

Ontario Baptists and the War of 1812

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Article abstract

This paper examines both the impact of the War of 1812 on the Baptist churches in Ontario, as well as on the response of Baptists to the war. To be sure, the war had wrought devastation upon Upper Canadian churches, and Baptist churches were no exception in this regard. All Baptists were isolated from their American colleagues, friends, and support. Upper Canadian Baptists had suffered even more through the ignominy of disloyal pastors, and the closure of churches. There may have been a purging of Americans from the Methodists of Upper Canada, but there does not seem to be the same happening among the Baptists. No doubt the desperate need among Upper Canadian Baptists for American help was a factor in this willingness to have American missionaries return. The most passionate loyalty expressed in the evidence that remains was a cross-border ecumenism that speaks to the power of the evangelical impulse. Once the war ended, the churches could quickly reopen relations and get back to the work of the church.

ONTARIO BAPTISTS AND THE WAR OF 1812¹

By Gordon L. Heath

Pennsylvania-born Michael Smith (1776-c.1816) moved with his family to Upper Canada in 1810 where he taught school at Niagara (now Niagara-on-the-Lake) and engaged in itinerant Baptist preaching. Shortly after the outbreak of war, he and his family fled back to the United States because he refused to take the oath of allegiance as demanded by the government. He made it clear to his readers why he fled: "And further I will remark, that I am a firm friend of my native country, the United States; in consideration of which, I left the province of Upper Canada, where I was settled with my family, and all the prop-

erty I had in the world, rather than fight against my countrymen."² Unlike Smith, American-born Joseph Winn, pastor of

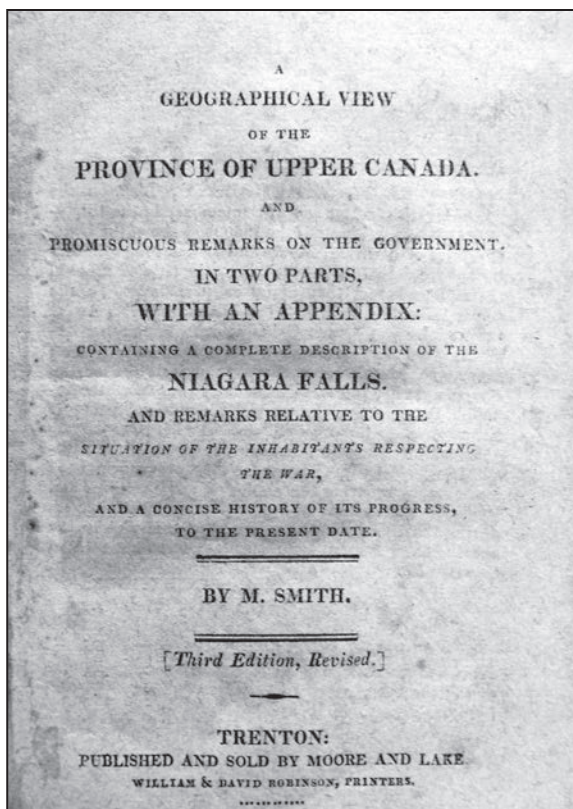
Abstract

This paper examines both the impact of the War of 1812 on the Baptist churches in Ontario, as well as on the response of Baptists to the war. To be sure, the war had wrought devastation upon Upper Canadian churches, and Baptist churches were no exception in this regard. All Baptists were isolated from their American colleagues, friends, and support. Upper Canadian Baptists had suffered even more through the ignominy of disloyal pastors, and the closure of churches. There may have been a purging of Americans from the Methodists of Upper Canada, but there does not seem to be the same happening among the Baptists. No doubt the desperate need among Upper Canadian Baptists for American help was a factor in this willingness to have American missionaries return. The most passionate loyalty expressed in the evidence that remains was a cross-border ecumenism that speaks to the power of the evangelical impulse. Once the war ended, the churches could quickly reopen relations and get back to the work of the church.

