

From Itinerant to Pastor:
The Case of Edward Manning (1767-1851)

by

Barry Moody

Historians have been in general agreement that the roots of the Baptist denomination in the Maritime Provinces lie deep in the Great Awakening. It is felt, however, that by 1800, the Baptist Church had emerged from the chaos and uncertainty of the period of religious upheaval; from the secure footing of the Baptist Association, formed in that year, the denomination would expand and grow, becoming the most dynamic religious force in the Maritimes in the 19th century.

Maurice Armstrong, in the last paragraph of his significant study The Great Awakening in Nova Scotia, 1776-1809 summed up well the prevailing view of what took place. He wrote:

Ecclesiasticism had triumphed; the cycle of the Great Awakening was completed; the revolt against the "forms of Godliness" was ended, and the Protestant Dissenters of Nova Scotia, after their brief but spectacular flight, laid aside the wings of the spirit and settled down to orderly and unexciting growth. ¹

It was not to check the validity of this view but rather to attempt to understand the process that occasioned this paper. How did men, whose early ministerial experience was in the crucible of the Great Awakening, eventually make the transition from itinerant preacher to settled pastor of an established church? Just as importantly, how did a group of people, used to the erratic service of an itinerant, transform themselves into a church, complete with . . . 2

doctrine, practice, building, pastor and the resultant responsibilities? These were the questions that led to the present topic.

The career of Edward Manning and the growth of the Cornwallis Baptist Church were chosen as the vehicle for examining these questions for two reasons. Manning, and the church that he led, have been considered traditionally as among the most stable elements on the Maritime Baptist scene in the last century. Also, the Manning diaries, from 1807-1843, are by far the best single source extant on Baptist growth,² while the Cornwallis Church Records are relatively complete and well organized. If the process of change from itinerancy to establishment is documented anywhere, it should be in the career of Edward Manning.

The Great Awakening in Nova Scotia and its immediate aftermath produced a host of dynamic religious leaders, who collectively have become known as the Baptist Fathers. Theodore Seth Harding, Joseph Dimock, Harris Harding, Thomas Handley Chipman, Joseph Crandall and Edward and James Manning would do much to mould the emerging religious forces in the Maritimes. Of these, Edward Manning was probably the most influential on the overall scene. Born in Ireland in 1767, Manning came with his parents, first to Philadelphia and then to Falmouth, N.S., about 1772. Although born into the Roman Catholic Church, Manning was greatly influenced by the preaching of the Great Awakening. For the remainder of his life, he retained a vivid picture of Henry Aline, with tears flowing, begging him to flee from the wrath to come.³ In 1789, through the preaching of John Payzant and Harris Harding, Manning underwent a dramatic conversion. In later years he related the

details of the event:

While hearing the Rev. John Payzant preach on the 26th of 1789, and several young converts confessing their Lord and Master with much sympathy of soul for poor sinners and for me in particular, my heart was broken. I could not contain myself, but wept aloud and came to a decision to seek the Lord; and to use my own expression at the time, I was determined if I was lost at last to go to Hell begging for mercy. 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 an awful state, and thought I was literally sinking into hell. Then I saw the justice of the Almighty in my condemnation, a most astonishing change having taken place in my views of that justice. If ever I loved any object before or since, it was the eternal justice of God. It appeared to me that I could not but love it, even though it prove my eternal condemnation. The view was overwhelming. I was quite 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 everything. ... I had a great discovery of the vanity of the things of time and sense. I felt a sense of what a miserable state the world was in, and what it was to die out of Christ. ... I discovered the whole world sinking down into eternal misery, and they knew it not, blindfolded by the gods of this world.... My mind now turned upon Christians in general, and love kept increasing. My mind turned upon God. An inquiry arose in my heart, whether it would be possible that God would be infinitely condescending, or could be 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 expression came to my mind, or whether there was any or not. But this I know, my soul was wrapt in God's eternal love. I felt nothing but that glory. ... Then I could call heaven and earth, yea God and angels and men to witness, that I knew my Redeemer lived, and I should live also."

He became a Newlight Congregationalist and in February, 1790, began an itinerant ministry that would take him all over the Maritimes and into the State of Maine.

