ Elder declared that its only true meaning was “dip” or “immerse.”³⁸

Elder’s understanding of history and the favoured place of the Baptists in “divine providence” is very revealing. From his perspective, Maritime Regular Baptists represented a revival of primitive Christianity, because of their biblical view of baptism. They were God’s partners in creating sacred history. Any period or Christian group that rejected “New Testament” baptism was, by definition, not a church in the biblical sense. Believing that every period of Christian history contained a group of believers who practised immersionist baptism, Elder was somewhat optimistic about the time in which he lived.³⁹ The Baptists throughout the world were expanding and so was the Kingdom of God. Integral to his post-millennial notion of progress was the controversy which highlighted the truth of baptistic Christianity, and the deceit of pedobaptistic Christianity.

It is to be lamented that . . . professing Christians have divided into many sects, and many errors in principle and practice, have prevailed among them. I cannot but hope however that light is increasing in the world, and that Christians are finding their way back to gospel principles and practices [immersionist baptism]. I think that controversy on religious subjects, when conducted with a proper spirit, and with a desire to know the truth, has a tendency to do good in this respect.⁴⁰

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 14 -15.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 37 - 38.

³⁸ Although these points would be developed in a more sophisticated way by later authors, they remained essentially unchanged.

³⁹ For a discussion of the successionist view of Baptist history, consult: W. Morgan Patterson, Baptist Successionism: A Critical View (Np: Npl., 1979). See also Mircea Eliade’s Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959) for a perspective on primitivism from a cultural anthropologist.

⁴⁰ Elder, Infant Sprinkling Weighed, p.3; also see pp. 15,16,36,37.

Elder also pointed out that this debate had not been initiated by the Baptists, “but when an appeal is made to the public, in favour of infant sprinkling, and other sources of argument resorted to we think it our duty to oppose ‘infant sprinkling’.”⁴¹ With confidence in God and a Baptist millennium, Elder faced Jackson’s challenge.⁴² Sharing Elder’s belief in progress, Edward Manning prayed

that the light of truth might spread, and prevail in the world, that this unhappy controversy might be brought to an end. that the Christian church might come into its proper order, and look forth a the morning, fair as the noon, clear as the sun and terrible as an army with armour.⁴³

Important to Elder’s hermeneutic and critique of the pedobaptist position was a “common sense” approach to interpreting the Bible, which did not rely upon historical theology, the use of visions and dreams which had been an important part of Regular Baptist spirituality, or the mediations of clergymen.⁴⁴ He believed that “scripture is the only standard of the christian’s faith and practice,” for “God has given us sufficient means of knowing his will,” especially in the area of baptism. Bible passages, he argued, had been unnecessarily confused by learned men who had relied upon tradition, “popes,” and fathers to support their position on infant sprinkling. Furthermore, he noted that “the New Testament was translated by men who practised sprinkling; and there is sufficient evidence that they did not wish to challenge the baptists.”⁴⁵ Throughout history, contended Elder, learned men sought to remove the right or responsibility of ordinary people to interpret the Bible for themselves, especially in the area of baptism. But in this new age, “common

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.3.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.53.

⁴³ “Manning Diary,” 28 February 1825.

⁴⁴ Consult Nathan O. Hatch, “Sola Scriptura and Novus Ordo Seclorum” in N. O. Hatch and M. A. Noll (eds.), The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 59 - 78.

sense”⁴⁶ was to prevail and the veil removed for all to see the truth. In a rhetorical sermonic fashion, Elder queried:

What must the plain unlettered christian do? Must he learn Hebrew and consult the Jewish Rabbin, before he can obtain satisfaction respecting a gospel ordinance. Is it because there is no lawgiver in Israel that we must be thus sent to Baalzebub the god of Ekron for counsel? Again, a plain man has doubts on the subject of infant baptism; to silence them you refer him to Ecclesiastical History. Must he learn two languages, and inquire what the Greek & Latin fathers have said on the subject. Must he be able to reconcile all the various discordant accounts given by popes, councils and fathers, before he can make up his mind on the subject . . .⁴⁷

The answer to all of his questions was clearly no. The authority for all religious life and practice was the scriptures. Elder knew that he could not appeal to religious experience as an authority, because that would suggest to the reading public that the Regular Baptists were little more than a disorderly, unlettered radical sect -- which was in part the case. Elder was content to argue that corrupt history of the church could do little to address concerns of genuine faith.

While Elder’s commitment to a New Testament primitivism and Baptist Millennium was sincere, and reflected the views of many Baptist leaders and lay people, it was also a convenient way in which to dismiss the more learned participants in the baptismal controversy, without having to deal with their erudition. Although Elder’s response to Jackson, and to a lesser extent Monro, did not address the central issue of covenant theology, it was nevertheless a valiant defence from a denomination of modestly trained leaders and parishioners, and it had at least presented in a straightforward way the Regular Baptist position on baptism and the nature of the believers’ church.

⁴⁵ Elder, Infant Sprinkling Weighed, p.43.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.43.

In the same year, shortly after Elder published his first work on baptism, George Jackson wrote an extensive reply. The liveliness of the debate so evident in Elder's first volume continued in Jackson's second. In this work, the Methodist polemicist abandoned much of his non-threatening approach and became more aggressive which, undoubtedly, increased the popularity of the debate and its contribution to the intellectual awakening of Nova Scotia.

The truth, and it may perhaps be pretty generally known, that the unity of all societies [Methodist] and the religious faith of all members, have, for a series of years, been disturbed by a number of the Ministers of the Baptist persuasion, who, not to deny them the credit of piety, have been chiefly remarkable for the zeal with which they have opposed the religious sentiments of others, and who because they could see nothing but "Popery" and "superstition" in our proceedings, have both in public and in private been in the habit of characterizing them by those illiberal epithets.⁴⁸

It was a remarkably honest concession for Jackson to admit that ordinary, "unlearned" Baptist lay women and men were siphoning off significant numbers of Methodists to the immersionist camp. Perceptively, highlighting the primitivist-anti-traditionalist perspective of some Regular Baptists, which was, as Manning stated, fueled by their belief that the beginning of the new age would coincide with a "Baptist explosion" or Reformation "of the church."⁴⁹ Jackson also observed, in disgust, that "a succession of covert attacks (chiefly in family and private conversations with the members of all societies, and by lending of Books on the points in controversy between them and us) have been incessantly repeated."⁵⁰ While their New Light ancestors would have been content to exhort their neighbours in religious

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.17.

⁴⁸ George Jackson, A Further Attempt to Substantiate the Legitimacy of Infant Baptism . . . (Halifax, NS: P.J. Holland, 1823), p.3.

⁴⁹ "Manning Diary," 28 February 1825.

⁵⁰ Jackson, A Further Attempt . . ., p. 3.

matters, the Regular Baptists now took a more formal approach and discoursed with their acquaintances and family members over baptism and also shared theological books, pamphlets, and newspapers.

Beside the obvious reason of replying to Elder, Jackson also wrote his second volume to give “further reasons in justification of the proceedings of Pedobaptists” in a land where infant baptism is increasingly “too seldom practiced, the reasons on which it is founded too little known, the duties which ought to follow in its train too little regarded by both ministers and people.”⁵¹ Although Jackson’s desire to provide the people of the province with a clear statement on the pedobaptist understanding of baptism was a driving motivation for both of his publications, his second work was more extensive in scope and deeper in theological content. Like Monro, he chose not to confront any aspects of other conflicting pedobaptist theologies, perhaps fearing it might fragment the coalition of infant baptizers in the debate.

If Jackson’s Further Attempt . . . gave the Regular Baptists reason to be concerned about “holding their aim” in the controversy in 1823, Duncan Ross’ response to Elder two years later raised serious questions about whether it was wise for the immersionists to continue in the literary exchange at all.⁵² Ross was a formidable opponent. A Scottish Secession Church minister from Pictou County, he had attended the University of Edinburgh and graduated from the theological Hall of the General Associate Synod of Whitburn (anti-burgher).⁵³ Settling in the Pictou area in 1795, Ross had become widely

⁵¹ Ibid., p.4.

⁵² Duncan Ross, Baptism Considered in its Subjects and Mode: In Three Letters to the Reverend William Elder . . . (Pictou, NS: Weir Durham Press, 1825).

⁵³ Allan C. Dunlop, “Ross, Duncan,” in DCB 6(1987), pp.659-660.

known as he preached and ministered to people from as far away as Amherst and Prince Edward Island. According to one nineteenth-century historian,

Mr. Ross was a man of a very clear and logical mind and strong natural powers; he could scarcely be called a popular preacher, but by intelligent persons his pulpit ministrations were highly relished for their clearness, variety and solidity of matter, and often times ingenious and striking illustrations, while among his ministerial brethren, for soundness of judgment, knowledge of church matters and intellectual capacity.⁵⁴

Given his background and education, Ross was exceptionally qualified to contribute substantially to the baptismal controversy. His Baptism Considered in its Subjects and Mode . . . was a systematic analysis and refutation of the major tenets articulated by Elder. While one suspects that Ross would have disagreed on some points with George Jackson's Baptism Considered . . ., the essential pedobaptist collaboration against the Baptists was not violated.⁵⁵

Baptism Considered set a theological standard against which many future publications on baptism would have to be measured. Moreover, Ross' systematic categories of theological classification, and his use of the original biblical languages, could not be scrutinized effectively by one as modestly prepared for the task as Elder. It looked as if the pedobaptists -- in the person of Duncan Ross -- had won the controversy. What Maritime Regular Baptist could respond to the sophisticated use of biblical languages and reformed theology? There was no obvious choice, but Edward Manning was convinced that Ross could be answered.

⁵⁴ George Patterson, A History of the County of Pictou, Nova Scotia (Belleville, ONT: Mika, 1972), pp. 171 - 172.

⁵⁵ I refer to the efforts of the pedobaptists as a collaboration because the Baptists clearly viewed them in this way, and by not debating each other's rather different views of infant baptism the "sprinklers" essentially functioned as an ad hoc force against the immersionists.

am reading Ross upon baptism against Elder. if I had the languages, I would reply myself, for I think the author tho' a scholar an unfair reasoner, and commits himself in a great many places, and if his theory was universally believed, the doctrine of regeneration would be exploded. I think I know better.⁵⁶

While Manning could see flaws in Ross' polemic, responding in an intellectually responsible and respectable way would not be easy. He prayed, "O may God raise up able men to vindicate the ways of God."⁵⁷ The Baptist Patriarch knew that the second generation of Maritime Baptist leaders would have to defend the faith but the risks were great. Writing to Manning on 17 January 1826, Samuel Elder placed into perspective the denomination's involvement in the controversy:

My object in writing you at the present is to call to your attention to the existing state of the Baptist controversy [.] your system has been attcked] and defended, and reattcked, the present is an important period in the history of the denomination in Nova Scotia, the public attention is considerably excited by the publications which have appeared, the advocates for Infant Baptism arrogate to themselves the victory at the present crisis, the enemies of your sys[tem] are numerous powerful learned and determined. Therefore the utmost effort should be used to bring the subject before the public again in such a form as may be conducive to the interests of truth and religion.⁵⁸

While Maritime Regular Baptists were numerous and determined, they were neither as powerful nor as learned as their pedobaptist opponents. Nevertheless, the "Faith of the Fathers," their pride, and public image were under attack. In the words of Samuel Elder, "The cause ought not to suffer for want of an exertion."⁵⁹

⁵⁶ "Manning Diary," 24 December 1825.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 10 March 1826.

⁵⁸ "Samuel Elder to Edward Manning, 17 January 1826, Truro, N. S., AUA. Samuel Elder was William Elder's brother and a Regular Baptist.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

It is ironic that as the Baptists moved deeper into the debate in order to defend their “sacred rite,” which for many ritualized the radical “New Birth” experience, they had to resort to means which had never been part of their evangelical tradition. In other words, in order to uphold believers’ baptism by immersion -- a heavily experiential ordinance -- some Baptist leaders were forced to adopt a much more rational and biblicist approach to their faith. Recognizing that someone must prepare a Baptist response to the works of Jackson and Ross, Samuel Elder was

in hopes brother [Charles] Tupper is writing an answer to Jackson and if so it is well but Ross’s book must be answered . . . [for] the rancourous old Bigot must not be permitted to retire without seeing the pattern of the true tabernacle which god pitched. I should not be afraid to trust the subject in William Elder’s hands were he master of Greek and Latin but as he is not he ought to have the assistance of one adept in those languages. [He] ought to be enabled to visit the Waterville institution [Maine] there he would [ob]tain all the necessary assistance from books and Scholars.⁶⁰

Although the Regular Baptist believed that William Elder “cannot in duty avoid answering Ross,” he was relieved from this task by Alexander Crawford.⁶¹ In the 1820s, Crawford was one of the best educated Baptist ministers in the region, although he never joined the Baptist Association of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.⁶² This was the same Alexander Crawford, in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, who had been so disquieted and in the end had rejected the New Light piety of Harris Harding. In 1815, Crawford had moved to Prince Edward Island where he had established a number of small Baptist churches. Never achieving any significant ministerial “success,” he had begun to question his divine call to

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Consult: D. Merrick Walker, “Robert and James Haldane: Brothers, Blended, and Blessed” *The Chronicle* 13(1950): 18 - 27; Allen M. Gibson, “Alexander Crawford and the Prince Edward Island Baptists:” *The Chronicle* 15(1952): 133 - 139.

ministry. "I once thought the Lord had called me to preach the gospel. I Fear much that I ran unent."⁶³

Discouraged in his efforts as a pastor, Crawford turned his attention to the baptismal controversy in Nova Scotia. Given his cognitive approach to Christianity, he was no stranger to religious controversy, having debated a number of issues in the pages of the Prince Edward Island Register.⁶⁴ Crawford understood that all Regular Baptists in the Maritimes were in a very difficult position following Ross' scholarly publication. Writing to William Tingley 15 May 1826, Crawford noted:

I suppose you have heard that Mr. Ross of Pictou took up the [sword?] against poor Mr. Elder I thought it was not bad to have two clergyman against one man who had to labour for his food[.] [I have] huddled together a few remarks to draw the attention of Mr. Ross from Mr. Elder and leave the original combatants to settle their differences themselves.⁶⁵

Crawford knew that the baptismal controversy was perhaps his last chance to make a notable contribution to Baptist life in the Maritimes. Having read Elder's Infant Sprinkling Weighed in the Balance, he was convinced that he could produce a more learned response to Ross. Without any indication that his manuscript would receive financial support from the Baptist association, Crawford wrote his Believer Immersion⁶⁶ and began to circulate it privately among a number of ministers, believing "the pedobaptists will not find it any easy

⁶³ Alexander Crawford to Richard Creed, 25 November 1827, Tryon, P. E. I., AUA.

⁶⁴ Prince Edward Island Register, 20 March 1827.

⁶⁵ Alexander Crawford to William Tingley Senr., 15 May 1826, Tryon, P.E.I., AUA. Nothing is known about Tingley except that he was a Regular Baptist who seems to have supported Crawford's island ministry.

⁶⁶ Ibid., Alexander Crawford, Believer Immersion, As Opposed to Unbeliever Sprinkling (Charlottetown, PEI: James D. Hazard, 1827). The evidence suggests that Charles Tupper --from whose pen many Regular Baptists hoped the reply would come -- was instrumental in encouraging Crawford in writing this manuscript.

to answer."⁶⁷ It is ironic that someone who had opposed the essentially Allinite piety of Harris Harding, which was dramatically represented in immersionist baptism, became a leading defender of the religious ordinance.

In 1827, Crawford received the necessary funds to publish his text at the press of the Prince Edward Island Register. The editor, James D. Hazard, printed the preface of Crawford's work in the 6 March 1827 issue of his newspaper, declaring that the "subject is not of a nature to render it generally attractive, being a matter of abstract religious controversy." Outraged at such an introduction and thoroughly convinced that Hazard's observation was wrong -- given the excitement caused by the baptismal controversy -- Crawford replied.

I am doubtless, obliged to you for the respected manner in which you have introduced to the notice of the public my pamphlet on Baptism. . . I lament that you have misrepresented my subject. I am sorry you did not allow yourself "leisure" and "inclination" to think -- at least so far as to discern between "a matter of abstract religious controversy; and direct plain positive command of Jesus Christ," a standing law of his Kingdom, a significant institution of universal and perpetual deligation . . . the very vitals of Christianity.⁶⁸

What Hazard did not understand was the popular appeal of the baptismal debate and its relationship to what D. C. Harvey has called the "intellectual awakening." Indeed, Hazard's critical comments about Crawford's work fueled the controversy on the Island colony. One angry "observer" noted in the Register:

With regard to the present work . . . it certainly proves, that its author rises very high in his own estimation; and that he is quite sure that he is right; although many thousands of persons, quite as well reformed, and as great in

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Prince Edward Island Register, 20 March 1827.

every respect as himself, have thought otherwise. Surely, Sir, such a mode of writing, in this enlightened age does a man no credit.⁶⁹

One aspect of this “enlightened age” hinged upon debates of this kind which called for people to defend certain intellectual positions in their particular context, even the Maritime colonies of British North America. In that respect, Alexander Crawford succeeded very well indeed.

Crawford’s Believer Immersion was an exercise in careful biblical theology. Its essays on the “Abrahamic Covenant” and “Christian Baptism” were followed by three letters addressed to Duncan Ross. The essays were not intended primarily as a response to the specifics of Ross’ pamphlet, but rather a positive statement about the relationship between the Old Testament (Abrahamic Covenant) and the New Testament (believers’ immersionist baptism). In a fairly sophisticated way, Crawford raised the fundamental questions about hermeneutics or methods of interpretation. Not surprisingly, the island Baptist linked his hermeneutic to the “Baptist post-millennialism” of the Calvinistic immersionists. He conceded that Duncan Ross was fully committed to biblical Christianity and attempted to base pedobaptism upon scriptural principles. The “chief excellency I admire in your letters is, your resting the cause on the scriptures alone.”⁷⁰ Crawford also declared that he too was tied to biblicism.⁷¹ The difference between the two men, according to the Crawford, was in their approach to understanding the Bible, and in

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Crawford, Believer Immersion, p.73.

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. v, 130.

particular, the relationship between the two testaments. Since there are no explicit examples of infant baptism in the New Testament, Ross had argued for continuity between the Abrahamic covenant and the New Covenant to make his point. Since circumcision was the rite of passage in the Old Testament, which signified an infant's entry into the covenant people of God, infant baptism was a similar ritual of initiation into the New Testament church.

Crawford disagreed and argued for a radical separation of the two covenants or testaments. In very simple terms he wrote:

Again, you [Ross] grant that the two testaments were made, the old and the new. Suppose that a certain rich gentleman had willed all his property to the protestant clergy of British North America. Mr. Ross and Mr. Elder both, would probably expect a little. But as the gentleman was yet alive, he could alter the will. Accordingly, he makes a new one; leaving the whole to the protestant clergy in British North America, who have passed their 50th year, and Mr. Ross to be his sole executor. Suppose then Mr. Elder should put in his claim, pleading that he was incumbent on Mr. Ross to show his authority for excluding him. Would not Mr. Ross laugh at his folly and impertinence, and show that the standard of qualification was altered; and, as Mr. Elder's age was not included in the last [current] testament, its having been included in the first availed nothing? It's needless to multiply instances. All I mean by them is to show how unfair you would state the point at issue. I request your attention to Isa. 12:4 the general opinion is that Zion and Jerusalem mean the Christian church. If the uncircumcised and the unclean are to be taken literally, Mr. Ross has no business in Zion; for I expect he is both uncircumcised and unclean. If they are taken spiritually, those who are uncircumcised in heart and ears, whether infants for adults, are excluded.⁷²

The explicit argument made by Crawford was that while the old covenant was granted to those in a certain hereditary line, the new covenant was given to those with "circumcised hearts," those who had experienced the "New Birth." To these people was extended the rite of passage, believers' baptism by immersion. Believing his hermeneutic to be "the plain,

⁷² Ibid., p. 98.

easy, natural, unforced interpretation” of the Bible,⁷³ he challenged his readers to compare his approach with that of Ross, who “appears to study systematically rather than scripturally.” By adapting “a theory” first, Crawford maintained that his Presbyterian opponent “then tries his utmost to support it, instead of carefully examining and comparing all the particular cases in the word of God,” and then “forming his opinion” based on their “combined testimony.”⁷⁴

By addressing the foundational issues at stake in this religious debate, Crawford placed the Baptist position on a firm intellectual footing which would have been impossible for William Elder to achieve. Nevertheless, Crawford defended Elder’s pamphlet with great passion and clarity, thereby uniting the Baptist stand against the pedobaptists. This was necessary, for Crawford believed that the Regular Baptists were at the very center of the divine will for humanity. They were the “shining gospel lights” who had rid themselves of the pollution of the superstitions pedobaptists had inherited from the “dark and shadowy dispensation which is done away.”⁷⁵ The “veil of Moses” had been removed so that the purity of the gospel ordinance could be seen. The progress of the Kingdom of God, for Crawford, depended upon the advancement of Regular Baptist principles. In 1827 it was the perception of many Maritime pedobaptists that the immersionists were gaining ground, at least in part through the baptismal controversy in its printed and preached forms. Crawford boasted:

Lately . . . Gospel light is increasing; believers are ceasing to call men masters in religion; and their appeal is to the infallible standard. The spiritual nature of Christ’s Kingdom, in its government, subjects, and ordinances, begins to be understood. This is visibly undermining unbeliever sprinkling; and

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.135.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.126.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.37.

whenever evangelical truth prevails, Baptist principles are suggested to the enlightened mind, as most consistent with the spirituality of the Kingdom of heaven.⁷⁶

Crawford was fully aware of the excited nature of the debate, for “the books which contain such [pedobaptist] sentiments are extensively circulated in the community.” Indeed, to promote “Kingdom progress,” it was his “duty” to publish his pamphlet for “we hope the time is coming when the whole population of every land shall be brought into the [Regular Baptist] church.”⁷⁷ “The increase of the Baptists always bears a proportion to the progress of truth.”⁷⁸ For Crawford, he and his fellow Baptists were the legitimate heirs to the ministry of Jesus. They alone possessed a “pure believers” church because their ritual of immersionist baptism was extended only to converted individuals. Theirs was the rite of passage to the new age or dispensation.

During the 1820s and 1830s, Maritime Regular Baptists needed confidence to face an increasingly complex society. Leading revival was one thing; participating in politics, business and the broader intellectual currents of the region was quite another. Crawford’s sound -- if not brilliant -- exposition of “Baptist post-millennialism” reassured his constituency that they must continue to evangelize and proselytize the unconverted and the converted pedobaptist world. The future of the world depended upon it. Crawford’s work also provided a respectable and reasoned response to Duncan Ross at a time when perhaps the only other person capable of entering the debate was Charles Tupper. The island Baptist had stripped away much of the rhetoric characteristic of the baptismal controversy, and explained clearly why pedobaptists and Baptists held differing positions. He also

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.iii.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. iv ,iii.

demonstrated that Maritime Regular Baptists could no longer be dismissed as a “strange, erroneous, enthusiastic people.”⁷⁹ Crawford had produced a work that equaled, if not surpassed, Ross’ in intellectual rigor. At a more popular level, Crawford had vindicated the Baptist position, even though it would continue to be understood at the popular level in heterodox ways which sometimes smacked of sacramentalism, magic, and New Light enthusiasm. Crawford clearly understood this dimension of Maritime Regular Baptist spirituality though he could not address it in his pamphlets, for it would have tended to support the negative popular perceptions of the immersionists. Nevertheless, his carefully argued and cogently written essays were most likely an attempt to move the region’s Baptist grassroots in a more cognitive, orthodox direction. Indeed, many of the associations preachers would have applauded this goal, while those leaders and laity in the tradition of Harris Harding would have ignored Crawford’s work.⁸⁰

The pedobaptist response to Crawford was not long in coming. Duncan Ross’s Strictures on a Publication Entitled Believer Immersion, As Opposed to Unbeliever Sprinkling appeared in 1828.⁸¹ Unlike his first book, this work is almost entirely a response to Crawford, offering little in the way of a defence for infant baptism. His pamphlet of thirty-eight pages did little but clarify “several topics maintained in my former letters” and attack Crawford. Ross began his first letter by suggesting that Crawford’s work did not require an answer, because his “mistakes are so evident, as to render a refutation useless to

⁷⁸ Ibid., p.131.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p.iii. It is very likely that Crawford understood the heterodox views of baptism at the grassroots level. Nevertheless, he regarded the baptismal debate as the means to educating even the Baptists about their own beliefs.

⁸⁰ One publication not dealt with in this chapter is the anonymously written A Poetical Essay Upon Baptism (Halifax, NS: Acadian Magazine Office, 1827). Since all parties in the controversy ignored the pamphlet it did not impact the direction of the debate.

any intelligent person.”⁸² Instead, the Presbyterian polemicist responded primarily with personal attacks and overstatement. Indeed, he was much more content to rail against Baptist triumphalism than attempt to dismantle the central arguments of Believer Immersion.⁸³ This was significant since the Presbyterian contributions to the controversy, to this point, had not adopted an aggressive offensive, unlike the Methodist approach. Ross had not outmaneuvered Crawford, however, and since Strictures on a Publication had not substantially advanced or altered the debate, the Baptists were content to allow Crawford’s work to stand as their definitive reply to the pedobaptists. While there may not have been a clear victor, the Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians all believed they had not lost the controversy.⁸⁴

It is quite possible that the literary exchange would have ended in a draw in 1828, if an unexpected and shocking volume by William Elder had not appeared in 1834. His Reasons for Relinquishing the Principles of Adult Baptism, and Embracing those of Infant Baptism, addressed to his Baptist “brethren”, dumbfounded them greatly.⁸⁵ Even as late as

⁸¹ Duncan Ross, Strictures on a Publication Entitled Believer Immersion, As Opposed to Unbeliever Sprinkling (Pictou, NS: Weir Durham Press, 1828).

⁸² Ibid., p.3.

⁸³ Ibid., pp. 20,21.

⁸⁴ For the next six years no books on baptism were published. Because Crawford was not able to reply to Ross before he died, the pedobaptists had no reason to respond. The only exception is John George Naylor, A Treatise on Baptism; Including a Refutation of the Arguments Advanced on the Same Subject by the Rev. G. Burns, D.D. (Saint John, N.B.: Andrew Garrison, 1832. Since the tracts by Naylor [Baptist] and Burns [Presbyterian] do not interact with any of those in the wider controversy, they have not been included in this study. I. E. Bill wrote of this controversy: “Both writers evinced more intellectual cleverness than religious power, and we are not aware that any special advantage resulted from the contest” in The Baptists of Saint John, N. B. (Saint John, NB: Barnes & Company, 1863), p.11.

⁸⁵ William Elder, Reasons For Relinquishing the Principles of Adult Baptism, And Embracing those of Infant Baptism . . . (Halifax, NS: Edmund Ward, 1834).

28 October 1833, Elder had seemed quite content to be a Regular Baptist minister. Writing to Edward Manning regarding his preaching tour in Cape Breton, Elder had commented:

I trust the Lord assisted in preaching to them the unsearchable riches of Christ [.] I do not know that I even felt greater freedom in my own mind than while wondering among them and endeavouring to point them to the lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world[.] Six were baptized on one route and brother McQuillan was ordained.⁸⁶

Four months later, Elder rejected believer's baptism by immersion as normative. His reasons for adopting pedobaptist principles are not altogether clear. Extant letters suggest that he was experiencing not only personal financial problems, but also difficulty with a neighbouring minister and people in his own church.⁸⁷ Perhaps these factors, along with what his most recent biographer has called "a period of intense mental agony" over his theology of baptism, led to his defection to the pedobaptist fold.⁸⁸ His internal struggles and change of mind about baptism were concealed from his people for a time; but contrary "to his wishes and intentions the subject of his forthcoming publication was divulged, and great excitement followed."⁸⁹ Without question, Elder's change of mind caused a great disturbance in his local church and in the denomination. In a desperate plea for guidance from Edward Manning, William H. Chipman, one of Elder's parishioners, wrote:

Altho it has pleased god hither to spare us it now becomes our painful duty to state that our peace is broken in upon and we as a church are called to suffer. Father Elder has changed his Sentiments notwithstanding all he has written and said against infant Baptism he has now become a decided Congregationalist- He intends leaving us in May or sooner if he can and is

⁸⁶ William Elder to Edward Manning, 28 October 1833, Bridgetown, N. S. AUA.

⁸⁷ See the following letters in the Baptist Collection, AUA. William Chipman to Edward Manning, 15 April 1832, Bridgetown, NS, William Chipman to Edward Manning, 13 June 1832, Bridgetown, NS.

⁸⁸ Hicks, "Elder, William," p. 272.

⁸⁹ J.M. Cramp, "History of the Maritime Baptists," p.218.

now actually engaged writing a treatise In Support of infant Baptism – We know not hardly what to do . . .⁹⁰

In a day when many pedobaptists were being “buried with Christ” in immersionist baptism, it was almost unthinkable that a well established minister -- one who had defended the Baptists in the controversy -- would embrace pedobaptism.

At the advice of Edward Manning and other preachers, an association council was convened in Bridgetown in order to give direction to Elder’s church. The council concluded that the church should “exclude [Elder] from their fellowship,” which was promptly carried out. Elder had hoped to be honourably dismissed from the Bridgetown church and recommended to the Liverpool Congregational church. In the words of J. M. Cramp

We may differ among ourselves as to the modes of stating or explaining certain truths of Christianity -- but the truths themselves must be inviolably held; -- there is “one faith.” We may differ from each other, to, respecting the time of administering, christian baptism; but infant sprinkling and believer’s baptism are not modes of the same ordinance; -- there is only “one baptism.” If any members of our churches renounce that baptism, their connection with us necessarily ceases- nor do I see that they have any right to complain of it.⁹¹

Consequently, Elder’s name was withdrawn from the list of ministers in good standing with the association, for he was by definition “no longer a Baptist minister.”⁹² Although it is unknown exactly where Elder went immediately following his dismissal, it a fact that by May, 1834, he was pastor of the Congregational church in Liverpool, formerly led by John

⁹⁰ William H. Chipman to Edward Manning, 3 March 1834, Bridgetown, NS. AUA.

⁹¹Cramp, “History of the Maritime Baptists,” p. 218.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 219.

Payzant, where people were said to “rally around the antichristian stand and Pedobaptist new-lightism there.”⁹³

In spite of their phenomenal numerical and geographic expansion in the 1820s and 1830s, the Regular Baptists were still concerned that a renewal of interest in pedobaptism by their own people might in fact hinder their growth, and by definition, the “Kingdom of God.” One cannot overestimate the importance of Elder’s defection from the Baptists. As one of the region’s best known Regular Baptists, Elder’s change in sentiments raised some serious questions about the denomination and its leaders. At a popular level it was a huge victory for the pedobaptists, a victory which touched the grassroots in a way publishing theological tracts could never achieve. After visiting the Baptists in Liverpool in November of 1834, I. E. Bill, who was already a key second generation leader, expressed concern about Elder’s impact.

Mr. Elder is doing all he can to pull down the Baptists at Liverpool as well as elsewhere, but he has got a powerful God to overcome if he lays them waste. As sainted [Alexander] Crawford remarks, “the moon shines none the dimmer, for the dogs barking at it.” So far as I can judge Mr. E. is not advancing in influence at Liverpool; but truth blessed be God, is gaining ground.⁹⁴

If Elder’s preaching caused problems for his former denomination, his Reasons for Relinquishing the Principles of Adult Baptism was far more damning. In this tract, Elder presented a very different view of “sacred history” and the role of baptism than he had done in 1823.⁹⁵ Arguing for continuity from the Garden of Eden to the end of time when

⁹³ A. M. Gidney to Edward Manning, 19 May 1834, Pleasant River, NS. AUA.

⁹⁴ I. E. Bill to Edward Manning, 3 May 1835, Liverpool, NS. AUA.

⁹⁵ For an engaging discussion of restorationism as an important aspect of American culture consult: Richard T. Hughes and C. Leonard Allen, Illusions of Innocence: Protestant Primitivism in America, 1630-1875 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988. Note

all of humanity will be one, he painted the Baptists as the ultimate schismatics and dissenters who were destroying Christian civilization and not, as they believed, advancing the Kingdom of God. Elder declared that through ignorance and the influence of misguided Baptist leaders he had embraced “Adult Baptism” and rejected infant baptism without considering the arguments carefully.⁹⁶ Hoping to help other Baptists shed their bigotry, he longed for them to “return to the old paths and thus find rest for their souls” in pedobaptism. To enlighten his Baptist readers he asked them to consider that the “family of Abraham” which included children were “constituted members” of the Old Testament church. Just as this church had Moses, the law giver, the New Testament church, with increasingly divine light, had “Jesus and his apostles.”⁹⁷ Stressing the theme of continuity, Elder argued that the New Testament church obviously included children as well because the “church is the church.” Recognizing that the New Testament did not provide explicit examples of infant baptism and church membership, he changed his hermeneutic to include “Christian history.” Elder’s former radical biblicism was now tempered by religious tradition and pedobaptist scholarship. He asked the Maritime Regular Baptists:

How is it that there is such a total silence on the subject in ancient writers. You suppose my brethren that you have the whole scripture on your side, and yet you cannot reestablish truth in the church of God without the most determined opposition; while those ancient Christians, could introduce a pernicious error, without any individual having sufficient love to the truth, to lift up a warning voice against it:--To him who can believe this, nothing will be incredible.⁹⁸

also Manning’s diary entry for 12 February 1822. “We think in the Millennium they will all be Baptists, Sentimentally and practically, and in Heaven they are and will be Baptists. . . .”

⁹⁶ Elder, *Reasons for Relinquishing*, pp. 43, 39, 67.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

Using the “authority” of history, Elder could not fathom how the Baptists could believe that the majority of Christians throughout history held to heretical views of baptism and the church. Turning this argument on its head, he posited that “christianity would never have come down to us thro’ the ages of darkness and ignorance, it has passed through . . . had it not been for infant baptism.”⁹⁹ If “Adult Baptism” had been practised throughout the centuries, especially the “dark times,” there would “be scarcely any thing to remind the people, that God has sent his Son to die for sinners.”¹⁰⁰

In a way very similar to his 1823 pamphlet, Elder linked the furtherance of the Kingdom of God to baptism -- except that in 1834, infant baptism was the central ritual, not believer’s baptism by immersion. In light of the evidence from history, he challenged his former “brethren” to flee the “polluted” heritage of “immersing,” which was practiced by dissenters such the Mormons and the Socinians and embrace the respectable tradition of pedobaptism. Why should those preparing for the Baptist ministry read pedobaptist saints such as “Owen, Edwards, Dwight etc,” accepting all of their teaching except in the area of baptism, asked Elder?¹⁰¹ Why inject Baptist “infidelity” into Puritan and Reformed theology? By reading “any of the late commentaries on the scriptures or treatises on baptism by pedobaptists,” Elder rather naively believed that Baptists would rejoin the historic universal church. Scholarship and history, not “impressions” from the Holy Spirit, led the searching Christian. Implicitly, Elder was rejecting the heavily experimental piety of the Baptists which they had inherited from the First and Second Great Awakenings in Nova

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.56.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

Scotia. The Holy Spirit was not the author of dissent. That “the Holy Spirit teaches pious persons those things in which they differ from each other I do not believe.”¹⁰²

Dissent worked against Elder’s revised notion of post-millennialism. No longer was there to be a “Baptist” Kingdom of God, but a broadly catholic or universal pedobaptist Kingdom.

There is . . . a brighter day awaiting the church on earth; I trust a day in which Ephraim shall no more envy Judah, and Judah no more vex Ephraim. This will be brought about we have reason to think, not by the different denominations being all brought over to one, but by more of the spirit of love and of a sound mind being communicated to all; by all being brought to see more clearly, wherein the essence of true religion consists; and how little that is affected by externals. Selfishness will be more subdued; the glory of God and good of his cause will be more simply aimed at; and seeing thus brought gradually to approximate [sic] nearer each other in temper and spirit as they are more assimilated to the mind which was in Christ; that happy state of things will take place, when none shall hurt or destroy in God’s holy mountain.

How blessed a consummation! Why should we not wish to do our part, to facilitate its approach.¹⁰³

While Elder’s vision approximates that which would be known as the Protestant consensus, the Baptist view of baptism would only allow them a qualified or limited participation in the area of cooperative Christianity.¹⁰⁴ The principles of the Regular Baptists set them apart from other Christian denominations in the Maritimes. If anything, Elder’s pamphlet helped stiffen Baptist resolve to hold firmly to their “dissenting principles.” While clinging to Regular Baptist distinctives, many in the denomination’s leadership also laboured to achieve acceptability in society on their terms.