Résumé: Cet article examine à la fois l'impact de la guerre de 1812 sur les églises baptistes de l'Ontario et la réaction des Baptistes à la guerre. La guerre a eu un effet dévastateur sur les églises du Haut-Canada en général, et celles des Baptistes ont souffert comme les autres. Tous les Baptistes ont été coupés de leurs coreligionnaires, amis, et appuis américains. Ceux du Haut-Canada ont souffert davantage par l'ignominie de pasteurs déloyaux et la fermeture d'églises. Les Baptistes haut-canadiens ne semblent pas avoir purgé leurs rangs d'Américains comme l'ont fait peut-être les Méthodistes. Sans doute leur besoin désespéré d'aide américaine explique en bonne partie le fait qu'ils ont rapidement accepté le retour de missionnaires américains. Une fois la guerre finie, les églises ont vite rétabli leurs relations avec leurs coreligionnaires aux États-Unis et ont repris leur travail évangélique.

¹ Thanks to Ray Hobbs for the sharing of his expertise on this subject, and for providing some much-needed tips on where to find sources. Thanks to Bill Sumners at the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives for sending me copies of association minutes, as well as for the granting of the Lynn E. May, Jr., Study Grant that allowed me to travel to the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives. Appreciation is also extended to Nick Caric and Melissa Richer for identifying the Ontario Baptist records at the Canadian Baptist Archives, McMaster Divinity College.

² Michael Smith, *A Geographical View of the Province of Upper Canada and the Promiscuous Remarks on the Government in Two Parts, with an Appendix:*



the Baptist church in Ameliasburg (later referred to as Murray Baptist Church), remained in the province and even assisted the government by using his team to carry supplies for the troops. When the war ended, Ontario Baptists immediately asked American churches for missionaries and financial support, and that assistance arrived within months and continued for decades.

These disparate reactions provide

concrete examples of the impact of the war on a small struggling evangelical denomination, as well a glimpse of the range of political loyalties that existed within Upper Canadian Baptist churches. They also illustrate the central argument of this article: the war did not entirely eclipse evangelicalism's cross-border relationships, nor did evangelicalism completely erase national identities.

John Moir has noted that "regionalism seems to be the most important factor in determining the degree of American influences, both positive and negative, on Canadian Protestantism."³ This research supports this claim, for there were very different experiences of the war in the Maritimes and Upper Canada.⁴ This study of Ontario Baptists and the war does, however, challenge some assumptions about post-war anti-Americanism and nascent Canadian nationalism. There was no quick movement to purge their churches of American influences, few, if any, displays of "Canadian" identity, and good reasons for Upper Canadian authorities to be concerned about Baptists and their allegiance to the Crown.

It also challenges some assumptions about the strength of cross-border evangelicalism. Historians of Christianity have begun to note the importance of the imperial and British connection to denominations in early nineteenth-cen-

Containing a Complete Description of the Niagara Falls and Remarks Relative to the Situation of the Inhabitants Respecting the War, and a Concise History of Its Progress to the Present Date (Trenton: William and David Robinson, 1812), 117.

³ John Moir, "American Influences on Canadian Protestant Churches before Confederation," *Church History* 36: 4 (1967), 440.

⁴ For Maritime Baptists and the war, see Gordon L. Heath, "'The Great Association Above:' Maritime Baptists and the War of 1812," (under consideration).

tury British North America.⁵ Rather than placing the denominations on a trajectory towards independence from Britain (and becoming more “Canadian”), they have correctly noted that the imperial connection and identity often remained (though frequently contested or as imagined constructions) and provided an ideological framework for their relationships with one another and their role in Canada and the world. This imperial and British connection is important to note, for it provided a crucial ideological backdrop for the churches’ support for late-Victorian conflicts.⁶ But what also needs to be noted is the radical evangelicalism of Baptists in the earliest decades of the nineteenth century and how it provided an ideological framework for Baptist identity and relationships.

While a number of prominent Upper Canadians had ideological, social, and eco-

nomie ties that “spanned the border” and which encouraged and sustained cross-border relations,⁷ radical evangelicalism was a vibrant ideology that encouraged and sustained cross-border contacts among Baptist communities. Radical evangelicalism was, as George Rawlyk argues, “the heart of Canadian evangelicalism.”⁸ Evangelical services were informal and often emotional. Itinerant ministry was commonplace, with numerous individuals on the road preaching revival and seeking converts.⁹ It was a culture whereby rank and deference to authority was giving way to ideals of individual self-expression, social equality, and democratic consent.¹⁰ This emotional and revolutionary evangelical religion of the Baptists and Methodists flourished in the frontier situation, for as Dan Goodwin notes, it was adaptive, provided comfort for those in hardship, and required minimum requirements for leaders.¹¹ Regenera-