During this period, his concern for awakening souls was paramount. Doctrine, dogma, church practice, forms of baptism - for all of these, Manning could have readily agreed with Henry Alline that they were "non-essentials." Partly as a result, like many of the Newlight preachers, Manning became entangled in the doctrinal controversies of the 1790s, supporting for a time what became known as the New Dispensation movement.⁵

In 1795, Manning accepted the call to the pastorate of the Cornwallis Newlight Congregationalist Church. E.M.Saunders later painted a picture of quiet, uneventful growth. "From the 19th of October 1795, until January 12th, 1851, Edward Manning faithfully served the Church in Cornwallis as pastor."⁶ The importance of Manning to his pastorate is indicated by I.E. Bill, an early Baptist historian and himself a convert of Mannings.

Over mountains and valley he travelled by day and by night, watching for souls as one that must give an account, until the whole township became thoroughly leavened with the doctrines he proclaimed and with the precepts he enforced.⁷

This at least is the standard view.

It is clear that in the years following 1795, Manning strove hard to put his itinerant beginnings behind him. With a large church to care for, he could not afford the long months of absence that an itinerant ministry necessitated. There were occasional trips to New Brunswick and Maine, but these were, in general, of short duration and became less and less frequent over the fifteen or twenty years following his ordination.

If Manning was changing the form of his ministry during this period, he was also moving in new directions doctrinally. The

appeal of baptism by immersion and the constitution of a church of adult baptized members became irresistible. Following the doctrinal and social upheaval of the New Dispensation movement, the Baptist position seemed secure and stable. After much personal agony, in 1798 Manning travelled to Granville to be immersed by the Rev. Thomas Handley Chipman. That Manning should do this without informing his church or asking its advice caused much adverse comment and some hard feelings.⁸ In spite of this Manning continued to preside over what was clearly becoming a mixed congregation. He baptized by immersion or sprinkling, adults or infants, according to the individual's preference. However, the balance was gradually shifting away from the traditional Congregationalism toward the new, if ill-understood, Baptist position. The two factions continued to "travel together" until 1807.

In 1800, Manning was one of the key figures in the formation of the Baptist Association, although he and most of the other ministers concerned did not preside over Baptist Churches. It was in reality an association of immersed ministers, rather than of Baptist Churches. Unlike many of his fellow Baptist ministers, in the long years ahead Manning appears to have had no reservations about the stand taken at this early stage. He was now a Baptist and would not retreat from that position.

But what would all of this mean in practical terms--both for Manning and for the church that he now led? There was growing tension in the church as Manning took a firmer Baptist stand. Finally, in 1807, the rupture occurred and Manning left the church.

It is not clear from the records whether Manning departed of his own accord or if he was forced out. He recorded in his diary:

...it was (God) that appeared for me in a great storm of affliction when professors of Religion could not bear Sound doctrine and on that account turned my bitter enemies...with putting into my hand some share of worldly property to enable me to purchase a piece of land to build on. And put it into the hearts of many friends to assist me.⁹

It would seem no accident that the acquisition of "some share of worldly property" should coincide with his leaving the church. He now had at his disposal the means of support that made him independent of the church and allowed him to follow the dictates of his conscience. The Cornwallis Baptist Church was formed in late 1807, comprised of Manning, his wife and seven other members. This was only about one tenth of the immersed members of the New-light Church, indicating that much confusion remained in the minds of the church members.

With one brief interruption, Manning would remain the pastor of the Cornwallis Church from 1807 until his death in 1851, but it would not always be the smooth, progressive pastorate pictured by some historians. Manning himself created some of the difficulties through his inability to leave behind completely his itinerant beginnings. In addition, it clearly took the church far longer to fully accept a settled minister and Baptist doctrine than has previously been assumed. Far from a peaceful transition, Manning's years as pastor were tension-filled, acrimonious and at times debilitating, for both pastor and congregation, indicating that the road to stability was far longer, and rockier, than we have been led to believe.

The issue of ministerial support was a problem from the very beginning. As anxious as the people were to have a minister among them, the question of who would pay for his services was long left unanswered. Stretching back behind this problem were the years of erratic itinerant service to which the people were accustomed. The occasional gift to a travelling evangelist was not the same as the year-round support of a settled minister and his family. It is clear that without the income from his labour on his own farm Manning would have been forced to leave Cornwallis within a few years of the formation of the church. Such slackness cannot be accounted for by lack of numbers, for the church expanded rapidly. By 1820 there were 124 adult members, with at least double that number of adherents.¹⁰