¹⁰² Ibid., p.82

¹⁰³ Ibid., p.93.

¹⁰⁴ For an excellent discussion of the nature of the Protestant Consensus in the one Maritime city consult T. W. Acheson, Saint John: The Making of a Colonial Urban Community (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), chapters 6, 7, 8.

Elder's Reasons for Relinquishing the Principles of Adult Baptism left the Regular Baptists scrambling. Elder had taken their worldview and turned it upside down. While his interpretative scheme was not true to the biblicism of the era, he nevertheless landed a blow which Jackson or Ross could never have delivered. What little religious and social acceptability the Baptists possessed in 1834, with Horton Academy and a growing numerical and even political influence, was dangerously close to evaporating. The published response to Elder's defection had to be masterful, comprehensive, and not delayed.¹⁰⁵

The author chosen to address Elder's second work was Edmund A. Crawley, a Baptist minister from Halifax. Born in England in 1799, Crawley had grown up near Sydney, Cape Breton Island. Coming from an Anglican family, he had been entitled to attend King's College in Windsor, N. S., and graduated with a M.A. in 1820. He had then apprenticed as a lawyer in Halifax, where he had become identified with a group of socially prominent Anglican evangelicals who had left St. Paul's in 1825 to found the Granville Street Baptist Church two years later. As a recent convert, Crawley had been baptized by immersion on 1 June 1828 and joined the church. Sensing "God's call to ministry," he had

¹⁰⁵ Elder's rejection of the Baptist position and his revised post-millennialism is seen in the following verse from Reasons for Relinquishing, p. 96.

Then let the children of the saints,
Be dedicate to God;
Pour out thy spirit on them Lord,
And wash them in they blood

Thus to the parents and their seed,
Shall thy salvation come;
And num'rous households meet at last,
In one eternal home.

given up his law practice and studied at Andover Theological Seminary in Massachusetts, and Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island. Ordained in 1830, he assumed the position of pastor to the Granville Street church the following year, a position he held until 1839.¹⁰⁶

Crawley's education made him the best prepared Baptist to participate in the controversy since its beginning in 1811. Crawley, who had moved from Anglicanism to the Baptist side, was a particularly appropriate choice to respond to Elder, who had moved in the opposite direction, from Baptist to Anglican.¹⁰⁷ Although he declared that he was "Naturally adverse to public controversy,"¹⁰⁸ he welcomed the opportunity to respond to Elder who "plunges the dagger of calumny into the heart of a whole community" while at the same time calling them "beloved brethren."¹⁰⁹ Adopting a hermeneutical approach similar to Alexander Crawford's, Crawley insisted upon an essential discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments. Since baptism was a New Testament rite, there was no sound reason for trying to understand it from an Old Testament perspective. In this regard, he believed "Jesus Christ and his Apostles are much more proper instructors than Moses and the Prophets."¹¹⁰ His approach to the question was straightforward and detailed.

In order to facilitate investigation we propose to collect together in the course of these pages all the passages in the New Testament from which it is possible to obtain any light on the two main points of inquiry, What sort of persons were baptized; and, In what manner were they baptized;¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Barry Moody, "Crawley, Edmund Albern," *DCB* 9(1982), p. 214.

¹⁰⁷ E. A. Crawley, *A Treatise on Baptism . . . Containing Reply to Mr. Elder's Letters on Infant Baptism . . . and a Solemn Appeal In Favor of a Spiritual Church* (Halifax, N. S.: James Spike, 1835). His response was the result of prompting by his brethren to the extent that he was relieved of his pastoral duties by I.E. Bill in order to write his treatise.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. iii.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.92.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6; See also p. 30, 62.

By concentrating on the New Testament, Crawley highlighted the rather “breezy” treatment it received in Elder’s 1834 work. In doing so, Crawley reasserted the primacy of the Baptist hermeneutic and biblicism. One of the reasons Elder chose to downplay the New Testament as an authority for the controversy stems from his use of it in his first pamphlet in favour of believer’s immersion. Through an extensive and often technical exposition of all the “baptismal passages” in the New Testament, Crawley concluded the obvious, that there are no clear or explicit instances in the New Testament where infants were baptized.

Following his biblical exegesis, the Halifax minister addressed Elder’s arguments from early church history. Clearly better educated and having more scholarly resources at hand than Elder, Crawley dismantled his opponents’ arguments and concluded that “infant baptism did not begin with the apostles and that its introduction was not altogether . . . silent and unresisted.”¹¹² In addition, he used his background in biblical languages to write a chapter which dealt with the Greek word baptizo, arguing that its biblical and extra biblical meaning had always been to dip or to immerse.¹¹³ Finally, the author examined the relevant scripture passages regarding the qualifications for baptism, concluding:

Baptism was the appointed solemnity accompanying an open avowal of faith in Christ, and as such, stood as a sign or symbol of that salvation which all obtain through faith; and none but those who possessed that change of heart which would render them willing “to confess Christ before men,” . . . could be real believers, could possess salvation.¹¹⁴

Although Crawley restated many of the same arguments made by previous Baptist authors, he did so with the confidence and precision which came with formal education and

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p.99.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 126-151.

systematic analysis. Perhaps better than any Maritime Baptist polemicist, Crawley challenged the pedobaptists to address the question of church membership purity or integrity. In a lengthy critique of “hereditary” Christianity he noted that by “baptizing infants . . . you introduce into the church persons of whom the greater part will certainly turn out to be unworthy members of it.”¹¹⁵ By accepting into membership people who would never be regenerated or converted, Crawley argued, pedobaptists opened themselves up to heretics, and “gross sinners” and those with “other errors to produce the downfall of real religion.”

A pure or spiritual communion is essential to many important blessings. Without it cannot be expected and will rarely happen that the pulpit will preach plainly and powerfully the doctrines of Christ. The saying is as true now as in the days of Hosea, “there shall be, like people, like priest.”¹¹⁶

Building upon his arguments about the pollution of pedobaptism and the purity of the Baptist denomination, Crawley ended his pamphlet by reiterating his constituency’s post-millennial expectations. In order for the Kingdom to advance, Christian pedobaptists should abandon their corrupted churches and be immersed and join a Baptist church. Progress depended upon it. In the words of E. A. Crawley, “Yes there is a remedy and only one – and that is SEPARATION.”¹¹⁷ Rejecting the charge of schism, which he defined as a “division among real Christians on needless grounds, Crawley counseled separation which “is the escape of christians from religious fellowship with those who neither acknowledge nor practice the vital truths of God’s word.”¹¹⁸ It was their duty to join a “gospel church.”

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.154.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.158.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.194.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.190.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.197.

This had been Crawley's pilgrimage, along with that of thousands of other Baptists and the kingdom depended upon more people entering into the New Testament church.

The Baptist association was thoroughly delighted with E. A. Crawley's Treatise on Baptism and in its annual meeting in 1835:

Resolved. That the Association highly appreciate the valuable production of brother E. A. Crawley on Baptism, in reply to Mr. Elder, and that they will cordially sustain him in any future production on the same subject he may be induced to send forth.¹¹⁹

Crawley had not only controlled the damage done by Elder's defection and publication, but he had clearly contributed the most extensive and scholarly work to the baptismal controversy to date. His biblical languages, exegesis, theology, and systematic analysis had combined to prove to the Maritime Protestant community that even the Baptists had their intellectual "giants," or at least "giant." For those Baptists looking to increase the respectability of their denomination, Crawley's work was heaven-sent. For those at the grassroots, the experiential dimension of the ritual would always be more important than its defense.

A pedobaptist response to Crawley came in 1835 by a Methodist minister of Irish Presbyterian dissent. Matthew Richey's A Short and Scriptural Method with AntiPedobaptists . . . was a meager attempt to rebut the Halifax Baptist. His discussion centered around the mode of baptism; his stated intention was to publish another book at a later time on the more deeply theological question of who was an appropriate subject for baptism -- a sequel which never appeared.¹²⁰ Richey's volume signified a change in the

¹¹⁹ Cramp, "History of the Maritime Baptists," p. 220.

¹²⁰ Matthew Richey, A Short and Scriptural Method with Antipedobaptists Containing Strictures on the Rev. E. A. Crawley's Treatise on Baptism in Reply to the Rev. W. Elder's

controversy as it became concerned increasingly with the question of the mode of baptism. This shift in the focus of the debate made the literary exchange even more popular, since to the average person, the question of how to baptize was the most visible and by far the best understood aspect of the controversy. The style of the debate also changed during this period, as aggressive rhetoric largely replaced theological accuracy and affirmative statements of denominational beliefs. An unsigned article in the Baptist Missionary Magazine indicated that Crawley was willing to respond to Richey following the publication of his anticipated, but never published, second volume. The Magazine article was insulted that the pedobaptist replied to Crawley in “one of the weakest productions on ‘the mode of baptism’ we have ever read.” It was noted that “a fortnight was quite too short a time to arrange the materials for any work that should be really an answer” to Crawley’s Treatise on Baptism.¹²¹ Although the Baptists did not want a protracted baptismal controversy, since Crawley’s work seemed impenetrable, Richey’s unremarkable response needed to be exposed as superficial, if not insulting.

The next phase of the controversy proved to be one with which the Baptists as well as many pedobaptists became increasingly uncomfortable, because it appeared to be disorderly and lacked decorum. In 1835, William Jackson, only recently converted to immersionist baptism, wrote a response to Richey which was unauthorized by the Baptist elite. Jackson had come to Nova Scotia from Virginia in 1832 as pastor for a Methodist congregation in Halifax. His success as the new minister of his congregation was short-lived, though he remained in the city after resigning his pulpit to Thomas Taylor.¹²² As

Letters on that Subject. Part I (Halifax, NS: J. S. Cunnabell, 1835). Richey relocated to Upper Canada shortly after his volume was published.

¹²¹ BMM, July 1835.

¹²² Smith, History of the Methodist Church....p. 209.

historian T.W. Smith has somewhat dispassionately related, "A little later, as a convert to immersionist theories, he [Jackson] accompanied a Baptist minister out of the city, and by the use of the words of the Ethiopian eunuch made his immersion in the waters of Bedford Basin a somewhat dramatic scene."¹²³ Jackson's volume was an unremarkable reiteration and personal reflection upon believer's baptism by immersion which outraged the Methodists and made the Baptists feel uncomfortable as someone not under their guidance was effectively speaking for them.

Jackson's former Methodist colleague, Thomas Taylor, assumed the responsibility of replying to Jackson's attack on Richey. Grounded in the theology of his day, Taylor presented the most comprehensive book on baptism written by a Methodist to this point in the debate.¹²⁴ Taylor also made brief comments on Crawley's work and on an article "The Baptismal Controversy" in the Baptist Missionary Magazine.¹²⁵ At this point it was imperative for a Methodist to make a wide and sweeping refutation of the Baptist polemics because Jackson, a former Methodist, had slanderously questioned the pedobaptist position. The embarrassment of having a former Methodist minister make a public defense of the Baptist position must undoubtedly have enraged the pedobaptists.

The 1835 publication of Jackson's, A Portrait of the Rev. Thomas Taylor; or the Hypocrite Unmasked,¹²⁶ must have aroused the curiosity of many persons previously disinterested in the baptismal controversy. Representing the climax of the discourteous and disrespectful polemics, Jackson concluded his attack with these words.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 211 and Acts 8:27.

¹²⁴ Thomas Taylor, The Baptist Commentator Reviewed: Two Letters to the Rev. William Jackson on Christian Baptism... (Halifax, NS: J.S. Cunnabell, 1835).

¹²⁵ BMM, July, 1835.

Under a sense of my own insufficiency, I have humbly endeavoured to draw your "Portrait", -take off your "Mask" and give you a summary of your most "Striking Features." --And you will, no doubt, put on a "grave brow", and ask, "Have you done it in the spirit of the weak and lowly Saviour?"—and endeavour to insinuate that I have not. But I can assure you that I have not written one word with an angry or resentful feeling.¹²⁷

Given the former Methodist's questionable style and limited argument, the Regular Baptists were not eager to embrace him as a brother who shared their convictions. Indeed, the Baptist and pedobaptist communities seemed anxious to distance themselves from the "populist" Richey-Jackson-Taylor phase of the controversy. The Methodists wisely withdrew from the debate at this point.

The heated, even slanderous writings of 1835, which piqued public interest, reflect well that the large social-intellectual developments in the colony also had religious dimensions. By the end of 1835 the popular religious debate in print form had come to an end. The churches' contribution to the intellectual awakening and the broader literary exchange was taken over by a more erudite theological approach to the baptismal question by men who may be characterized as pastor-scholars. The Regular Baptists seemed pleased with this shift in the debate, hoping to protect the intellectual ground and social standing gained through Crawley's book. The only volume on baptism published in the Maritimes in 1836 reflected this dramatic change in the methods of the controversy.

James Robertson, the first Anglican to contribute a book on the question, was a missionary of the society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign parts and priest of

¹²⁶ William Jackson, A Portrait of the Rev. Thomas Taylor, or, the Hypocrite Unmasked (Halifax, NS: Blackadar, 1835).

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

the Wilmot parish for the first half of the nineteenth century.¹²⁸ His treatise was intended to be more catechetical than polemic in its purpose.

People who have been brought up in the bosom of the Church of England, are in the habit of looking upon infant Baptism, as a point of faith which can admit of no controversy: they therefore are apt to dismiss the subject from their thoughts, and to take no notice of those grounds upon which it rests, as on a sure foundation. The consequence is that, should they at any time be called on to give a reason for the hope that is in them, and to show the authority of their church for her practice in this particular, they would necessarily feel themselves rather at a loss as to what answer they should return. During their silence, arguments on the opposite side of the question would be brought forward, and put in the most prominent light; causing doubts to arise in their minds, and presenting difficulties which would all disappear on a closer investigation. Instead however of making such investigation as may lead to a clear and comprehensive view of the whole subject, they allow their imagination to carry them away, and to guide them to the conclusion that Infant baptism is not Scriptural.¹²⁹

As a pastor, Robertson was concerned that people be on guard against zealous Baptists who would try to lure Anglicans from their churches with arguments about baptism. Sensitive to the widespread popularity of the baptismal controversy, Robertson noted that the “authority of numbers” evident in the Baptists must not sway Anglicans “in matters which concern the welfare, spiritual and eternal, of yourselves and your children.”¹³⁰ Robertson’s goals were not unlike those of Monro, the Presbyterian minister who had written the first treatise back in 1811. Rather than merely seeking to attack the Regular Baptists, Robertson,

¹²⁸ T. R. Millman and A. R. Kelly, Atlantic Canada to 1900: A History of the Anglican Church (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), p. 89.

¹²⁹ James Robertson, A Treatise on Infant Baptism; Showing the Scriptural Grounds and Historical Evidence of that Ordinance Together with a Brief Exposition of the Baptismal Offices of the Church of England (Halifax, NS: Nova Scotian Office, 1836), pp. xviii - xix. For an examination of gentlemen-pastor-theologians in a very different context consult E. Brooks Holifield, The Gentlemen Theologians: American Theology in Southern Culture, 1795 - 1860 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1978). Holifield’s religious writers, he contends, were committed strongly to a common sense rationalism. A similar commitment is not found among the Maritime’s baptismal polemicists.

¹³⁰ Ibid., xvii - xviii.

like Monro, sought to inform his constituency of the distinctive theology underlying their practice of baptism and to inoculate Anglicans from confusion caused by “immersionist theories.” In 1811, the Baptists had had no one qualified to respond to Monro; in 1836, they were unwilling to respond to Robertson because of the embarrassing excesses of the previous year. The Regular Baptists were content to allow Crawley’s Treatise on Baptism to stand as their definitive statement.

In 1838, J. W. D. Gray, a leading evangelical Anglican minister from Saint John published A Brief View of the Scriptural Authority and Historical Evidence of Infant Baptism.¹³¹ Although the book carried all of the trappings of scholarship, including translations from Greek, Hebrew and Latin and formal theology, Gray was responding exclusively to E. A. Crawley’s 1834 publication. Committed to a thorough refutation, Gray declared:

. . . the writer desires to add, that in the whole investigation, he is not sensible of having neglected the consideration of a single argument, which has been urged in the Pamphlet before him, against the practice of Infant Baptism. He has endeavoured, whether successfully or not remains to be proved, to understand the precise meaning of their opponent, and to meet his positions with plainness and candour.¹³²

The text of over three hundred pages defended the established church, that had been maligned by Crawley, and in a respectful and often painfully polite, manner tried to dismantle Crawley’s arguments. By 1835 the debate had clearly changed. It was now characterized by a high level of scholarship, and although authors defended their brand of Christianity or at least its central rite, they had also lost most of their populist attachment.

¹³¹ J. W. D. Gray, A Brief View of the Scriptural Authority and Historical Evidence of Infant Baptism; and a Reply to Objections Urged in the Treatise of E. A. Crawley (Halifax, NS: W. Cunnabell, 1837).

¹³² Ibid., p. xi. On Gray see G. L. Jain, “Gray, J. W. D.”, DCB 9(1976), p. 338.

The Regular Baptists seemed quite content to allow Gray to go unanswered, and during the late 1830s, Maritime Baptist leaders made a conscious decision not to risk heated polemical debates which might tarnish their image as an orderly religious group. William Sommerville's published letters in 1838 reveal something of the exchange about baptism between Baptists and pedobaptists of this period. Sommerville, pastor of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Horton Township, had been offended by a rumour purporting that he had remarked to a local resident that "Baptist sentiments on the mode of Baptism were not unscriptural."¹³³ Sommerville wrote John Pryor -- the principal of Horton Academy and a leading local Baptist leader -- and requested his assistance in stopping this false rumour and vindicating his reputation locally. The principal's appended letter of support suggests that this was accomplished only after much procrastination. Sommerville did not hide his anger against Pryor's failure to act promptly on the request. But it should be pointed out that Pryor did not respond with an attack on Sommerville's character, but instead with a plea for understanding, delivered in a firm, yet respectful way. Indeed, the two scholar-pastors sought to make sure that the embarrassments of three years earlier would not be repeated. The way in which this local conflict was resolved differed significantly from the events in 1835.

From 1838 to 1844, no tracts on baptism were published. It was not until pedobaptist overconfidence in the form of a news item in the Saint John press appeared in 1843 -- which while commending a polemical sermon, "The Baptist Answered", remarked, "The work of the Rev. J. W. D. Gray on this subject which was published some years ago,

¹³³ William Sommerville, Antipedobaptism: A Letter to the Rev. John Pryor, A. M. Principal of the Baptist Seminary in Horton (Halifax, NS: W. Cunnabell, 1838), p. 5.

has never been answered because it is unanswerable"¹³⁴ -- that Maritime Regular Baptists realized they could no longer remain silent. E.A. Crawley was now a busy professor at Acadia College. Therefore, the responsibility of a reply fell to the much-respected Baptist minister, Charles Tupper, who nearly twenty years earlier had been unsuccessfully approached to answer Duncan Ross' arguments.

The son of New England Planter parents, Tupper was the first Baptist polemicist to represent the ethno-cultural "planter" background characteristic of the many in his denomination. Although he possessed a limited formal education, his passion for knowledge, mission work, and denominational apology made him aware of the most highly regarded Baptist leaders in nineteenth-century Maritime Canada. The most scholarly of the Baptist writers, Tupper gave his constituency an extensively researched work which outlined and refuted the major pedobaptist arguments.¹³⁵ Adopting the approach of a gentleman and scholar, Tupper confessed:

Between the Rev. Mr. Gray and himself, so far as he knows, no other feelings have ever existed than those of mutual friendship and esteem. It is his sincere desire that the same friendly dispositions which have hitherto been activated by them, should continue and increase, not only between them, but also between the Baptists and Pedobaptists generally.¹³⁶

Tupper knew that even as he showed due respect to Gray, he would nevertheless have to treat his opponent's arguments "unceremoniously."¹³⁷ Since he made Gray's book the focus of his reply, the Baptist triumphalism so characteristic of the earlier tracts was far more nuanced and subtle. Tupper's logical mind would not allow him to base his case on

¹³⁴ Saint John Chronicle, 4 August 1843.

¹³⁵ Barry Moodly, "Tupper, Charles", DCB 11(1982), pp. 895-896.

¹³⁶ Charles Tupper, Baptist Principles Vindicated: In Reply to the Rev'd J. W. D. Gray's Work on Baptism (Halifax, NS: Christian Messenger Office, 1844), p. 5.

ancient non-biblical history nor on the recent expansion of Baptists in the western world. Hence, any post-millennial emphasis was implicit as he tried to show how the Baptists most faithfully replicated the New Testament church in rituals and church polity.¹³⁸ Although many of Tupper's brethren would have preferred a more victorious approach, they were still able to feel vindicated because of the logic, readability, linguistic skill, and theological depth used in his defence of basic Baptist tenets. If there had been any doubt that the Baptists possessed able thinkers and apologists, Tupper put such misgivings to rest.

Although the Maritime Regular Baptists had begun the baptismal controversy as enthusiastic evangelicals with little pretension to erudition, they were now engaged in the debate as full and equal participants in colonial theological debate. One suspects that the pedobaptists continued to be outraged at the defections from their camps to the Baptists, but the immersionists could no longer be ignored or lampooned as ignorant enthusiasts whose movement would soon die out. In the mid-1840s Baptists possessed educational institutions, denominational organizations, and theological writers equal to any in the region. Nevertheless, Baptist passion for evangelism, baptism, and religious revival had not waned significantly as the second generation of Regular Baptist leaders expanded their denomination's influence and defended the "Faith of the Fathers." Indeed, the continued growth of Maritime Baptists probably explains why controversy over baptism would never completely die out in the nineteenth century; nor would the Baptists sense of duty to defend their sacred rite. In the words of Tupper.

The Baptists generally, regarding the sacred Scriptures as a full and explicit rule of faith and practice, deem the instructions contained in them quite sufficient to guide the sincere inquirer, whose mind is free from

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.5n.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101.

prepossession, to the right discharge of the duty. Accordingly, the Baptist Ministers in these Provinces have never published any books on Baptism, except in reply to works published by pedobaptist Ministers, adapted, in an opinion, to increase the popular prejudice against the scriptural view of this ordinance.¹³⁹

The last volume to appear in this baptismal controversy came from the pen of Thomas Trotter, a Presbyterian minister from Antigonish. A graduate of the University of Edinburgh, his Letters on the Meaning of Baptizo in the New Testament in Reply to the views of the Rev. Charles Tupper were reminiscent in some ways of the pamphlets of the mid-1830s.¹⁴⁰ Using his finely developed skills in linguistics, he concentrated on the question of baptismal mode. However, he continued in the tradition of the other pastor-scholars and merely debated the issues without entering into character-assassination. In fact, it is important to remember that the Presbyterians never had engaged in the debate during the years of unbridled passion. Very clearly they were not prepared to risk being associated with “theological mud slinging,” and risk damaging their respected positions, and those of their respective denominations in society. The course of the controversy had come full circle by 1848. The first polemic written by James Monro in 1811 had had as its main purpose the education of Presbyterians about baptism, so that they might resist the appeal to be “buried in the placid sheet.” Similarly, in the volumes after 1836, rather than deliberate combat or disparagement, the “pursuit of truth” was Trotter’s primary stated aim.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁴⁰ Thomas Trotter, Letters on the Meaning of Baptizo, in the New Testament In Reply to the Views of the Rev. Charles Tupper (Pictou, NS: Eastern Chronicle Office, 1848). Also see R. A. MacLean, “Trotter, Thomas”, *DCB* 8(1985), pp. 894-895. Charles Tupper did respond to Trotter in his Vindication of the Baptist translators in India in reply to the Rev. Thomas Trotter’s Letters. “On the Meaning of Baptizo (Pictou, NS: Eastern Chronicle Office, 1848). However, since it is at least in part a response to the debate between two Bible Societies with which Tupper was involved, it will be considered in the next chapter.

The Regular Baptists were not pursuing the truth, they believed they possessed it. Indeed, they had always maintained without apology that they were the purveyors of the Kingdom of God. While never initiating the published debate, they had become increasingly comfortable and confident in defending their sacred ritual. The irony of the baptismal controversy for the Baptists was that it had started because of their aggressive proselytizing methods which centered around the outdoor baptismal service with its accompanying ecstatic religious experiences. However, by feeling compelled to defend the "Faith of the Fathers," and especially believer's baptism by immersion, the second generation of Regular Baptist leaders had to adopt a more scholarly or cognitive approach to their faith, or at least to its preservation. In fact, the Baptist involvement in the baptismal controversy reflects the creative initiatives that characterized many preachers during this period, such as Charles Tupper, Ingram Bill, and Samuel Elder. In a way similar to the Baptist polemicists of the baptismal controversy, the leaders of this second generation demonstrated an ability to adapt the tradition of the "Fathers" to a changing society without "selling their souls." However, the necessity of personal faith and a conversion experience followed by immersionist baptism remained the actual practise for the generation of preachers which followed the "Patriarchs."

Chapter Six

Charles Tupper: The Making of a Formal Evangelical

The piety and ministry of Charles Tupper represented, in many ways, a radical departure from the revivalist heritage of the Maritime Regular Baptists inherited from the First and Second Great Awakenings. Mentored by Edward Manning, Charles Tupper became one of the leading second generation denominational leaders, not because of his ability to lead revivals, but because of his intellectual genius. The best mind produced by the Regular Baptists in the nineteenth century, Tupper was a brilliant linguist, apologist and theologian, and an effective pastor, educator and denomination-builder. As a key player in the baptismal controversy, he personified, perhaps more than anyone else, the transformation of the “Faith of the Fathers” that occurred among a number of central second generation Regular Baptist leaders. This pietistic metamorphosis, along with his own temperament and background seemed to form Charles Tupper into what Curtis Johnson has termed in his Redeeming America a formal evangelical.¹ Tupper, white and middle class, “sought an orderly faith which stressed consistent doctrine, decorum in worship, and biblical interpretation through a well-educated ministry” (as did his counterparts, south of the border). Furthermore, in company with other formal evangelicals, Tupper desired “to extend religious and social order to the rest of the nation through a network of voluntary

¹ The best treatment of Charles Tupper is I. E. Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches of the Maritime Provinces, (Saint John, NB: Barnes and Company, 1880), pp. 681-738; See also Jonathan Wilson “Leading the New Epoch: Charles Tupper, Ingram Bill and Richard Burpee and the Regular Baptists of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, 1800-1850” (M. A. Thesis, Queen’s University, 1995); E. M. Saunders, History of the Baptists of the Maritime Provinces (Halifax, NS: John Burgoyne, 1902), pp. 160,172,211,247.

associations known as the benevolent empire.”² But Tupper also bore the anti-formalist preoccupation with conversion. For Tupper, while he laboured to create a self-disciplined society which lived by the edicts of God, conversion or the New Birth and revival were also central to his philosophy of ministry. He believed that only as individuals were converted one by one to Christ would a province or nation become Christian. Indeed, Tupper came to represent the “devotionalism” or the “moralism” of Victorian Christianity while sustaining a strong commitment to the New Birth. Far from merely juxtaposing his denomination’s revivalist heritage with education, scholarship and Victorian social morality, he created a masterful integration through his all-encompassing biblicism. While I. E. Bill, another second generation minister who will be discussed later, transformed his New Light heritage by marrying the implications of conversion to a variety of nineteenth century religious causes, Tupper proved it could be done with a single-minded commitment to asking consistently “What saith the scriptures?” In that respect, he advanced a biblicist perspective which was similar to Father Crandall’s. Tupper personified the struggle his denomination faced during the period of “intellectual awakening” in Nova Scotia. He demonstrated, as did the baptismal controversy, that intellectual debate could be used to defend and even advance “vital Christianity.”

At the age of sixty-eight, Tupper began to reflect on his long and eventful life and with the use of his diary (unfortunately no longer extant) wrote a series of articles on his life for the Christian Messenger, published between 18 February 1863 and 2 January 1880.³ This inappropriately titled “Autobiographical Sketch” chronicled Tupper’s early life, and the period from his active ministry to his retirement. Although clouded by a mid-century

² Curtis D. Johnson, Redeeming America: Evangelicals and the Road to Civil War (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1993), pp. 7-8.

preoccupation with drawing out “morals” to form the character of the reader, the “Sketch” nevertheless seems surprisingly accurate, even highlighting the faults of the author.⁴

Charles Tupper was the twelfth child of Charles Tupper and Elizabeth West, born 6 August 1794. Born of New England Planter parents, Charles was reared in Cornwallis Township, Nova Scotia, which was almost exclusively settled by Yankee settlers in the 1760s and 1770s.⁵ The Tupper family was of Presbyterian background and practised religious exercises in the family which were so vital for covenant theology.

It becomes me gratefully to acknowledge the Divine goodness toward me, that my parents were truly pious people. Prayer was constantly offered, both morning and evening, in my father’s house, accompanied with the reading of the holy Scriptures. In his absence my mother regularly thus led the family to the throne of grace.⁶

It is likely that Tupper’s life-long advocacy of family religion stemmed, at least in part, from the Presbyterian influence of his parents who continued the practice after they became Calvinistic Baptists under the leadership of Edward Manning. Furthermore, the example of his pious parents’ devotional life so impressed Tupper that he sustained these spiritual exercises throughout his life. Long before he experienced the rapture of conversion, Charles Tupper had established a rhythm of life which tended to foster a deeply religious existence.

³ See Christian Messenger, “Autobiographical Sketch” (hereafter CM) 18 February 1863 - 2 January 1880.

⁴ This judgment about the “sketch” is based on other contemporary sources, such as Tupper’s many letters to Edward Manning, which tend to confirm its accuracy. Furthermore, Tupper often quoted large sections from his diary for the “sketch.” Nevertheless, it must be conceded that Tupper occasionally draws conclusions without providing evidence from his personal diaries. Consequently, one must be careful in using this source uncritically. The difficulty is exacerbated by the fact that the “sketch” is the single most important “window” to the life and ministry of Tupper.

⁵ Ibid., 4 March 1863.

⁶ Ibid., 18 March 1863. That parents such as Tupper’s continued to instruct their children in the Reformed faith after becoming Regular Baptists suggests that there might have been a fairly complete grassroots’ understanding of Calvinism in the association during this period.

When I was about five years old my mother was baptized by the late Rev. Edward Manning, and became a member of the Baptist Church under his care; and my father likewise when I was fourteen years of age. With pious instructions and admonitions from them, as I was taught the Assembly's Shorter Catechism.⁷

At the age of six, Tupper went to live with an older and newly married brother in Kentville where he was able to attend school at least sporadically. Since the education available to him was mediocre and the relatives he lived with were indifferent to his learning, it was possible that Charles Tupper might have entered adulthood barely literate. However, natural ability and a desire to learn were the guiding forces in his formative years. He recalled, "All my education while under ten years of age consisted in being simply taught to spell and to read." At that time, the only book he had read in its entirety was the Bible. Apart from the poorly prepared teachers he encountered in local schools, who in "all probability . . . knew no more about it than I did," Tupper's intellectual development had been largely left up to him.⁸ At the age of fifteen Tupper began reading W. Durham's "Physico-Theology: or a Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God . . ." which, though beyond his comprehension, introduced him to Latin. This occasion sparked a life-long interest in languages and logic, which later served him well as the denomination's apologist and leading theologian.

The fervent desire, however, awakening in my mind in the manner now narrated, to understand Latin, led me subsequently to the employment of means better adapted to the attainment of the object sought—the obtaining of a knowledge of the Latin language prepared the way, and disposed my mind, to engage in the acquisition of other languages.⁹

⁷ *Ibid.*, 22 April 1863. It is not known whether or not Tupper overstated his intellectual advances as a youngster, it is clear that as an adult he possessed uncommon analytical abilities.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 29 April 1863.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 22 April 1863.

If the influence of family piety and the discovery of his facility in linguistics were formative in his early life, the influence of the Annapolis Valley's religious culture was definitive. During the first two decades of the nineteenth century, a host of New Lights and New Light Baptists were a force with which to be reckoned in the Horton-Cornwallis area. While Edward Manning laboured diligently to remove the emotional and behavioural excesses of this movement, he could not stamp out the stray "New Light fires." As has already been noted, Manning and his ministry also continued to be significantly shaped by the Allinite tradition. Nevertheless, Manning's desire to distance himself from New Lightism did affect Charles Tupper. In 1809, his parents were among the few from Manning's Allinite church to leave and found a close communion Regular Baptist Church.¹⁰ It was within the context of Manning's quest for an orderly Calvinist Baptist Church that Charles Tupper came to understand the immersionists. One of Tupper's earliest memories was that of Manning preaching in his father's house, his arm outstretched toward the people as his voice boomed with biblical injunctions. Tupper's worldview was like that of many other second generation Baptist leaders in the Maritimes, clearly shaped by the public and private discourses of Edward Manning.

Even though Charles Tupper had undoubtedly been counseled to seek God and his "converting power" through his childhood and adolescence, he was nevertheless in an "unconverted" state when, in 1813, at the age of nineteen, he accepted an invitation to teach school in western Cornwallis, followed by a similar appointment in Lower Aylesford the next year.¹¹ During this period of his life, Tupper became increasingly anxious about

¹⁰ Bill, *Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches*, p. 132.

¹¹ *CM*, 23 September 1863.

the state of his soul. While he attempted to live morally and was deeply moved by evangelistic preaching he found that his religious commitments were ambiguous.

... I had frequently felt deeply concerned, and exceedingly fearful that death would overtake me in an unprepared state. Under impressive preaching I had many times felt greatly distressed an account of my sins, and in view of the awful doom that awaited me, as a sinner against God. Not unfrequently [sic] had I, when thus disquieted and distressed, prayed earnestly, and wept profusely; and my grief having thus found vent, would abate, and I would feel quite cheerful. It is to be feared that persons from similar exercises conclude that they are converted, when no real change is effected in them. As, however, I subsequently relapsed into a state of carelessness and worldly conformity, I was aware that I must be still "in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity" and that my "heart was not right in the sight of God."¹²

On 31 December 1814 Clarke Alline, a lay preacher and nephew of Henry Alline, invited the twenty-year old Tupper to a small New Light prayer meeting. Knowing full well that his venerable pastor would not have approved, he recorded that the request by Alline "was not at all congenial with my inclinations." However, since he had no valid reason to refuse, Charles Tupper attended what may have been his first exposure to a religious meeting in the radical evangelical tradition. Tupper recalled that

It was a season of such religious excitement in that place as I had not been accustomed to witness. Some confusion arose by reason of two persons speaking at once. I coolly inquired in my own mind, Do these people read their Bibles? Are they not aware that this is contrary to the directions of Scripture, and that "God is not the author of confusion"?¹³

Since Edward Manning and T. S. Harding -- the "Patriarch" from Horton -- were the religious leaders best known to Tupper at this time, he was not familiar with the "freer" informal services which were common within and without his denomination. While resorting to "proof-texts" as a way of shielding himself from the anti-formal evangelicalism

¹² *Ibid.*, 23 September 1863.

¹³ See 1 Corinthians 14: 31-33 in the New Testament and *CM*, 23 September 1863.

of this Allinite meeting, he found himself to be inextricably drawn into the richly emotional spirituality so feared by some of the order-seeking "Fathers."

After a little time, however, this interruption subsided, and several persons spoke with great earnestness of the necessity and importance of experimental and vital piety. While these exercises were proceeding my mind was led into a train of very serious reflections. I thought within my self, I have noticed some extravagances among these people. They seem at times transported beyond reason! But am I acting a more reasonable part? I acknowledge myself to be a guilty sinner, under the curse of God's law, exposed every moment to death, and to an eternity of woe, Is it not, then, more consistent in them to be strongly moved with reference to matters of infinite moment, than it is in me to remain unmoved while in a state of such imminent danger? Under a consciousness of my sinfulness, and the madness of my course. I turned my face toward the wall, to conceal my emotions, and wept profusely.¹⁴

Relieved that his distraught state had been hidden from those present, Tupper continued in his existential angst, out on the ambiguous boundary between heaven and hell.

On several occasions during 1815, Charles Tupper attended other anti-formal Allinite prayer meetings with his sister. While trying to stifle his emotions during these services, he continued to be profoundly affected by the testimonies, exhortations, and sermons he heard. Eventually, his defenses were worn down to the point that he requested in one meeting that "prayer to be offered for me, as for 'the vilest of the vile'."¹⁵ When the meeting was over, Tupper fell on his "knees in the presence of all the people, and engaged in fervent prayer" to the point of exhaustion. However, when the spectacle of his despondency attracted attention among those who had remained in the meeting house, Tupper feared he would "now be a laughing stock for the world, and a reproach to religion." Believing that "Others might either obtain the bliss of heaven, or enjoy the pleasure of this world; but I could do neither," Tupper returned to his parents' home

¹⁴ CM, 7 October 1863.