⁵ Nancy Christie, “Introduction: Theorizing a Colonial Past: Canada as a Society of British Settlement,” in *Transatlantic Subjects: Ideas, Institutions, and Social Experience in Post-Revolutionary British North America*, edited by Nancy Christie (Montreal/Kingston/London/Ithaca: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2008), 3-41; Todd Webb, “How the Canadian Methodists became British: Unity, Schism, and Transatlantic Identity, 1827-54,” in *Transatlantic Subjects*, 159-98; Michael Gauvreau, “The Dividends of Empire: Church establishments and Contested Identities in the Canadas and the Maritimes, 1780-1850,” in *Transatlantic Subjects*, 199-250; Todd Webb, “Making Neo-Britons: The Transatlantic Relationship between Wesleyan Methodists in Britain and the Canadas, 1815-1828,” *British Journal of Canadian Studies* 18, 1 (2005), 1-25; Denis McKim, “‘Righteousness Exalteth a Nation’: Providence, Empire, and the Forging of the Early Canadian Presbyterian Identity,” *CSCH Papers* 2008, 47-66.

⁶ Gordon L. Heath, *A War with a Silver Lining: Canadian Protestant Churches and the South African War, 1899-1902* (Montreal/Kingston/London/Ithaca: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2009).

⁷ Jane Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle and Upper Canada: a Developing Colonial Identity* (Montreal/Buffalo: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), 7.

⁸ George A. Rawlyk, *The Canada Fire: Radical Evangelicalism in British North America, 1775-1812* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), xv.

⁹ Daniel Goodwin, *Into Deep Waters: Evangelical Spirituality and Maritime Calvinistic Baptist Ministers, 1790-1855* (Montreal/Kingston/London/Ithaca: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), 102ff.

¹⁰ Nancy Christie, “In These Times of Democratic Rage and Delusion,” in *The Canadian Protestant Experience*, edited by George Rawlyk (Burlington: Welch, 1990), 10.

¹¹ Goodwin, *Into Deep Waters*, 5.

tion, as Rawlyk notes, “was the pivotal and quintessential Christian experience,”¹² and itinerant Baptist preachers or Methodist circuit riders sought to make converts at every stop. This radical evangelicalism was so extreme that it “was able to cut itself free from largely secular concerns and preoccupation.”¹³ What the experience of Ontario Baptists indicates is that the cross-border evangelical impulse was strong enough to allow for rapid reintegration of American missionaries with the churches as soon as the war ended. However, evangelicalism did not completely eradicate national identities, for during the war a number of Baptist leaders revealed their pro-American loyalties and fled to the States and, in one instance, one was arrested for sedition.

William Gribbin’s study is the authoritative work on the subject of the American churches and the war.¹⁴ He notes how the war exacerbated tensions in the States that already existed between the various denominations, and was both

a challenge and an opportunity to the various churches. He also makes it clear that there was no religious uniformity; in general, Baptists (especially in the Southern States) and Methodists were supportive of the war effort, whereas New England Congregationalism was “the heart of religious opposition to the war.”¹⁵ Numerous other studies have also been made on the American churches and the war.¹⁶ However, how Canadian churches responded to the war has been a neglected subject. One can find references to particular denominations and the war imbedded in various books and articles, but there is very limited research specifically on the war and the churches. Ray Hobbs’ research on Upper Canadian churches and the war has been presented in various contexts, but his conclusions have so far remained unpublished.¹⁷ James Robertson’s “Band of Brothers” looks at Methodists in Upper Canada and some of their cross-border troubles,¹⁸ Peter

¹² Rawlyk, *The Canada Fire*, xvi.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ William Gribbin, *The Churches Militant: the War of 1812 and American Religion* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1973).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁶ Ralph Beebe, “The War of 1812,” in *The Wars of America: Christian Views*, edited by Ronald A. Wells (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 25-43; William Gribbin, “Covenant Transformed: the Jeremiad Tradition and the War of 1812,” *Church History* 40 (September 1971), 297-305; William Gribbin, “War of 1812 and American Presbyterianism: Religion and Politics during the Second War with Britain,” *Journal of Presbyterian History* 47 (December 1969), 320-39; William Gribbin, “American Episcopacy and the War of 1812,” *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 38 (March 1969), 25-36; J. Earl Thompson, “An ‘Unnecessary, Unjust, and Inexpedient’ War: Congregational Clergy Dissent against the War of 1812,” *Andover Newton Quarterly* 11 (September 1970), 35-47; Lawrence S. Kaplan, “A New Englander defends the War of 1812: Senator Varnum to Judge Thatcher,” *Mid-America* 46 (October 1964), 269-80.