The question of support was raised by Manning almost yearly. Committees were formed, recommendations were made, subscriptions were circulated but no real results were forthcoming.¹¹ At times, the situation bordered on disaster. Winter was especially difficult. By February or March, Manning's supply of firewood was usually nearly exhausted. Where the next load was to come from he never knew, and was on occasion forced to beg among his people.¹² By March, 1820, for example, Manning was nearly frantic. His daughter Nancy lay dying, he had only a few days of wood left and was about to be sued for £40 which he owed but could not pay.¹³ On one such occasion he cried in anguish to his God:

O Lord, thou fed Elijah by ravens, thou fed the multitude with a small allowance, and enabled Peter to catch a fish to pay the custom. Lord, now I am thy unworthy servant and am sick and in debt, and not wherewith to pay without distressing my family. O Lord, send help and relieve me. Amen.¹⁴

To his diary he confided his tale of woe and broken promises:

My situation as it respects temporalities is to me truly trying. For many years I supported myself except what some few individuals imparted. years ago I was obliged to sell my Dyke Lott, which was my principal support. I then told my brethren that there must be some new arrangement in regard to my maintenance. They thought so too, and made some exertions for that end, and obtained a subscription to the amount of about 30 pounds, about 2/3 of which hath been paid in produce. This has been a help but nothing to depend on for a support. About 2 years ago I made a statement to the Committee with tears, and they wept too. Then they Started afresh and obtained a Subscription to amt. near 50 pounds, about 1/4 of which is never paid. This amt. I told them at the time would not answer, and it did not meet my Views. I told them I would give them to the last of August or beginning of September to see what they could do. They met as a Committee and concluded to double the Subscription for the present year, 1818, and of that there was about 25 pounds paid. Such is the fruit of their exertions. One of them called and told me that a number of them had taken it upon them to see that I was supported, but what this information meant I never knew. And now I have it not in my power to cloathe myself nor Family, nor to pay my just debts. The cloaths I now wear is unpaid for.¹⁵

This problem remained an important part of the scene for most of the rest of Manning's life, frequently interfering with the carrying out of his pastoral duties. And it tended to make him rather bitter and resentful. In 1823 he could write rather sarcastically: "Lois Calkins began a contribution to get me a watch. I hardly think she will succeed. this comes close to pockets."¹⁶

Not only were the church members constantly behind in the minister's salary but they did little to organize the church upon a sound financial basis. The payment of the account for communion wine was usually several years in arrears and there was frequently no wood at the church, making winter services impossible.¹⁷ It took the congregation 19 years

18

to have the interior of the church plastered and this was finally accomplished only because the mason (a Presbyterian) would accept no payment for his work!¹⁹

Over the years, the financial problems wore away at Manning. On a number of occasions they led him to consider leaving Cornwallis but he was always prevented by his fear of what the sheep would do without their shepherd,²⁰ the conviction (perhaps justified) that things would fall apart without him.

By 1810, Manning had developed a very clear understanding of the financial obligations owed by a church to its settled minister. There is little indication that the church had progressed to the same point. The nature and extent of the problem make it fairly clear that there is more here than the familiar attempt on the part of a congregation to get off as lightly as possible. There seems to have been general agreement that Manning deserved what he demanded-- in fact they frequently voted him larger sums than requested. There was no quarrel with the minister over support. What seemed to be lacking was any understanding of how the desired ends could be attained. For over thirty years after its founding, the Cornwallis Baptist Church failed to organize itself sufficiently to fulfill one of the main temporal duties of a church.

People frequently gave to Manning -- turnips, a side of beef, a load of wood or a sack of grain, or occasionally money-- and often at unexpected times. However, they gave in no systematic or organized manner. On March 7, 1823, Manning recorded that, in the midst of very bad snow storms, he had enough wood to last three more days. Within a week, fifteen loads of wood had arrived in his yard.²¹ The people continued to give as they had given to itinerants-- sporadically, haphazardly and "as the Spirit moved them." It proved a poor financial base on which to build a secure church.