¹⁵ Ibid., 21 October 1863.

where he poured out his soul to his understanding sister. She entreated him to “cherish these emotions” and “to hope that it was God’s work.” Instructed by Edward Manning that excessive emotion regarding religion could be harmful, he believed that true conversion had to include the “head” and the “heart.”¹⁶

Discussing the predicament of his son’s soul, Charles senior gave Charles junior Joseph Alleine’s Alarm to the Unconverted, a tract written by a Puritan in the seventeenth century for individuals struggling for the assurance of salvation. In spite of the guidance of his family, and the example set by local New Light lay preachers and exhorters, Tupper still feared he was not among the “elect.”¹⁷ However, through prayer and Bible reading, he abandoned his hyper-Calvinist view that “God had designed by predestination and election to limit the exercise of mercy to a very small number,” which implicitly placed “an insurmountable barrier in the way of the salvation of the mass of mankind.” In its stead, he concluded that the Bible teaches that God “presents no obstacle to the salvation of any.”¹⁸ This mild-Calvinism would later be promoted by Tupper through his publishing efforts. Having jettisoned the intellectual dilemma about the possibility of his salvation, he began to discover the “mercy of God.”¹⁹

Tupper finally experienced his conversion on 16 February 1816. He began his day in prayer declaring, “Lord, if I perish, let me perish at the feet of Jesus!” After he dismissed the students from his school in Lower Aylesford, he determined to remain in the school house for the night. Believing he could only find spiritual resolution in seclusion, he began

¹⁶ Ibid. On the role of lay-exhortation in New Light Baptist meetings, consult G. A. Rawlyk, Ravished by the Spirit: Religious Revivals, Baptists and Henry Alline (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1983), pp. 112-119.

¹⁷ CM, 2 December 1863.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ The influence of Fuller is more fully explored in the chapter on Edward Manning.

to read the scriptures and "Alliene's Alarm" and prayed "till my eyesight and lungs were exhausted." After a time of sleep, "On awaking I wondered at finding myself out of hell."

... while attempting to pray, such an overwhelming view of man's guilt and rebellion against God, and of my own in particular, presented itself to my mind, of my condemnation, and could not offer a petition. I had often been disposed to murmur against God because he does not save more of the human family; but now I wondered that He saves any. The way of salvation, by the sovereign grace of God, through a crucified redeemer, appeared to me unspeakably excellent and glorious. The heavy burden of my sins was removed, all anxiety respecting the salvation of my soul ceased; and instead of pleading for pardon, I began to wonder and admire, and to praise and adore the infinite mercy of God in Christ.²⁰

Tupper's conversion went through a series of stages similar to those experienced by the "Fathers," except that this second generation Baptist dealt simultaneously with his personal salvation and the finer points of theology. Unlike Joseph Crandall and Edward Manning who spent much of their lives trying unsuccessfully to shed the cloak of New Lightism, Tupper effectively embraced both a vibrant, if not ecstatic, spirituality and a warm evangelical Calvinism. For Tupper, these did not create an inner tension or dilemma, but rather were taken for granted as central components of his world view. That Tupper's Christianity would always be expressed more cognitively than that of the grass roots he served was a testimony to his personal genius and effective integration of the "head" and "heart." It was also an indication that Tupper was becoming a "formal evangelical" in that he stressed the importance of consistent doctrine. Nevertheless, he was able to work effectively with "enthusiastic," Baptists as well as both his denomination's and society's emerging elites.

²⁰ CM, 16 December 1863; Tupper's stages of conversion loosely conform to those of the Fathers and I. E. Bill, even though his anxiety stemmed as much from theological problems as inner assurance of salvation.

The day following his conversion, Tupper began to share his new-found faith with unbelievers and family members and exhorted backsliders to repentance.²¹ During one prayer meeting in particular, he recorded:

At the close of the sermon I addressed the congregation. It was my intention to speak to the Christians; but when I looked around upon unconverted sinners, in the broad road to unending woe, my bowels yearned over them, and I immediately proceeded to exhort them very earnestly to flee from the wrath to come, and to embrace the glorious Redeemer. Though I noticed several persons present who would probably ridicule me, yet neither their presence, nor the prospect of being the object of their diversion, affected me in the slightest degree. It was a season of unusual solemnity.²²

In spite of his “indescribable joy and delights,” Tupper endured the very common period of doubt following his conversion. He knew he had “come to Christ,” but was not sure if he was “in Christ.”²³ While many Baptist leaders such as Harris Harding, Joseph Crandall, and I. E. Bill awaited an inner, emotionally-based, assurance of eternity from God, Tupper began to debate rationally the question of eternal security by examining the Calvinist and Arminian positions. He concluded that both were in error; “the former in thinking that they never would wholly fall, and the latter in supposing that they might when fallen be renewed again.”²⁴ Tupper distrusted elaborate systems of theology, preferring instead an intense biblicism. Tupper’s troubled soul was relieved after much Bible reading, and in particular the promise of Christ that, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.”²⁵ It was the very words of the Bible, not humanly-

²¹ *Ibid.*, 30 December 1864.

²² *Ibid.*, 20 January 1864.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 3 February 1864.

²⁵ John 10: 27-29; *CM*, 3 February 1864.

constructed theological arguments, that had the authority to answer the questions of life. This explains in part Tupper's enthusiastic support of Andrew Fuller's theology which was far more biblicist and activist than systematic.²⁶

Charles Tupper adapted his biblicism to the classroom, where he incorporated the reading and study of the scriptures into his daily routine. He exhorted his students to model biblical morality and to hold prayer meetings during recess and the lunch hour.²⁷ Tupper was deeply moved at the sight of children reading 'Holy Writ' and praying for their souls and began to consider the preaching ministry. This desire to proclaim the gospel was intensified as a number of children and adults with whom he had conversed were converted and baptized.²⁸ However, he himself had not yet been baptized. In fact, following his conversion he undertook a study of the scriptures to ascertain whether he could unite with the Baptists. While he most certainly had witnessed the powerful affect the ritual had on people on countless occasions as a boy, he was not content to accept a religious rite on the basis of experience.

In this examination [of the Bible] I became fully confirmed in my persuasion of the correctness of the Baptist view of the ordinance of baptism, namely, that believers are the only proper subjects, and immersion the only scriptural mode or action.²⁹

While most Baptists would not have come to receive immersionist baptism through a systematic reading of the Bible as Tupper had done, his example indicates that people adopted the Regular Baptist position for a variety of reasons. And whether motivated by religious experience or theological reflection, those who were immersed in the name of the

²⁶ Tupper later struggled with the Reformed doctrine of perseverance. See CM, 6 April 1864.

²⁷ Ibid., 24 February 1864.

²⁸ Ibid., 9 March 1864.

²⁹ Ibid., 6 April 1864.

“Holy Three” became part of a distinct community of faith. In fact, the power of this rite transcended the divisions between formal and informal Baptist evangelicals.

Knowing the evangelistic appeal surrounding an outdoor baptismal service, Tupper was “disposed to confess Christ in the presence of the associates of my youth, in the hope of promoting their spiritual welfare.”³⁰ In addition, he wanted to receive the sacred rite at the hands of Edward Manning, even though T. H. Chipman was far closer to his residence and school in Lower Aylesford. It was Manning “who had often admonished me, and, to become a member of the Church under his care.” Consequently, Tupper went to the church in Cornwallis and related publicly his Christian experience. This Regular Baptist Church had not really grown numerically since its founding in 1807. After being joyfully received as a candidate for baptism, “On Lord’s day, May 14th, 1815, in obedience to Christ’s command, I was “buried with Him in baptism.”

It was to me, and doubtless to many others, a solemn and impressive season. A large concourse assembled on the occasion; and I addressed them, especially the young, at the waterside, with great seriousness and ear[n]estness. At the conference on the day preceding, (as noted in my diary) and doubtless also at the baptism, were present my father and mother, my two sisters, and seven of my brothers. The family in general appeared much aroused to a sense of divine things.³¹

While Tupper did not record his experience of being completely immersed in water, he did remark that the scene so impressed a number of people, including two family members, that they were later converted and presented themselves for baptism.

The timing of Tupper’s conversion and baptism had a profound impact on his life and ministry. While many second generation preachers were converted during the revivals in the 1820s and were socialized to think of ministry and church life in terms of revival and

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

its accompanying ecstatic experiences, Tupper was converted, baptized and entered ministry during a time when there were no revivals of religion in the Annapolis Valley. There were no "First Great Awakening", "Great Reformation," or the 1826-1829 revivals to inspire him and mold him into a revivalist, as was the case for I. E. Bill, Ezekiel Marsters, Silas Rand, and others mentored by Edward Manning. Tupper's cognitive orientation, and the formalist goals he received from Manning were not balanced by "religious outpourings." It is therefore, not surprising that he was not an especially gifted revivalist, though he supported and delighted in revival and baptized over five hundred people during his life.

While Tupper may not have been converted in the midst of revival, he nevertheless began "Feeling an ardent desire to bear some humble part in the advancement of the Kingdom of Christ, and the salvation of my persisting fellowmen" and the possibility of entering into ministry. Tupper knew that there needed to be younger preachers in the denomination to pastor new churches and replace the founders as they began to age and die. He was also aware of his own talents as an exhorter and teacher and the need to "improve these gifts." He longed to receive further education, but was cautioned by well-meaning friends that learning might dull his passion for Christ. Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, many Maritime Regular Baptists remained suspicious of higher education. It was believed that as long as a minister was reasonably literate, familiar with the Bible and its central doctrines, and filled with the Holy Spirit, advanced education was unnecessary and might lead one down the path of perdition.³² He recorded that only "the Lord could make me a good and useful minister of the gospel" and yet

³² For an examination of Baptist ambiguity toward education, see Barry M. Moody, "The Maritime Baptists and Higher Education in the Early Nineteenth Century" in B.M. Moody (ed.) Repent and Believe: The Baptist Experience in Maritime Canada (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot Press, 1980), pp. 88-102.

one whose duty it would be to expound the sacred Scriptures, was under the indispensable obligation to employ all available means in order to make himself thoroughly acquainted with their exact meaning and to this end he ought to study diligently, as well as to pray earnestly for divine assistance.³³

As Tupper went through almost a year of uncertainty regarding his call to ministry, he began to assist in leading worship services and prayer meetings under the guidance of Manning, Chipman, and a number of unknown lay persons. As he tested and improved his “gifts,” he became increasingly comfortable leading public worship and giving extended exhortations to small groups of people.³⁴ On 24 December 1815, Tupper received his first public commendation from Edward Manning, his “father in the faith” and “mentor in the ministry.”

... I attended Elder Manning’s meeting. As he was in a feeble state of health, and did not feel able to preach in the evening, he requested me to lead in the public exercises. I did not adventure to name a text, but endeavored to point out the road that leads to peace and comfort here, and to felicity hereafter; and that which conducts to endless woe. My beloved Pastor subsequently made a few remarks, in which he strongly commended my discourse. This was, indeed, gratifying; but the fact that it afforded me gratification, caused me much alarm, lest spiritual pride should be fostered, and do me great injury.³⁵

With praise from Manning and encouragement from those connected through his “labors,” such as Samuel VanBuskirk -- an active Cornwallis Baptist layman -- Tupper became increasingly convinced that he had much to offer his denomination as a minister.³⁶

By March 1816, Tupper had relocated from Lower Aylesford, having left his job as a teacher, “with the intention of devoting myself henceforth unreservedly to the work of the Lord” under the careful guidance of Edward Manning. In Cornwallis he discovered that a

³³ *Ibid.*, 10 August 1864.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

“divine presence” attended his preaching efforts, as did the unconditional support from family and friends. After holding meetings in the Regular Baptist preaching stations throughout Cornwallis Township, he was granted a “License to preach, so that I might go to any place abroad to publish the gospel.”³⁷ As one of Manning’s first “students,” Tupper received very close scrutiny from the aging Baptist Patriarch.

Elder Manning, under whose supervision I was laboring, frequently attended my meetings, and kindly imparted such instruction, encouragement, cautions, and admonitions as he perceived that occasion required.³⁸

One incident which “required caution” concerned the attention one young woman “under awakening” gave a young and rather naïve Tupper. Taking the apprentice aside, Manning warned of the danger inherent in spending time alone with women in such a vulnerable situation. Manning’s involvement in the New Dispensation Movement of the 1790s had conditioned him to be watchful for any hint or possibility of moral failure.

Tupper’s education progressed as he travelled as an itinerant to the north side of the Bay of Fundy to Parrsboro. Here he encountered an economically and spiritually desolate area of New Lights, Congregationalists, and Methodists destitute of ministerial aid. He discovered that the Baptist presence was extremely limited, with only “two or three Baptist sisters” in Lower Economy and a small Baptist church in Amherst.³⁹ Although not especially successful in his preaching, Tupper gained experience and confidence as a travelling preacher.⁴⁰ In the fall of 1816, Tupper again visited the Parsboro shore where he encountered a man who had just been rescued from drowning. During a rather unpleasant conversation with Tupper -- the man had been drinking heavily and verbally abused his wife

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 12 September 1864.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 28 September 1864.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 9 November 1864.

-- said with scorn "I may know who you are: I have seen New Lights before."⁴¹ While this man's understanding of the term New Light is not precisely clear, it is fair to conclude that Tupper was perceived by some to be an advocate of experiential or conversionist Christianity in the revivalist tradition of the late eighteenth century. Furthermore, Tupper does not seem to have objected to being so identified, suggesting that he may not have been as eager to sever his denomination's ties to the Allinist tradition, as at least one historian has suggested.⁴²

After two years as an active Licentiate, Tupper was ordained to the Christian ministry 17 July 1817. He had proven himself to be an acceptable preacher, an advocate for an ordered evangelicalism, and an ardent Baptist who had been at least somewhat successful in the evangelistic mission of the Church. Furthermore, since he had been instrumental in the conversions of a number of people along the Bay of Fundy, it was necessary for them to be baptized. Being unordained, Tupper had not been permitted to perform the rite.⁴³ On the date announced, the ordination council met.⁴⁴ In spite of a large congregation, Tupper was concerned that only the Horton and Cornwallis churches were represented. However, Manning assured him that they should proceed. By this time in his early career, Tupper was well known as a promising itinerant and had been introduced to most of the denomination's ministers at association meetings in Fredericton the previous month. The service proceeded. "Elder [T.S.] Harding preached the sermon ... offered the ordaining prayer, and presented the right hand of fellowship; and Elder Manning proposed the

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 30 November 1864. Tupper also travelled to Maine during this period of his ministry.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 25 January 1865.

⁴² See Wilson, "Leading the New Epoch," pp. 1-37.

⁴³ *CM*, 5 April 1865.

Questions, and gave the Charge.” Here at one council, the founding first generation of Regular Baptist preachers symbolically passed on the “Faith of the Fathers” to the second generation.

Tupper’s first permanent ministerial field was, not surprisingly, the Parrsboro Shore of Cumberland County, where he had spent so much time as a Licentiate. Sparsely settled, with a population of approximately twelve hundred residents,⁴⁵ the Parrsboro Shore was not particularly receptive to Tupper’s message. As early as 21 February 1817, he confided to Manning that most of the people “were rigid Presbyterians who appeared to bring with them . . . a set determination not to believe what was said.”⁴⁶ Nevertheless, as Tupper embarked on his new pastorate in September, he reported to his mentor that

Eight persons have received baptism in Parrsborough since my leaving Cornwallis, and several others had formerly. Some of them have a desire to be formed into a Church. I need heavenly wisdom to enable me to conduct in such a line as shall be for the declaration to the glory of God and the good of his people.⁴⁷

Eager to exercise pastoral authority and church order, Tupper cautiously implemented Regular Baptist close communion practices in the churches he founded and served. In May 1818, he wrote with disappointment to Manning that “nothing very special or extensive has taken place here of late.” In fact, he had encountered some difficulty in dealing with a “Mrs. P. Thompson; who has long been in very deep distress.” This widow had become so attached to the “ministrations” of Tupper “that she was not only unable to attend to any

⁴⁴ Charles Tupper to Edward Manning, 2 June 1817, Parrsboro, Nova Scotia. AUA; CM, 3 May 1865.

⁴⁵ For some useful background on this area, see Julian Gwyn, “The Parrsboro Shore - West Indies Trade in the 1820’s: The Early Career and the Diary of Joseph Norman Bond Kerr” NSHR 13(1993), 5ff.

⁴⁶ Charles Tupper to Edward Manning, 21 February 1817, River Philip, Nova Scotia. AUA.

⁴⁷ Charles Tupper to Edward Manning 3 September 1817, Parrsboro, Nova Scotia. AUA.

temporal concerns, but was brought apparently near the confines of the eternal world.”⁴⁸ Tupper’s relationship with the woman was viewed by some in the community to be so inappropriate that they “took occasion to blaspheme, and not only to speak evil of me, but also of the right ways of the Lord.”⁴⁹ As a young, single, and obviously appealing man, Tupper had realized, under the watchful eye of Manning, the difficult position in which he could find himself if he were not careful. The last thing his denomination needed was a scandal (like that which led Harris Harding to marry Mehitable Harrington in 1797). Tupper knew that respectability was a necessary building block for his denomination, if it was ever going to distance itself from what some considered to be an embarrassing past.⁵⁰

From 1818, when Tupper was essentially a circuit preacher along the Parrsboro Shore to 1825 when he was a settled pastor in Amherst publishing articles for popular consumption, he developed his own philosophy or approach to ministry and life. Since he had not been converted in revival, nor entered ministry in the midst of “spiritual earthquakes,” Tupper viewed the Baptist preacher’s role somewhat differently than many of his colleagues. While solidly a conversionist and committed to the believers’ church principle, his worldview was actually formed by his biblicism. Recognizing that he did not possess “that fervent desire for the salvation of souls, which it behoves a minister of Christ to have,” he unconsciously broadened the “traditional” role of the Regular Baptist minister to include apologetics, theological writing, publishing, and education.⁵¹ In fact, while an acceptable pastor and evangelist, Tupper did more to promote the “intellectual awakening” than any “religious awakening.”

⁴⁸ Charles Tupper to Edward Manning, 24 May 1818, Parrsboro, Nova Scotia. AUA.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ See the discussion about the New Dispensation in the introduction.

⁵¹ *CM*, 5 July 1865.

As a settled pastor in River Philip in 1819 and then Amherst in 1821, Tupper attended to church order and discipline, believing that “Until wholesome and necessary discipline was exercised, the cause of truth and godliness” would not advance.⁵² Convinced that moral living was achieved by the hearing of explanations of the gospel precepts and acting on them with the help of the Holy Spirit, Tupper’s preaching was necessarily didactic in nature. For example, throughout the year of 1822, Tupper preached, on alternate Sundays, on one of the Ten Commandments.

As this would necessarily require the exposure of the evil of numerous sins, of which many were evidently in the place, and certain remarks that must in faithfulness be made, might be regarded by some as personal, it seemed to me proper to state, that it was a fixed principle with me, and an invariable rule, never to make any observation in the pulpit with a design to wound the feelings of any person, nor to make the slightest reference to private matters. I could not, however, pass over any one of the divine commands, or neglect to point out distinctly, though with delicacy, the various ways in which each was violated, and the baleful consequences of such violations.⁵³

Tupper’s own religious experiences had proven to him that religious ecstasy in itself did not necessarily bring about a permanent change in a person’s moral and ethical behaviour. While conversion was a necessary beginning – and by definition an emotional experience – instruction from the Bible and not religious feeling was the key to growth in piety.⁵⁴ Indeed, Tupper’s biblicism proved to be very useful in his many “Missionary Tours” to Prince Edward Island, where his more cognitive approach to experiential Christianity resonated with Scotch Baptists and other more formal evangelicals and was applauded by Alexander Crawford who, ten years earlier, had found Baptists, such as Harris Harding, to be quite heterodox and unacceptable.⁵⁵ Increasingly, as the denomination expanded its geographical

⁵² *Ibid.*, 25 October 1865.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 14 February 1866.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 27 June 1866.

influence, it was necessary to match preachers' style and approach to ministry with specific communities. In other words, while preachers such as Charles Tupper and Harris Harding were both Regular Baptists (Harding by 1829), they appealed to very different kinds of people.

This is not to suggest that Charles Tupper was an ineffective pastor. For example, on 22 December 1822, a little after midnight, Tupper was aroused from a deep sleep to attend the bedside of a dying young man in Amherst. This was the first time he actually witnessed a death. As he entered the bedroom, he noticed fine wedding clothes which would never be worn by the young man. Youthful vigour had been replaced by a "ghastly visage." Tupper was consoled by the fact that he had recently spoken to the man about his soul and eternity and was convinced he was ready for heaven. The parson proceeded to pray for the unconscious man and his grief-stricken relatives. "Soon after the close of this exercise, his spirit took its flight to the invisible world."

This very impressive scene appears to have had some tendency to excite me to increased earnestness in my work. In my Diary of the 16th day of the same month [December] the following entry occurs:-Devoted this day to visiting, and visited and prayed with thirteen families. My heart was pained to see what carelessness and insensibility prevailed among the people.⁵⁶

Though clearly not his "first love," Tupper proved to be effective in dealing with the vital issues of life and death, providing the necessary counsel and encouragement. His wife, whom he had married in 1818,⁵⁷ also assisted him in his ministrations. For example, in 1827, "scarlatina" or "putrid sore throat" swept through Amherst, causing people to become very ill, even to the point of death. As Charles Tupper visited people, frantically trying to give them spiritual peace, "Mrs. Tupper readily volunteered to attend in the worst

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 28 February 1866.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 6 September 1865.

cases and to sit up whole nights with the sufferers. This she never regretted, though she caught the disease, and became extremely ill.”⁵⁸ Indeed, the available evidence suggests that Tupper was especially sensitive to the needs of those marginalized in society. Widows and Afro-Nova Scotians received much of his pastoral attention. In 1819, when more of his responsibilities were located in Amherst, he began to visit and preach among those in the black community, who suffered from a shortage of ministers.⁵⁹ When visiting Halifax, Tupper consistently attended John Burton’s church, composed almost entirely of people of colour, instead of having fellowship with the Baptist elite at the Granville Street church.⁶⁰

Since the Amherst area was never a hot bed of revivalist activity, Tupper was able to devote a great deal of time to intellectual development and writing. He had developed a working knowledge of Latin and the general structure of language as a teenager.⁶¹ By the age of thirty, in 1825, he recorded in his diary that “I finished the perusal of the New Testament in Hebrew. This completed the reading of the whole Bible in three languages, namely, English, Greek, and Hebrew.”⁶² Tupper later worked in German, Italian, and French which he claimed to have learned quickly because of his grounding in Latin.⁶³ Always motivated far more by the nuance of the original words than impressions which “may” be from the “Holy Spirit”, he declared it is “evidently desirable to know the exact

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 10 October 1866. For a discussion of minister’s wives in nineteenth-century American Protestantism see L. I. Sweet, The Minister’s Wife: Her Role in Nineteenth-Century American Evangelicalism (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983).

⁵⁹ *CM*, 8 November 1865. Apart from brief references to Maritime Black Baptist Churches in denominational histories, little research has been done in this important area.

⁶⁰ John Burton was born in England, ordained to the Baptist ministry in Knowlton, New Jersey. In 1794 he settled in Halifax and began a small inter-racial church in the city which he served until 1838. See I.E. Bill, Fifty Years with the Ministers and Churches, pp. 176-178. Although he might be called a “founder,” his influence was limited to the Halifax area.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 5 July 1865.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 11 July 1866.

meaning of every sentence in the Bible. To this the careful comparisons of different translations with the originals is highly conducive." Unlike many of the first and second generation leaders, Tupper declared emphatically, "I never placed confidence in dreams."⁶⁴ In this regard he differed significantly from his mentor, Edward Manning.

In 1824, Charles Tupper began to receive the Christian Watchman (published in Boston) and to contemplate the potential of print as a vehicle for his own message. As an average, and admittedly stiff and erudite preacher, his sermons were not always appreciated or understood. Religious newspapers, on the other hand, needed clear thinkers such as Tupper who could deal with the issues of the day in a biblically-responsible way.

As the watchman . . . was highly valued by me, and was indeed, the only vehicle through which it was convenient for me to communicate observations on subjects connected with the Scriptures, my earliest communications for the press were prepared for it. The signature chosen by me was Philographes, which signifies Lover of Scripture.⁶⁵

Tupper's first article, entitled "On the Misquoting of Scripture," began a career in writing and publishing which characterized his ministry for the rest of life. He found fulfillment in this extension of his ministry. As the publisher of the Boston paper remarked, "Your communications, I can assure you, are very acceptable, not only to us, but to our readers. We are often asked, who is the author of these excellent communications." Delighted because of such affirmation, Tupper began to "hope that my pen might be beneficially employed, and stimulated me to use some diligence in that department of labor."⁶⁶ Charles Tupper realized that his biblicism and the growing newspaper industry

⁶³ See the following issues of Ibid., 17 January 1866; 11 July 1866; 10 October 1866; 28 November 1866; 16 January 1867.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 12 June 1867.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 6 June 1866. See also N. O. Hatch, M. A. Noll (eds.), The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

⁶⁶ CM, 8 August 1866.

could be brought together to serve the Baptist cause. One did not have to move the emotions of readers to communicate effectively, as one was required to in preaching. Furthermore, his private study and intellectual development could now be harnessed fully to advance the Kingdom of God.

At the denomination's association meetings held in Hillsborough, New Brunswick, in 1826, it was resolved to begin the publication the Baptist Missionary Magazine of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. This was an important step for the Regular Baptists, because it reflected a growing maturity and financial stability of the denomination. Sponsored by the home mission boards of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, the paper's purpose was to promote evangelism, "religious communication," and Regular Baptist identity. Not surprisingly, Charles Tupper was chosen as editor and remained so until 1833.⁶⁷ The Regular Baptist leaders recognized in Tupper the intellect that was needed to defend the "Faith of the Fathers" from its detractors and the diplomatic temperament necessary to provide unity within the fold. I. E. Bill, who became the editor of the Christian Visitor in the 1850s, provided the following analysis of this important step in the denomination's history

In this arrangement regarding the New Magazine the providence of God is most distinctly seen. There was no high institution of learning open to the Baptists in those days for training their young men for the ministry, or for editorial life; but Jehovah had given them a young man who by self-culture had placed himself in a position which so commanded the respect and confidence of the Fathers, that they cordially united in appointing him to the editor's chair of the first magazine published either by them or any other denomination in these Provinces. In the prosecution of this mission Elder Tupper showed himself in all respects worthy of the important trust committed to his care.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Ibid., 22 August 1866. The paper was published first in Saint John and later in Halifax.

⁶⁸ Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches, p. 70.

The Magazine signaled to all who cared to see that the Regular Baptists of the Maritimes were serious about developing a denomination that would not only promulgate vital experiential Christianity and baptismal spirituality, but also debate the broader religious and cultural questions of the day as was evident in the Regular Baptist's involvement in the baptismal controversy. This publication placed the Baptists at the very center of innovations in the publishing industry which were so important to the intellectual awakening of the region and served the formal evangelical aspirations of preachers like Charles Tupper.

However, Tupper was quick to assure his readers that this new periodical and denominational structure did not mean a departure from vital Christianity.

. . . we are persuaded that there are many of the dear children of God in the interior of these Provinces, who are sighing for spiritual knowledge; and who are desirous to hear what God is doing relative to the heathen world, and the advancement of religion generally.⁶⁹

At the same time it is clear that Tupper attempted to use the Magazine as a vehicle for promoting a more rational and orderly approach to Regular Baptist theology and ministry. Nowhere was this more evident than in his "History of the Baptist Churches in Nova Scotia,"⁷⁰ written in 1829 at the request of John Dyer, a key British Baptist leader from London in support of the association's request of their British co-religionists for financial aid. While not attempting to hide their Allinite heritage, Tupper was very critical of Alline's "impressions and impulses" and his disdain for religious forms and order. The editor reminded his readers that it is "not uncommon for an object to be promoted by indirect means. Such has been the case in reference to the Baptist interest in this Province. Rev. Henry Alline, though he did not belong to this denomination, was instrumental in greatly

⁶⁹ BMM, 27 January 1827.

⁷⁰ See Ibid., January 1829; April 1829; October 1829.

augmenting their numbers.”⁷¹ In essence, Tupper’s account was one of a group of overzealous religious enthusiasts finding more “gospel light” by embracing church order, close communion, and the ideal of an educated clergy. Consciously distancing his denomination from its New Light past, he argued that Nova Scotian Regular Baptists were at last orderly, biblicist, and socially acceptable.

As to our doctrinal sentiments (you are aware that they are those usually called Calvinistic,) we have sometimes been charged with antinomianism; but we deny the charge as we strenuously maintain the necessity of a holy life, proceeding from a principle of gratitude, as the fruit of faith. Some Baptists were indeed tinctured with the wild ideas that were formerly disseminated in these Provinces; but their views generally are now built on a rational exposition of Scripture.⁷²

Attempting to demonstrate the compatibility of revivalistic Christianity, denominational structures, and religious respectability, Tupper assured his British readers that while “there is much room for improvement in various respects” there was “great cause for gratitude to God.”⁷³ While not overtly arguing for “Baptist” post-millennial optimism, Tupper was suggesting that the future was bright because of the “increase of truth” in the form of biblicism. Tupper’s articles are perhaps more valuable as an autobiography than as history. They make clear that his agenda, and that of other preachers, for the denomination placed biblicism, order, and revival at the foundation for the future.

Although Tupper believed that his calling was finally being fulfilled through his work as a denominational leader and educator-journalist, his good fortune was jeopardized by the attitudes and actions of powerful clique from the Granville Street Baptist Church, in Halifax. This church of former Anglicans was composed of a large number of men whom

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, January 1829.

⁷² *Ibid.*, October 1829.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

R.D. Gidney and W.P.J. Miller have called “Professional Gentlemen.”⁷⁴ The Halifax clique clearly came from a different world than the preachers and laity in their new-found denomination, and included Attorney General J.W. Johnstone, King’s College Professor and lawyer E.A. Crawley, and wealthy businessman John Ferguson.⁷⁵ Well-educated and socialized to the upper class, these men attempted to force their ideals of an educated clergy comprised of “gentlemen” upon the Regular Baptists of the Maritimes. And while their goals seemed consistent, in part, with those of Tupper, he could never be one of them, because he was not a “professional gentleman.” In 1833, after six years as editor of the Baptist Missionary Magazine, Tupper relinquished his position at the paper to make way for J. W. Nutter and John Ferguson, both from the elite Halifax church. Within four years, the format and name of the paper had changed. In 1837, it was known as the Christian Messenger.

While it is clear that Tupper understood well what was required to be a “gentleman,” he had no interest in pursuing such goals. His commitment to biblical Christianity and to the grassroots – which did not always appreciate his ministry – took priority. Early in his preaching career, Tupper had resisted the predominantly Anglican and Presbyterian notions that ministers were to be “Professional Gentlemen” and that it was “degrading to the ministerial character to engage in manual labor.” He had observed in 1826:

Doubtless it is inconsistent with the calling of one who is professedly devoted to the work of the ministry, to neglect any part of his sacred vocation in order to acquire wealth by some worldly occupation. But the

⁷⁴ See R. D. Gidney and W. P. J. Millar, Professional Gentlemen: The Professions in Nineteenth-Century Ontario (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), chapters 1,2,6. See also E. Brooks Holifield, The Gentlemen Theologians: American Theology in Southern Culture, 1795-1860 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1978). Donald M. Scott, From Office to Profession: The New England Ministry 1750 - 1850 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978).

⁷⁵ Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches, pp. 59-65.

attempt to preserve or recover health by a moderate share of productive and useful labor is evidently commendable;

I volunteered my service to assist friends, as my strength and due regard to my appropriate duties permitted, in securing their hay and grain. This course was found, then and subsequently, to be conducive to health.⁷⁶

Such physical activity and neighbourly assistance, Tupper believed, produced “bodily health” and “spiritual consolation.”⁷⁷ In spite of his cognitive orientation, he was still very much attached to his roots and had little time for the “pretensions” of an emerging colonial elite.

Tupper’s rejection of the “Professional Gentleman” approach to ministry is perhaps best seen in his short and unsuccessful pastorate in Saint John in 1826. At that time, he had clearly been the best-educated Regular Baptist minister in the Maritimes and had appealed to at least some of the men in the Calvinistic Baptist Church in Saint John, who appreciated his reasoned sermons. However, the women and Blacks of the congregation had longed for the more experiential ministrations of their former pastor.⁷⁸ Although lasting only six months as pastor in the city before returning to his church in Amherst, Tupper had come to understand more fully what was expected of urban professionals, even if they were unlettered Baptist ministers. He had been troubled that one’s clothing and furnishings were expected to conform to a standard associated with gentility.

To change my mode of living from the habits of economy and frugality—always living within the means—to those deemed respectable in a city was no easy task. The kind sisters whom we consulted with reference to furniture for our apartments, doubtless wishing to have that of their minister equal to the furniture of genteel people in the city in general, proposed an expenditure quite beyond the means possessed. As I had but little property besides a small place, which neither could be sold for its value nor let, the

⁷⁶ *CM*, 30 August 1865.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Charles Tupper to Edward Manning, 26 May 1826, Saint John, N. B. AUA.

outlay [of money] required would have involved me in debt, without any reasonable prospect of being able to pay.⁷⁹

Apart from the financial burden of trying to live as a gentleman in Saint John, Tupper had also rebelled at any ostentatious display, counting it selfish indulgence if at the same time the temporal needs of the dispossessed went unmet. His biblicist piety had not allowed him to become a consumer of luxury items while people “suffered from want.”

Not only did my conscience revolt at this, but it appeared to me the part of duty to practice such economy as would enable me to afford some assistance to persons in pressing need. A case had recently occurred in which I was called to visit a very sick person in the night, where the family had no light, nor means to procure even a candle. The thought of expending so much in superfluities--a thing undoubtedly done by many--as to put it out of my power to contribute to objects of benevolence, or the relief of persons actually suffering from want, was to me intolerable. I therefore winced at the proposal to expend ten dollars a piece on the windows for curtains.⁸⁰

As Tupper had complained to his Saint John church in 1826 about these “unchristian” expectations, he had been shown by a number of well-meaning women from his congregation how “to have every thing placed on as moderate a scale as would be at all becoming my situation.”⁸¹ When he had left Saint John to return to his Amherst congregation, after serving the very troubled church for only a few months, Tupper had known he would never be able to conform to the social conventions of a professional urban elite. His piety, background, and temperament would not permit it.⁸²

By 1833 it was clear that while Charles Tupper was an able leader and thinker for his denomination, his rejection of a genteel ministry, his lack of a classical education, and the

⁷⁹ CM, 8 August 1866.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

denomination's willingness to allow the Halifax Baptist clique to direct the Magazine, meant that his influence in the denomination would be marginalized (somewhat) for more than a decade. Nevertheless, these setbacks did not discourage Tupper from being a strong advocate and apologist for women in church life, for temperance, Christian higher education, and believer's baptism by immersion. All four of these "crusades" were deeply rooted in his biblicist, formal evangelical piety and occupied much of his time as he served his often stagnant church in Amherst.

Tupper's commitment to, and defence of, immersionist baptism was evident early in his ministry, immediately following his ordination in 1818, when he came to appreciate the controversy and attraction of believer's baptism by immersion in areas where the rite was virtually unknown. One of the first persons he baptized was a woman in Parrsboro whose husband had informed Tupper that he supported his wife's decision to receive the ordinance. As soon as she was immersed, the man became enraged as a "madman" and "shook hands with his wife, bidding her farewell, and did not return to the house that night." This separation of husband and wife caused serious problems for Tupper and the Baptists along the Parrsboro Shore as rumours began to spread about the religion that divided families. As an inexperienced preacher, Tupper was deeply troubled at the prospect of his struggling work being dismantled by the ritual which gave Regular Baptists their identity. Nevertheless, Tupper was a committed immersionist and he was unwilling to downplay the ordinance. Tupper was therefore relieved when the irate husband reunited with his wife, apologized to the young preacher for his inappropriate behaviour "and acknowledged that he had done wrong in complying with a strong temptation, that suddenly

⁸² See Gidney and Millar, pp. 5,118-120; Holifield, pp. 36-49; and T. W. Acheson, Saint John: The Making of a Colonial Urban Community (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), p. 119.

assailed him, from the evil one.”⁸³ While Tupper’s early ministry did not consist of many baptisms, his dedication to this central rite was unflinching.