¹⁷ See Ray Hobbs, “Religion and the War of 1812 in Upper Canada – Part One: British Military Chaplains,” unpublished paper. Interviews with Hobbs revealed a number of important insights, especially about Baptists serving in the militia.

¹⁸ James Tyler Robertson, “Band of Brothers: Connection and Tension within Upper-Canadian

Brock explores the dilemma Mennonite, Tunker and Quaker settlers faced when pressured by the government in Upper Canada to support the war effort,¹⁹ and Gordon Heath's "The Great Association Above" examines Maritime Baptists and their cross-border relations with American Baptists.²⁰ But much more is needed in order for a clearer picture to emerge of what occurred in Upper Canadian religion during the war years.

The primary sources available for a study of Ontario Baptists and the War of 1812 are limited. There were no denominational newspapers published in British North America at that time,²¹ no larger-than-life political figure in Ontario Baptist circles like Church of England clergyman John Strachan (whose personal papers and public statements provide ample opportunity for analysis), no printed

sermons, and limited commentary on the war in what has survived. Nevertheless, there are sources that do provide helpful glimpses of the condition and convictions of Baptists during the war. Local church minutes and association records (both from Ontario and the United States) provide important details.²² Other records that have been consulted are court documents in the Upper Canada Sundries relating to Elijah Bentley (Baptist pastor),²³ the *Funeral Sermon of Elder Elkanah Holmes* (Baptist pastor),²⁴ publications of Michael Smith (Baptist lay preacher and educator),²⁵ and material in various postwar publications.²⁶

Baptists in Upper Canada

Baptists separated from the Church of England in early-seventeenth-century England in part due to their belief

Methodism during the War of 1812," *CSCH Papers 2010* (forthcoming). Robertson is working on a PhD dissertation that will explore Canadian churches and the War of 1812, but that is a few years away from completion.

¹⁹ Peter Brock, "Accounting for Difference: The Problem of Pacifism in Early Upper Canada," *Ontario History* 90:1 (Spring 1998), 19-30.

²⁰ Heath, "The Great Association Above."

²¹ The first Canadian Baptist publication in British North America was the *Baptist Missionary Magazine of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick* in 1827. For a brief summary of the development of the religious press in Canada, see Gordon L. Heath, "Forming Sound Public Opinion: The Late Victorian Canadian Protestant Press and Nation-Building," *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society* XLVIII (2006), 109-59.

²² Upper Canadian church records are located at the Canadian Baptist Archives, McMaster Divinity College, Hamilton, Ontario. American association material can be located at the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

²³ Depositions from his trial are located at the National Archives, Ottawa (Upper Canada Sundries, microfilm #C-4508).

²⁴ William Parkinson, *The Funeral Sermon of Elder Elkanah Holmes* (New York: G.F. Bunce, 1832).

²⁵ Smith, *A Geographical View of the Province of Upper Canada*; Michael Smith, *A Narrative of the Sufferings in Upper Canada, with His Family, In the Late War, and Journey Through Virginia and Kentucky, of M. Smith, Minister of the Gospel* (Lexington, 1817).

²⁶ Marilla Marks, *Memoirs of the Life of David Marks, Minister of the Gospel* (Dover, NH: Freewill Baptist Printing Establishment, 1846); I.D. Stewart, *The History of the Freewill Baptists, for Half a Century with and Introductory Chapter, Volume One* (Dover, NH: Freewill Baptist Printing Establishment, 1862);

in baptizing adults who believed, rather than baptizing infants who could not. They also rejected the Church of England hierarchy and emphasized a local church government that worked with other Baptist churches through “associations.”²⁷ They were not inherently pacifists like Mennonites or Quakers, nor did they have qualms about political allegiances.²⁸

The ending of the American Revolutionary War in 1783 brought about a remarkable change in the religious composition of the British territory, for during and after the war over 50,000 loyalists headed north to British-held territory (both the Maritimes and Upper and Lower Canada). Within the mix of Loyalists who arrived in the frontier land of Upper and Lower Canada were Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans, Mennonites, and Quakers, but few Baptists.