There was clearly confusion in many minds concerning the

obligations of a church; of a more serious nature was the confusion that existed over exactly what constituted a church. The belief that the adult baptized members are the church is of course central to the Baptist position. And yet, this seems to have been only vaguely understood--if understood at all-- by many of Manning's followers. The congregation, the church members and the pewholders all at various times laid claim to supremacy. In an attempt to clarify the situation, in 1820 the church sent to the United States for two dozen Baptist Catechisms and two dozen copies of Church Articles. Manning strove consistently to impress upon his people that neither the congregation nor the owners of the pews were "the church", but rather the immersed adults who had been received by the relation of their experiences. Yet, as late as 1834, the Billtown wing of the church was torn apart over the selection of the "quarester" or choir master (they now proudly boasted a "quire".) The dispute had arisen over whether the pewholders or the church members had the right "to regulate the worship of God, especially the singing."²³ At a special meeting, the church members, not surprisingly, agreed unanimously that it was the right of the church members "to regulate the Singing in every place within its limits, & of course to choose its choirster."²⁴ By the end of the year, the conflict had grown so bitter that Manning would not dispense communion to the church.²⁵ The problem was finally resolved but that such an issue could arise more than twenty-five years after the church's founding is an important comment on the state of affairs.

Along similar lines, in 1837-40 there was a major disruption over the position of the Rev. George McDonald, who had become temporary minister in Manning's absence. After much upheaval, and many

rescinded motions, McDonald was dismissed by the church.²⁶ The real problem arose when it became clear that the majority of the pewholders, many of them now excommunicated for their continued support of McDonald, insisted that he be retained as minister. Who, in fact, was "the church"? Disaster was averted only by the decision of the dissidents to sell their pews.²⁷ Only slowly were the Cornwallis Baptists coming to grips with that important question of what constitutes a church.

Even more confusion is evident in the field of doctrine. Although only seven of Cornwallis's immersed church members followed their pastor into the Baptist Church in 1807, judging by mere numbers Baptist doctrine spread rapidly in the township. In two years, the membership increased to 65 and climbed steadily thereafter. By 1840, the various congregations of the Cornwallis Baptist Church contained 700 members.²⁸ A superficial glance, then, would indicate that Baptist doctrine had triumphed, that Manning had seen "the fields white unto harvest" and had reaped them.

A careful reading of the Church Records and the Manning diaries throws serious doubt on the above view. Throughout his ministry, Manning's church was plagued by doctrinal uncertainty, to the point where one must question whether the majority had any clear perception of Baptist doctrine at all.

Manning's main--an persistent--problem centered around the doctrine of election. After the free willism of the Great Awakening, the early Baptist leaders had shifted back to the basic Calvinism of their Congregationalist forerunners. Certainly, by the second decade of the nineteenth century, there could be no doubt as to where most of the Baptist leaders stood in the conflict between free will and predestination. And yet, the diaries especially are filled with

references to the recurring inroads that the free will movement made in Cornwallis. On April 30, 1819, Manning recorded:

Went to Habitant. I addressed the people... but one woman laughed in meeting, though quite a solemn time. And when I asked her the reason she said it was because I tried to prove the Doctrine of Election. I told her it did not need much proof, that it was to be seen in all parts of the Bible. But she advised me to drop it, that it was not the doctrine of Christ. I replied that it was and that it lay at the Foundation of all Real Religion, and that it was the foundation of the Hope of every poor lost Sinner. I then reproved her for her presumption, and we parted with much dissatisfaction with each other, I believe.²⁹

If this type of thing were an isolated case it would be easier to fit into our understanding of the evolution of the Baptist denomination. But it occurs time after time.

Throughout 1820-22 a free-will preacher by the name of Jacob Norton was active in Cornwallis, profoundly dislocating the Baptist Church there. Manning described him as "full of Wild Fire, false doctrine and abominable intrigue."³⁰ But he was clearly having an impact, Manning referring to it as "the strange fire that is in the land."³¹ He was "much exercised about this flood of false fire, and doctrine that is prevailing among the people."³² Of a monthly conference meeting, Manning would record sadly "A number that are taken with the doctrine and the wonderful Norton attended and renewed covenant, but I fear they are not sincere, for as soon as they could get away they went to Norton's meeting."³³ Although Norton was eventually discredited as an imposter and an immoral character, Manning's wayward followers clearly did not thank him for pointing out their error. It is no wonder that, in drawing up a list of the things that bothered him about his people, he included these two:

5th A neglect of reading the Scriptures and other good books, so that they don't know when the

truth is preached and when not in many points.
 6th An itching of ears to hear strange preachers,
 and not being well instructed by reading are
 liable to be imposed upon by a man of gifts
 and false zeal....³⁴