During a preaching tour in Sackville, New Brunswick, in 1828, Tupper baptized an aging New Light, “Mr. Anderson, 81 years of age,” who had been influenced by the expanding biblicism of the 1820s.

He had undoubtedly experienced a work of grace about 60 years before, under the zealous and successful labors of Rev. Henry Allen [Alline]; and in his deportment had uniformly been an upright man and sincere christian. In accordance with Mr. Allen’s views and teaching, however, he had formerly paid very little attention to the subject of baptism. In the relation of his experience he stated this and added, in effect, “now in my old age, being unable to labor, I take very much to the Book; and every now and then I find myself brought up - there is a command which I have never obeyed.” He was, of course, cordially received.⁸⁴

When Tupper had first moved to Saint John in 1826, he had witnessed the baptisms of four people at the hand of his predecessor. Since one of the candidates had been the captain of a well-known ship, the crowd had been huge, including “many sailors and numbers of drunken men.” One of the men had threatened to throw Tupper into the water as they strained, to no avail, to witness the immersions.

So dense, however, was the crowd, that it was out of my power to obtain a position from which the administrator and candidates could be seen. The only means whereby I could ascertain where a person was baptized, was by hearing a shout and roar of laughter from the irreverent rabble, of whom numbers were perched upon adjacent wharves. (When the ordinance was subsequently administered by me, it was deemed expedient to choose an earlier hour, when there would not probably be so many, if any, persons present in a state of intoxication.)⁸⁵

⁸³ CM, 30 August 1865.

⁸⁴ CM, 7 November 1866.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 8 August 1866.

If Tupper had been unwilling to debate the “drunken rabble” and take full advantage of the evangelistic potential of the outdoor baptismal ritual, he was prepared to defend this “sacred rite” in the press. The publication of Baptist Principles Vindicated which emerged at the end of the baptismal controversy made Tupper the denomination’s leading apologist of the “Faith of the Fathers.” As has already been discussed, Tupper’s Baptist Principles Vindicated reflected not only the erudition of its author but the expansion of Maritime Regular Baptists into the intellectual mainstream of the colonies.⁸⁶ What is most telling is that Tupper achieved his status as arguably the best known religious apologist in the region without ever achieving the status of a “gentleman” or “anti-formal” revivalist.

If Tupper became well-known as a defender of believer’s baptism by immersion through the baptismal controversy, he also caught the attention of the public as he entered into an extended debate over the translation of the New Testament, and especially the Greek word baptizo. As a qualified formal evangelical, Tupper saw the need for Christian voluntary associations to promote the kingdom of God at home and abroad. It is therefore not surprising that Tupper was one of the charter members of the Cumberland Bible Society, which was an auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society.⁸⁷ However, as the denomination sent out Richard Burpe and his wife to the foreign mission field in Burma in 1845, Tupper and many associated with the Cumberland Bible Society began to question the acceptability of interdenominational translators merely transliterating baptizo in all translations used by missionaries. By refusing to translate the word as “immerse,” which most immersionists accepted as correct, a number of British and American Baptist

⁸⁶ CM, 26 December 1866; J. W. D. Gray, A Brief View of the Scriptural Authority and Historical Evidence of Infant Baptism: And a Reply to Objections Urged in the Treatise of E. A. Crawley (Halifax, NS: W. Cunnabell, 1837). Charles Tupper, Baptist Principles Vindicated: In Reply to the Revd. J. W. D. Gray’s Work on Baptism (Halifax, NS: Christian Messenger Office, 1844).

translators began to produce their own versions of the scriptures, rendering baptizo as immerse.⁸⁸

The Cumberland Bible Society became divided over this issue following the visit of “Dr. Maclay” of the Baptist Bible Society of New York, an auxiliary of the American and Foreign Bible Society, which was exclusively Baptist. In the fall of 1845, Charles Tupper and the other Baptists resigned from the Cumberland Bible Society and formed, on 15 December 1845, the “New Cumberland Bible Society” which was attached to its American Baptist counterpart. Tupper then entered into a protracted debate over the issues of translation with Alexander Clarke, a Reformed Presbyterian minister in Amherst. In the words of Tupper,

. . . we wish abundant success to all societies engaged in disseminating the scriptures; but we cannot regard it as consistent to contribute our funds to a society that will not aid our excellent brethren in circulating the faithful translations executed by them. If these translations are not sustained, multitudes of the perishing heathen, into whose languages they are now made, must long remain destitute of the Word of Life, before translations can be made by pedoBaptists.⁸⁹

By May of 1846, Tupper was pleased to learn that the debate had generally prompted people to give funds to both Bible societies, which tended “to extend the circulation of the holy Scriptures.”⁹⁰ Nevertheless, some pedobaptists were uncomfortable with the Baptist post-millennialism which sought “to circulate Baptist Bibles ...to all dwellers upon earth.”⁹¹

⁸⁷ CM, 9 October 1867.

⁸⁸ For the background to this international debate see William Wilson’s article in the Novascotian, 11 May 1846 and the discussion as it was carried in the Guardian, 1 May 1846.

⁸⁹ CM, 9 January 1846.

⁹⁰ Guardian, 29 May 1846.

⁹¹ Novascotian, 11 May 1846; also see the related letters surrounding this debate in the Guardian, 29 May 1846; 5 June 1846; 19 June 1846; 26 June 1846; 10 July 1846; 17 July 1846; 24 July 1846; 31 July 1846; 4 September 1846; 11 September 1846; 18 September 1846; 16 October 1846; 25 December 1846; and the CM, 13 March 1846; 3 April 1846. I

So unrelenting and thorough were Tupper's newspaper articles surrounding the debate that Thomas Trotter, a learned Presbyterian minister from Antigonish, published Letters on the Meaning of Baptizo . . . in reply to the views of the Rev. Charles Tupper. Drawing upon his skills as a linguist, Tupper responded with Vindication of the Baptist Translators in India in Reply to the Rev. Thomas Trotter's Letters . . .⁹²

In this 1848 publication, Tupper demonstrated how he considered his ministry to be that of the reasoned and respectful apologist for his denomination. His piety made him especially suitable for the task of defender of the "Faith of the Fathers." In fact, the exact meaning of biblical words were central to his understanding of the faith. While still embracing the New Birth as a necessary experience, he considered it to be a beginning of a long journey for which the Bible provided the map and all of the provisions. For Christians to misunderstand the Greek word baptizo was to risk wandering in the proverbial wilderness instead of living in the "Baptist Promised Land."⁹³ While some Maritime Baptists spoke of being "wrapped up in God" in baptism, Tupper defended the legitimacy of the rite. In so doing, he bore witness to his own deeply-felt faith as a qualified evangelical. Since his commitment to religious order and biblicism did not allow personal religious experience or that of others (history) to stand as an authority, the very words of scripture took on profound importance.

am indebted to Dr. Eldon Hay of Mt. Allison University for bringing this debate to my attention.

⁹² Thomas Trotter, Letters On the Meaning of Baptizo, In the New Testament in Reply to the Views of the Rev. Charles Tupper (Pictou, N. S.: Eastern Chronicle Office, 1848); Charles Tupper, Vindication of the Baptist Translators in India: In Reply to the Rev. Thomas Trotter's Letters "On the Meaning of Baptizo" (Pictou, N. S.: Eastern Chronicle Office, 1848).

⁹³ Although more research is necessary, it would seem that Maritime Regular Baptists had a qualified participation in the "Protestant Consensus" at mid-century because of their view of baptism and the church. The temperance movement, therefore, was the only cause to which they gave their fullest support and attention, given the fact that it was based on very general notions of a moral and Christian society.

If Tupper's piety predisposed him to inform society about Baptist principles, he also assumed the role of educator among his own people. Even though he was only formally a professor for several months during 1842, at the Fredericton Seminary, his influence as a teacher through the pages of the Christian Messenger was very extensive, especially in the areas of temperance and Baptist education.⁹⁴ One area in which he particularly sought to "enlighten" his denomination concerned the role of women in church life. In April 1855, Charles Tupper defended the traditional practice of women exhorting in worship services.⁹⁵ Since the First Great Awakening under the direction of Henry Alline, women had played a vital part in revival by praying and pleading with men, women, and children to be converted. Although a traditional dimension of church life, by the 1850s, it was being questioned by a number of preachers and lay persons whose Victorian middle-class sensibilities were affronted by "sisters exhorting men."⁹⁶ In order to address the problem, Tupper tackled the New Testament injunction from 1 Corinthians 14:34 "Let your women keep silence in the Churches." Not willing to compromise his commitment to biblical authority, he argued that the passage was addressing the problem of women who "disrupted" worship and those who wanted to preach. However, he did not believe that the passage forbade women to exhort the congregation to holy living.⁹⁷

Tupper's article, clearly designed to allay fears that this inherited practice was unbiblical, initiated a debate with Silas T. Rand, himself a brilliant self-taught linguist.⁹⁸ Not

⁹⁴ CM, 24 July 1867.

⁹⁵ Ibid. , 12 April 1855.

⁹⁶ For a study, for an earlier period, which examines New England Baptists and the move from an egalitarian approach to church life to one that was more patriarchal, see Susan Juster, Disorderly Women: Sexual Politics and Evangelicalism in Revolutionary New England (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

⁹⁷ CM, 12 April 1855.

⁹⁸ Silas Rand was a contemporary of Tupper who also had a great facility in languages which was evident in his translation of the Bible into Micmac. See "Silas Rand Diary," AUA.

wishing to engage “in a lengthened controversy with a Baptist brother on this or any other subject,” Rand concluded that

Brother Tupper has not cited a single plain example in which a female member of a christian church, was ever called upon to address a public assembly of one kind by an apostle, or in which such an occurrence took place by divine authority. Had there been such an instance on [biblical] record, he would not have failed to produce it.⁹⁹

After reiterating his position, Tupper concluded, “I trust the discussion will prove beneficial by removing all scruples from the minds of “timid females” and emboldening them to occupy their place with comfort, to the glory of God, and the good of his people.”¹⁰⁰ Tupper had come to appreciate the significant role women played in Baptist church life. He knew as well that the exhortation of women often balanced his technical and logical sermons. Public ministrations by women allowed his worship services and conference meetings to embody more fully the revivalist heritage. Exhortation from women like Bertha Lewellyn and men injected a more experiential dimension of the faith into Tupper’s ministry. This suggests that Tupper, while never as comfortable with ecstatic expressions of the faith as many of his people, recognized that passionate appeals from lay people to salvation and holy living were a necessary component of evangelicalism, even when it was formal in its orientation.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ CM, 22 May 1855; see also 15 May 1855.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 7 August 1855.

¹⁰¹ Some women were not content to have the lone voice of “brother Tupper speak for them. Bertha Lewellyn of Woodbine Bower, Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia, wrote a lengthy reply to Rand “not because I do not think that Mr. Tupper has not fully sustained his arguments, and nobly refuted errors, but in behalf of the sisterhood” she wished to launch her own defense. While Lewellyn confessed that she did not read New Testament Greek, she still maintained that the scriptures were clear on the matter. Insulted that Rand would argue that the “Saviour would never impose such a burden” as exhortations upon women, she insisted that God gave committed Christian sisters the strength for such religious exercises. She then suggested that the evidence of God’s blessing on the efforts of women speaking in public was well known. “Who has not seen the blessed results of female speaking, in a revival of religion. A number of years ago, when many

Although more research is needed, the evidence from the Christian Messenger and the church records for the Regular Baptist churches in Yarmouth and Cornwallis suggest that the public role of women was increasingly marginalized in the 1840s and 1850s. What is somewhat surprising is that Tupper, a leading formal evangelical of his generation, supported a sustained public role for women in church life when Victorian notions of class and respectability assigned women to a private or gender-specific sphere. Since Tupper rejected changes in church life which were based on notions of gentility, he saw no need to accept these notions even if biblical arguments could be launched in their support. Because of his stand on women, Tupper can only be called a formal evangelical with significant qualifications. While some socially-prominent Regular Baptists may have regarded the public ministrations of women to be by definition "disorderly," Tupper, along with women such as Bertha Lewellyn, clung to the late eighteenth-century revivalist ideal that social and gender distinctions were supposed to be removed in the Kingdom of God.

This is not to suggest that Tupper was untouched by contemporary movements. Indeed, he was an ardent advocate for the temperance movement, as were many other Regular Baptist ministers in the nineteenth century, including Harris Harding and Edward Manning, and this allowed him to work cooperatively with other denominations.¹⁰² His

were converted, I think the greater part dated their first impressions from some brother or sister in the church exhorting them to repentance. I could cite instances in former years when the gospel has been preached, and when some sister or sisters have arisen and delivered a powerful exhortation which has melted the hearts of penitent sinners in the assembly, and issued in their conversion; when the appeals from the pulpit passed unheeded. God has set the seal of his approbation upon their speaking, and why, because through the weakness of the instrument, his power has been more gloriously displayed. Alas! Alas! For our world that these lights are sinking in obscurity. *Ibid.*, 4 August 1855.

¹⁰² Consult *Ibid.*, 18 March 1863; 9 May 1866; 28 November 1866; 12 December 1866; 27 February 1867; 13 March 1867; 27 March 1867. See also: Jan Noel, Canada Dry: Temperance Crusades before Confederation (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), chapters 3-4; Sandra Barry, "Shades of Vice and Moral Glory: The Temperance Movement in Nova Scotia 1828-48" (M.A. thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1986).

rationale for such unfailing support of a movement which transcended denominations, was that alcohol abuse prevented people from experiencing the New Birth.

In my view intemperance is so great an obstacle to the interests of vital religion, by holding the unregenerate in the chain of Satan, and by drawing professors of faith into gross impiety, that a minister of Christ is well employed, in his appropriate work, when putting forth zealous continuous efforts for its suppression.¹⁰³

Indeed, Tupper represents in a variety of ways the changes over time within the Regular Baptist denomination, but also certain continuities which remained central to his ministry. If he was not a successful revivalist, as were some of his contemporaries, notably I. E. Bill, he nevertheless supported the vital place of revival in religious life and did, in fact, lead an important “awakening” in Saint John in 1840 and a series of outpourings in the Annapolis Valley in the mid-1850s.¹⁰⁴ As his denomination slowly moved toward a more orderly expression of its piety, Tupper’s approach to preaching and revival seemed to resonate with a host of people longing to merge Allinite conversionism with Victorian sensibilities.

In 1850, Tupper’s church in Amherst which he had served for almost thirty years, began to question whether or not they would be better served by another pastor. Not wishing to divide the church, Tupper resigned and became a full-time agent for the Christian Messenger.¹⁰⁵ It was with some satisfaction that he recorded in his diary that the congregation did not experience the revival it expected with the change in ministers. Between 1850-1851 only two people were added to the Amherst church by baptism.¹⁰⁶ Despite his continued connection with the newspaper, Tupper began to miss the rhythm

¹⁰³ CM, 12 December 1866.

1840.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 8 January 1868. ¹⁰⁶ See Tupper’s account of the 1840 revival in Saint John and the role he played as preacher and baptizer in CM, 31 January

associated with the life of a settled pastor. Consequently, he accepted the position of pastor for the church in the Aylesford and Wilmot area of the Annapolis Valley on 1 July 1851. Apparently “two separate churches, occupying the same ground, had continued for several years in antagonism” and it was Tupper’s responsibility to unify the people so that they might function as one congregation.¹⁰⁷ Tupper was a logical choice for such a task since he had been committed to church order and discipline throughout his career and was experienced at providing pastoral care and advice to people and churches in distress. While some in his congregation wished for a more “earnest” preacher, they agreed to keep Tupper as their pastor a year later.¹⁰⁸ It was clear that his sermons did not regularly create an atmosphere where people experienced “divine ecstasy.” Nevertheless, his church was unified, orderly, and practiced church discipline. Charles Tupper apparently, however, was not content to replicate the stable, yet unremarkable ministry he had in Amherst. Consequently, in

. . . the closing part of the year 1853, and the commencement of 1854, my mind was unusually exercised respecting the people of my charge. A consideration of the greatness of their numbers, the frequency of deaths among them, and the extreme fewness of the instances of hopeful conversion made known, filled me with deep disquietude, and with earnest desires for a speedy revival of the Lord’s work.¹⁰⁹

In his sixtieth year, Tupper, with the help of W.G. Parker, the minister from Nictaux, began a series of meetings which were “attended with special tokens of the Lord’s favor.” Revival began to convulse the Aylesford-Wilmot-Nictaux area of the valley. Charles Tupper baptized by immersion one hundred people between 26 February and 20 October 1854.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 25 December 1867.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 4 March 1868.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 8 April 1868.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 13 May 1868.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Thirty-five years after his ministry began, Tupper was finally able to experience not only revival, but also to share, vicariously, the ecstasy of conversion as it was ritualized in the “watery grave.” So intensely connected to this revival was Tupper that he declined an offer the next year to become co-editor of the Christian Messenger following the death of John Ferguson -- a position for which he was ideally suited.

Some persons expressed a desire that the Editorship should be committed to me, but it was not congenial with my views and desires to be so far diverted from the work of preaching the Gospel of Christ, to which my life had been conscientiously devoted.¹¹¹

Having achieved success as a revivalist, though late in life, he was not about to leave it for the influential position of newspaper editor. Tupper had proven that even a formal evangelical could be a revivalist, as well as an erudite apologist and author. In addition to his remarkable baptismal record in 1854, Tupper also “travelled 3065 miles, preached 198 sermons, delivered 9 lectures on Temperance, attended 63 conferences, and 88 other meetings . . . [and] made 710 family visits.”¹¹² The rewards of these activities far outweighed for Tupper any sense of accomplishment which might be gained as an editor. Even as late as 7 May 1856, the Christian Visitor reported that “the glorious revival in his [Tupper’s] field of labor is progressing favorably.”¹¹³

Although he never again led a revival as extensive as that in the mid-1850s, Tupper continued to serve the Aylesford-Wilmot church into his later years. He continued to promote education, newspapers, temperance, Bible Societies, and revival. On 19 January 1881, Charles Tupper died. In the words of his friend and colleague I. E. Bill, “It was like

¹¹¹ Ibid., 15 July 1868.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ CV, 7 May 1856.

the going down of the sun in the western sky amid a brilliant blaze of enchanting glories.”¹¹⁴ Ironically, while seeming to be something of a misfit in his early ministerial career, by the 1850s Tupper came to embody the piety and aspirations of many Maritime Regular Baptists. If he restyled the “Faith of the Fathers,” he did not diminish its stress on the New Birth. In fact, it might be argued that Tupper modeled a kind of qualified formal evangelicalism that would allow Maritime Regular Baptists to face an increasingly complex and changing society during the second half of the nineteenth century. Meshing the ethos of the “intellectual awakening” in Nova Scotia with New Light Baptist evangelicalism, he had established a viable option for those in ministry which resonated with many Maritime Baptists during the second half of the nineteenth century.

¹¹⁴ Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches, p. 734.

Chapter Seven

Ingram Bill: A Son of the Fathers

“Mr. Bill was not one of the fathers of our denomination, rather one of the sons of the fathers.”¹

Ingram E. Bill personified, perhaps better than any preacher of his generation, the tensions, aspirations and balanced evangelicalism of those who occupied both the pulpit and pew.² A thorough-going advocate of experiential revivalistic religion, Bill sought to fashion his Christianity to fit the changing realities of colonial society. Like Charles Tupper, he had the intuitive ability to integrate the “New Light-New Birth” paradigm with education, temperance, the publishing industry, and denomination-building. But unlike Tupper, his evangelistic preaching was popular, and he was also able to appeal to the both the formal and antiformal groups which comprised the Maritime Regular Baptist community.³ True to the “Faith of the Fathers,” he was able to help direct the Regular Baptists toward social acceptability on the one hand, while sustaining the revivalist ethos on the other. In short, Bill represented to a large degree, the general nature of Maritime Regular Baptist spirituality by mid-century.

An unpublished manuscript written by Bill, entitled “A Personal Sketch”, began by providing a fairly typical description of his family tree beginning with Thomas Bill – a

¹ The Daily Telegraph, 8 August 1891.

² With the exception of Jonathan Wilson’s “Leading the New Epoch: Charles Tupper, Ingram Bill and Richard Burpe and the Regular Baptists of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island, 1800 - 1850” (M. A. Thesis, Queen’s University, 1995), pp. 38-72, Bill has been almost completely ignored by historians. See also I. E. Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches of the Maritime Provinces (Saint John, NB: Barnes and Co., 1880), pp. 59-62, 70-79, 122-126; E. M. Saunders, History of the Baptists of the Maritime Provinces (Halifax, NS: John Burgoyne, 1902), pp. 255, 292; and The History of Germain Street Baptist Church . . . 1810-1910 (Saint John, NB: Saint John Globe Pub., 1910), pp. 39 - 41.

³ It is important to note that while neither Bill nor Tupper easily fit Johnson’s categories of formal and informal evangelicalism, Bill was able to appeal to both camps while Tupper never really appealed to either.

physician to Princess Elizabeth in 1549, and ending with the arrival of his father, Asabel Bill, to Nova Scotia in the 1760s as part of the New England Planter migration. Asabel Bill was wed to Mary Rand shortly after his arrival.⁴ The youngest of the family, Bill, was born 19 February 1805, and given the names Ingram Ebenezer after his paternal grandparents.⁵ Such a connection to family history was important to Bill for he believed it revealed the providence of God. He also came to embrace the post-millennial expectations held by many in his denomination, because he believed that the future of Christianity was indeed a Baptist future. With an enormous sense of destiny and of family, Bill knew he had been born for divine purpose.⁶

Bill's father was a prosperous and distinguished Presbyterian land owner who had received "a magnificent tract of land of several hundred acres in the center of the Township of Cornwallis." This rich land, which had been formerly occupied by Acadians, allowed the Bill family to create a large and very lucrative family farming enterprise. I. E. Bill wrote years later:

From the ample products of this fruitful homestead our parents were not only able to supply the physical and mental necessities of a large family; but -
-to accumulate, what was then considered a most valuable property, which was ultimately divided between their three sons ... and four daughters⁷

The Bill homestead became a favorite stopping point and lodge for a host of itinerant evangelists in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth centuries. As a boy, Ingram

⁴ Ingram Ebenezer Bill, "A Personal Sketch," unpublished manuscript dated 1887, in AUA (hereafter "sketch"), Some of this narrative is presented in Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches. While this is one of the most important sources for Bill's life, it is nevertheless a "memoir" and, unlike Tupper's "Sketch," does not seem to have been based on a personal daily journal. Consequently, Bill is occasionally inaccurate. Nevertheless, some phases of his life are not recorded anywhere else, which makes "A Personal Sketch" a key, although flawed, source.

⁵ Messenger and Visitor, 19 August 1891.

⁶ "Sketch," pp. 1 - 4.

⁷ Ibid., p. 5.

Bill recalled hearing Baptist Patriarchs such as James and Edward Manning, T. S. Harding, Joseph Crandall, and others preach in his home, even though his parents were Presbyterian. Under the influence of these itinerant Baptist preachers and after “a careful study of the word of God,” Bill’s parents “changed their views regarding the subjects and mode of Christian baptism” and embraced the revivalistic religion of the immersionists. While his parents certainly changed their religious sentiments, Bill’s mother continued to educate her children in the faith (as she had been taught by her mother), by teaching “the summary of Bible doctrine contained in the Westminster catechism.”⁸

So thoroughly did she instruct them [children] in these fundamental verities of the christian faith, that as they grew to years of understanding they found no difficulty in giving a good reason for the faith which they cherished [.] Through catechetical instruction coming from parental lips to children under their fostering care produce impressions and convictions not easily effaced. Hence the obligation resting upon parents to apply themselves carefully and prayerfully to the religious culture of those that God has given them.⁹

The custom among some Maritime Regular Baptists during the first half of the nineteenth century in the religious education of children has not been explored; it seems very possible, however, that the religious training of sons and daughters was inherited by the many Anglicans, Methodists, and Presbyterians who became Baptists. Within the Methodist context, Marguerite VanDie has observed, “evangelical revivalism entered into the experience of infants as well as adults, not through the preaching of an itinerant evangelist, but through the exhortations of a godly mother.”¹⁰ Phillip Greven, in a fascinating study of evangelical children in seventeenth and eighteenth-century colonial America, has concluded that “Evangelicals did not remember their own earliest experiences, and few ever reported

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁰ See the important study by Marguerite VanDie, *An Evangelical Mind: Nathaniel Burwash and the Methodist Tradition in Canada, 1839-1918* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1989), p. 21.

their earlier memories, yet their actions, their beliefs, and their temperaments reveal, as nothing else could, that their earliest and most formative experiences still shaped and influenced their lives throughout youth and adulthood.”¹¹ Certainly from a theological and pietistic perspective, Bill’s mother had a profound influence upon his formative religious development. Could it be that I. E. Bill’s pedobaptist heritage, with its emphasis on child catechism, actually prepared him to become a strong Calvinist Baptist minister?

Despite Bill’s early religious training, he still found himself as a teenager to have “a cold heart and thoughtless tongue” and needing redemption.¹² However, the Bill family was coming under the increasing influence of Edward Manning. In fact, Manning became the most influential person ever to enter Bill’s life (as had been the case for Charles Tupper). Sometime in 1823, in the course of his pastoral visitation, Manning arrived at the Bill home to find lodging for the night. He shared a room with Ingram. Taking this “divinely given” opportunity to investigate the state of Bill’s soul, Manning’s

... words came home to my heart and conscience with such melting tenderness that I hastened from his presence and act in the darkness of the night to cry, upon bended knees and from a broken heart, for the first time in my life “Lord be merciful to me a sinner.” This was all I could say! But it was enough; for it was a full recognition of conscious vileness in the sight of infinite purity, and of the necessity of pardoning mercy.¹³

This was but the beginning of I. E. Bill’s conversion process. He was “convicted of his spiritual state” and he cried for divine mercy, but he had yet to experience the releasing rapture of conversion assurance. During this period of doubt, Bill found himself “yielding

¹¹ Philip J. Greven, The Protestant Temperament: Patterns of Child-Rearing, Religious Experience and the Self in Early America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), pp. 64-65. It is clear from my preliminary investigation that children and family became increasingly important themes among Regular Baptists in the nineteenth century, especially after 1823 when William Elder published his first baptismal tract.

¹² “Sketch,” p.6.

¹³ Ibid.

to former habits of indulgence in worldly mirth.”¹⁴ In the midst of this existential turmoil he attended a worship service conducted by “Father” Theodore Seth Harding, who preached from the apostle Paul’s injunction to the church in Philippi, “Being confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”¹⁵ Bill believed the message had been divinely directed toward him. He resolved that it “was in vain that I sought any longer to conceal my concern for my soul’s eternal welfare.” Rushing home after the service, he went to bed “not to rest but to plead with the Lord Jesus for salvation.” After an intense and agonizing struggle under the “burden of sin” and faced with the “fierceness of eternal burnings,” he encountered “an unexpected movement [of] deliverance” and felt swept away as a newly born child into “a new faith,” “a new hope” and “a new world.”¹⁶ So profound was Bill’s conversion experience that he looked at life and all of creation in a new light.

Typical of many who had experienced what can only be called a “New Light” style “New Birth,” Bill was hesitant to declare his new-found faith, lest he deceive himself. “But the flame burnt within and could not be long concealed.”¹⁷ Venturing outside, he shared his experience with a farmhand and they began to rejoice. It was at this time that Bill began to long for “angelic wings, and for a trumpet tongue to proclaim to saint and sinner everywhere the wonders of God’s redeeming love.”¹⁸ In the same way that first generation preachers such as Edward Manning, Joseph Crandall, and Harris Harding felt compelled to testify to their new found faith and conversion, so too did Ingram Bill. Terrified at the

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ See Philippians 1:6 in the New Testament.

¹⁶ “Sketch”, p. 7.

¹⁷ Ibid. Bill’s conversion is “classic,” in the sense that it conforms in every important way to the “New Light - New Birth.”

¹⁸ Ibid.

prospect of speaking in front of literally hundreds of people, he sought counsel from his mother who said, "go forward my Son and may God go with you." Taking his mother's advice, he went to a meeting especially appointed "to hear young converts" and told the story of his conversion. "The old Christians" celebrated the good news and gave young Bill "a most cordial welcome," while "sinners" were "awakened to a sense of their sin."¹⁹ The following day, 8 August 1824, I. E. Bill was baptized by full immersion by Father Manning. The venerable pastor recorded:

this was one of the most solemn seasons I ever saw, and I spoke of it as much with much interest. dismissed and went to the lake, 1 mile distant, and it seemed as if the whole country attended, then the hymn, "Come see the place where Jesus lay," at the request of one of the young candidates, was sung, and prayer made, and a short address, and likewise a short address to the numerous [people] . . . and then I took the old gentleman and baptised him as Jesus was by John in the Jordan, and 7 more, and 6 females, 14 in all. Several of them were praising God where they came up out of the water. . .²⁰

In 1887, sixty-three years later, Bill could still remember the event vividly.²¹ If his conversion had been the defining event in his life, his baptism by immersion symbolized his identification with the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the "immersed" people of God. Not surprisingly, the baptismal service became absolutely central to Bill's ministry as pastor and revivalist.

However, even the ecstasy of immersion could not defeat the "demons of doubt" that haunted Ingram Bill. Naively believing that going under the "placid sheet" would usher in a life of "uninterrupted sunshine," Bill entered instead into yet another period of introspection. In this regard, his immediate post-conversion experiences were not unlike those of Joseph Crandall.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.8.

²⁰ "Edward Manning Diary," 8 August 1824. AUA.

²¹ "Sketch," p. 8.

For three days and nights I was in the horrors of despair; but one bright morning as I entered upon the duties of the day sending a cry to heaven for mercy the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shining in the grace of Jesus Christ came streaming into my darkened soul Redemption alone by the blood of the lamb; justification and acceptance alone by the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus came before me with all the brightness of a morning star. Doubts and fears were scattered to the winds, and the soul was filled with joy immutable and full of glory.²²

While it seems clear that Bill would not have been able to articulate the theology of assurance to this degree at the age of eighteen, the passion and the ultimate release that came with this final jettisoning of his doubts was still fresh in 1887. All of the available evidence suggests that he never encountered such terrifying questions again.

As Bill left behind a period of doubt about his eternal security, he entered into another phase in his spiritual journey as he contemplated “engaging in the work of the ministry.”²³ However, he concluded that such a goal or “calling” would be impractical, since he did not have access to formal ministerial training. It is important to recognize that Bill’s concern at this point was not just rhetoric borrowed from Edward Manning, but rather the tacit recognition that colonial society was becoming increasingly complex and needed better educated ministers, especially within his own denomination. He also faced the grassroots’ suspicion that higher education undermined vital spirituality. Even the initial encouragement by Edward Manning to consider preaching as a divine calling was rejected because of Bill’s intense feelings of unworthiness.

Convinced that he ought to live life in the manner of his father -- who had died when Bill was nine years old -- he married Isabela Lyons at the age of twenty-one. Moving into a home provided for them by his mother, the young couple had their first child

²² *Ibid.*, p. 8. Some of the uncertainty and almost “spiritual depression” of Bill is not unlike that of Joseph Crandall. Interestingly, after both achieved certainty of faith and calling they never again encountered periods of “morbid introspection”.

²³ “Sketch,” p. 9.

thirteen months after their wedding.²⁴ Committed to transmitting the faith through family religion, the young couple “with one heart and soul”

began the duties of . . . married life by erecting the family altar, and calling upon the name of the Lord for guidance in all that appertained to the present and to the future.²⁵

As Bill tried to replicate the prosperity of his father, he could not shake the inner compulsion “to abandon all mere worldly pursuits, and preach the gospel to persisting sinners.”²⁶ In a short time, he found himself so enveloped in this dilemma of the soul that he became “strangely unfitted for . . . worldly pursuits.”

Bill’s circumstances deviated from the norm of most Regular Baptist preachers at the beginning of their careers because he had a wife and child for whom to provide. If he were to enter the pastoral ministry, he would be faced with an almost impossible task of supporting his family, given the irregular and meager support given to the ministers at this time. Furthermore, there was always the first year or two of preaching as a licensed evangelist during which it was incumbent upon the would-be minister to prove himself in leading revivals and providing pastoral care. Only after demonstrating his gifts was it likely that a church would invite him to be their pastor. The harsh realities of “accepting the call” troubled Ingram Bill mightily. One day, alone in meditation and prayer, Bill had another religious experience as “words of Paul came like a thunder clap from the heavens.” “Unto me who am less than the least of all the saints is this grace given that I should preach among the gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” So overwhelmed was Bill at “hearing” these

²⁴ I. E. Bill, Jr., “A Brief Biographical Sketch of the Rev. I. E. Bill, D.D.,” unpublished manuscript, AUA. This biography by Bill’s son is rather hagiographic and downplays the enthusiastic dimension of his father’s piety, suggesting Bill Jr., may have been embarrassed by the New Light spirituality of his father’s early career.

²⁵ “Sketch,” p. 9.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

words that he stood tall, with his hands raised to the heavens, and exclaimed “Lord it is more than I can bear.”²⁷ It is important to recognize that Bill’s conversion and calling, although just as ecstatic as that of the “Fathers,” was also far more biblicist in its orientation. If he heard audible words, they were scripture verses, not dreams or visions which needed to be interpreted.

Finding his brother at work, Bill shared his experience and his dilemma. “I do not know what is to become of me or my wife and child for I feel an awful necessity laid upon [me] to preach the gospel of Christ to a lost world.” So deeply moved was Bill’s brother by this “divine revelation” and pathos that he began to cry almost uncontrollably and said, “Ingram go to your bible and to your God, do your duty, and I will take care of your wife and child.”²⁸ Here again is seen the important role family played in Bill’s spiritual development and ministerial career. He took his brother’s offer as a sign of God’s provision and determined to follow his divine call, laying “all upon the altar of a self consuming sacrifice.”²⁹ When he told his “Venerable Father” that he desired to be a minister, Manning warned him that “to preach the gospel is like going to the height of [Mount] Blomidon and jumping off.”³⁰ The personal risk of becoming a minister was one to be taken very seriously, as Manning well knew. Nevertheless, the aging preacher was also aware that his denomination needed younger ministers who would carry on the evangelical Baptist tradition in creative yet authentic ways.

During the 1828-1829 period, at least three other men from Manning’s congregation expressed a serious desire to preach the gospel, including William Chipman who for many

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

years had been an active lay person and deacon, Ezekiel Marsters with whom Bill had been baptized, and T. Harding Porter.³¹ As Manning laboured diligently to prepare these men for useful ministry, he provided a series of opportunities for them to exhort, pray publicly and preach.³² Ingram Bill preached his very first sermon in Lower Canard, Cornwallis Township, at the home of "Brother William Eaton." Trembling under the pressure, the young Bill uttered his words with unction and the "Spirit's power." People were deeply moved during his message and one person was convicted and converted. It was obvious to all present that Bill had an uncommon ability to "move sinners," a necessary gift for any Regular Baptist preacher. Requests for his ministration poured in from all over the township and as he recalled:

In [Lower] Cunard the meetings were attended with a rich blessing. The widow Ells her son Joshua and four daughters were rejoicing together in the full exercise of a new born faith, the whole household won to the Saviour.³³

With the success of at least five conversions in response to his first few sermons, Bill was elated and fully convinced that he was called of God. He soon became a successful evangelist who could help people experience the ecstasy of conversion, not unlike the revivalists of the older generation. Indeed, his early accomplishment in the pulpit gave shape, to a marked degree, to his philosophy of ministry. It was built on the "New Birth" paradigm.

³⁰ Ibid. Manning was very familiar with the hardships that accompanied the Regular Baptist ministry. See Barry Moody's "From Itinerant to Pastor."

³¹ T.H. Porter, Sr., was "an earnest and useful man" who served churches in Port Medway, Hammonds Plains, Canso And Sackville. He died 12 April 1869. See E.M. Saunders, History of the Baptists of the Maritime Provinces (Halifax, NS: John Burgoyne, 1902), p.496

³² "Sketch," p. 12. See the "Cornwallis Baptist Church Records," 7 June 1828; 24 February 1829; 30 April 1829; 21 November 1829; 1 August 1830, in AUA. Also see "Manning Diary," 24 February 1829; 30 April 1829. These citations identify the opportunities Manning granted to these preachers along with his evaluation.