After the flood of Loyalists came American settlers to Ontario lured by the offers of land rather than by any commitment to the Crown. By 1812 there were 100,000 settlers in Upper Canada (approximately eighty percent American born), and 300,000 settlers in Lower Canada (with less than ten percent American born).²⁹ The religious diversity of Upper Canada, as Curtis Fahey notes, “mocked the lofty notions [the Church of England] had of its status.”³⁰ A summary of ordained clergy in 1812 indicates that there were 44 ordained ministers in Upper Canada: 12 were Methodist, 9 Presbyterian or Reformed, 6 Church of England, 6 Baptist, 5 Roman Catholic, 5 Mennonite, and 1 Lutheran.³¹ These figures do not indicate the number of itinerant Baptists and other missionaries who travelled throughout the province.

John Peck and John Lawton, *An Historical Sketch of the Baptist Missionary Convention of the State of New York; Embracing a Narrative of the Origin and Progress of the Baptist Denomination in Central and Western New York* (Utica: Bennett and Bright, 1837); John Howson, *Sketches of Upper Canada, Domestic, Local, and Characteristic: To Which Are Added, Practical Details for the Information of Emigrants of Every Class; and Some Recollections of the United States of America* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1821); F.A. Cox and J. Hoby, *The Baptists in America: A Narrative of the Disputation from the Baptist Union in England to the United States and Canada* (New York: Leavitt, Lord and Company, 1836); and various 1837 issues of the *Canadian Baptist Magazine and Missionary Register*.

²⁷ Baptists rejected any outside authority over the local church (such as a bishop), and ran their churches on a “congregational model” of church governance that left all decisions in the hands of each local church. An “association” was the name given to a group of Baptist churches in geographical proximity that chose to associate with one another and work together on common projects. A group of associations often formed a convention or denomination. A Baptist church does not have to join an association, but most did (and still do).

²⁸ Although they were one of the first Protestant groups to advocate for religious freedom—meaning that all denominations should be free to worship as they saw fit without government (or established church) coercion.

²⁹ Christie, “In These Times of Democratic Rage and Delusion,” 10.

³⁰ Curtis Fahey, *In His Name: the Anglican Experience in Upper Canada, 1791-1854* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1991), 1.

³¹ John Webster Grant, *A Profusion of Spires: Religion in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto/Buf-

Baptist work in both Upper and Lower Canada was primarily the result of American missionaries. John Webster Grant notes that the Shaftesbury Association of Vermont was the “virtual founder of the... denomination in the province,”³² but other American Baptist associations and missionary societies sent missionaries northwards as well.³³ These American links were critical, for, as Albert Newman writes, without the aid of American missionaries “it is doubtful... the few scattered Baptists among the Loyalist settlers would have succeeded in organizing churches and keeping their Baptist faith alive.”³⁴ The first Baptist church in Lower Canada was founded at Caldwell’s Manor (1794), and the first in Upper Canada at Hallowell (1795) in the Bay of Quinte area. Thurlow (1795/6) and Beamsville/Clinton (1796) followed. By 1800 there were eight Baptist churches in the two Canadas. The Thurlow Association of

three small churches³⁵ was founded on the north shore of Lake Ontario in 1802, and four churches in Lower Canada joined the Richmond Baptist Association, Vermont (1805-1810). Michael Smith noted in 1812 that in Upper Canada Methodists were the most numerous denomination, and that there were 15 Baptist churches with 1,000 members and 11 preachers.³⁶ The clustering of Baptist churches in the Niagara region, western Ontario, and the north shore of Lake Ontario between York and the Bay of Quinte (as well as in the Eastern Townships) meant the Baptists were to experience the American invasions and hardships of war firsthand.

I. Impact of the War

On 18 June 1812 the United States declared war on Great Britain, a war that continued to the signing of the Treaty of Ghent on 24 December 1814.³⁷ One region severely affected by the war

falo/ London: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 48-49. Grant goes on to note that a significant percentage of these clergy were of American origin. ³² Grant, *A Profusion of Spires*, 44.