Many other free will evangelists swept through the township--and the church--leaving doubt and confusion in their wake. The success of men like Norton, Clark Alline, Reynolds, Howard and others would perhaps suggest that Henry Alline's doctrine made a greater and more long lasting impact on the Maritime scene than historians of the Awakening have suggested or nineteenth century Baptist writers have dared admit. Jack Bumsted, in his study of Alline, has written:

Alline's overt attack on Calvinism undoubtedly cost him a good deal of support from within the province....In his 1784 attack on Alline, Jonathan Scott undoubtedly sensed the undercurrent of discontent with Alline's "doctrines" and hit hard at his anti-Calvinism, obviously anticipating that a thorough exposure of the evangelist's break with tradition would turn many against him. In the long run it undoubtedly did, and the successful heirs of Alline's evangelical thrust were the Baptists, whose position was generally Calvinistic in nature.³⁵

It is not at all apparent that the people of Cornwallis were so concerned with the Calvinist tradition, or that they even understood it. Their minister was undoubtedly a Calvinist, but all of his powers--and they were considerable--could not keep his flock from wandering. In late life he wrote that he had spent thirty-five years attempting to "protect the people from the various kinds of doctrine, and the cunning craftiness of subtle, and designing men."³⁶ His frequent lack of success underscored the doctrinal confusion that persisted in the Cornwallis Baptist Church for nearly half a century after its founding.

The willingness of the Cornwallis people to follow new leaders--both Baptist and non-Baptist--and the frequency with which this took place, especially during Manning's absences or illnesses, would seem to indicate that at heart the people were uninterested in doctrine at all. They were Baptists because Manning had given them forceful, dynamic leadership on key occasions and Manning was a Baptist. It was a commitment based on personality, not conviction. If Manning were not constantly on the spot, they would follow someone else, Baptist or non-Baptist, Calvinist or not. And it is remarkable on how many of these occasions the ring leaders were the deacons of the church themselves.

Manning knew his people well and seemed to be well aware of their failing in this regard. In writing about a series of revivals on the North Mountain, he commented:

Howard the imposter hath been among the people, and they have had a noisy meeting. this is the criterion of religion with some people, to have a bustle, and this with them is an infallible proof that the preacher is sent of God, and that the ado is the work of God, and so they willingly are duped.³⁷

When Manning went on an extended missionary tour of New Brunswick and Maine, the man chosen by the church as his successor was a Baptist of questionable theological soundness. Even after charges of immorality were proved (he molested several of his young parishioners on Prince Edward Island), the church refused for a time to remove him. When he finally left, he took with him an important segment of the church, forming a separate congregation known locally as McDonaldites.³⁸ Personality, not doctrine, seems to have been the motivating force in the religious life in Cornwallis Township.

In matters of church organization, practice and doctrine, it is

difficult to see the ordered transition to a settled church that has on occasion been suggested or assumed. Certainly part of the problem lay in the nature of the society itself, where less stability is indicated than one would perhaps expect. However, it is clear that part of the difficulty originated with the pastor himself and the way in which he attempted to lead his people.

The church over which Manning presided was, in the early years, of manageable size. Although it grew fairly rapidly from its small beginnings in 1807, for some time support remained localized in the Canard region. However, the itinerant spirit in Manning did not die with his acceptance of the call to a pastorate. If obligations, both family and church, in general kept him from the long missionary journeys, the township itself offered an exciting if smaller field. Manning's diary reveals that he was almost constantly on the move, pushing his way into new areas, conversing with people of any denomination, preaching, visiting, marrying, burying. In some respects he was still very much the itinerant. He was away so frequently that his wife resorted to "illness" in an attempt to keep him at home. She frequently had "the glooms", as Manning called it, and began "dying" about 1815. She was still well enough 36 years later to walk in her husband's funeral procession!

Manning's efforts, of course, paid off in new converts and a widening sphere of influence. By 1820 his pastorate encompassed the entire township, in which he was the only settled Baptist minister. In addition, there were by this time four or five very distinct, but widely separated, areas of support. As the population of the

township grew, the area to be covered became an increasing burden. Manning could not be among the people as constantly as was necessary for a weak and still confused church. He was not always able to be where he was most needed. For example, in the middle of the Norton controversy, Manning, while preaching in a community on the North Mountain, was able to stir the people deeply. They begged him to stay until the next Sunday, but he could not because he had appointments to preach elsewhere in the township. It is not surprising that Norton should be able to make rapid strides on such an occasion.³⁹ In many respects Manning had the advantages of neither an itinerant, who could come and stay in a community for as long as seemed necessary, nor a settled pastor of a manageable church, who was present in the community constantly. On visiting one of the areas most prone to waywardness, Manning noted with great insight:

found the People (notwithstanding the dreadful prejudices that have existed in the minds of many) friendly and kind. Think if I could be more among the people, that their opposition to Truth would come down. 40

Although he correctly identified the problem, he proved unable to provide the solution.