In his "Sketch," Bill described the joy he felt as he watched, in 1832, an ailing Edward Manning baptize those who had been converted under his preaching. They were "first fruits," and he never forgot their names, nor the circumstances surrounding their "New Birth" experiences and baptisms. This occasion gave Ingram Bill great hope for the future. "Imagine the feelings of those witnessing the first fruits of their ministrations. I could but say deep down in my heart if such be the fruits of the first few months of ministerial labor what will be the full harvest?"³⁴

During the coming months, Bill, along with Marsters, began to preach throughout the Annapolis Valley, always under the watchful eye of their mentor. The older preacher's impact on Bill was even greater than that on Charles Tupper. Because Bill's father had died when Ingram was six years of age, he considered Manning his central father figure. In their correspondence, Bill repeatedly referred to Manning as "my dearest father" and "Brother and Dear Father in Affliction." In one very revealing letter, Bill, in a moment of uncommon honesty, wrote to the Patriarch as the father who has "watched over me, and handled me upon the lap of tenderness from my childish years, he who has as it were pastored me in his own bosom, and whose preaching, praying, advice, Instructed, and admonition, has left an Impression on my mind. Never, no never to be erased."³⁵

Never receiving formal theological education, Bill also cherished the "walking seminary" which was Edward Manning.

He was my theological teacher, not indeed in the phraseology of the schools, but in the burning words of a Divine inspiration. How my young heart admired and adored, while listening to some of his masterly discourses on the attributes of the God head, as unfolded in His works and in His word. I used to say, Surely never mortal man spake like this man. More than half a

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³⁵ I. E. Bill to Edward Manning, 16 December 1832, Nictaux, NS. AUA.

century has passed; I have heard a great many eminent preachers in both hemispheres: but to this day I have never heard a man that waded so deeply into the great sea of Jehovah's eternal perfections.³⁶

Truly a "son of one of the fathers," Ingram Bill relied upon the wisdom and guidance of Manning for at least the first ten years of his ministry. Indeed, his own theological system became a mixture of the Westminster Confession of Faith and his mentor's own evangelical Calvinism.³⁷

Shortly after Bill began his wider itinerant ministry -- his family being cared for by his brother -- he was invited by the Nictaux Baptist Church to make an extended visit with them, with a view to becoming their full-time pastor. Since 1809, Thomas Handley Chipman had been the "shepherd" of this church, but, by 1828, his aging and feeble health had forced him to assume a very limited pastoral role.³⁸ It was clear that he needed an assistant, one who could appreciate the Allinite background of the venerable pastor and his congregation.³⁹ One suspects that Bill's conversion and ability to lead revivals must have been quite attractive to the Nictaux congregation, which had not rejected its Allinite heritage to the same degree that Manning's church had.

As an itinerant evangelist with a growing popularity, Bill wanted "to be at liberty to go wherever God in his providence." But Bill accepted the invitation from the Nictaux

³⁶ Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches, p. 132.

³⁷ At one point in 1830, Manning contemplated the possibility of having Bill succeed him as the pastor of the Cornwallis parish. "Manning Diary," 7 March 1830.

³⁸ Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches, p. 75.

³⁹ In J. M. Cramp's "History of the Maritime Baptists", pp. 226 - 228, he noted that Chipman adhered to a notion of conversion through which true believers must travel. This process involved conviction of sin, repentance, followed by a period of intense doubt, ending with full assurance of conversion. While this conception of conversion reflects an Allinite origin Cramp seems to suggest that a more straightforward approach to the conversion process was being articulated by some in the Maritime Baptist community by 1830. For an examination of this changing conception of conversion in the Methodist tradition consult Phyllis D. Airhart, "What Must I Do To Be Saved?: Two Paths to Evangelical Conversion in Late Victorian Canada" in Church History 59(1990): 372-385.

Baptist Church. After a few weeks there “with marked results,” he was faced with an insistent and unanimous call from the members of the church. He accepted the invitation with the proviso that he would be free to preach as a traveling evangelist for a “few months” every year.⁴⁰

Beginning in the fall of 1828, revival began to convulse many of the communities in the Annapolis Valley, as well as the Yarmouth and Sackville areas. Not surprisingly, Bill emerged as the leading preacher from his generation in the revival. In a letter to the Baptist Missionary Magazine of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, 19 December 1828, Thomas Tupper Esq. recorded that “Father Ansley and Bro. Bill came to preach at my house; the Lord was there . . . such a display of the mercy and power of Jehovah I never saw or felt before.” If anyone thought that the enthusiastic religion of the awakening had died, Thomas Tupper’s letter suggests a great degree of continuity in piety for he said it “was almost a day of Pentecost.”⁴¹ At the center of this “spiritual earthquake” was Ingram Bill, under the watchful eyes of the “Fathers.”

The revival thus opened rolled on as a mighty-tidal wave over mountain and valley. Not only Aylesford in all its sections; but Wilmot, Nictaux, all along that beautiful valley and the hills North and South from new Albany South to the Bay of Fundy North, a distance of some 20 miles, and stretching from Aylesford East down through Wilmost to the Granville lines on a distance of some 25 or 30 miles were all visited with the salvation of God and were vocal with the songs of ransomed souls.⁴²

Although more research is necessary before firm generalizations can be made about the revival period of 1827-1829 in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, it seems clear that Bill and other key denominational leaders from his generation were socialized for the ministry

⁴⁰ “Sketch,” p. 18.

⁴¹ BMM, 19 December 1828.

⁴² “Sketch,” p. 20.

during this critical time of intense spiritual awakening.⁴³ Revival and ecstatic religious experience within the confines of order were the norm. Certainly, Bill's expectations about the very nature of the Regular Baptist ministry were shaped in the revivals of this period.

During the winter of 1829, Bill preached a series of evangelistic messages at Mount Handley at the people's request. Even in old age, Bill remembered these revival meetings, recording that there was "a consciousness of the coming nigh of the Holy One." When the time came for him to offer an appeal to the unconverted, he began to tremble "in body as if shaken by an unseen hand."

. . . eternal realities crowded in upon the mind all luminous with the light of the Holy Spirit, until I felt that I was speaking as one standing . . . in the presence of three worlds, heaven, earth and hell. The effect upon the congregation was overwhelming-every head bowed and every face was bathed in tears.⁴⁴

At another meeting, Bill began to shake again, only this time it was "more" powerful. Almost immediately, "cries for mercy" and "shouts of rejoicing from consumed spirits" could be heard. Although unaccustomed to preaching while others "prayed" and "groaned" – since Edward Manning would not have permitted such "disruptions – Bill joined the ecstatic chorus and continued to preach the "New Light - New Birth" message, until he collapsed into the arms of "Bro. Cunningham."⁴⁵ One of the disappointments for Bill and other licentiates preaching in the revival, such as Cunningham, Ezekiel Marsters, Nathaniel Vidotoe, and William Chipman – who were young preachers from the Cornwallis area also

⁴³ The preliminary research includes Daniel C. Goodwin, "Advancing Light: Evangelicalism in Yarmouth Township, 1761-1830" (M.A. thesis, Acadia University, 1986), chapter 4. See also Jonathan Wilson, "Leading the New Epoch: Charles Tupper, Ingram Bill and Richard Burpe and the Regular Baptists of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, 1800-1850" (M.A. thesis, Queen's University, 1995).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 23. Richard Cunningham was another second generation preacher who was mentored under T. S. Harding in Horton. See Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches, pp. 280 - 284.

under the direction of Edward Manning – was that they were not able to baptize their converts because they were yet not ordained.⁴⁶ That which was the center of their religious identity as ministers was denied them.

The “Fathers” were indeed delighted that so many able young men had offered themselves for ministry. In September, 1828, during one of many prayer meetings, Thomas Ansley was moved to tears at the sight of Bill and his young colleagues, and “threw his arms of love” around them and exhorted them “to be faithful stewards of the manifold grace of God.”⁴⁷ Bill and his contemporaries had proven themselves. Not surprisingly, the following spring the Nictaux church requested that an ordination council be struck to examine Ingram Bill and to set him apart for ministry. Since Edward Manning had played such a central part in his spiritual development Bill insisted that he be “prominent in my ordination”.⁴⁸ Bill was ordained on 3 March 1829. Many in the congregation had waited to be baptized until he could perform the ordinance, and one historian has stated that Bill immersed over 200 converts before the “spiritual earthquake” of 1828-1829 had subsided.⁴⁹

Well on his way to becoming an effective pastor and a much-in-demand revivalist, Bill continued to rely heavily upon the guiding hand of his mentor. It would seem that some of the excesses of the 1828 - 1829 revival disturbed Edward Manning. In May of 1829, less than two months after Bill’s ordination, he sent a letter to Manning in the midst of revival extolling the reality of the spiritual realm of heaven, earth, and hell. Indeed, the young pastor had come to believe that the radically experiential nature of the awakening had

⁴⁶ Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches., p. 75.

⁴⁷ “Sketch,” p. 19.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 24.

⁴⁹ Wilson, “Leading the New Epoch,” p. 47.

sensitized him to spiritual realities he had not thought possible. Out on the “boundary” between glory and damnation, Bill wrote

I would just say as to myself I learn by dayly experience that I am a frail mortal [and] there is an enemy that troubles me very much, he follows me in secret, he follows me in the pulpit, he is with me in all occasions indeed, he is in my own bosom and I expect he will remain there until the day of my death and then I hope through grace to get rid of him all together as it respect the goodness of the Lord.⁵⁰

Manning was clearly alarmed over Bill’s letter. The almost Manachean or dualistic theology in the epistle most likely reminded the “Father” of days during the New Dispensation Movement of the 1790s, when New Light enthusiasts committed “gross sin,” justifying their actions by declaring “the devil made me do it.” Religious ecstasy, within certain limits, Edward Manning could abide, but dualism had the potential to lead to a variety of heterodox and antinomian beliefs and practices. In response to this dangerously dualistic theology and the “shaking” and other unusual “manifestations” at Bill’s revival meetings, Manning wrote a letter of correction and direction to his “son in the faith.” In reply to Manning’s epistle, which is not extant, the young pastor thanked him for

the wholesome advice contained in your letter. I felt that I needed it. Indeed it answered two purposes, first as an advice, and secondly as a reproof. I must say that it brought the blush in my cheek when I saw how many instances I had swerved from my duty as laid down in your epistle; may the Lord on my part forget my past follies, and enable me to do better for the time came . . . I see more and more that I am in fact [a] failable creature and need not only advice and instruction and reproof, from my Fathers in the Gospel, but I need the constant influences and direction of the Holy Spirit in order that I may be kept in my proper place and be useful in the Servant’s cause.⁵¹

From this point in his ministry, Bill laboured to sustain more order in his revival services, although he remained open to “movements of the Spirit” to the end of his life.

⁵⁰ I. E. Bill to Edward Manning, 20 May 1829, Nictaux, NS. AUA.

⁵¹ I. E. Bill to Edward Manning, 22 August 1831, Nictaux, NS. AUA.

Even though he strove to promote a “balanced evangelism” of the head and the heart, he continued to “err” on the side of a warm enthusiastic piety reminiscent of Harris Harding who allowed the “Holy Spirit” to direct the religious service or revival (without imposing any order whatsoever, lest God’s will be limited). This contrasts sharply with Tupper who chose to maintain “orderly” services even at the cost of “cooling” the fires of revival. Achieving a winning mix of formal and antiformal evangelicalism, Bill represented the Regular Baptist compromise of the 1830s which blended the radical revivalism of the Great Revival of 1827-1829 with the aspirations for religious and social acceptability emanating from Manning, Crandall, and the Halifax Baptist professional elite, represented by people such as E. A. Crawley, who would never be altogether comfortable with the essentially Allinite piety of their rural New England Planter cousins. Nevertheless, most accepted the balance which Bill so consciously sustained. In other words, by 1831 Ingram Bill was becoming the quintessential second generation Regular Baptist leader, one who had wide-ranging appeal and acceptability.

If Bill was effective in evangelizing the farming families of the Annapolis Valley, he was also helpful in the conversion of better educated people such as Angus Gidney, who was a lawyer and teacher from Pleasant River. In a very confident letter to his mentor, Bill reported

that there are a number of young people in the neighbourhood [who have]... most Solemnly affected with a sense of eternal things two have professed to find peace in believing, one of them perhaps you know, Angus Gidney he was educated for the law but through the means of mismanagement Some way his prospects have all been blasted and he came up to Brother Shaffer’s neighbourhood and has been teaching School for a short time, and has professed the religion of Jesus. he tells me for three years he was an established Infidel and to use his own words he has dipt his pen in Hell to write against the Bible, but now he speaks and prays in publick, his powers of mind are Strong and considerably Refined and if his

religion is of a genuine nature as I hope it is, he undoubtedly will be useful in the Cause of God . . .⁵²

A. M. Gidney became one of the best-known Regular Baptist laymen in 1830s and 1840s, writing frequently for the Baptist Missionary Magazine and to denominational leaders such as Edward Manning. Gidney was attracted to Bill's experiential, yet warmly theological sermons, which answered the "questions of his head" and the "longings of his heart." One year after his conversion, Gidney wrote to Edward Manning about "two excellent sermons through the medium of elder Bill."⁵³

Bill's ability to relate effectively to the elite of Nova Scotian society became evident in 1834 when he received a request came from the Granville Street Baptist Church to act as an interim minister. This request was made because their regular pastor, E. A. Crawley, was devoting himself full-time to the writing of his Treatise on Baptism, his response to the defection of William Elder from the Baptists to the pedobaptists, discussed previously.⁵⁴ This church of socially prominent individuals was very much out of place in a denomination of people they themselves described, rather patronizingly , as

humble companies of Jewish Shepherds, or Galilean fishermn, who, in accordance with the Scripture narrative, may be supposed to have poured forth their artless but heartfelt devotion in the days immediately succeeding the time when the King of Heaven stood in human form on the Earth.⁵⁵

While Bill most assuredly rejected their characterization and narcissistic aspirations for Maritime Regular Baptists, he nevertheless recognized how such a merger of two radically

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Angus Gidney to Edward Manning, 23 April 1832, Pleasant River, N. S. AUA. This is the same A.M. Gidney whose extended account of a baptismal service was explored in chapter one.

⁵⁴ E. A. Crawley, A Treatise on Baptism . . . Containing a Reply to Mr. Elder's Letters on Infant Baptism, and a Solemn Appeal In Favour of a Spiritual Church (Halifax, NS: James Spike, 1835).

different religious traditions could expand the “Kingdom of God.” Furthermore, he too was committed to education, not primarily to achieve respectability but rather to allow the “New Birth” gospel of the Regular Baptists to permeate all levels of Maritime colonial society.

As Bill preached and provided pastoral care to the Granville Street church, he encountered a Halifax that was hostile to the Baptists, and which initiated steps to impede the expansion of the immersionists in the city.

St. Paul’s is thrown open on sabbath evening by the Bishop the Methodist are opening their third preaching house in the town . . . we at once feel that the Baptists must bestir themselves or their interest in this place will loose ground.⁵⁶

Bill also spoke of the damage which the Richey-Taylor-Jackson phase of the baptismal controversy had done to the Baptist’s reputation in the city. The nasty and almost liable literary exchange in 1835 between Thomas Taylor, a Methodist, and William Jackson, a Methodist-turned-independent Baptist, had largely discredited the immersionists in the city.⁵⁷ For example, Bill noted that “Jackson and his coagitors are straining every nerve etc., etc., and add to their the embarrassed circumstances.” This kind of theological mud-slinging, especially in its published form, was new to the young Nictaux pastor, and while unsure about how to proceed, he was able to assure Manning that the Halifax Baptists were “now encouraged with some revival of religion in the church and also without.” With several baptisms scheduled and people “under conviction of sin” Bill decided to extend his stay in a world that was unfamiliar yet intriguing, where he believed his brand of the gospel

⁵⁵ Origin of the Formation of the Baptist Church in Granville-Street, Halifax, N. S. (Halifax, NS: The Nova Scotian Office, 1828), p. 17.

⁵⁶ I. E. Bill to Edward Manning, 29 January 1835, Halifax, NS. AUA.

⁵⁷ See Daniel C. Goodwin, “the Very Vitals of Christianity”: The Baptismal Controversy and the Intellectual Awakening in Nova Scotia 1811-1848” *NSHR* 15(1995): 72-87. Also consult chapter four of this thesis for the wider context of the controversy.

could make an important difference at a crucial time.⁵⁸ In a modest way, Bill's balanced revivalistic piety was effective and acceptable in the Granville Street Church -- the most formal evangelical congregation in the denomination.

If those at the grassroots of the denomination were concerned that Bill might lose his charismatic and strongly evangelistic edge in Halifax, their fears were allayed as he led a revival that convulsed the town of Liverpool in 1834. However, in his account of the "outpouring," published in the Baptist Missionary Magazine, he took great pains to show that the excesses of the Mount Handley revival several years before had not been repeated.

With confidence, Bill explained that

with a few exceptions it was entirely free from all undue excitement. If the young converts rejoiced in the Saviour it was not in a style of boistrous excitement; but of calm religious enjoyment; and if the burdened sinner cried for mercy it was in tones expressive of a deep sense of his criminality before God, and the need of salvation through the blood of the cross.⁵⁹

One should not read this report as if it suggests that Bill had become a committed formal evangelical. In fact the "tears," "cries for mercy," groaning, the excitement at baptismal services, and the shouting of "hallelujah!" by the newly converted, which had characterized his earlier revivals, were also present in Liverpool.⁶⁰ Furthermore, although Bill did not record "getting the shakes" during his preaching, he did concede that "the Lord came down" and "my soul was filled with the power of the gospel" as "saints rejoiced aloud in god their saviour" and "sinners felt that God was in the place."⁶¹ Angus Gidney, who was present with Bill, recorded that the Holy Spirit came upon new converts as the evangelist

⁵⁸ I. E. Bill to Edward Manning, 29 January 1835, Halifax, N. S., AUA.

⁵⁹ BMM, July, 1836.

⁶⁰ See the outstanding description of one of Bill's baptismal services in Liverpool during the revival in Angus Gidney to Edward Manning, 11 June 1834, Nictaux, NS. AUA.

⁶¹ I. E. Bill, "Revival in Liverpool N. S.," unpublished manuscript. AUA.

baptized them in the name of the “sacred three.”⁶² What was somewhat ironic was that Ingram Bill was converting and baptizing by immersion many people while the vestiges of “pure New Lightism” was passing from Liverpool. The aged John Payzant, the only New Light preacher from the late eighteenth century who did not become a Baptist, died in the summer of 1834, during the revival led by Bill. While Bill disagreed with Payzant’s view that the sacraments were non-essential (a cardinal doctrine of Henry Alline) he did concede that the old Allinite evangelist was “a good minister of Jesus Christ.” Indeed, Bill understood that the remarkable success of his preaching stemmed from the fact that it was sufficiently within the New Light paradigm to trigger a popular response. In fact, the evidence suggests that Bill was a master at helping people to realize that believer’s baptism by immersion was essentially a dramatic representation or re-enactment of the “New Light-New Birth.” So strong did Bill plant this baptismal spirituality among the people of Liverpool, that the anti-immersion preaching efforts of William Elder, the defrocked Baptist-turned-Congregationalist, could not dismantle the work.⁶³ And not only did he just attract former New Lights to the Baptist fold; his logical and scripturally-based sermons also appealed to leading Anglicans in Liverpool.

[Bill] baptized one lady that moves in the first circle . . . She was a subject of the revival last spring, and was much impressed at the time about Baptism, but as she had for many years been connected with the Church of England, she felt the cross to great to leave them; but when I was there last she concluded to break through every opposition, and unite with the Baptists. I trust she will be very useful.⁶⁴

⁶² Angus Gidney to Edward Manning, 11 June 1834, Nictaux, NS. AUA.

⁶³ Several years later, Silas Rand, another leading second-generation preacher, would assume the pastoral care of the Regular Baptists in Liverpool, building upon the foundation laid by Bill. See the very fine biography D. M. Lovesay, To Be A Pilgrim: A Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missionary to the Micmac (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot Press, 1992), p. xv.

⁶⁴ I. E. Bill to Edward Manning, 17 November 1834, Nictaux, NS. AUA.

In 1836, Bill led another revival in Nictaux in which fifty-nine members were added to the church. In May of that year, a member of Bill's congregation wrote the Baptist Missionary Magazine, and reported that a number of well-educated unbelievers were soundly converted under Bill's preaching.

. . . when we see men, whose character is irreproachable, and whose minds have been cultivated by learning, and elevated by philosophy above the influence of superstition, or a susceptibility of fanatical delusion, embrace a belief in a total moral revolution of heart from their own experience [it is clear they cannot] resist the conclusion, that the Holy Ghost has created them anew in Christ Jesus.⁶⁵

It is important to recognize that while Bill was able to appeal to a fairly well-educated audience, he could have just as easily become a revivalist in the tradition of Harris Harding, appealing exclusively to the emotions of people. Edward Manning must have viewed Bill's ministry with satisfaction as he learned of his evangelistic success among both the unlettered and the educated in Nova Scotia.

For Bill, education, far from being a hindrance to the expansion of the Kingdom, was a means for promoting the "Faith of the Fathers." Holding firmly to this conviction, he and his wife encouraged their children to be exposed to as much schooling as possible. Perhaps the best known example was Bill's daughter Mary Ann, who was initially trained in the faith by her mother, attended the school in Nictaux, and then entered the Female Department of the Fredericton Seminary in 1839, under the able direction of "Miss Bennett who had been brought out from England . . . to fill that important position."⁶⁶ During that time in Fredericton, Bill and his wife witnessed the results of their efforts at

⁶⁵ BMM, July 1836.

⁶⁶ I. E. Bill, Memorial Sketch of the Late Mrs. Mary Ann B. McHenry (Saint John, NB: Barnes and Co., 1865), p. 4.

promoting religion in the home. With great pride and obvious emotion, Ingram Bill shared with Edward Manning that

Our little daughter Mary Ann has been baptized and I expect to baptize Asahel next Sabbath. It is most delightful to hear those children speak and pray in the meetings nothing can stand before them. O may they be kept in the narrow path, and prepared for usefulness in the cause of the Redeemer. I never knew untill now what the feelings of a parents heart are when listening to the prayers of their children at the domestick altar and in the solemn assembly.⁶⁷

After a time at the seminary, Mary Ann accompanied her father on a trip to the United States, during which time she was enrolled in the Baptist Seminary at Charleston, and “while pursuing her studies in that excellent institution, she took private lessons of a highly accomplished English lady, in some of the ornamental branches.”⁶⁸ Following her education in Charleston, Mary Ann Bill returned to Nictaux and began the “first Baptist female school of superior type” in Nova Scotia, in the Bill family home. In 1865, it was stated that several of these students “are now filling prominent positions in society, and in this connection exhibit in unmistakable lineaments the impress which they received from their youthful preceptress at Nictaux.”⁶⁹

While Bill’s commitment to women’s education may not have been shared by all, it was fully consistent with his belief that all levels of society should be permeated with converted Regular Baptists in order to expand the Kingdom of God. His view was similar to Tupper’s in that they both contended that women were as responsible to God as men in this regard. Consequently, educational opportunities needed to be made available not just

⁶⁷ I. E. Bill to Edward Manning, 1 March 1840, Fredericton, NB. AUA.

⁶⁸ Bill, Memorial Sketch . . . , p. 4. Two important studies which explore the role of women in education in British North America include Alison Prentice, The School Promoters (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976) and Elizabeth Jane Errington, Wives, Mothers, Schoolmistresses and Scullery Maids: Working Women in Upper Canada, 1790-1840 (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995).

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 4-5.

for men headed for ministry or law, but for women in whatever capacity might be open to them. It would be a mistake, at this point, to paint I. E. Bill as a nineteenth-century ideological liberal. His equalitarianism stemmed from the implications of his experiential piety. Although Mary Ann Bill eventually married and moved to Saint John, her influence, according to I. E. Bill Junior, continued as her former students established similar schools which finally culminated in the erection of Wolfville Seminary.⁷⁰

If Bill's passion for education was evident in his support for his children's learning, it was also seen in his strong support for Horton Academy (1828) and Acadia College (1838), and the Fredericton Seminary (1836).⁷¹ Two years after the New Brunswick Baptist institution was founded, Bill led a revival and canvassed the Fredericton area for funds. Attempting to relieve the Baptists' educational institutions from "crushing debt," he declared in 1841,

... never was there in the history of our churches so pressing a call for mental improvement in our ministers as at the present moment. There are a number of interesting fields of labour left uncultivated . . . because there are not men to be found who are competent to improve them . . . Let us not forget that men are called for who have not only sound heads and sound hearts, but who have also had some opportunities of mental culture . . .⁷²

If revival and prayer improved the "heart," Bill believed education was needed to improve the "head." Religion and education belonged together. His balanced evangelicalism insisted that both the head and heart operate in vital tandem. He was delighted, for example, when

⁷⁰ I. E. Bill, Jr., "A Brief of Biographical Sketch," p. 6.

⁷¹ On the history of Horton Academy and Acadia see Memorials of Acadia College and Horton Academy . . . (Montreal: Dawson Brothers, 1881); B. M. Moody, "The Maritime Baptists and Higher Education: in the Early Nineteenth Century" in B. M. Moody (ed.), Repent and Believe: The Baptist Experience in Maritime Canada (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot Press, 1980); B. M. Moody, "Breadth of Vision, Breadth of Mind: the Baptists and Acadia College", in G. A. Rawlyk (ed.), Canadian Baptists and Christian Higher Education (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988). See also Allison A. Trites, "The New Brunswick Baptist Seminary, 1836 - 1895" in B. M. Moody (ed.), Repent and Believe: The Baptist Experience in Maritime Canada (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot Press, 1980).

revival swept both the Horton and Fredericton campuses in 1841. He recognized that an education that was purely cognitive did little to promote the “holiness of heart and life” and, at the same time, “wild unmeaning enthusiasm” which did little to mold useful Christians.⁷³ Concerning the 1841 revival in Fredericton Church and Seminary, Bill stated with enormous satisfaction:

It has been my lot to witness several religious revivals which were powerful and glorious beyond description, and which were more extensive than the one we now enjoy, in this place; but, I must say, that I have never seen one that was characterized by so small a measure of what might be termed animal excitement, as the present . . . no noise, no confusion, nothing but the most perfect order prevailed.⁷⁴

So successful was the revival that the membership of the Fredericton Baptist Church doubled. That Bill stressed the “order” in this spiritual “outpouring” is not surprising, since the church consciously steered a course in the direction of a formal evangelicalism that deplored the tradition of the New Light impulse found in other churches.⁷⁵ Bill was able to be “all things to all people” in the denomination.

If the 1830s were years of economic and numerical growth for the Regular Baptists, the 1840s were full of anxiety and economic uncertainty, not only for the immersionists, but for the Maritime colonies in general.⁷⁶ During this time of depression, the Baptist Education Society requested Bill to undertake a fundraising tour to the United States, which he accepted in 1844. Determined to sustain the presence of the institutions at Horton and Fredericton as a necessary balance to the Baptists’ evangelical religious culture in 1844, Bill

⁷² *CM*, 12 February 1841.

⁷³ *CM*, 31 August 1834; 30 April 1841.

⁷⁴ *CM*, 30 April 1841.

⁷⁵ See the “Fredericton Regular Baptist Church Record Book” for 1814. AUA.

⁷⁶ T.W. Acheson, “The 1840’s: Decade of Tribulation” in P. A. Buckner and J. G. Reid (eds.), *The Atlantic Region to Confederation: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), pp. 307-332.

embarked on a mission which strangely enough resulted in confirming the nature of his own piety far more than raising money. In a series of letters submitted to the Christian Messenger, he described the academically and economically-advantaged but, spiritually-deficient New England Regular Baptists who gave little to the cause. In New York State, he encountered the millenarian enthusiasm of the Millerites who, through “disorder and confusion, preaching, praying singing, rejoicing, screaming, and blasphemy, all going on at the same time” were prepared to rise at any moment to meet Jesus in the air. They even had “ascension robes” at hand for the apocalyptic event.⁷⁷ In the end, Bill found the Millerites unacceptable, not because of their radical behaviour but because of their heterodox theology, the result, he considered to be of their improper interpretation of the scriptures. If the stoic New England Regular Baptists proved to be an affront to his experiential piety, the Millerites offended his informed orthodoxy.

Undaunted by his lack of success raising funds, Ingram Bill continued on into the southern states, where he found a polite, but a cool welcome from whites who associated his northern accent with the abolitionist cause.⁷⁸ Disillusioned by the bigotry and formality of the southern whites, Bill began to visit black Baptist churches, where he was often accepted and sometimes invited to preach the gospel. Recognizing immediately Bill’s warm evangelical piety and strong emphasis on the New Birth, baptism, and the hope of heaven, they sacrificially gave what they could to support the Baptist educational cause in the distant Maritime colonies.⁷⁹ If the trip to the United States reflects anything about Ingram Bill, it

⁷⁷ CM, 15 November 1844.

⁷⁸ See Bill’s letters in CM, 1 March 1845; 18 April 1845.

⁷⁹ CM, 14 February 1845; 4 April 1845 and Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches, pp. 122 - 124. For a discussion of the African American role in the evangelical tradition, see Milton Sernett, “Black Religion and the Question of Evangelical Identity,” in Donald Dayton and Robert Johnston (eds.), The Variety of American Evangelicalism (Knoxville, Tenn.: University of Tennessee Press, 1991).

suggests that while he had a certain attachment to the respectability-seeking aspirations of his denomination's elite, his faith was still firmly planted in the orthodox revivalistic Christianity of his youth.

Throughout the 1840s, Bill became increasingly effective and comfortable working for the denomination. In 1849, he, along with John Francis,⁸⁰ were sent by Acadia College to raise money for higher education from the Baptists in Britain.⁸¹ Arriving in late November, they canvassed the Baptist and Independent churches in the larger centers with some success.⁸² However, some churches and individuals were unwilling to contribute to a colonial college which still occasionally received grants from the government, a practice which offended the English Baptist strict policy of the separation of church and state. In the spring of 1850 they returned to the Maritimes, and Bill to his Nictaux church, which had seen far too little of him during the previous ten years. Interestingly enough, Bill had felt it necessary to defend his absence to Manning, as early as 1840, even though he had made such an option a condition of his call to the church. In keeping with his worldview, he had pleaded his case which was based on an inward spiritual impression that would have made Harris Harding proud.

I felt that the same hand which rested upon me in Billtown [family home] and made me willing to break away from every tie and leave all to recommend out the Saviour to the lost, was pressing heavily upon my soul to come to Fredericton. It occasioned one of the most painful struggles that I ever endured. Sometimes half consenting to yield to the impression; and then again feeling that I could not. I must not leave those dear people that

⁸⁰ John Francis was also a second generation preacher who died in California in 1885. See E.M. Saunders, History of the Baptists, p.483.

⁸¹ Although many first generation preachers went on preaching trips to escape problems in their churches, there is no evidence that there were any difficulties in the Nictaux church. In fact, it would seem that Bill's ministry was prosperous throughout his time there. Bill's trips to the American South and England were most likely a reflection of his growing importance as a denominational leader and spokesperson.

⁸² Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches, pp. 124 - 126; Bill Jr., "A Brief Biographical Sketch of Rev. I.E. Bill," p. 7.

had grown up under my ministry and whose interests and souls seemed identified with my own . . . let the consequence be what it would, and say to my people . . . if the building up of the cause and the conversion of sinners in this place is any proof that I have walked in the path of duty I must feel that I have . . .⁸³

Relying upon his inward and “divinely inspired” directions, Bill continued to expand the nature of his ministry. No longer just a rural pastor, money raiser, and denominational representative, in 1852, he became an urban pastor of the Germain Street Baptist Church in Saint John, where Charles Tupper had briefly served a decade before. This decision to relocate greatly upset his congregation in Nictaux. In an open letter of explanation to his former church he stated, “I believe that he who first called me to leave my family and have to preach the word of God to perishing sinners, has in his providence called me to another part of his vineyard.”⁸⁴

Given Bill’s abilities and his insightful understanding of his constituency, it is not surprising that he went to an emerging business, cultural, and religious center to carry on his ministry. He assumed also the editorship (occasionally co-editor) of the Christian Visitor in 1853, (after the death of E. D. Very in a tragic boating accident with Professor Chipman and four graduates from Acadia College.) Although he was not college-trained, Bill’s experiences to this point in his life, while unremarkable when compared to those of Charles Tupper, had prepared him well for this position. In the words of historian E. M. Saunders,

Mr. Bill was endowed with more than ordinary gifts. He was naturally ambitious, alert, appreciative, ardent and progressive. The proposal to establish an academy [1828] impressed him as, perhaps, it did not any other young man of his class. His ready memory, keen observations and skill in imitating enabled him to profit personally by all he heard and saw. He was qualified to take every advantage of the changed conditions and altered circumstances in which the denomination found itself . . . in his contact with

⁸³ I. E. Bill to Edward Manning, 1 March 1840, Fredericton, NB. AUA.

⁸⁴ CV, 20 February 1852.

men of learning and culture [he] improved his country dialect, enlarged his vocabulary, and refined and enobled him in all respects.⁸⁵

Saunders might have also stated that Bill was a popular and well known preacher whose understanding of the breadth and variety found in Maritime Regular Baptist piety which made him particularly well suited to the “politically sensitive” position. This “strong progressive, independent and cultured minister” who, by the early 1850s, had reaped the benefits of “college extension,” did not put aside the piety of his youth and early ministry, however. In fact, the “enlargement of his culture” merely opened more doors through which he could propagate the gospel. Very receptive to new ideas and methodologies, he became an avid promoter of temperance, foreign and home missions, public education, and the adaptation of contemporary and innovative approaches to ministry.⁸⁶ In this respect, he resembled Curtis Johnson’s formal evangelicals who were known promoters of consistent doctrine and the “benevolent empire.” However, like Tupper, Bill engaged in voluntary organizations, not to produce “social regeneration,” but to prepare people in society for personal and life-changing conversion. In the words of his eulogist, J. H. Hopper, “In essential creed and church organizations there was in sixty years little change in his belief and practice, but in modification of thought and plan and execution he lived fully abreast of the times through which he passed.”⁸⁷ Bill was content to sustain the “Faith of the Fathers” as his belief system while he explored a variety of new ways to express it.

Bill’s pragmatic approach to the faith was evident in his editorials in the Christian Visitor. Under his direction, it “always had a pronounced evangelical ring, and the peculiar

⁸⁵ Saunders, History of of the Baptists, p. 292.

⁸⁶ Messenger and Visitor, 19 August 1891.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

tenets of the denomination were advocated with consistency and grace.”⁸⁸ Implicit in his career as editor (at least to 1860) is a pronounced commitment to post-millennial notions of progress. Building on the denomination’s ideas of the Baptist millennium expressed in the 1820s and 1830s, he broadened his view to include all of western civilization. He adhered to a general concept of progress that rested on the accumulation of knowledge, and the potential for humans to improve politically and economically through its dissemination. He believed God had created human beings with “faculties” constituted “to retain all the experience of past ages,” and a thrust to “delve into the yet unexplored, and bring to light the secrets that he [God] hid in the chambers of mystery.” “Enlightenment” through education, whether formal or informal, as in a religious newspaper, was crucial for genuine progress, because virtue was based on knowledge; “depraved” notions were rooted in “ignorance and superstition.” Consequently, as knowledge expanded, so did virtue and progress.⁸⁹ Educating the reading public through the Messenger and Visitor, then, became another way Bill expressed his passion for general education, as he had continued to do for family, women’s and college education.

According to Bill, the accumulation of knowledge was itself important, regardless of who discovered it, because all truth was God’s truth. In fact, he believed that it was the role of the Christian thinker to appropriate truth, regardless of its origin. “All things are being made to work together for good to the cause of Christianity. Even the ‘godless’ thinkers of the Enlightenment had been unknowingly inspired by the ‘author of all truth.’”

Truly has God caused the wrath of man to praise him, for Gibbon, and Hume, and Voltaire, and Boliugbrock, and Rosseau [sic], and Paine have each added something to the general stock of knowledge. Unwittingly and

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

reluctantly though it was, they each cast their intellectual treasures at the foot of the cross, and paid an unwilling tribute to the Man of Calvary.⁹⁰

Bill was convinced, as a progressive post-millennialist, that all new discoveries about reality would harmonize with “the truths of the Bible.” The scriptures, he believed, were perfect and consistent in every way.