When the inevitable happened and his extended pastorate began to break up into its geographic parts, Manning felt betrayed. Although by the late 1820s there were many young men entering the ministry, looking for pastorates, Manning clearly viewed this as his field, one and indivisible. When the Berwick Church, or 2nd Cornwallis, was carved out of the western portion of the field in 1829 and called to the pulpit William Chipman, one of Manning's deacons turned preacher, there was anger and bitterness in Manning's heart. He could only attribute the establishment of a separate church

to the intrigues of the Chipman family, the most powerful and contentious element within the Cornwallis Church.⁴¹ He never understood what was happening in the township nor did he ever become reconciled to the breakup of his old itinerant field. Two years after the founding of 2nd Cornwallis, Manning could write of the people of that district "O that dear people, how they long for their old unworthy pastor."⁴²

The nature of Cornwallis Township was being transformed during this period. People were beginning to identify with the immediate vicinity rather than the broader area. The meaning of "community" was changing along with people's needs. They demanded a church in their midst, with a pastor more readily available. This was at the heart of the conflict between Manning and David Harris, the worst of all the disruptions in the Cornwallis Church during this period. Harris, a Baptist minister, attempted to work in Cornwallis in the expectation of succeeding to the pastorate when Manning passed to his reward. Co-operation was possible for a time, but when Harris built up a following in some of the more remote areas of the field, bitter controversy ensued that raged for over six years. Clearly part of the problem originated in Manning's fear that the already inadequate financial support given to the minister in Cornwallis would be divided.⁴³ But there was more there than mere monetary concern. Manning failed to understand what was happening in Cornwallis, attributing the unrest to "a spirit of partyism," the intrigues of the habitually discontent.⁴⁴ Manning's dreams, which he faithfully recorded, were often very revealing. In the midst of the crisis he dreamed "that an old lady charged Mr. D. Harris with the stealing of sheep, that he was exceedingly disorderly,

and would not be silenced. I endeavoured to preserve order, but all in vain."⁴⁵ In viewing the bitterness, the confusion and the discension, one is forced to agree with Manning that "religion is disgraced, and driven from among us."⁴⁵

Manning's resistance to the shift to a community-oriented church is in many respects ironic. The stabilization of the Baptist Church, for which Manning worked so hard throughout his life, would have been easier to accomplish with greater contact between minister and congregation. It is probable too that a church identified with the emerging community would have found financial support more readily available. Manning's view of the broader pastorate and his determination to treat it as a small mission field to some extent helped insure the defeat of the very things that he worked so hard to attain.

Manning began his ministerial career as an itinerant preacher and perhaps in many respects never moved much beyond that point in actual sentiment. In the early years of Baptist growth he was kept at home by a young family, inadequate financial security and a large mission field at his door step. In the 1820s he was able to channel his great energies into the broader Maritime field, but without having to leave Cornwallis. For over three years, 1825-28, he was almost completely preoccupied with events in Halifax. The revolt in St. Paul's Anglican Church, the formation of the Granville Street Baptist Church and the resulting tensions and problems absorbed his energies and attention. He was clearly the pivotal figure in the early stages especially; he acted in some respects as an armchair itinerant, conducting his campaigns through the mail, by visits from the key Halifax people and the occasional trip to

47

Halifax.

The founding of Horton Academy in 1828 and Manning's election to the presidency of the Nova Scotia Baptist Education Society provided another vehicle whereby his influence could be greatly expanded.⁴³ Manning found the work exciting and challenging, placing him at the forefront of the movement for doctrinal stability within the broader Maritime community.