The role of Christians, therefore, was to understand and integrate all truth so that divine order, will, and purpose might be seen. As the replication of “apostolic” or “Primitive Christianity,” many Baptists believed they were in the vanguard of this purposeful interpretive process. They, more than any other group or generation, were responsible in this regard because they had “more intelligence [data] and more light.”⁹¹ Bill also believed that Christians seeking to reform society should be encouraged by the increase in knowledge which would surely lead to virtue. Thus, reformist activities needed to possess a strongly pedagogical dimension which was most often expressed in the explosion of publications beginning in the 1840s.⁹²

It should be stressed, though, that Bill clearly did not articulate a kind of orthodoxy accommodated to the spirit of the age. Even at the end of his life, he maintained the centrality of the “New Birth” in all Christian endeavours. Maintaining his propensity for a balanced evangelicalism, as editor of the Messenger and Visitor, he warned against both an easy-believism that was emotionally-based and a scholastic form of Christianity that merely stressed “right thinking.” For Bill, a truly regenerated Christian sustained a balanced constancy in “religious sentiments, feelings and practice.”⁹³ In part, he was responding to a

⁹⁰ CV, 28 October 1853.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² D. C. Harvey, “Newspapers of Nova Scotia, 1840 - 1867” Dalhousie Review 28(1945): 279-301.

⁹³ Ibid.

changing understanding of conversion, which tended to say that one was “saved” if one gave cognitive assent to the atonement and resurrection, or that one was regenerate if one felt an emotional tug on the “heart” during an evangelistic sermon. Rejecting these ideas that promoted a kind of “cultural Christianity,” Bill educated his readers about religious “stability.”

The religion of the cross is not a fitful impulse, but a stable impression,-not a flight of the imagination, but a sober reality-it is not the result of excited feelings merely; In regeneration it takes its seat in man's soul, and hence forth directs his footsteps in obedience to truth. It blesses man with a conscience that is quick to decide between truth and error holiness and sin. It is one thing to be enlightened, and another thing to be truly converted-one thing to be seriously impressed and another thing to be saved. The religion of too many in our day is like the overflowing, of a freshet, that rushes on like an impetuous torrent for a short period, and then passes away; but the religion of the Bible is like a noble river, that takes its rise in a living spring in you mountain cliff, and in its smooth meanderings through the lonely vale enriches all its banks and clothes them in beauteous green.⁹⁴

Bill's “stabilized” evangelicalism called for an integration of fervent revivalistic piety, and the reasoned biblicism so pronounced in Edward Manning. The flexibility of this hybrid allowed him to enlist a variety of “new” practices in ministry so that progress might continue.

One example among many was Bill's entry into the debate over church music in the 1850s -- dramatically played out in Harding's church during the same time. The traditionalists in Regular Baptist churches had resisted the introduction of musical instruments into the worship services, preferring instead to sing the hymns of Watts and Henry Alline unaccompanied. As training and musical programs improved generally in society, pressure came to bear on pastors to include the “new” developments in their churches' worship life. Those opposed to such innovations argued vociferously that the

⁹⁴ CV, 28 October 1853.

human voice was the only proper instrument to be used in the worship of God, since it was made by the Almighty himself. Musical instruments were but cheap and imperfect imitations of that which was divinely made.

Ingram Bill, always open to new ideas and practices which would not comprise the “Faith of the Fathers,” suggested that while the perfection of the human voice was unrivaled, it might be “properly blended” with musical instruments to “produce a delightful harmony” which was the “soul of all music.” Furthermore, the acceptability to God of any worship, whether in voice or through instrument, depended “entirely on the spirit” in which it was offered to God. Since music in its many forms was universally present among all peoples of the world, Bill reasoned

The question for the church to decide is shall we have it associated with the debasing influences of the theatre, the ball-rooms and the low dram shop, or shall we have it imbued with the everlasting, enobling and purifying influences of the religion of the Bible?⁹⁵

Consistent with his progressive Christian worldview, Bill sought to reclaim and “baptize” in Christian principles those dimensions of society which could be used to advance the “Kingdom of God.” If music could be introduced in worship services, and assist in communicating the gospel to “sinners” and uplifting the “saints,” then it should not be allowed to rest solely in the hands of “Satan.”⁹⁶

Bill remained convinced throughout his lifetime that his denomination must not adopt anything that would violate the balanced evangelicalism which the two first generations had laboured so hard to forge. Perhaps better than anyone else of his generation, he understood the necessity of holding the experiential-revivalistic ethos of the

⁹⁵ See CV, 30 March 1849; 22 July 1857; CM, 22 March 1855.

⁹⁶ Consult the following, Horton Davies, Worship and Theology in England: From Watts and Wesley to Maurice, 1690-1850 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961); Phyllis Blakeley, “Music in Nova Scotia 1605-1867” Dalhousie Review 3 (1951): 99-101, 223-230.

late eighteenth century in tension with the gains made in the areas of education, temperance, publishing, and denomination-building. Not surprisingly, he was a valued friend of a number of Baptist Patriarchs, the emerging Baptist elites in Halifax in the 1820s, and in Saint John and Fredericton in the 1840s; and the grassroots which clung tightly to its New Light Baptist spirituality. As the key exponent of a truly balanced and malleable Baptist piety, he expressed dimensions of both the formal and antiformal approaches to evangelicalism. In this way, he personified the wide-ranging and often conflicting aspirations of a denomination seeking to articulate an identity that was based largely on revivalistic principles, tempered with an orderly biblicism. Quite simply, he exemplified the "Faith of the Fathers." Indeed, the accommodating and irenic evangelicalism of the Maritime Baptists, which endures to the present day, can be attributed, at least in part, to the path forged by Ingram Ebenezer Bill. He was without doubt a "Son of the Fathers."

Chapter Eight

Samuel Elder: A Formal and Genteel Evangelical Ministry¹

“Was ever a ministry more barren than mine?”² This was the self-critical and searching question which Samuel Elder asked himself on 27 July 1851. Only thirty-four years of age and, dying of consumption, Elder had laboured since 1845 as the minister of the Regular Baptist church in Fredericton. A graduate of Acadia College and a member of the second generation of Regular Baptist ministers, he represented the formal “genteel” evangelicalism of a growing Maritime Baptist urban elite at mid-century.³ His sense of failure was rooted in a conflict between his desire to replicate the revivalistic Christianity of his youth and his “professionalized” understanding of a pastoral ministry which was anti-emotional, orderly, respectable, and grounded in a classical education.⁴ To a greater extent than Charles Tupper and Ingram Bill, Samuel Elder embodied the ministerial ideals of the Halifax clique of Anglicans-turned-Baptists who dominated Horton Academy and Acadia College until the 1850s. In some ways, Elder looked to members of this elite, men such as E. A. Crawley, John Fergusson and J. W. Johnstone and not the “Fathers.” And Elder’s

¹ The Samuel Elder Diary is located in two repositories. “Samuel Elder Diary,” 15 November 1847 - 7 September 1848; 13 May 1851 - 8 December 1851 are in the Acadia University Archives, Wolfville, N. S. “Samuel Elder Diary”, 9 September 1848 - 2 February 1849 is in the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick. This rich source for Elder’s life is comprehensive for the period covered in this chapter. Hereafter the dates of the diary alone will be cited. No secondary literature exists on Elder.

² Elder Diary, 27 July 1851.

³ For the Halifax scene consult Philip G. A. [Griffin-] Allwood, “First Baptist Church, Halifax: its Origin and Early Years” (M. Div. Thesis Acadia University, 1978). For Saint John consult The History of German Street Baptist Church . . . 1810-1910 (Saint John, NB: Saint John Globe., 1910).

⁴ R. D. Gidney and W. P. J. Millar in their Professional Gentlemen: The Professions in nineteenth-Century Ontario (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), p. 5, argue that a classical college education was necessary for one to be a true professional. In this regard Elder was one of the very few Maritime Regular Baptist ministers of his day who had such an education. As has been discussed, Charles Tupper was unable to achieve the status of the genteel professional, because he lacked the necessary formal education, though it is unlikely he would have wanted such a designation.

ministry, while perhaps demonstrating the difficulty – even the futility – of trying to establish a genteel professional ministry during his lifetime, nevertheless pointed to an ideal that would become popular in urban areas during the second half of the nineteenth century.⁵

For Samuel Elder and many other Regular Baptists, this did not mean, however, that one completely rejected the New light tradition,⁶ even if its emotional and behavioural excesses had been almost completely exorcised. Although Elder never articulated fully the “Faith of the Fathers,” ironically he probably understood the tradition of the “Patriarchs” better than anyone else of his generation. It was his profound understanding of Regular Baptist piety, together with his inability to lead revivals effectively, which was in part responsible for the inner turmoil he suffered throughout his ministry. In fact, it will be argued that Samuel Elder’s life and ministry were defined by the tension between the antiformal religion of his youth and the ordered and “genteel” evangelicalism he embraced as an adult.

Samuel Elder was born in Halifax on 6 February 1817, to William and Elizabeth Fraile Elder. At that time William Elder, while working on the port docks, came under the preaching influence of John Burton, who served a largely black Baptist congregation in the city. Soon after his conversion, William Elder felt called to preach and relocated to Bridgetown, Annapolis County, where he served for more than a decade.⁷ Religion played a prominent role in Elder’s early life, in much the same way it did with Charles Tupper and

⁵ This point is made by R.D. Gidney and W.P.J. Millar in their *Professional Gentlemen* and by T.W. Acheson, *Saint John: The Making of A Colonial Urban Community* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985). It seems probable that many urban Protestant ministers in the Maritimes by mid-century were generally perceived as genteel professionals.

⁶ G.A. Rawlyk, *The Canada Fire: Radical Evangelicalism in British North America, 1775-1812* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University press, 1994), pp. 1-18.

Ingram Bill. Many years later, Elder recalled with great emotion his mother's "sincere and earnest piety."

I remember most clearly how she trained me when a child to read the hymns of Watts for children, and to commit them to memory. From her lips I first heard them and they easily imprinted themselves upon my mind. I have not forgotten them. I seem now to see her as in those early days when she would draw my brother and myself to her side and sing some of the most select of the Divine songs. Her voice is yet in my ear. She also taught me to read, and I could manage to read a chapter in the N. Testament before I went to school. Nor was she contented with our being able to read the sacred word; she explained its truths and endeavoured to impress them upon our hearts.⁷

Elder regarded his mother's religious instruction and piety to be central to his own spirituality. The experience of singing children's hymns, reading Bible stories, listening to exhortations to be converted and live a moral life, and observing his mother's example blended together to provide many of the necessary emotional and theological bases for conversion. Even though his father was often occupied with teaching school and blacksmithing to supplement the meager income he received from his church, William Elder, too, provided spiritual leadership in the home. Samuel Elder recalled "the domestic devotions of past years" in which his father "read the word of God and we all gathered around the altar of prayer while he offered up our united thanksgiving and supplications."⁸ Having, himself, been raised in the Reformed tradition, William Elder believed, like the parents of I.E. Bill and Charles Tupper, and other Maritime Regular Baptists, that family religion was a crucial element to the rhythm of life. This stress on the importance of

⁷ Franklyn Hicks, "Elder, William" in *DCB* 8(1988): 271-273.

⁸ "Elder Diary," 26 May 1851. See also the entries for 31 October 1848 and 2 November 1848.

⁹ "Elder Diary," 21 July 1848; 15 December 1848. See also the memoir of Elder written by Charles Spurden in the *CY*, 6 August 1852.

children and families in evangelical religion significantly shaped Samuel Elder's ministry; in his later years, he became a passionate exponent of Sabbath Schools.¹⁰

As a child and adolescent attending school under the careful instruction of a Mr. Andrew Henderson, it became clear that Samuel Elder was especially gifted intellectually. "Thirsting for information and ardent in the pursuit of knowledge, he stood foremost among his school-fellows." Indeed, it was noted by Charles Spurden, Elder's biographer, that "his very boyhood gave promise of those fruits of genius and talent which his riper years fully realized."¹¹ Although Elder's extant diaries and biography do not explore his teen years, it is very likely that even though he excelled intellectually, this period of his life was filled with strife because of his father's involvement in the baptismal controversy. Samuel Elder was six in 1823, when his father wrote the first Baptist response in the baptismal debate, defending adequately the position of the immersionists. Samuel Elder was a vulnerable seventeen year old in 1834, when his father renounced his formerly-held Baptist position and embraced pedobaptist principles, and was unceremoniously ejected from the Baptist association in disgrace.¹² The stress and crisis caused by his father's change in religious sentiments and the family's persistent poverty probably raised serious questions in Samuel's teenage mind about the efficacy of organized religion. Although the evidence is sketchy, it would seem that Samuel Elder may have either followed his father and the family when they relocated to the South Shore of Nova Scotia, or remained in the Annapolis

¹⁰ Consult the articles on "Sabbath Schools" in C.V., from 13 April 1849- 18 January 1856.

¹¹ Ibid. , 6 August 1852.

¹² For the details on William Elder's involvement in the baptismal controversy consult chapter IV.

Valley with relatives. Certainly, by 1838, Samuel Elder had begun to teach school in Pleasant Valley, Cornwallis Township.¹³

By the time he became a teacher, Samuel Elder had come to despise the Baptists. From his perspective, they had treated his father badly and forced him to supplement his income from preaching by working in the “secular world” which had made him frequently absent from home. Samuel’s cynicism combined with his keen mind prompted him to reject vital, conversionist Christianity. His obituary writer recorded

. . . the decided manner in which he held the doctrine of universal salvation fortified him against any other reception of Christ, than that which he had already given to him, for why need he deny himself and forsake all to follow the Saviour, when his safety was as secure (according to the views he then held) as the death of Christ could render it.¹⁴

Even if he had been open to evangelical Christianity at this point in his life, Samuel Elder would not have considered uniting with the Baptists because of what he considered to be their “ignorance and contractedness of view, the[ir] weakness of mind, and faults of character.”¹⁵ Nevertheless, the early religious teaching of his mother persisted and he came to understand the biblical concepts of moral responsibility and hell through a careful reading of the scriptures. Then, his biographer noted, during the winter of 1838-39 “it pleased God to promote a powerful revival of religion in connexion with the Baptist Church at Cornwallis.” During the “earlier part of these meetings,” Samuel Elder’s

mind was powerfully exercised by invisible realities; the hand of God had touched him, strange terrors shook his soul; the struggle between the powers of darkness and light commenced in his mind; unable to bear the conflict alone, and craving relief for his troubled spirit, he rose up, at one of he

¹³ C.V., 6 August 1852. This period of Samuel Elder’s life is sketchy. However, it is possible that Elder remained in the care of his father’s brother Samuel Elder, who lived in Cornwallis.

¹⁴ Ibid., 6 August 1852.

¹⁵ Ibid.

public meetings, and in the midst of the congregation, besought with impressive voice, deep solemnity of manner and subdued feelings of heart, the prayers of God's people on his behalf.¹⁶

Those present at this revival meeting were amazed to see one of their church's greatest detractors and critics requesting prayer for his troubled and unconverted soul. Bowed "in soul before God, and seeking the sympathy of the once despised Baptists," Samuel Elder was converted and this permanently altered the course of his life. After relating publicly his new-found faith, the following day, on 5 January 1839, he was baptized by William Chipman. His own soul searching had combined with the excitement of revival to create an atmosphere in which Elder was prepared to humble himself before God and a denomination he had scorned.¹⁷ Ironically, even though Elder was converted in the midst of revival he would never lead one himself. Charles Tupper on the other hand, who had not been converted during a revival, did eventually direct an "awakening." Clearly, although having been converted and exposed to "religious outpourings" were important factors in becoming an effective revivalist, such experiences, or lack thereof, did not guarantee evangelistic success in ministry.

Throughout the 1830s, Samuel Elder was also significantly influenced, spiritually, by his relationship with William Chipman. A devoted Calvinist, Chipman was a reasoned and often solemn preacher who was suspicious of excessive emotionalism in religion. In the words of his friend Ingram Bill, "He never dreamed of shaping his preaching so as to tickle the ears of his hearers or please their fancy."¹⁸ Far from being a popular preacher, Chipman's ministry was characterized by routine, hard work, and denominational loyalty, all

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.* Also consult the Cornwallis Baptist Church Records for the years 1838-1839.

¹⁸ I. E. Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches (Saint John, NB: Barnes and Co., 1880), pp. 251-261,264.

of which came to characterize Samuel Elder's career.¹⁹ Elder recalled in later years Chipman's "kindness . . . in getting me appointed teacher of the District School [before his conversion], and afterward watched over me even as a father his child."²⁰ It had been the Cornwallis pastor who had been instrumental in Elder's

. . . first awakenings to a sense of my condition as a lost sinner, my alternate relapses into indifference and renewed convictions, the religious meetings which I first attended from curiosity and afterwards from strong desire, - my struggles with sin, my fears and regrets, my tears and prayers; - the hope and peace and joy that broke upon my soul like the dawn of a new and glorious day; my baptism, union with the Church, and happy fellowship with the people of God;²¹

Elder's conversion and church membership occurred during a time in the denomination's history when there were many preachers who could lead revivals, but still relatively few men of his intellectual ability and academic potential. Consequently, when Elder expressed his longing to become a preacher, shortly after his conversion, his pastor and church were supportive. Chipman immediately provided opportunities for the new convert to exhort, pray publicly and preach.²² Those who witnessed his early ministerial efforts became convinced he should enter the pastorate. Since Elder was especially gifted intellectually, he immediately contemplated attending the recently-founded Acadia College. This was still an unusual route to the ministry because many Regular Baptists were

¹⁹ Although William Chipman was fairly close in age to some of the "Fathers," he was not considered to be a "Patriarch," because he entered ministry in the 1820s along with I.E. Bill and others. Chipman was a long-time parishioner of Manning and was an active lay preacher for many years before his ordination in 1829. See E.M. Saunders, History of the Baptists of the Maritime Provinces (Halifax, NS: John Burgoyne, 1902), p. 476.

²⁰ "Elder Diary," 7 September 1848.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches, p. 306; "Elder Diary," 7 September 1848; CV, 13 August 1852.

suspicious of higher education, believing that it undermined genuine piety.²³ Nevertheless, for Elder

. . . an ardent thirst for knowledge was combined with a desire more efficiently to glorify the Saviour in the proclamation of the Gospel, and exercised its share in impelling him to devote a portion of time to study, before entering upon the public stated ministration of the word.²⁴

Edward Manning may have encouraged Samuel Elder to attend the Horton institution. In 1840, Elder chose Acadia, however, and graduated four years later.²⁵

During Elder's first two years at Acadia, Horton Township was in the midst of a revival which affected many Academy and College students.²⁶ Thus, when Elder entered the College, it paradoxically represented both the elitist, urban, respectability-seeking perspective of the Granville Street Baptist Church as well as the grassroots revivalist ethos of the denomination. Although a direct connection between the early years of Acadia and Samuel Elder's worldview is impossible to identify, given the available evidence, it would seem that professors John Pryor and Isaac Chipman were particularly influential. John Pryor, an Anglican-turned-Baptist from Halifax, represented his clique's ideal of the "genteel" urban minister whose rank in society was equal to that of any cleric in the established church or those in other professions such as lawyers and physicians.²⁷ Isaac L.

²³ Consult Barry M. Moody, "Breadth of Vision, Breadth of Mind: The Baptists and Acadia College" in G.A. Rawlyk (ed.), Canadian Baptists and Christian Higher Education (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), pp. 3-30.

²⁴ CV, 13 August 1852.

²⁵ Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches, p. 306.

²⁶ J. M. Cramp, "Sketches of the Religious History of Acadia College and Horton Collegiate Academy" in Memorials of Acadia College and Horton Academy (Montreal: Dawson Brothers, 1881), p. 46.

²⁷ I am using the word "genteel" to denote the refined, elegant politeness which characterized the urban Baptist elite in Halifax and Saint John. It is not used in its current derogatory or humorous sense. See also E. Brooks Holifield, The Gentlemen Theologians: American Theology in Southern Culture, 1795-1860 (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1978), pp. 36-50. Holifield links education and the urban environment with gentility.

Chipman, a student of Horton Academy in its early days and later a graduate of the Waterville College in Maine, embodied, perhaps even more than Pryor, the aspirations and approach that came to characterize Samuel Elder. Under his tutelage, Elder studied mathematics and the natural sciences which continued to interest him long after his graduation.²⁸ It is not surprising that I. E. Bill's assessment of Isaac Chipman could apply equally to Samuel Elder. "He was always in his element when surrounded with books; and by a close and careful reading of the best works he kept himself fully abreast of his age."²⁹

During his four years of college, Elder preached in the Horton-Cornwallis area and as far away as Halifax. The Granville Street Baptist Church found Elder's preaching to be acceptable and promising. While I.E. Bill had proven in 1838 to be an able interim preacher for the Halifax congregation, Elder possessed the classical education necessary to be a "genteel" urban pastor.³⁰ Elder represented the kind of minister the Halifax clique hoped would come to dominate the denomination. Far from the self-taught fishermen-farmers-turned-ministers who served most of the churches, Samuel Elder spoke with clarity, reserve, and polish, and peppered his sermons with classical illustrations.

He himself, without any additional training might have made a very respectable preacher, but he could scarcely have excelled as he did in the felicitous choice of words, the transparent clearness of language, the exquisite finish of his sentences, the variety of expression, the beauty and delicacy of imagery, which combined to render his preaching attractive to all, but especially so to the educated and refined.³¹

²⁸ E. A. Crawley, "The Rise and Progress of Higher Education in Connection with the Baptist Denomination in the Maritime Provinces" in Memorials of Acadia College and Horton Academy (Montreal: Dawson Brothers, 1881), p. 38.

²⁹ Bill, Fifty Years with the Ministers and Churches, p. 736.

³⁰ It should also be noted that Charles Tupper not only lacked a formal college education, his rejection of the "genteel" professional minister model automatically disqualified him from finding acceptance among the Halifax clique, although there is no evidence that he longed for such acceptance.

³¹ CV, 13 August 1852.

Indeed, Samuel Elder's "heros of the faith" were not Edward Manning, Joseph Crandall, or T. H. Chipman; rather they were his teachers at Acadia, and Edmund A. Crawley of Granville Street. Crawley's polished sermons and professional demeanor inspired Elder, who recorded in his diary, "I always feel a reverent sentiment towards him [Crawley] as towards a parent."³²

Upon graduation, Samuel Elder was faced with the very difficult challenge of finding a church to serve. It would seem that Baptist churches in the mid-1840s were located in primarily rural areas where an "educated ministry" was considered suspect if not completely evil. Furthermore, even the few urban churches in the denomination were divided on the issue of whether a pastor should be educated and genteel, or an enthusiastic revivalist trained by the Holy Spirit alone. Elder was known, in some circles, as "a metaphysical preacher whose profound speculations were far beyond the range of ordinary intellects."³³ While his reputation may not have been fully deserved, the evidence suggests that Elder always took a scholarly approach. Therefore, at his graduation in 1844 there were very few churches that were open to having him as their settled pastor. In fact, he waited almost an entire year before the Regular Baptist church in Fredericton, New Brunswick, invited him to preach during the summer of 1845. During these weeks, Elder proved that he was an able preacher and caring pastor.³⁴ Consequently, he was called to be the church's pastor and ordained on 9 November 1845.³⁵

This Fredericton church had a long history of distancing itself from the New Light origins of the Regular Baptists and setting a course to achieve acceptability within the

³² "Elder Diary," 26 June 1848.

³³ CV, 13 August 1852.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

society of the province's capital. Closely associated with the denomination's Fredericton Seminary, which provided a basic post-secondary education for men and women, the church wanted to have a minister who was as well educated and "cultured" as the institution's principal, the British-born and trained Charles Spurden.³⁶ If Elder and some of the Fredericton Church had reservations about Samuel becoming pastor, both sides recognized that it was a marriage of convenience, if not necessity, since the church had unsuccessfully searched for a "suitable" minister and, Elder had not been able to find a congregation to serve.³⁷

During his first several months as a settled minister, Elder came to appropriate the example set for him by William Chipman during his early adulthood in Cornwallis. A letter to him by Elder, dated 8 May 1846, reveals the extent to which the young struggling preacher was indebted to the unlettered pastor.

I see that it was a merciful dispensation that placed me under the teachings of a pastor qualified to instruct, strengthen, and comfort his flock, by a judicious and clear exhibition of scriptural truth. It is a source of sincere gratification to my mind that my labours in the pulpit and elsewhere, are in accordance to some considerable extent, I trust, with the truth as it is in Jesus; and that this arises from "the form of sound words" which I was taught to hold fast by my former Pastor.³⁸

While Elder was enamoured with the genteel professionalism of people such as E. A. Crawley, he owed much of his success as a minister to the grassroots' evangelicalism of his

³⁵ "Fredericton Regular Baptist Church Records," in A. U. A. Consult entries for January 1845 and November 1845.

³⁶ For a basic summary see A. A. Trites, "The New Brunswick Baptist seminary, 1836-1895" in B. M. Moody (ed.), Repent and Believe: The Baptist Experience in Maritime Canada (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot press, 1980), pp. 103-123.

³⁷ CY, 13 August 1852.

³⁸ Ibid.

youth. And the tension between his rural Baptist piety and the urban formal evangelicalism to which he aspired was a defining mark of his ministry and spirituality.

Although Samuel Elder was by temperament an intensely private and reserved person (even in his own diary entries), the nature of his inner spiritual life is still discernible. Consistent with the practice of Edward Manning and other "Patriarchs," Elder often expressed the state of his soul's struggle in verse. As a student at Acadia, he had been well known for his two "poetical productions" entitled "The Exodus" and "The Captivity."³⁹ Elder was especially attracted to the metaphors provided by nature as a way of expressing the state of his soul. Often bordering on pantheism, he found in creation not only the "order" and "rhythm" he longed to see in church life, but also the conflict and turmoil he experienced in his own life. In his "Address to the Sea," which he wrote en route to Cape Breton in 1848 to visit his parents, Elder declared:

O mighty Ocean!
I feel, I feel thy power;
My spirit with the motion
Of thy strong-heaving breast
Seems in its height to tower
And proudly lifts its crest
As if to touch the sky
There is a gleam heroic in mine eye
And in my heart a monarch's conscious sway,-
A feeling that I could command
The force of mightiest energies,
Call forth the tempest on his way,
And bid his gloomy wings expand,
And roll the thunder through the skies
I cannot curb the sense
Of greatness that upbears the soul:-
A power as of Ominipotence
Sways me with irresistible controul,
As the moon rules thy tide.
Laying her silver rein
On its green neck that curves with pride

³⁹ Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches, p. 309.

And tosses its bright move, -
 So doth the spirit of thy mightiness
 Its force upon me lay -
 Not with a weakening & subduing stress
 But with exalting sway.
 Is it idolatry,
 To feel as I do now,
 As thro' the mist heaves high and free
 Thy billow's foam-wreathed brow?
 To listen to the break
 And dash of battling seas
 As flashing they shake
 Their white plumes in the breeze,-
 And in my spirit hear a voice
 That shouts amid the waves - "rejoice"?⁴⁰

Reflecting the Romanticism of the nineteenth century, this poem places Elder on the ocean, not as a mere observer of nature, but as one who feels spiritually empowered to the point of "feeling that I could command/ The force of mightiest energies,/Call forth the tempest on his way,/ And bid his gloomy wings expand,/ And roll the thunder through the skies." While most of his colleagues no doubt experienced transcendence and spiritual power in the midst of revival services, Elder turned to nature, which declared to him the greatness and majesty of God. In verse and poetic prose, he could abandon his commitment to a privatized and non-emotional faith to release the flood of his anxious or joyous soul. The rocks, trees, sky and water of any locality had the potential to speak directly to him. On one occasion he recorded how overcome he was at the sight of a spring day in 1848. His mind then focused upon one specific tree. "What an exquisite creature of God is a tree! How it moves in its grace and light and loveliness like a living thing! How it drinks in the dew, the rain, the brightness which he sheds upon it! O that it were a true image of my soul."⁴¹ If nature was not an extension of God for Elder, it was surely a "means of grace and

⁴⁰ "Elder Diary," 14 July 1848.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 6 June 1848.

revelation” from which he learned lessons for living and believing. Recognizing that his poetic outpourings might be charged with heterodoxy, he ended one piece on the northern lights with,

O let me ne'er with atheists eye
Survey this fair wondrous earth
Thy works admire, and yet deny
The god that gave them birth,
But may I still behold thy name
Inscribed an all this wondrous frame⁴²

Writing verse and prose allowed Elder to express his often intense religious experience privately, away from public view. In fact, the writing of verse and prose seems to have fulfilled the role of publicly testifying to God's favour and one's spiritual development, which characterized the monthly conference meetings in the region's Regular Baptist churches, and was a continuation of the "testimony service" of the late eighteenth century revivalistic tradition. Elder insisted that all public meetings be conducted in an orderly fashion with emotional restraint. He differed somewhat from Ingram Bill and Charles Tupper in that he tolerated little, if any, emotional expression in worship services. While Tupper and Bill desired to lead "orderly" meetings, a public display of emotion did not necessarily mean or lead to disorder. Elder, on the other hand, advocated a largely privatized faith and orderly worship. Although Elder certainly had no difficulty in speaking in public, he saw little advantage to expressing emotions through the tears, cries and groans still commonplace at mid-century. Religious feelings were to be internalized, or at least tightly controlled. Passionate outbursts in church meetings, even during revivals, were an affront to Elder's formal evangelicalism and commitment to order.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 17 November 1848.

In too many parts of the country religion assumes a passionate, excitable and fitful character, without showing much evidence of mental culture or of steady religious principle. It is the more pleasing therefore when we find a group of disciples who are manifestly not only growing in grace but also in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.⁴³

Elder was convinced that divinely-assisted self control was the necessary key for stable and lasting growth for his church and denomination. Although converted in the 1838-39 revival in Cornwallis, he was suspicious of the emotionalism which he believed so clouded the judgment of people that they substituted religious feeling for conversion and dedication to living a new life. For Elder, ecstasy and heart-wrenching exhortations were not the lasting building blocks of evangelical Baptist religion. For example, in his role as pastoral care giver to those who were ill, he remarked "it is not what escapes from the lips of the dying that gives me hopes of their salvation, but the fruits of righteousness exhibited in their life."⁴⁴ While still very much a conversionist, Samuel Elder wanted to see evidence beyond religious experience that a spiritual transformation had actually taken place in a person's life. The necessary proof was to be found in a holy life based upon Christian moral principles. In this regard, Elder was not unlike Charles Tupper who also was more satisfied with what he considered to be a consistent, orderly pious Christian life, as opposed to religious emotional abandon. However, even Tupper accepted genuine expressions of the moving of the Holy Spirit in revival. His objection to uncontrolled emotion was that faith had to be informed and given substance through biblical understanding, not just religious experience. However, when compared to Harris Harding and Ingram Bill, Samuel Elder's approach to the "Faith of the Fathers" was a radical departure.

⁴³ Ibid., 3 January 1848.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 12 June 1851.

Elder believed that the traditional emotionalism displayed in Regular Baptist revivals weakened the churches, instead of bringing vital spiritual strength. For example, in June 1851, Elder attended a discouraging association meeting in Annapolis in which the reports indicated that many churches were in spiritual decline.⁴⁵ He recorded:

I was disappointed at these results, -- for it is only a year or two since the whole district of the Central Association seemed flooded with the spirit of revival, and hundreds professed conversion. There are solemn doubts attending these excitements of the churches which we call Revivals. An awful deadness follows them -- creating the suspicion that excitement was little else than unwholesomeness elation of natural passions.⁴⁶

It would be a mistake to assume that Samuel Elder was not open to revival. In fact, the contrary was true. He longed for revival to come to his church, recognizing "I must become an instrument far better adopted to the winning of souls to him."⁴⁷ However, Elder's models or heroes of the faith (John Pryor, E.A. Crawley and William Chipman) had not been effective revivalists. Consequently, his understanding of the appropriateness of emotion in evangelical Christianity tended to make impotent his efforts to spark revival. Consequently, he became anxious in the early years of his ministry because people were not being converted, which meant his church was not growing. Given the success-driven and convert-counting orientation of evangelicals in general, and the Regular Baptists in particular, Elder was in a dilemma. He prayed:

Make me a true minister of the gospel, a servant of Christ, and then for his sake grant me the blessed reward of winning even one soul to him. O Lord I ask not for distinguished success. To be employed by thee in leading one

⁴⁵ In 1846 the two associations, one for New Brunswick the other for Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island merged to form a convention comprised of a number of smaller associations. See George E. Levy, The Baptists of the Maritime Provinces 1853-1946 (Saint John, NB: Barnes-Hopkins, 1946), pp. 151-174.

⁴⁶ "Elder Diary," 21 June 1851.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 6 April 1848.

spirit from the path of the destroyer, and guiding it to the way of life, were an infinite favour. O Lord! for Christ's sake, thus bless me!⁴⁸

Consistent with his analytical, if occasionally romantic, mind Elder tried to understand the basic principles of revival so that he might modify and use them in his own ministry. In March of 1848, he visited the Saint John area which was experiencing revival. He noted that "No more interesting study can present itself than that of a human soul in its struggles to escape from the power of sin and from the wrath to come." Nevertheless, he had to admit that he felt "as a child ignorant and untrained in these important things."⁴⁹ In a way reminiscent of Charles Finney, Samuel Elder believed that revival was a matter of understanding "the workings of the mind under the force of religious convictions," and the necessary "influences" to bring about conversion.⁵⁰ He reasoned that if the basic elements of conversion and revival could be "scientifically" identified, they could be applied anywhere, even in his rather formal Fredericton church.

Elder was enamoured with those conversions which seemed to embody a reasoned, heart-felt, yet controlled, response to the gospel. During a return trip from Cape Breton in September 1848, he encountered two school chums on the steamer, Henry and Arthur Crawley, sons of Edmund Crawley, the preacher who had inspired Elder to become a "genteel" professional minister. Crawley's sons had been converted during a revival at Acadia several months previous.

I was curious and anxious to observe their characters closely, to discover the evidences of the gracious change they have undergone. From previous acquaintance with them, I thought they were of a class of minds not easily

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 3 April 1848.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 27 March 1848.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* See a Charles Finney, Lectures on Revivals of Religion, William G. McLoughlin (ed.), (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960).

to be subjugated by the gospel, but if brought under its influence likely to remain steadfast.

It was with more than ordinary pleasure, therefore, that I discovered in the frank and unaffected account which they gave of their religious experience, and in their department-convincing testimony of their having been born again.⁵¹

Even if Elder attempted to remove emotional excesses in the “Faith of the Fathers,” he was nevertheless an avid advocate for his denomination’s central and most sacred ritual. Samuel Elder probably understood the social and cultural meaning of believers’ baptism by immersion better than anyone of his generation. Although he had few converts in his ministry, he cherished those occasions when he immersed them in outdoor baptismal services. His first such service took place on 2 October 1848. It was preceded by “feelings of mingled desire and anxiety: desire to discharge a high and holy service; anxiety, lest through inexperience I should fail to perform it in a becoming manner.” In this dramatic ritualization of the New Birth experience, Elder believed “the faithful minister of Christ has the promise of divine aid for his encouragement.” Selecting the baptismal site carefully along the St. John River, he made sure that all aspects of nature culminated to create the necessary sense of sacred space for the event. Because of his “creationist spirituality,” Elder was especially sensitive to the powerful impact nature often made on such occasions.

The Sabbath morning came though partially, obscured by mist, yet calm and quiet. The winds were hushed, and the waters of the river seemed scarcely to flow, so unmoved did they repose beneath the still air and the soft light. I felt that He whose sacred Rite we were about to honour, and who had honoured it himself by going down into the Jordan to be baptized of John, breathed this sacred tranquility – over the elements, to render his ordinance the more impressive and beautiful in its observance. And I felt also that the unruffled bosom of the river, that spread like a mirror before me, was a sweet and fitting emblem of the serenity of my own soul. No fears, no

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 5 September 1848.

doubts, no anxieties troubled me. The path of duty was freed from every obstacle, and shone brightly in advance.⁵²

In an almost sacramental description of the site and his soul's peace, Elder was prepared to receive the "blessings" of conversion and baptism vicariously through the event itself. In this ordinance, Elder (like so many other Maritime Regular Baptists claimed during the first half of the nineteenth century) was mystically transported back to the first century along the River Jordan to the baptism of Jesus. While Elder rejected the radically experiential dimension of Regular Baptist piety so well represented by Harris Harding, he embraced the ritualization of the "New Light-New Birth" without hesitation. Ironically, it seems that the respectable Samuel Elder and the New-Light-to-the-end Harris Harding were spiritual cousins, if not brothers. As his first baptismal service unfolded, Elder ensured that all of the details had been seen to as "Father" Manning had done for decades.