After 1829, the breakup of his large church and the factions and bitterness that characterized this movement led Manning to reassess his role. His only surviving child was now safely married and provided for. Mrs. Manning, while not well, was clearly no worse than she had been for the past fifteen years. The problems in the church tended to drive Manning away, only allowing for a brief division. In a break with the past thirty years, much of 1830 was spent on missionary tours, in spite of tears and recriminations from Mrs. Manning.⁴⁴ David Harris was left free to increase his support in Cornwallis; the situation clearly grew worse in Manning's absence.⁴⁵

A revival of major proportions in the Billtown wing of the church kept Manning preoccupied throughout much of 1833 and early 1834, but July and August found Manning once again on the road. His missionary tour took him to south-western New Brunswick, where the problems of the people moved him deeply. He wrote:

... that I say be directed while I am in this part of this province. this people need help. the Unitarian Baptists with their anti-Christian free-willism, is spreading their delusion among this uninformed people, and there is a charming people here. 51

He had preached in the same area forty-three years before and he felt happy and useful again after the debilitating struggles of the

just few years. Should he stay and labour where he was useful? He confided to his diary: "on some acc'ts I dread to go home, and truly on some acc'ts I dread to stay away."⁵² And again: "thinking much about Cornwallis. I long to go home, but truly there are things existing there that distresses me, and makes the sweat pour off of me when I think of going home."⁵³ So home he did, however, to find of course that the situation had worsened in his absence. His own deacons were now in full revolt and by late fall communion had to be suspended because of the discension within the church.⁵⁴ Once again Manning left rather than face the situation.

In mid 1835 he wrote: "I find the brethren of this church are opposed to my going to the State of Maine, but they do not know my feeling, and cannot judge for me."⁵⁵ This time Manning stayed away for nearly a year, obviously enjoying himself immensely. He was flattered by the attention paid him and, although 68 years old, served as the catalyst for several revivals, preaching almost every day, travelling, visiting, exhorting. Soon after he arrived in Maine he recorded: "laid down, and dreamed of fishing, and catching fish in abundance. this I am foolish enough to think a good dream."⁵⁶ He reluctantly went home in the spring of 1836, although he was forced to ask himself "Is it duty to go to Cornwallis, and be immersed there, as in a prison, fearing a factious party in my time of life...?"⁵⁷

It was a different Edward Manning who returned to his church this time. He had come full cycle and was once again the unabashed itinerant. He bluntly informed his deacons that

I would preach to them all I could. I loved the people and would help them all that laid in my

power, that I would not be absolutely bound to any people, but would go wherever I thought the Lord called me.⁵³

In an open letter to the church he was even more forthright:

...I do feel that I am the old Pastor of this Church and I live in the affections of the Church and Congregation and the public generally (there are it is true some Exceptions)...I shall Return as soon as I can with a clear Conscience....⁵⁹

And with that farewell, he was off once again, this time staying away for over a year. In exasperation the church finally voted to remove Manning as pastor.⁶⁰ At about the same time, Manning wrote to the church resigning his position.⁶¹ Although Manning later resumed the leadership, it was really more as pastor emeritus than as full-time minister. He ended his active ministry as he had begun it, as an itinerant.

This paper was undertaken for the purpose of examining the transition from itinerant to pastor, from awakened Christians to settled church. Yet, in the case of Edward Manning and the Cornwallis Church, it would appear that the transition did not take place at all, at least not before 1840. Manning remained at heart an itinerant and in many respects the Baptists of Cornwallis failed to develop the characteristics of a settled church.

Only tentative conclusions can be drawn from this study until it can be determined whether or not the Cornwallis experience was shared by other Baptist Churches in the Maritimes. If Manning and Cornwallis are typical, then clearly the period of stabilization for Maritime Baptists comes at a later date than we have been led to believe. In studying the development of the denomination, too

much reliance has been placed on the early Fathers. It is clear that there was often a wide gap between pastor and congregation, that the minister did not always reflect trends within his church. Although priding themselves on the democratic spirit of the denomination, Baptist writers have apparently been guilty of elitism in viewing their past. It is time to reassess the evolution of the Baptist Church, this time "from the bottom up." The move from revival to established church may be found to be a longer process than previously realized and the Great Awakening may achieve a new significance in our understanding of Maritime society in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Notes