Bro' Spurden read an appropriate hymn, which sung by many voices rose in strong harmony through the quiet air, and floated towards heaven. He then prayed a simple, beautiful, scriptural prayer, whose influence seemed to hallow yet more the sacred scene.

I addressed the large number of interested and serious spectators present - showing the reasons for the performance of the solemn rite about to be administered, and dwelling upon its meaning and significancy. I closed by an appeal to the unconverted.⁵³

Following the baptisms, Elder joyously declared that "I never felt more collected or more happy in my life."⁵⁴ Heaven and earth had become one along the banks of the Saint John River, and it had been choreographed by Samuel Elder. He had not led a revival, but in his

⁵² All of the above quotations are from "Elder Diary," 2 October 1848.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

mind, he had accomplished something more important. In an orderly manner, he had made the gospel visible in a sacred space for a sizable crowd to witness.

Two months later, in December 1848, Elder organized a second baptismal service in the province's capital. Having instructed his people to maintain a certain level of self-control and decorum in public worship, he was delighted to discover that not only the Baptists, but also the pedobaptist onlookers carried themselves with an acceptable level of reverence.

A large number of people witnessed the solemn scene, with serious attention. The day seems past when this religious observance could not be solemnized without the indecent and impious scoffs of bystanders, from other denominations. Whether the change be owing to a general refinement in public manners, to a growing conviction of the scriptural nature of the ordinance, or the increased respectability of the Baptists--it is a change I hail with pleasure. But I ascribe it more to the restraining power of God than to any gracious revolution in the public mind.⁵⁵

While one might not wish to challenge Elder's conclusion that the "solemn attention" of the crowd was due to the "restraining power of God," the historical evidence suggests that his generation of pastors and their urban churches consciously steered their denomination in the direction of social and religious acceptability. If Tupper had achieved this, in part, through his involvement in the baptismal controversy, and Bill through integrating the revivalist tradition of the grassroots with the ideal of a professional clergy, Elder quite unapologetically sought to establish an educated, genteel, and respectable ministry.

This is not to suggest that Elder did not seek to use baptismal services as a means to converting onlookers. In fact, he noted:

In a revival of religion it seems yet more desirable that the baptismal Institution should be honoured, on account of its impressiveness, its efficiency as a means for confirming the converted and awakening the unconverted.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 4 December 1848.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

So important was public immersionist baptismal services that Elder opposed those in his congregation who thought it unnecessary to chop through several feet of ice to immerse the recent converts and advocated waiting until the river was free of ice. Elder was loathe to wait, maintaining that the new believers “are in danger of losing their ardour and of neglecting the duty altogether,” should they delay the ordinance. Furthermore, Elder hoped that the immersion and testimonies of these two converts, Isaiah Wallace and William Barber, might entice more people to receive the New Birth and be baptized.⁵⁷

Elder’s need for order was also evident in his attitude to women in the church. He considered that allowing women to speak and exhort in worship services and other religious meetings was “disorderly;” it was certainly inconsistent with his attempt to create a “genteel,” professional, and irenic ministry. To a great degree, Samuel Elder, unlike Charles Tupper, advocated the privatization of women’s faith. A revealing diary entry, 13 December 1848, indicates that even in the context of an interdenominational fund-raising for the poor, Elder questioned the propriety of women assuming a public role.

Attended a Tea Meeting this evening in the Temperance Hall, prepared by the “Provincial Union of the Daughters of Temperance”. The object was to raise funds for the relief of the poor, among whom there is much destitution and suffering.

The design is good, whatever may be said of the organization of the Daughters of Temperance. I can hardly reconcile myself to these societies of women which bring them so boldly out to public observation, and seem to remove that veil of retirement which forms the graceful covering of the sex. It appears to me that the objects contemplated might be attained without such modes of combination.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Isaiah Wallace, interestingly, became the most successful Maritime Regular Baptist revivalist of the post-1850 period and was instrumental in the conversion and baptism of literally thousands of individuals. It is ironic that one of the least “successful” evangelistic ministries in the history of the denomination gave birth to one who led countless revivals. See Isaiah Wallace, Auto-biographical Sketch with Reminiscences of Revival Work (Halifax, NS: John Burgoyne, 1903).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 13 December 1848.

Nevertheless, Elder praised the women for their efforts and for not violating public “order” (as the Daughters of Temperance were known to do in the United States). He embraced the separate sphere ideology which prevailed during this period. On one occasion he remarked, “It is touching and beautiful to see how strong and pure motherly affection is in all conditions of life.”⁵⁹ For Elder, women were especially blessed with a nurturing spirit which he believed belonged in the home, not the pulpit. Female piety could be “fervent and rational” but its primary function was one of nourishing the souls of children and influencing the behaviour of others.⁶⁰ Although Elder does not seem to have been dogmatic on the point of women speaking in church, he did not challenge those who opposed the public ministrations of women. For example, on 5 January 1849, he noted in his diary that women were especially silent during the monthly conference meetings, because Charles Spurden, the principal of the Fredericton Seminary, “is against women speaking in the church meetings.”⁶¹ Usually during conference meetings in Maritime Regular Baptist churches, all members “renewed the covenant” and gave a brief summary of their spiritual condition, and were often given the floor to exhort and encourage other members. On such occasions, women were known to give stirring and lengthy exhortations which might be more accurately described as sermons. For most Regular Baptists this kind of lay-speaking was considered an effective tool in converting unbelievers who might be present. But given Elder’s attitude, it is not surprising that he allowed Spurden to intimidate

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 21 July 1851.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 2 January 1849. For a discussion of the separate sphere ideology see Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womenhood: Women’s Sphere in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 5 January 1849. This decline in the public role of women also took place in Harris Harding’s church in the 1840s and 1850s.

not just the women, but some men as well. Elder's concept of a "professional ministry" had little room for unlettered women and men exhorting with great pathos, accompanied by tears and uncontrollable weeping. Such activities not only undermined his position as the "expert," but might lead to his losing control of public meetings, resulting in the eruption of unseemly religious emotionalism. One way to insure that one's ministry sustained professionalism was to control consistently public meetings so that they would be "orderly" and "respectable."

However, Samuel Elder also believed that lay persons played an important role in evangelism and church growth, albeit not a very public one. He often addressed his people on "the duty of the church to seek to bring sinners to Christ and to encourage converts," by citing the New Testament passage John 4:1

He first findeth his own brother Simon and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah (which is being interpreted the Christ) And he brought him to Jesus.

While Elder was able to record in 1849 that "some of the members do evince revived feeling, and cooperate in efforts to win souls to the Saviour," he continued to be disappointed in himself and most of the church for spiritual deadness and a reluctance to evangelize.⁶² He attempted to address this problem by initiating "Inquiry Meetings" to which unconverted individuals were invited. The evidence seems to suggest that certain men may have been asked to speak about their faith which was followed by an informal time in which "others conversed privately."⁶³ During these occasions, Elder attempted to change the old conference-meeting format into an orderly and controlled "inquiry" service, hoping the dynamic of the older form would operate within fixed boundaries. He was

⁶² *Ibid.*, 15 January 1849.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 12 January 1849.

delighted when a number of people testified to their conversions and were received as candidates for baptism and church membership. However, in spite of the initial success of this form of evangelism, Elder was unable to replicate its results with any regularity. Near the end of his short life, in a burst of painful honesty, Elder conceded he was not an effective evangelist. "I am poorly prepared both from native temperament and from habit. Yet I acknowledge its importance."⁶⁴

If Elder's "native temperament" and "habit" made him ineffective in "saving souls," they fully equipped him to be an effective teacher and educator. Although too introspective to embrace completely the progressive spirit of the Victorian age, Elder, like Ingram Bill, was nevertheless optimistic about the unlimited potential of the mind to learn and understand. Elder believed that there were no

experienced limits in many directions to the enlargement of all conceptions, the increase of all knowledge, or the progress of our mental power. Even the love of the beautiful grows by its own exercise. Taste becomes more refined by use. Thus our capacity of delighting in the works of God may be amplified indefinitely, and sources of happiness be opened continually, of which before we had no intimation.⁶⁵

Although hindered by "original sin," Elder contended that human beings had only begun to unlock the mysteries of the created world and the implications of the gospel and the Bible for the living of the Christian life. Hence, he wanted to engage in a career that was not only educated, but educating. Building on the biblicism so evident in persons such as Edward Manning and Charles Tupper, his starting point for any intellectual or ideological discussion was always the scriptures. "Holy Writ" was his supreme authority. The "preacher who does not, whether by public expository lectures, or by private and continuous examination of the

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 9 June 1851.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 19 November 1847.

scriptures, make himself familiar with the Bible” cannot “be prepared to train a church in religious knowledge.”⁶⁶

To this end, Elder laboured to reshape the quarterly meetings of his association into vehicles designed to educate pastors, and thereby enhance the practice of ministry. He was appalled at the lack of organization and intention for such meetings. After one such occasion, he recorded in his diary:

I was highly pleased with this communion with my colabourers in the gospel, - and hope to profit much from their riper knowledge, their experience and their piety. But I think our conferences might be rendered more practically beneficial, by the observance of more method in our discussions, and by adopting specific plans of improvement. If for instance one of our number should be required to prepare for our next meeting an essay on some subject, or skeleton of a sermon; and the rest devote previous attention to the source subject, we should find it, I am persuaded, greatly to our advantage, and a decided improvement upon our present course of proceeding.⁶⁷

Elder knew that it was unlikely his ministry in Fredericton would spark a revival that would convulse the Saint John River Valley. However, he was convinced that he had an important role to play in the denomination. If he could engage his unlettered brethren in the ministry in discussion, they could teach him about evangelism, and he could instruct them in the finer points of theology and the broader currents in higher culture. Elder also brought this educating emphasis to his weekly Bible lectures, in which he would present rather lengthy dissertations on certain scripture passages, placing them firmly into historical, literacy, and geographical context. He complained repeatedly in his diary that attendance at these classes – or perhaps more accurately called, College lectures – was sporadic. Nevertheless, he did

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 8 November 1848.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 29 December 1847; see also 24 December 1847.

not abandon his ideal of an “educated and educating ministry.” This was the cost of trying to forge a genteel, professional, clerical career.

Samuel Elder was somewhat critical of the unsophisticated approach many of his colleagues took in preaching. He even spoke disparagingly of the preaching of Father Theodore Seth Harding of Horton. Elder had most likely attended his church during his studies at Acadia, and was very familiar with his method. He noted that Harding consistently chose to speak on the “grand, sonorous and musical portions of Scripture” because “from his peculiar mental habit” he would not “know what to do with a little text.” On one occasion, Elder heard T. S. Harding remark of a finely-crafted sermon,

I never preached from one of those small texts. I could not. My plan is always to choose a large text, with plenty and variety in it. Then if I fail on one part others are still left; and if I fail altogether-then the text itself is as good as a sermon.⁶⁸

Elder’s somewhat uncharitable comment must be understood in part as a defence of his own style of preaching and education. Even a “venerated father” could be deficient in some areas. Since all ministers were limited in some tasks associated with their work, it was to be accepted that someone such as Harding might lack systematic precision in his public discourses, while a preacher such as Elder might not be able to trigger revivals through his own public orations. Far from preaching an evangelistic message every week which pointed the way to heaven -- a widely practiced approach -- Elder attempted to preach on a variety of themes from both the Old and New Testaments. Of Elder’s preaching, Charles Spurden, the principal of the Fredericton Seminary, commented:

Didactic, practical, and consolatory subjects were frequently chosen, so that his sermons were eminently fitted for instruction in righteousness, for correction and reproof. His preaching was not what is usually called

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 25 September 1848.

doctrinal, but whenever he did handle a topic of that kind, he excelled in the clear, forcible, and convincing exhibition of the truth. In illustration, I might mention a sermon preached the winter before last, upon the moral impotence of the carnal mind. Another sermon upon the peculiar privilege of Christians, from the language of John, "Ye need not that any teach you, ye have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things;" may be remembered by many who heard it, as justifying in itself many of the above remarks. But it would be impossible to give even a classification of his discourses; they presented a rich variety of subjects, doctrinal, practical, experimental and consolatory.⁶⁹

Using his facility in languages and systematic analysis, he was able to produce sermons which exhibited poetic grace, scholarship, and the polish suited to a professional urban minister. The following outline of a sermon preached on 8 February 1849 was typical of Elder's approach to preaching.

Sermon this evening on Ps. 119: I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep they precepts.-Topic. Advantages of companionship with those that fear God and obey his precepts.
1st Such companionship is beneficial to our own character.
2nd It promotes our happiness.
3rd Increases our usefulness.
4th Procures us the approval and blessing of God.⁷⁰

Although he departed from the basic evangelistic message being preached every week, his biblicism remained secure, for he stated that "A sermon without a 'thus saith the Lord' in it, is like an ambassador without credentials."⁷¹

It would seem that early on, during his time in Fredericton, Elder longed to gain the same social status as ministers in the established church. For example, in September of 1848, Elder travelled by steamship from Annapolis to Saint John, following a visit to his parents in North Sydney. One of the passengers on his return trip was Bishop Medley of

⁶⁹ CV, 20 August 1852.

⁷⁰ "Elder Diary," 8 February 1849; 25 December 1848; 1 November 1848.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 25 January 1848. The evidence suggests that the Fredericton church responded positively to this departure from having a weekly evangelistic service.

Fredericton, who showed absolutely no interest in striking up a conversation with Samuel Elder. Obviously in awe of someone at the height of social and religious standing in colonial society, Elder defended this slight in his diary.

The bishop of Fredericton, I am persuaded, from what I have heard of him, is too intelligent, too wise and courteous, to make his clerical rank a barrier against communion with those of less exalting title. He would doubtless, both from principle and kindness allow any respectful stranger to converse with him. It is difficult therefore to assign a reason why he and many other men into whose company I have been thrown for hours, do not take the pains to make themselves more agreeable and useful ⁷²

Elder's clear desire to achieve the status of a respectable Anglican priest within colonial society was later replaced, however, by a cynical view of the pomp and undue homage given to this class of minister. By May 1851, he spoke of meeting "one of the bishop's neophytes" in a tailor's shop, who "is a tall, gaunt, solemn and ridiculous personage, with a very small modicum of brain and an aspect of silliness." Elder stated that the cleric did not know the difference between a "dissenting minister and one of the Episcopal church," which led the rather smug Baptist to recall an "impertinent assertion in one of the Oxford tracts, to the purport that a true and apostolically ordained minister, tho' an idiot, should be treated with reverence."⁷³ In the end, Elder was committed to a professional and respectable ministry, based not on the social status of one's church, but upon one's character, education, and hard work. On this important point, he seems to have differed from some of the Baptists in Halifax and Saint John who wanted a "genteel" pastor who could elevate the social standing of the entire denomination. Elder believed that personal respectability was ultimately tied to individuals, not organizations. It must be remembered

⁷² *Ibid.*, 13 September 1848.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 23 May 1851.

that for many lay Baptists, conversion and personal piety were the highest and truest religious goals to pursue; social acceptability was a non-issue.

If Elder's goal of producing a "professional" and orderly ministry differed from many of his colleagues, his approach to pastoral care was not unlike that of Edward Manning, Ingram Bill, and Charles Tupper. Samuel Elder spent much of his time visiting among those in his congregation, not allowing "his love of study to interfere with the faithful discharge of pastoral duties."⁷⁴ His mild temperament and good listening skills eminently fitted him to cope with trials suffered by those under his case. He was especially diligent in calling upon the sick, dying, and the socially and economically disadvantaged.⁷⁵ In the fall of 1847, Elder came upon a desperate family in which the mother was dying with "pulmonary disease," the father mentally ill, and the children starving from a lack of food.

As soon as I was informed of the miserable condition of the family I called upon several benevolent ladies and gentlemen, who at once interested themselves on behalf of the sufferers and provided food and clothing for them. I called frequently to see the sick woman, the mother of eight young children, and administered to her spiritual wants as far as I could. It was pleasing to find her acquainted with the gospel and manifestly deriving peace and hope for its divine truths. Death speedily released her from further trials.⁷⁶

For Elder, developing a respectable and professional ministry did not involve ignoring those at the bottom of the socio-economic scale. In fact, for a preacher to ignore the physical and/or spiritual needs of individuals in his community, regardless of whether they were members of his church, was to betray his calling and profession. However, it must also be pointed out that Elder's community involvement may have been motivated by a sense of a "gentleman's" duty to the dispossessed.

⁷⁴ *CV*, 20 August 1852.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 27 August 1852.

During his many pastoral visits, Elder read the scriptures, prayed for individuals, and inquired about the state of their souls. Always the gentleman, Elder sought to convert unbelievers, but “I never urge the individual so as to give them pain, from a conviction that it would be unkind and injurious.” He believed that it was “better to wait till their confidence strengthens, and they can reveal their hopes with freedom.”⁷⁷ This is not to suggest that he was not persistent in his evangelistic efforts through the course of his pastoral care. Perhaps one of the best examples of his tenacity in this regard was in his relationship with “Miss Margaret Stewart,” whom he had visited regularly throughout her illness. Initially, he “seldom found a fitting occasion for ascertaining the state of her mind in relation to eternal interests.” Since the young woman’s mother feared that any discussion of death and eternity would “be injurious,” she changed the direction of the conversation whenever it approached “a religious and personal tendency.”⁷⁸ Elder finally reported that

To-day, however, she gave me the opportunity which I have longed desired of more confidential communion with Margaret and the result has been more satisfactory than I had expected. I found that it had long been her wish to have a more free and personal conversation on the state of her mind. She has been sometime convinced that death was approaching, and felt grieved at the attempts made to cheer her by what she was assured were groundless hopes.⁷⁹

After his lengthy visit with Margaret Stewart, Elder was “encouraged to believe that she is truly convinced of her guilt and danger, and earnestly seeking pardon.”⁸⁰

Any fears that the Fredericton church may have had about Elder’s education making him an ineffective pastoral caregiver were put to rest when it became clear that he visited

⁷⁶ “Elder Diary,” 20 January 1847.

⁷⁷ *CY*, 27 August 1852.

⁷⁸ “Elder Diary,” 20 January 1849.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 20 January 1849.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

indiscriminately, attempting to meet the spiritual and physical needs of those he encountered. In fact, Elder's success as a pastor and counselor endeared him to his congregation, even if there is no evidence that he ever led a revival in the provincial capital. This explains, partially, why his congregation was content with his ministry. As ministers became more settled, the basic criteria for determining success began to broaden to include pastoral care and counselling. This trend was also true for Charles Tupper's ministry in Amherst; although the church did not grow, he was supported by the people because of his work among them.

If Elder was acceptable, at least in part, because of his pastoral calls, promoting the education of the laity was his passion. His teaching emphasis was best known through his efforts as a "public lecturer" and Sabbath School advocate. Public lecturing had become a recognized profession by the mid-nineteenth century in the United States. Donald M. Scott has suggested that millions of American flocked to hear lectures address a variety of issues and subjects. "Lecturing also appeared to have become an important and honored profession that rivalled press and pulpit in its influence over the mind of the public."⁸¹ While Elder never considered himself to be a "professional lecturer," presenting public discourses certainly fell within the boundaries he set for a "professional clergyman." Embracing the notion that educated persons had a civic duty to "raise" the level of culture and knowledge within society, Elder spoke at temperance rallies and the Mechanics' Institute in Saint John. He was especially attached to speaking for the temperance cause -- as were most Maritime Regular Baptist leaders in the nineteenth century -- because he was "disgusted with the low trash called anecdotes collected from the facetiae of Yankee

⁸¹ Donald M. Scott, "The Profession that Vanished: Public Lecturing in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America" in Gerald L. Geison (ed.), Professions and Professional Ideologies in America (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), p. 12.

newspapers, and retailed by temperance declaimers to grinning auditories who relish only course humour."⁸² Convinced of the "evils of drink" because of the alcoholism of his brother John, Elder spoke frequently and eloquently at temperance meetings.⁸³

. . . if it can be shown, as it most disputably can, that the use of wine as a beverage leads to a fearful amount of drunkenness, disease, misery and ruin; -- is not such a pledge more than justified. Independently of a countless aggregation of facts bearing testimony to the existence of these evils and their connection with wine-drinking as their cause; the advocates of total abstinence derive no feeble support from the solemn authority of the Bible. "Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder."⁸⁴

In February of 1848, Elder was invited to address a better educated crowd at the Mechanics' Institute in Saint John. As he began to prepare two lectures entitled "The Expansive Power of Mind" and "The Influence of Poetry," he welcomed the opportunity to select "some topic of discourse of a novel kind, one which entirely throws me beyond the circle in which my thoughts have been moving, in order to break up the uniformity which marks my style of sermonizing."⁸⁵ He delivered his first lecture to a small, "but respectable" crowd on 18 March, which received his oration "with more approbation than it deserved."⁸⁶ Two days later, his second lecture was received with "more favour than the first," which he attributed "to its being extemporaneous," since an illness leading up to his appointments in Saint John had prevented him from preparing a full text.⁸⁷ Elder seems to

⁸² "Elder Diary," 13 May 1848; 1 December 1848; 13 January 1848.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 29 August 1848.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 13 January 1848.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 28 February 1848.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 18 March 1848.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 20 March 1848.

have enjoyed not only the intellectual challenge of preparing lectures, but also the actual delivery of such presentations. On these occasions, he was able to explore themes not appropriate for the pulpit. Public lectures served as an outlet for Elder's creativity in a way very similar to his poetry. In fact, he believed that creativity and originality were lacking among Regular Baptist ministers who, in his opinion, seemed to pride themselves on their oneness of approach. He even criticized Ingram Bill, the most popular preacher of his generation, for possessing "little of the inventive faculty -- much of the imitative."⁸⁸ While clearly justifying his own approach to public delivery, Elder was also being consistent with his philosophy of the genteel professional ministry exhibiting the "high culture" associated with a classical college education. He was also reflecting his commitment to what Curtis Johnson has called formal evangelicalism, which was concerned about creating a self-disciplined, moral, righteous and "orderly" society through voluntary organizations.⁸⁹ Public education through mechanics institutes and temperance meetings were two of many ways of advancing this agenda.

If expanding the education of people in society was important to Elder, enhancing the learning in Regular Baptist congregations was a central concern, and especially in the area of Sabbath Schools. By the time Elder entered the ministry, his denomination was beginning to explore the place of children in a believers' church which stressed revival and life-changing conversion experiences. When church growth came primarily from the unchurched and pedobaptist sectors of the population, the revivalistic paradigm inherited from the First and Second Great Awakenings worked very well. However, as new members increasingly came from Baptist families, questions were raised about where

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 15 October 1851.

⁸⁹ Curtis Johnson, *Redeeming America*, p.7.

children fit in church life. The Baptist side of the baptismal controversy argued that children were not automatically Christians because of the faith of their parents, nor were they necessarily damned to hell if they died in infancy, or before they reached undefined "age of accountability." Fully aware of these questions, Elder proposed that Sabbath Schools be promoted and improved throughout the denomination.⁹⁰ To that end, he published a series of twenty-five articles on Sabbath Schools in the Christian Visitor. As a whole, they amount to what might be called a handbook for the Christian education of children. Given Elder's optimism about the role of knowledge to enhance piety and increase the Christian character and morality of society, it is not surprising that he assumed an important role as an avid Sabbath School advocate.

. . . although education does not necessarily purify the depraved soul, (and we are far from attributing to it this power) although, knowledge and the means of acquiring it may be largely possessed, without any moral blessing resulting from it to their possessors, yet it is an unassailable truth that right education is favourable to virtue, that the tendency of knowledge is to harmonize and refine the heart, to remove not only the grossness of vice, but in instil the principles of moral purity. It is equally certain, that ignorance is not only devoid of all good in itself but is invariably and actively evil in its effects. It adds to the corruption of the heart the darkness of the understanding, and while it repels truth and religion from the soul, confirms and augments the power and turpitude of sin. Knowledge then, and mental cultivation possess intrinsic excellence; their tendency is to do good . . .⁹¹

Since Elder believed that acquiring knowledge could create the necessary preconditions for a moral Christian life, he argued that the church should be in the vanguard of educational innovation within society.⁹² Building upon the notion forged in the Protestant Reformation that the ability to read with understanding was a requirement

⁹⁰ On the history of Sabbath Schools see Anne M. Boylan Sunday School: The Formation of an American Institution (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

⁹¹ CV, 16 November 1849.

⁹² Ibid., 27 April 1849.

for the development of truly biblical piety, Elder envisioned a Sabbath School program that went beyond a rote-memory centered approach.⁹³ In fact, he insisted that teachers instruct their students to read, if necessary, so that they might be able to reason on their own. In fact, reading was to take priority over teaching large portions of the Bible, because more scripture could ultimately be learned if the child became literate. Elder counseled his teachers to teach literacy by selecting a short simple sentence from the Bible which had a basic doctrinal principle. As the child learned to read, the central idea could also be appropriated.

Not surprisingly, Elder also promoted the establishment of church libraries to assist the development of teachers and the reading habits of young people.⁹⁴ By judiciously selecting “volumes composed with so much thought and anxiety, bearing the striking impressions of minds solicitous for the salvation of the young,” he hoped that the library would serve an “evangelistic” purpose. Indeed, Elder’s goal in promoting the Sabbath School was not just for the “cultivation and training of the mental powers” of children, but also the “converting” of their souls.⁹⁵ To this end, he warned teachers not to be content with teaching “manners” and “morality.” “What should be the chief and engrossing concern—the faithful and energetic endeavor to communicate the knowledge of Christ and thereby instrumentally to convert the soul.”⁹⁶ Elder, it would seem, attempted to transfer to the Sabbath School some of the principles of revival that he had observed. This goal of institutionalizing revival is perhaps best seen in his five-fold steps to converting the young.

[1]a constant regard to this chief object [salvation] and an earnest desire for its attainment

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ “Elder Diary,” 31 July 1851.

⁹⁵ *CV*, 15 June 1849.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

2. . . . to impress a spiritual character, as far as possible, on all his instructions.
3. Frequent and pointed appeals should be made to the hearts and consciences of the Scholars.
4. Private conversation also with each scholar, as occasion may offer, is a powerful means of producing deep and lasting convictions
5. It is the greatest importance that the Teacher should gain the confidence and affection of his scholars.⁹⁷

In order to avoid the charge of being an Arminian in theology, because of what may have seemed to some as an undue emphasis on method and human will in conversion, Elder assured his readers he was not arguing for “mere human instrumentality.” He insisted that “Talent, genius, learning, eloquence [and piety]” did not in themselves have any “power” to change a “single heart.” However, as “means and instruments,” Elder believed God, in his sovereignty and grace, might chose to use them in spiritually regenerating the elect. “But while we are constrained, by the direct testimony of the scriptures and by the evidence of fact, to believe that it is God’s incommunicable prerogative to transform the corrupt human spirit,” argued Elder, “we are as fully taught that he works this glorious change through appointed and adapted means.”⁹⁸

During this time, Regular Baptist ministers tended not to stress the importance of Sabbath Schools, let alone provide leadership in them. In his 24 August 1849 letter to the Christian Visitor, Elder challenged his fellow ministers to promote Sabbath Schools as an extension of their evangelistic strategy. By subtly linking the education of children to revival, he attempted to demonstrate the connection between the religious awakenings of

⁹⁷ Ibid., 6 July 1849.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 29 June 1849.

the past and the development of Christian education. He knew that by creating a sense of continuity with the denomination's evangelical heritage, he could mount a compelling argument for pastors to take leadership in the religious education of children.

. . .where can the pastor find an auxiliary so potent so easily managed and so effective as the Sabbath School to aid him in advancing the spiritual welfare of the children and youth of his charge? By entering those for whose salvation his tenderest thoughts and sympathies should be employed, and with whom it is essential that he should cultivate a friendly and intimate intercourse.⁹⁹

Elder had witnessed the evangelistic potential of his own Sabbath School, and was convinced that if someone as modestly gifted in evangelism as he was could make effective use of this institution, those truly gifted in this area would experience dramatic results.¹⁰⁰

Elder also contended that a Sabbath School education was important even for those who would never be converted. The influence of this sacred institution would “soften, refine, and improve [their] deportment,” helping to create and extend Christian society and civilization. As a formal evangelical, Elder felt compelled to foster a ministry that would not only lead to conversions of the soul, but also to the general refinement of society's morals, manners and education. These advantages alone were justification enough for Elder to promote Sabbath Schools, even if they represented “the least important of the benefits.”¹⁰¹

Samuel Elder's short life and ministry defy easy categorization (he lived to be thirty-five, dying on 23 May 1852).¹⁰² He chose a “professional” approach to ministry,¹⁰³ and was

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 24 August 1849.

¹⁰⁰ “Elder Diary,” 12 October 1848.

¹⁰¹ *CV*, 12 October 1849.

¹⁰² *CV*, 17 September 1852.

¹⁰³ During November and December of 1851, the Germain Street Baptist Church in Saint John dialogued with Elder concerning extending a call to him to serve their church. All indications are that he would have gone to the port city if invited. However, rumours that John Pryor might like to be their pastor quickly brought the negotiations with Elder to a close. See “Elder Diary,” 25-28 November 1851.

by far one of the leading formal evangelicals of his generation, celebrating the virtues of church order and privatized religious experience. However, in spite of his efforts to the contrary, Elder could not escape the “Faith of the Fathers.” He was unable to shed his spiritual heritage of revivalism, although he never measured up to the ideal image of what a Regular Baptist preacher and evangelist ought to be. To a great degree, Elder achieved his goal of becoming the professional, learned and urban pastor, and yet was disillusioned by his ministry’s lack of success in the vital areas of conversion, believer’s baptism by immersion, and numerical growth. This void, he discovered, could not be filled easily through expanding the teaching ministry of the church. Elder knew what it meant to be a Maritime Regular Baptist minister in the tradition of the “Patriarchs.” He understood clearly the meaning and attraction of immersionist baptism. And yet, he was not able to replicate effectively the often radical evangelical piety of his tradition. His personal anxiety caused by the tension between the antiformal Christianity of his youth and the ordered, genteel, and “professional” evangelicalism he embraced as an adult defined, to a large degree, the nature of his ministry and faith. Nevertheless, Samuel Elder’s existential angst reveals the profound and enduring influence of Maritime revivalistic spirituality forged in the late eighteenth century.

Chapter Nine

"The Faith of the Fathers"

Maritime Regular Baptists suffered a crisis of confidence and identity between 1846 and 1855 as the "Fathers," who had all exceeded the biblical three score and ten years, began to die. The death of Joseph Dimock in 1846 was followed in the next decade by that of Edward Manning in 1851, and Harris Harding and Theodore Seth Harding in quick succession in 1854 and 1855, prompting rumours of imminent spiritual and numerical decline in Baptist churches, and fears about what shape the ministry would take in the future.

This series of crises was exacerbated by the socio-economic trends Maritime society at large was experiencing. During the 1840s, Great Britain had decided to abandon its protectionist economic system with its colonies in favour of free trade, and Maritimers lived through two depressions accompanied by crop failure. In addition, the Maritime provinces experienced the mass immigration of victims of the Irish famine and growing ethno-religious tensions and conflict led to events like the Saint John riot of 1849.¹ There is little doubt that these socio-economic trends in society and the atmosphere of crisis that they fostered only exacerbated the denomination's dilemma. It is not surprising that as the turmoil of the 1840s gave way to the so-called "golden age" of the 1850s and renewed economic and political stability, many Regular Baptists began to wonder if their "golden age" had already passed.²

¹ For a stimulating view of the riot see Scott See, "The Orange Order and Social Violence in Mid-Nineteenth Century Saint John," *Acadiensis* 13(1983): 68-92.

² T.W. Acheson, "The 1840s: Decade of Tribulation" in Philip A. Buckner and John G. Reid (eds.) *The Atlantic Region to Confederation: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp. 307-332).

The solution to the crisis appeared to be surprisingly simple to the denomination's leadership. Maritime Regular Baptists needed to build upon the strong foundation created by the "Fathers." This included commitment to conversion and its ritualization in baptism, revival, religious experience, and an understanding of the unique role God had ordained for the immersionists in the Kingdom of God. But denominational leaders and some lay people were sharply at odds over the way this ministry should actually be continued into the future. And both camps appealed to the examples set by the "Fathers," that first generation of Baptists who had formed the denomination, to make their arguments.

While some second generation ministers occasionally left the relative comforts of their settled pastorate to assume the position of itinerant evangelist, the trend increasingly during the first half of the nineteenth century was to remain at home. While the "Fathers," including Manning, Crandall, and Harris Harding, might have been content to be absent from church and family for months at a time, the next generation of leaders, and in particular Samuel Elder, was not so inclined nor were their churches eager to release them for extended periods of time. However, for those people who belonged to small Baptist churches in rural areas which had no settled minister, this trend was a violation of tradition. One angry correspondent to the Christian Messenger in February 1859, complained about the neglect of the small churches in Eastern Nova Scotia by the denomination's preachers.

We fear that if dear old Fathers Manning, or Dimock could for a moment absent themselves from the assembly of the first-born, and look down upon us, they might well exclaim with Paul to his Corinthian brethren, "Now in this I praise you not."

Shall this state of things continue, or shall we not rather awake from our lethargy, and attempt something more worthy of the examples set us by our fathers?³

³ CM, 23 February 1859.

As the understanding of a pastor's role began to shift from that of an itinerant to settled minister, perhaps best seen in the life of Samuel Elder, a void was created in Baptist life. Who would help the churches that did not have the financial means to sustain a full-time minister? For decades, the "Fathers" had been tireless in their efforts to serve churches on the denomination's periphery. But in 1856 the crisis was real; more than half of the Regular Baptist churches in Nova Scotia still did not have a settled minister.⁴ One editorial in the Christian Messenger placed the dilemma into context.

We fear that our ablest and best supplied churches are not sufficiently alive to the necessity of allowing their ministers, a portion of their time, to help supply the spiritual wants of our waste places. In our early recollection, a year never passed but some of our oldest and best pastors, - the Mannings, Dimocks, Hardings, Ansleys, and others, were sure to devote more or less of their time to missionary work, and that not merely in their immediate vicinity, but in rugged and distant jounies, often where the gospel had seldom or never been preached.⁵

In the early decades of the denomination's history, few if any churches had been large enough to provide adequate support for their ministers. Consequently, preachers had not felt obliged to focus all of their efforts in the communities in which they lived. Furthermore, since most of the churches were relatively small and had little financial means, a certain equality or similarity among Regular Baptist congregations had been created. However, as society became more urbanized and structured, some churches had grown in size and social importance, as was the case in Halifax, Yarmouth, Saint John and Fredericton. "Professional" pastors, such as E. A. Crawley or Samuel Elder, no longer considered it proper to be preaching and trying to spark revivals in the backwaters of the

⁴ Ibid., 24 December 1856.

⁵ Ibid.

Maritimes. They were part of an educated professional elite, not unlettered, ignorant, revivalists who concentrated far too much upon the “heart” and too little upon the “head.”⁶

Identifying itinerant evangelism with spiritual vitality, some Regular Baptists believed in the 1850s that the decline in traveling preachers would lead to a decline in vital Christianity. One person argued that until the tradition of the “Fathers” was restored in this regard, the future of the denomination was in serious doubt.

Until something akin to this old spirit of gospel work is revived among us, we may look in vain for what we, no doubt, all desire to witness--the spirit of general revival awakened, not only in our churches, but in the remote and destitute corners of the land. We feel assured that the same spirit which planted Nova Scotia with Baptist churches, can alone maintain their existence or add largely to their numbers.⁷

On the other hand, Robert Dickie, a little-known contemporary of I. E. Bill, maintained that the general itinerant evangelism of all preachers in the past, while crucial to the denomination’s foundation and initial growth, was a paradigm that needed to be revised. Arguing that “though we desire not, neither do we look for any new views in reference to doctrine and practice substantially,” Dickie suggested that congregations now needed the constant attention of a settled ministry, for neither sizable numbers of adherents nor members necessarily reflected personal Christian maturity. In fact, he contended, the continued practice of settled pastors becoming travelling evangelists for periods of time could actually undermine the spiritual strength of existing churches because “circumstances are now quite different, so that it is not safe for us to determine the amount of moral strength by numbers.” However, Dickie was not prepared to dismiss out of hand the

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 22 August 1851.

paradigm established by the "Fathers."⁸ In fact, he suggested that two distinct offices or positions be created in the denomination, in keeping with the example established by Harding, Manning, and others. Both positions would be characterized by the gospel in its preached and visible forms. It was becoming increasingly difficult for one preacher to fulfill, successfully, two very demanding responsibilities. The days of the "Fathers" had passed, he wrote in the Christian Visitor, and

Now if we cannot have just such men as have preceded us, men who have united in themselves in some considerable degree, the pastoral habits, in connection with the work of an evangelist a thing in itself very rare and exceedingly difficult, let us seek to have both classes. It must be apparent to every reflective mind that the same paucity of pastoral labour, cannot carry out in all their bearings the doctrines of the gospel, and thus edify the churches. We long to see the day when every part of our Zion, shall enjoy stately, the faithful efforts of an under shepherd, who shall strive to cultivate the field appointed him, and mature the seed sown. But in connexion with this, we hope the same predominant desire for evangelization, will be perpetual among us.⁹

Despite such justifications for both a settled ministry and increasing attention given to home mission efforts, which were never adequate to the need, some lay people in the 1840s still angrily complained about "the engrossing chains of many of our larger churches which prevent their Pastors from traveling beyond the limit of their immediate duties."¹⁰ The definite tension between the urban and rural churches, seen in the ministries of Charles Tupper and Samuel Elder, clearly reflected the sense of crisis in the denomination during the 1840s and 1850s.

This sense of crisis among rural churches was exacerbated when it was realized by these congregations that there was no shortage of duly approved men to fill the vacant

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 13 April 1849.

pastoral positions. For example, at this time almost one half of the accredited ordained pastors in the Eastern and Western Associations [New Brunswick] were not engaged in full time ministry. To account for this discrepancy, one anonymous writer to the Christian Visitor suggested that some of those who had been “set apart” had never been divinely called. Moreover, it was noted that “churches have called to ordination men whom they are not willing to employ and support in the office for which they have been ordained.”

If we ask some to aid in sustaining a Pastor they demur and complain of hard times and want of means, when if it is a new lot, a good horse, a nice wagon, a new carpet, a sofa to compete with a respectable neighbor, there is no lack. The reason of the case lies here; what raises the money is of most consequence in the estimation of such people; and we are now to account for it, that when people are universally becoming more expensive in their habits; have well furnished houses, and are well and often expensively clad, they have so little regard for the pastoral office, and do not reckon his service to the children and family and community of so much consequence but that it may easily be dispensed with.¹¹

Given the revivalistic, results-oriented approach to the ministry which the early Regular Baptist ministers had adopted, it was difficult for some rural churches to accept a settled minister who might not lead many revivals but who would be diligent in exercising church discipline and expecting his people to attend several religious meetings each week. That the “solemn relationship which exists between the pastor and his flock is of divine appointment, and consequently involves on the side of both mighty support” was a foreign notion to many Maritime Regular Baptists.

From the perspective of a denominational leader in the 1840s and 1850s, Ingram Bill, then editor of the Christian Visitor, encouraged churches to be unfailing in their support of pastors and families which served their churches. When a preacher found his

¹¹ CV, 29 December 1849. See also the series in the CV, entitled “Encourage Your Minister,” 10 January 1855; 7 February 1855; 14 February 1855; 2 February 1855; 28

people “self-willed, conceited, uncharitable, disposed to magnify his faults, or to throw obstacles in the way of his success, his peace is broken, his happiness is disturbed and his soul filled with bitterness and grief.”¹² When clergy were primarily itinerants, they seldom stayed in a place long enough for the congregation to discover their faults and shortcomings, giving the people a false sense of their ability and personality. However, when the more settled model was employed the veneer of perfection soon faded, revealing the true humanity of the preacher. Bill counseled his readers:

[If] he [the clergyman] sees them [church members] anxious to administer to his comfort, to sympathize with him in distress, by holding up his hands in seasons of religious discouragement by taking a lively interest in his personal and domestic happiness, by evincing an interest in his public administration, his heart is greatly strengthened thereby to prosecute the arduous duties of his responsible vocation.¹³

Harris Harding had probably been the only “Patriarch” to receive such support from his church. It was, nevertheless, crucial for those who wished to revise what was meant to minister to the faithful, that the new ministry not depart significantly from the example and experiences set by the first generation of leaders.

In 1846, Maritime Regular Baptist leaders and churches came together into a convention so that home and foreign missions could be more effectively carried out. The architects of the convention wanted to create a denomination in which the ministers were settled, well supported and, if possible, educated. However, the fundamental step in this plan was to convince churches to accept the responsibility of providing for their full-time

February 1855; 14 February 1855; 21 February 1855; 28 February 1855 and Minutes of the New Brunswick Baptist Association, 1842. AUA.

¹² Ibid., 14 April 1854.

¹³ Ibid.

ministers.¹⁴ Although the initial attempts by churches sometimes resulted in failure, as they grew tired of the same preacher and simply terminated his connection with the congregation, it would seem that by mid-century the “settled” model was gaining some acceptance. Therefore, the debate about transforming the denomination’s ministry began to include discussions about the qualifications of ministers.

It was believed by many that if able young men could perceive the ministry as a high calling or a truly professional vocation accompanied by an appropriate social status and income, more would seek formal education and ordination. Ingram Bill was very optimistic that the status of the Baptist minister would increase as “the objections against the Education of the Ministry in Literary Institutions . . . disappear” and everyone entered “his appropriate sphere and work.”¹⁵

The guard of the respectability of the office and of its duties lies to day just where it did when the inspired Apostle charged his young brother to qualify himself for these by diligent culture and study, to show himself a workman that need not to be ashamed, emphatically adding, “Let no man despise thy youth” that is, let no man be left with any just pretext for despising thy youth. Your respectability and personal official influence rests where every other man’s does—“Let no man despise you.”¹⁶

However, while the denomination’s elite advocated an educated ministry, the laity continued to be skeptical of the benefits of education, as was seen so clearly in the early days of Samuel Elder’s ministry. A college-trained pastor was considered, by definition, to be of

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 9 August 1848; 3 March 1854.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 30 April 1852.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

questionable spirituality. Education eroded vital piety, leaving its victims dull and dangerously deceptive to unwitting congregations.¹⁷

Baptist leaders were not discouraged by the grassroots' challenge to their authority and hopes for the future. Leading preachers such as "Crito" -- almost certainly a pseudonym for E. A. Crawley -- believed that in the past many inappropriate men had entered the ministry "substituting dreams and visions, emotions and feelings in place of the Word of God" and a true divine call to preach.¹⁸ In defence of his position, and while giving due respect to the "Patriarchs," he asked, "What would have the Mannings, the Hardings, the Dimocks been, if they had possessed in their youth those qualifications which they now enforce upon others? What would a Burton, a Robinson, and many others have become if to their lofty powers of mind were added the aids of human learning."¹⁹ In spite of the rhetorical nature of these questions, "Crito" misunderstood the past of his denomination. The unlettered first generation preachers were successful, in part, because their simplicity and unpretentiousness resonated with early colonists. The overwhelming evidence suggests that at the beginning of the century an educated, "respectable" ministry would have almost surely failed.

However, his defence does reflect the authority that could be evoked by calling on the memory and activities of the "Fathers." The precedent of the "Patriarchs" example (and their support of the principle, as in Manning's outspoken encouragement of his "pupils" to become educated) became a necessary component of any proposed philosophy of ministry advocated in the 1850s because their example immediately evoked authority. If

¹⁷ Barry Moody explores this theme in his "The Maritime Baptists and Higher Education in the Early Nineteenth Century" in B. M. Moody (ed.), Repent and Believe: The Baptist Experience in Maritime Canada (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot Press, 1980), pp. 88-102.

¹⁸ CM, 19 February 1847.

¹⁹ Ibid., 26 February 1847.

the “Patriarchs” could have benefited from formal education how much more could “mere mortals” profit from such opportunities. It was implied by “Crito,” furthermore, that a new age had dawned.

Gifts which were acceptable in the past may not be so at the present, and that declamatory strain of preaching which may have profited the fathers will not now benefit the sons, having their powers of mind more expanded by the progression of knowledge, and who, although they may not have their father’s simple piety, yet must have their intellect fed by the ministrations of the Gospel.²⁰

Society now required men to enter ministry who understood their role as one of the three traditional professions -- doctor, lawyer and preacher. The day of the unlearned, fisherman-farmer-woodsman-turned-Baptist minister was gone. It was believed by the denomination’s “formalists” that those known for their uncontrolled zeal and ecstatic divine impressions should remain in the pew so that a new breed of professional cleric could articulate a respectable, ordered evangelical gospel. In his article entitled “The Present Canadian and Future Prospects of the Baptist Ministry,” Crito complained that Regular Baptist ministers were not given respect, as professionals, by their congregations. If the Anglicans and “Papists” approached idolatry in their veneration of their clerics, “Crito” argued, the Baptists treated their ministers as men without any authority or special status. And there was some truth to this. Many Regular Baptists’ rather egalitarian view of church life, rooted in the revivalism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, was that worldly distinctions among converts did not exist or matter before God. The grassroots believed that the preacher’s role was one of function in the Kingdom of God, not a position of privilege. The only minister examined in depth in this study who embraced this notion fully was Harris Harding, who seems to have achieved the “respect” so desired by “Crito,”

²⁰ CM, 19 February 1847.

without ever seeking it. "Crito" saw the continuation of this "low" view of the ministry as a stumbling block to the denomination's full participation in the Protestant mainstream, as well as a deterrent to bright prospective ministers who might chose a different profession.²¹

If the Baptist laity was no respecter of persons, apart from those categories of "saved" and "lost," those of the highest socio-economic standing in the colonies would reject the immersionists as arrogant and presumptuous. "Crito" warned, if lay people felt empowered by the revivalist gospel and "practise the greatest familiarity with their own ministers," how could order and respectability be maintained? Indeed, he feared that his denomination was going to be consigned to the margins of society unless a "proper" hierarchical model were adopted. Only ministers could change this "leveling" trend by "filling their office with dignity, and endeavoring by elevating themselves to make others feel, that the people are to hear the law at their mouth."²² Regular Baptist preachers were altogether too willing to

allow others to govern them and the church of the living God. Hence those schisms in our churches, that strong democratical feeling which exists throughout the land, which causes the members to controvert the opinions of their Pastors, so that every ignorant Deacon, and every old woman, and every youthful tyro, think themselves privileged to dictate to their minister, and to prescribe to him what he is to teach, and what doctrines he should entertain, the glorious liberty of the Gospel they contend is to give them liberty to insult the servant of the Lord.²³

²¹ CM, 26 February 1847. "Crito" went so far as to propose that "... we see that the Episcopal minister is regarded in a different light from that in which the Baptist minister is regarded. His office is considered as one of the most exalted that man can fill. He is considered fir for society for the richest and best born in the land, -- and instead of regarding it as an honour done to him at their luxurious boards, the most aristocratical consider it a privilege, an honour to have their spiritual guide as their guest."

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

By exalting the office of pastor to profession, it was believed that Baptist ministers would be given the necessary control of their people to achieve respectability for the denomination.²⁴

It is clear that the notion of a socially-respectable and professional ministry articulated most fully by the Halifax clique and “Crito” was embraced by only a minority of ministers and a few lay people. Although Samuel Elder proved that such a model did not necessarily mean a complete break with the denomination’s revivalist past, the evidence suggests that in 1850 most Regular Baptists still associated a professional ministry with spiritual impotence and declension. One regular contributor to the Christian Visitor, “Levi,” while not directly responding to “Crito,” spoke for most Baptists when he declared that the “office of the ministry was never designed to be a sinecure for the indolent; nor a stepping stone to personal aggrandizement; that men may amass wealth, or wield authority, and be lords over God’s heritage.”²⁵ Implicitly rejecting the professional, upwardly mobile model of ministry, “Levi” stressed that the basic tasks of preachers should be teaching the Bible and evangelism.²⁶ Education and seeking a status equal to Anglican clerics were rejected as superfluous or even dangerous goals. Samuel McCully – a second generation preacher who spent most of his ministry in the Truro area -- had written to Edward Manning on 3 January 1829 about the debate among the Presbyterians of his area over the issue of an educated ministry. His conclusion was one that many Regular Baptists would share for more than a century. “What a curse is a carnal [educated] Ministry to the cause of religion. I do think that the study of the bible is of more use to the preacher of the gospel than all other knowledge.”²⁷ Almost a quarter of a century later, Ingram Bill made a

²⁴ CY, 17 January 1855.

²⁵ Ibid., 31 May 1850.

²⁶ Ibid., 31 May 1850.

²⁷ Samuel McCully to Edward Manning, 3 January 1829, Antigonish, NS. AUA.

declaration similar to McCully's noting that "The paramount design of the Christian ministry, is to bring souls to Christ, and by so doing to save them from perdition's fearful depths."²⁸

As Bill stated in his letter to McCully, even if ministers were increasingly moving from the model of itinerant evangelist to settled pastor they were still expected to build their ministries on the conversionist/revivalist tradition. In a stinging critique of an educated professional ministry which had watered-down its gospel message, the editor of the Christian Visitor asked in 1852:

Are we the ministers of Christ? This must be our work. We may be learned, profound, brilliant and eloquent, and entranced crowds may gather about us; but are these crowds lost? Do they go from the charms of our ministry to the wailings of hell? If so, what a misfortune that they ever heard us. What will it avail the minister in the day of judgment to know that while on earth he preached in a splendid cathedral, that he was considered the most attractive orator of the age, and that he was followed by admiring multitudes, if he sees them in that awful day at the left hand, writhing, under the wrath of the Almighty, and doomed to blackness and darkness forever?²⁹

While the editor was not opposed to allowing the status of Regular Baptist ministers to rise within society, he was loath to see it happen if it meant undermining the New Birth message and its expression in immersionist baptism. In other words, if compromising the essentials of the faith was implicit in a professional ministry, the denomination would be better off being led by unlettered men like the "Fathers." Even the brilliant Charles Tupper conceded, "I hope . . . the time will never come when the Baptists will attempt to exclude from the ministry every man who has not received a collegiate education." Such a transgression "would be exceedingly detrimental to the interests of Zion."³⁰

²⁸ CV, 26 November 1852.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ CM, 30 January 1861.

Perhaps the most alarming perceived departures from the “Fathers” for many Regular Baptists was in the area of extemporaneous versus manuscript preaching. Of “written pulpit discourses,” “Hint” remarked, in 1856, that the “evil (if it be an evil) happily exists to but a small extent in Nova Scotia among our Churches, but as innovations once introduced are hard to remove it will be well to look to the matter before it takes root too deeply.” During “Hints” travels to the United States he had discovered the practice of manuscript preaching which had “destroyed in some measure the earnest, importunate appeals so characteristic of dissenting pulpit addresses.” Such discourses, he maintained, were much more like “polished essays” suited to a Mechanics’ Institute or literary society.³¹ Interestingly, Samuel Elder understood this fine distinction and preached from the pulpit extemporaneously while addressing other occasions from a full manuscript. If “Hint’ had cause for confidence in the future it rested not with educated pastors, who “venture before a congregation on the Sabbath with a lamp-soiled manuscript,” but rather with the “genius of our dissenting congregations who are not favourable to written discourses.”³²

Trained under the Hardings, Mannings, Dimocks, Chipmans, Ansleys etc., whose powerful voices, piercing eyes, ready utterance, and deep earnestness characterized all their pulpit labours, they [laity] are not prepared to make allowance for those who have had the advantage of training which belonged not to the age of our departed ministers, and cannot divest themselves of the prejudice they feel against innovations contrary to what has been the course for the last half century.³³

By appealing to the tradition of the “Fathers,” the author built his argument on an “authority” that was becoming increasingly powerful by mid-century. Nevertheless, this authority was open to interpretation and advocates for both continuity and change

³¹ CM, 6 February 1856.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.; 14 May 1852.

summoned the “ghosts” of the past to buttress their arguments. What was becoming clear by mid-century was that any proposals for change would have to be perceived as consistent with the “Faith of the Fathers.”

During their long lives, Harris Harding, T. S. Harding, Edward Manning, T.H. Chipman, Joseph Dimock and Joseph Crandall were viewed almost as apostles in the New Testament tradition. Even though they were not closely involved in denominational life after the 1830s, they represented a link with the past and instilled in the second generation of leaders a sense of confidence in the future. They remained, until their deaths, the symbolic keepers of the Baptist tradition and its gospel. The laity of the denomination seemed willing to accept change in church life as long as it found approval with the fathers. In fact, the often competing views or philosophies of the Baptist ministry had not greatly alarmed individuals while the “Patriarchs” were still alive. Because Manning, the Hardings, and others had represented the essence of the Regular Baptists and had been the original source of the revivalist gospel reenacted in believer’s baptism by immersion until the late 1840s, the denomination had coped with the differences of opinion without encountering an identity crisis. Those who had entered the debate, whether they had been the status-seeking Halifax clique or unlettered lay people from rural New Brunswick, had been able to point to the “Fathers” and declare that their perspective had been linked in some way to the “source” or “authority” of the denomination.

One of the first indications that the loss of the “Patriarchs” might undermine the confidence of Regular Baptists can be seen in a report about the 1851 meeting of the Eastern Baptist Association which complained that “the Fathers were not there; we could not look upon their countenances -- or listen to their prayers -- or feel those kindlings of holy zeal lighting up in our souls when the words from their lips as -- ‘fire’ -- penetrated our

hearts.”³⁴ One of the editorials in the Christian Messenger, leading up to the convention meeting in 1854, sadly acknowledged that future meetings would differ greatly from the past when

... all the principal brethren of the churches were together, old feelings and friendships were revived, and the deep and mysterious principles of Christian union first implanted in the heart by the influence of Divine Love, were awakened to active and delightful experience . . . The Fathers of the Denomination too were then in our midst, and their counsel and their prayers, nay, their very presence at such meetings, inspired hope and gave direction and confidence to every movement. It is, therefore, no reflection on present times, to say, that such occasions as the past, cannot be looked for again in all the deep and thrilling interest which they then awakened.³⁵

The editors suggested, however, that the Regular Baptists should not be discouraged about the future; the example of the “Fathers” endured beyond their deaths.

The example of the “Patriarchs” was to inspire the ministers who followed them. One anonymously written poem romanticized the lives and work of pastors from the first generation and challenged the new “servant[s] of God” to achieve their high standard of ministerial practice. Published in 1854, the year Harris Harding died, “Our Minister’s Old” reflected the veneration and supreme Christ-like example the “Fathers” were believed to have possessed.

Our minister’s old; so we’ve said, Depart;
We’ve severed each lingering tie
That could link our hearts with his noble heart,
To the home of the blest on high.

Our minister’s old; and ‘t is sinful now
For a minister’s years to roll;
He should keep the flush of youth on his brow,
And the *fire* of youth in his soul.

Our minister’s old; so he cannot win

³⁴ Ibid., 1 August 1851.

³⁵ Ibid., 8 June 1854.

The young, by his counsel given;
Nor manhood's feet, from the pathway of sin
Allure to the courts of heaven.

Our minister's old; and 't is strange to say,
When he knows a minister's doom,
That he cannot write not "passing away",
On a face of perpetual bloom.

Our minister's old; but he *once* was young,
And his form was erect and high;
And his heart beat warm when His praise we sung,
And *hope* look'd forth from his eye.

Our minister's old; but we bade him stay
In the hour of his manhood's prime;
He knew not then what he knows to - day -
"To be old" is a fearful crime.

Our minister's old; for e'en fifty years
He has track'd on his pilgrim way;
He has sow'd the seed mid sorrow and tears:
And is *this* his reward to - day?

Then, servant of God, arise and depart,
And toil till the race thou hast won;
Look *not* for a *crown* in this busy mart -
There's a rest on *high* to be won.³⁶

Again, it is crucial to understand that the model established by the first generation -- while in no way homogeneous -- was used as the basis for critiquing ministers in the mid-1850s. In a less-than-subtle way, the closing stanza is a telling judgment on a minister who might have been too concerned about respectability, popularity and social status, or a "crown," and did not want to wait until heaven to receive true rewards. Younger preachers, it was believed by the author, needed to embody more fully those characteristics associated with the "Patriarchs." Whether or not the early preachers warranted their reputations as they

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 23 November 1854.

were variously understood in the 1850s and after mattered little. The way in which they were portrayed in the hagiography became far more important.³⁷

Hagiography became the means through which the Maritime Regular Baptists came to solve what was essentially an identity crisis in the 1850s. Much of the ground work for the outpouring of memorials and histories following the deaths of Manning and Hardings was laid by Silas Rand in his widely read An Historical Sketch of the Nova Scotia Baptist Association, Delivered at the Jubilee Celebration.³⁸ Calling for the imagination of his listeners and readers, Rand romantically explored the first association meeting of June 1799. He described the seven “plain, farmer-like looking men” who became “Patriarchs.”

It is to be regretted that there are no notes of that meeting. We would like to listen to the prayers that were offered, and hear the conversation that took place, and the Resolutions that were formed; but we cannot. That house, however, will long be remembered. In the place where it stood, one of our aged fathers in the ministry, first performed the solemn rite of baptism. That place is still the sphere of his pastoral labors. At the time of his first baptism, a Revival of Religion was in progress in the adjoining township, and about thirty persons came over on horseback to attend the conference, on the Saturday previous. An awful solemnity rested upon them as the cavalcade moved on. A venerable deacon in the company, exclaimed “they look like a mighty host! Even the host of God!”³⁹

While down playing the ecstatic New Light piety on that momentous occasion, Rand asserted the essential identifying elements of Maritime Regular Baptist identity. The first meeting of the association had exhibited revival, conversions and the ritualization of the New Birth in believers’ baptism by immersion performed for the first time by one of the “Fathers”, perhaps Edward Manning. Regardless of what had been added to the Regular

³⁷ This point has also been made by Joan Jacobs Brumberg in Mission For Life (New York: The Free Press, 1980), p.7.

³⁸ Silas T. Rand, An Historical Sketch of the Nova Scotia Baptist Association, Delivered at the Jubilee Celebration (Halifax, NS: Christian Messenger, 1849).

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 6-7.

Baptist tradition, these three interconnected elements remained the bedrock of denominational identity. Rand invited the people to see the sacred space and to hear the young voices of God's Maritime "apostles" who had restored primitive New Testament Christianity to these British colonies.⁴⁰ The denomination's identity had been forged on this "sacred day." Implicitly, Rand stated that the collective ministry of Regular Baptists must therefore always include revival, conversion and, most importantly, immersionist baptism.

The Christian hagiography which emerged following Rand's Jubilee address, provided the perfect ingredient for the kind of inspirational biography that was central to the rhetoric of both the "traditionalists" and respectability seeking "progressives". According to Joan Brumberg in her study of the Judsons, an American Baptist missionary family, Christian biography, "particularly the biography of the trials of sincere individuals, regardless of denomination, had unlimited potential as a molder of character, a socializing agent."⁴¹ She argues that Christian biography helped sustain the evangelical paradigm in antebellum America. In the Maritime context, denominational history -- which was almost always biographical in nature -- became a means for sustaining religious identity for Regular Baptists while at the same time allowing for change which was seen to be consistent with the "Faith of the Fathers." In the words of E. A. Crawley during a memorial address in honour of the late Edward Manning on 26 January 1851

The past is not a mere store house of the vast rubbish of ages, but is in effect bringing even to bear a mighty influence on the present and the future. The existence of this fact is suggested by the text. The interrogation Jehovah makes by the prophet's mouth, "the fathers where are they?" [Zech. 1:5] reminds us that they were no longer, they had ceased to be; but then the next verse shows us that they still lived in their actions and example.⁴²

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7-8.

⁴¹ Brumberg, *Mission for Life*, p. 11.

⁴² *CM*, 7 February 1851.

As he applied his scripture and sermon to his denomination's crisis, Crawley counseled his listeners "to look back at a class of men, their fathers and prophets now nearly all gone, who have left behind them a rich legacy of powerful impressions to mold the present and the future."⁴³

Crawley affirmed in his address the "striking characteristics" of the "Fathers" which were worthy of emulation, although his agenda to transform the denomination into a highly respectable religious body in the Maritimes is obvious. For example, he praised the founders for their sincerity of faith; he was quick to point out, however, their "borrowed" "thought and expression." A lack of education and refinement had limited them to "springs of their own feelings," preventing them from achieving originality of "mind". The only exception Crawley cited was Edward Manning who stood alone as well-read (though self-taught). "He delighted to expatiate on the attributes of Deity, as exemplified especially in the Redeemer, so that if the public instructions of one of our most honoured living ministers is fitly characterized by the expression, 'he preaches Christ', of Mr. Manning it might with equal truth be said, 'he preaches God in Christ'."⁴⁴ Crawley understood well the resistance among his co-religionists to an educated ministry. Given the "inspired" example of Manning, he knew that the former Cornwallis preacher was the only "Patriarch" whose philosophy of ministry embodied the desire for an educated pastor. Indeed, Manning's legacy would prove to be singularly important in defending a more respectable and informed approach to the Baptist faith.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

In an attempt to rename the rampant emotionalism and heterodox theology of his denomination, Crawley sanitized the past by suggesting that the “New Light-New Birth” was little more than Martin Luther’s doctrine of justification by faith alone. One finds it difficult to associate the evangelistic efforts of Harris Harding with Crawley’s dry articulation of a doctrine. In fact, all of the “founders” were popular preachers in the early days because they helped individuals encounter God in often life-changing ways. Nevertheless, Crawley said of the “Fathers” that “so fully are the people impregnated with the effects of their faithful teaching in this respect, that a return to the mysticism and dimness of other times and teaching would seem almost impossible.” Instead of recognizing or admitting that the “dimness of other times” -- almost certainly a reference to the denomination’s New Light heritage which persisted well into the century -- Manning and others came to represent the orderly, respectability-seeking agenda of Crawley. In fact, Crawley used hagiography as a powerful means of articulating his urban, elitist vision for Maritime Regular Baptists. The Allinities and early Baptist “extravagances” in irregular behaviour and thought were buried in the baptisms of these re-invented “Fathers.” The waters of immersion had seemingly washed away, what George Rawlyk has called, the “radical evangelicalism” of the First Great Awakening.⁴⁵

If E. A. Crawley’s hagiography reflected a lack of appreciation for his denomination’s heritage, J. M. Cramp -- who became the principal of Acadia College in 1851 -- attempted a more mediating approach to Maritime Baptist history. Although British born and educated, Cramp was able to achieve a certain level of objectivity over the debate about the nature of the ministry on the future. Unfamiliar with revivals prior to relocating to Horton, he understood well the dynamic of the Convention with its two solitudes. More

⁴⁵ Ibid., See G.A. Rawlyk, Ravished By The Spirit: Religious Revivals, Baptists and Henry

than anyone else, Cramp attempted to link the breadth of the denomination's perspectives to the Faith of the Fathers. In his famous funeral message on the occasion of the death of T. S. Harding, entitled "The Memory of the Fathers," Cramp exhorted his listeners and readers to "Remember your guides." In his introduction, he highlighted the importance of the pedigree of the baptisms of the "Fathers."

. . .our attention will be confined to . . . Joseph Dimock [who] was baptized by Nicholas Pearson, first pastor of the church at Horton; Edward Manning, by T. H. Chipman; Theodore Harding by John Burton; I have not ascertained when and by whom Harris Harding was baptized. These four were fellow workers in the vineyard of the Lord, - Now, they "rest from their labours."⁴⁶

It was important that Cramp connect the history of the "Fathers" with the central rite of passage and identity in the denomination, believer's baptism by immersion. He stated that their piety was expressed in baptizing, preaching, revival and in the integrity of their everyday lives. "Their's was a realizing faith – they felt what they believed. The truth affected their hearts, and was illustrated by their lives."⁴⁷

Having demonstrated the basis of their unity of conviction as preachers, Cramp proceeded to explore the "variety of their gifts." This was essential if he was to prove that diversity was an essential component among the "Patriarchs," and by definition, of the denomination as a whole. Cramp knew if he could convince the constituency that specific approaches of pastors and churches could vary and yet serve a common cause which was motivated by a common piety, the crisis of the 1850's could be calmed if not eliminated.

Alline (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984).

⁴⁶ This notion has been developed most recently in G. A. Rawlyk, The Canada Fire: Radical Evangelicalism in British North America 1775-1812 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1994).

⁴⁷ CM, 17 July 1855. Cramp did not know that Harris Harding was immersed at the hands of James Manning, Edward Manning's brother.

In fact he insisted that the breadth of vision and religious practice of the "Patriarchs" had the potential to strengthen the Regular Baptist presence in the Maritimes. "In the service of the Saviour all kinds and degrees of talent may be employed. There was great diversity among the apostles themselves."⁴⁸

In like manner the gifts of our Nova Scotian fathers, various as they were, were blended for the promotion of the common cause. Every one recognized the affectionate and the judicious in Joseph Dimock; his very countenance be token heavenly mindedness, benevolence, and "a meek and quiet spirit." Edward Manning was strong minded; he was known by his massive thoughts, comprehensive views, stern boldness, and far-sighted penetration. Harris Harding was characterized by enthusiastic fervour; his voice was often tremulous with emotion, and tears flowed down his cheeks, while he besought sinners to be reconciled to God. His namesake Theodore [Seth Harding] enunciated weighty truths in a clear style, and sometimes bore down upon men with an abrupt, startling, hurricane eloquence that nothing could resist. Each had his "proper gift of God." The defects of one were supplied by the excellencies of another, and their very peculiarities were adapted to the circumstances of the times, and the nature of the work in which they were engaged.⁴⁹

Although Cramp was personally committed to a formal evangelicalism with a properly educated clergy, he recognized that his would not become the prevailing model in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, his experience of revivals at Acadia had made him far more open to these "religious outpourings" than he had been in England or Montreal.⁵⁰ Hence, he argued for a multifaceted approach to Baptist life where the urban professional model of the genteel respectable parson existed along side the rural itinerant evangelist-cum-pastor. While insisting upon the essentials of the faith, he noted that even the "Fathers"

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ The revivalism which Cramp encountered in the Maritimes was unfamiliar to him, not having encountered these kinds of religious "outpourings" in England or Montreal. Nevertheless, he was open and respectful of the "Faith of the Fathers" and was delighted when revival came to Acadia College. Interestingly, he enjoyed baptizing students converted in the revival, in the nearby Gaspereau River. See B.M. Moody, "Cramp, J.M." *DCB* 11(1982): 209-210.

possessed a malleable evangelicalism which embraced a variety of forms. Cramp essentially employed a hagiographic approach to the past as a way to justify the two solitudes and convince each side of the debate in the 1850s that the other was acting consistently within the framework of the "Faith of the Fathers."⁵¹

In this regard, Cramp's analysis was not only timely for Maritime Baptists in the 1850s, but also historically accurate. The "Fathers" did reflect the diversity in the denomination. Harris Harding symbolized the profoundly experiential dimension of Regular Baptist piety which would characterize much of the grassroots' spirituality throughout most of the nineteenth century. The New Light evangelist who never fully embraced the emphasis on the order, church discipline and biblicism of Regular Baptist close communionism, Harding longed for the people who heard him preach to be "wrapped up in God." Feeling the presence of God, for him, was far more important than orthodox doctrine. Even immersionist baptism, the ritualization of the New Birth which was so central to Harding's ministry, paled in comparison to the importance of personal, life-changing encounters with God. The irony of his ministry in Yarmouth was that even though he remained essentially a New Light Baptist throughout his life, he achieved a remarkable degree of social acceptability and prestige in southwestern Nova Scotia. The reluctant Baptist Patriarch continued to promote the radical revivalistic piety of the First Great Awakening to the very end.

If Harding represented and advocated the radically experiential dimension of the "Faith of the Fathers," Joseph Crandall spent most of his life trying to remove certain aspects of his New Light past. Converted in an Allinite-style revival, which was ritualized in believer's baptism by immersion, he assumed the role of an effective evangelist. Not

⁵¹ Similar "histories" of the Fathers may be found in CV, 3 February 1858; 10 February

content to advance the New Light movement, he embarked upon a career as a Regular Baptist itinerant preacher in search of religious and social acceptance for his denomination and himself. To this end, Crandall embraced a mild Calvinism and served for a short time in the New Brunswick legislature, in a vain attempt to shed the enthusiastic spirituality of his youth. Ironically, Crandall was not able to achieve the status he desired until late in life, while Harris Harding received social and religious respectability without ever seeking it. Crandall did not appreciate the extent to which New Light piety had been transferred to the Regular Baptist tradition and to his own approach to ministry. Believing that immersionist baptism symbolized a solid break with Anglicanism, he did not understand that the ordinance dramatically portrayed, for many, the New Light-New Birth experience and, therefore, continuity with late eighteenth-century revivalism.

While Edward Manning certainly shared aspirations for Maritime Regular Baptists which were similar to Crandall's, his approach and theological understanding were far more sophisticated. It might be argued that "Father Manning" appeared to have successfully dismantled the New Light tradition by encouraging the creation of an educated, stable, and settled ministry. However, his promotion of revival and immersionist baptism, and his personal spirituality, which was heavily experiential in nature, indicate that the piety forged in the first Great Awakening in Nova Scotia persisted well into the nineteenth century. Manning, and to a lesser extent Harding and Crandall, certainly broadened the New Light tradition, but demonstrated that it was a piety that could assume a number of forms without losing its essence.

If the Patriarchs created the "Faith of the Fathers" during the 1790-1820 period, it became the responsibility of the second generation of Regular Baptist preachers to defend

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and adapt the “Faith” to the 1820-1850 period. During the baptismal controversy in the Maritimes from 1811 to 1848, second generation preachers such as William Elder, Alexander Crawford, E.A. Crawley and Charles Tupper debated the region’s pedobaptists over the ordinance. As the debate raged, Baptist authors became increasingly more confident and scholarly in their approach to defending their tradition. This did not, however, undermine the denomination’s essential piety. Perhaps the brightest preacher of the second generation was Charles Tupper, who became the editor of the Baptist Missionary Magazine of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and an effective apologist for the region’s Regular Baptists. Even though he was successful as a scholar and denominational leader, Tupper suffered from a measure of dissatisfaction in ministry until the 1850s when he led an extensive revival in Aylesford, Nova Scotia. Significantly, during this time he turned down an opportunity to be the editor of the denomination’s paper, the Christian Messenger, so that he could continue leading revival services. Advancing the “Faith of the Fathers” through revival was more important to Tupper than the prestige of editing a leading religious newspaper in the Maritimes. He demonstrated that religion of the head did not necessarily lead to a decline of the religion of the heart.

Ingram Bill’s ministry showed that the New Light ethos of the eighteenth century could be transferred to denominational structures. His balanced evangelicalism, influenced by Edward Manning, operated within the tension between an urban professional model of ministry and the grassroots’ preoccupation with experiential, revivalistic Christianity. Bill’s inclusive approach to Regular Baptist spirituality and life accommodated both the formal and antiformal dimensions of the “Faith of the Fathers.” He reflected how the extremes in his denomination could exist side by side without diluting the “Faith of the Fathers.”

If Bill personified the variety of expressions of the “Faith of the Fathers,” Samuel Elder and his ministry, on the surface, seemed to represent a radical departure from the past. The only college-educated preacher examined in this study, Elder was inspired by literature, theology and history and a desire to be a “professional,” “orderly” clergyman. However, as his experience in ministry grew he became troubled by his lack of success as a revivalist and evangelist. In spite of his “professional” aspirations, he had could not escape the evangelicalism of his youth which measured the value of a preacher by the number of conversions he could trigger through his ministry. It is ironic that while Elder had been as committed to the New Birth, immersionist baptism, and revival as Tupper and Bill, he concluded that his ministry had been “barren” of success. Although few preachers would seek to emulate Samuel Elder’s piety and philosophy of ministry, the anxiety he experienced in the pastorate reflected the extent to which the “Faith of the Fathers” had defined the life and ministry of the denomination.

Given the variety of approaches and expressions of Regular Baptist piety among the first and second generations of preachers in the denomination, it is not surprising that J.M. Cramp chose to highlight these differences in the 1850s in order to address the crisis of identity. While it would be a mistake to overemphasize the importance of Cramp’s biographical histories, his solution was finally accepted by the constituency. In the mid-1850s and during the second half of the nineteenth century, they would agree to disagree and accept each other as brothers and sisters with very different callings, but united by a common commitment to revival, the New Birth and its ritualization in immersionist

baptism. They were Regular Baptists. The "Faith of the Fathers" belonged to them and that was enough.⁵²

⁵² Five years later, Cramp developed these themes more fully in his "Memory of the Fathers," *CM*, 16 July, 1855 and in his The Centenary of the Baptists in Nova Scotia (Halifax, NS: Christian Messenger, 1860).

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