- 1 Maurice W. Armstrong, The Great Awakening in Nova Scotia, 1776-1802 (Hartford, Conn., 1948), p. 138
- 2 Manning's diaries have been for many years in the Baptist Collection, Acadia University, Wolfville, N.S. However, they have been virtually unusable because of Manning's very poor penmanship. Thanks to Dr. Freeman Fenerty, who has painstakingly transcribed the diaries, this valuable resource is now available to scholars.
- 3 quoted in E.M. Saunders, History of the Baptists of the Maritime Provinces (Halifax, 1902), p. 27.
- 4 Ibid., pp. 27-8.
- 5 See Brian Cuthbertson (ed.), The Journal of John Payzant (Hantsport, N.S., 1981), for the best description of this movement.
- 6 Saunders, p. 134.
- 7 I.L. Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches of the Maritime Provinces of Canada (St. John, N.B., 1880), p. 134.
- 8 Ibid., p. 30.
- 9 MS Diaries of Edward Manning, Baptist Collection, Vaughn Library, Acadia University, Wolfville, N.S., Nov. 21, 1807.
- 10 Saunders, p. 141.
- 11 See for examples, Manning's diaries, Nov. 7, 1812; Dec. 10, 1814; Nov. 4, 1817; Dec. 23, 1817; May 3, 1819; Jan. 26, 1820; June 12, 1820.
- 12 Manning's diary, Feb. 15, 1813.
- 13 Ibid., March 7, 1820.
- 14 Ibid., April 17, 1813.
- 15 Ibid., May 13, 1820.
- 16 Ibid., Feb. 18, 1823.
- 17 Ibid., Jan. 1, 1815; Oct. 11, 1817.
- 18 Ibid., Nov. 19, 1813.
- 19 Ibid., Nov. 23, 1813.
- 20 Ibid., June 24, 1819; Feb. 3, 1820.

- 21 Ibid., Mar. 7, 1823.
- 22 Acadia University, Baptist Collection, Records of Cornwallis Baptist Church (Upper Canada), Record Book I, 1816-1834, Nov. 11, 1820, p.56.
- 23 Ibid., Book II, July 12, 1834, p. 39.
- 24 Ibid., Aug. 27, 1834, p. 40.
- 25 Ibid., Nov. 8, 1834; Manning's diary, Nov. 3, 1834.
- 26 Records of the Cornwallis Baptist Church, Book II, Feb. 7, 1838, p.66
- 27 Ibid., May 1840, p.84.
- 28 Minutes of the Nova Scotia Baptist Association for the year 1840, pp.4-6.
- 29 Manning's diary, April 30, 1819.
- 30 Ibid., Oct. 24, 1821.
- 31 Ibid., Sept. 7, 1820.
- 32 Ibid., Sept. 11, 1820.
- 33 Ibid., Sept. 7, 1820.
- 34 Ibid., Nov. 4, 1817.
- 35 J.W. Bumsted, Henry Allina (Toronto, 1971), pp.87-8.
- 36 Manning's diary, Nov. 29, 1831.
- 37 Ibid., Dec. 28, 1838.
- 38 For a very confusing sequence of events, see Records of the Cornwallis Baptist Church, Book II, 1836-40, pp.54-84.
- 39 Manning's diary, Aug. 18, 1820.
- 40 Ibid., Aug. 2, 1821.
- 41 see ibid., Jan. to Mar., 1822.
- 42 Ibid., July 23, 1831.
- 43 Ibid., April 16, 1832.
- 44 ibid., May 26, 1831.
- 45 Ibid., Sept. 28, 1831.

- 46 Ibid., April 26, 1835.
- 47 See ibid., for 1825-1828.
- 48 For the founding of Horton Academy, see Memorials of Acadia College and Horton Academy for the Half-Century 1825-1873 (Montreal, 1881), pp.25-31; R.S. Longley, Acadia University, 1838-1938 (Wolfville, 1939), pp.15-22.
- 49 Manning's diary, May 7, 1832.
- 50 See ibid., Dec., 1832, Jan., Feb., 1833; Records of Cornwallis Baptist Church, Book II, Feb.-Mar., 1833, pp.3-11.
- 51 Manning's diary, July 13, 1834.
- 52 Ibid., July 24, 1834.
- 53 Ibid., Aug. 2, 1834.
- 54 Ibid., Nov. 8, 1834; Records of Cornwallis Baptist Church, Book II, Nov. 8, 1834, p.41.
- 55 Manning's diary, July 12, 1835.
- 56 Ibid., Aug. 16, 1835.
- 57 Ibid., May 11, 1836.
- 58 Ibid., June 16, 1836.
- 59 Cornwallis Church Records, Book II, Aug. 3, 1836, pp.53-4.
- 60 Ibid., July 3, 1837, p.53.
- 61 Ibid., Manning to Holmes Chipman, July 13, 1837, p. 62.