³³ The six associations were the Shaftesbury Baptist Association of Vermont, New York, and Massachusetts, Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society, Lake Baptist Missionary Society (renamed Hamilton Baptist Missionary Society, which later merged with the Baptist Missionary Convention of the State of New York), New York Baptist Missionary Society, and the Black River Baptist Association. See Ivison and Rosser, *The Baptists in Upper and Lower Canada Before 1820*, 9-16. Anderson also notes the important role that American mission societies and associations played in the arrival of Baptists in Upper and Lower Canada. See Elmer G. Anderson, “The Work of American Baptist Missionaries in Upper Canada to 1812,” B.D. thesis, McMaster University, 1952. See also Davis Woolley, *Baptist Advance: The Achievements of the Baptists of North America for a Century and a Half* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1964), 161.

³⁴ Albert H. Newman, “Sketch of the Baptists of Ontario and Quebec to 1851,” *BCOQ Yearbook* (1900), 74.

³⁵ Cramahe-Haldimand, Hallowell, and Thurlow.

³⁶ Smith, *A Geographical View of the Province of Upper Canada*, 60-61.

³⁷ Battles continued after this date, for it took months for all of the combatants to receive notice of the cessation of hostilities.

was Upper Canada. One visitor traveling from Niagara to Detroit in 1816 was astounded by the damage:

I was most sensibly struck with the devastation which had been made by the late war, [farms] formerly in high cultivation, now laid waste; houses entirely evacuated and forsaken; provisions of all kinds very scarce; and, where peace and plenty abounded, poverty and destruction now stalked over the land.³⁸

The Niagara Peninsula was devastated due to the number of battles and destruction caused by troop movements. It should come as no surprise, then, to note that the churches in Upper Canada were the most impacted by the war. As Moir notes:

The churches...suffered as armies marched and counter-marched through the countryside and bands of raiders burned towns and farmsteads. The brunt of the damage fell on the Niagara peninsula where church

buildings were requisitioned as barracks by the opposing forces and one church, St. Andrew's Presbyterian at Niagara-On-the-Lake, was fired by retreating Americans in 1813 and its minister taken prisoner.³⁹

Semple, Landon, and Robertson claim that the war dramatically upset Methodist work in Ontario, and that the war meant that postwar Methodism had to move away from any identification with American leadership.⁴⁰ Moir and Landon note some of the damage inflicted on the Presbyterian churches, and how they too faced difficulty due to a lack of American support.⁴¹ But what about the Baptists?

Services

The war upset the worship and regular activities of the Baptist churches. Clinton (Beamsville) Baptist minutes note on 24 September 1814 that the church had not met for over two months due to the "troubles of the wars."⁴² Haldi-

³⁸ Wesley B. Turner, *The War of 1812: The War that Both Sides Won* (Toronto/Oxford: Dundurn Group, 2000, Second Edition), 126. John Howson's conclusions after his postwar visit indicate that the war did bring prosperity to some, but also undermined the hard working character of farmers: it had a "pernicious effect upon the morals of the people." See Howson, *Sketches of Upper Canada*, 77-83. Despite the devastation in Upper Canada, Adam Short argues that the War of 1812 "was the occasion of the greatest era of prosperity which it had heretofore enjoyed." See Adam Shortt, "The Economic Effect of the War of 1812 on Upper Canada," in *The Defended Border: Upper Canada and the War of 1812*, edited by Morris Zaslow (Toronto: MacMillan, 1964), 296-302. George Sheppard argues that the war led to financial ruin for many. See George Sheppard, *Plunder, Profit and Paroles: a social history of the War of 1812 in Upper Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994).

³⁹ John Moir, *The Church in the British Era: from the British Conquest to Confederation* (Toronto/Montreal: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972), 91. Echoing Moir, Christie argues that the war "abruptly curtailed" the ministry of evangelical churches. See Christie, "In These Times of Democratic Rage and Delusion," 41.

⁴⁰ Neil Semple, *The Lord's Dominion: The History of Canadian Methodism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 45; Fred Landon, *Western Ontario and the American Frontier* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967), 75-78; Robertson, "Band of Brothers."

⁴¹ John Moir, *Enduring Witness: The Presbyterian Church in Canada*, 2d ed. (Eagle Press Printers, 1987), 66-67, 72-73; Landon, *Western Ontario and the American Frontier*, 102.

⁴² Beamsville Baptist Church Minutes, 24 September 1814.

mand Baptist minutes note that during the war years there was “very little to record of the doings of the church,” in no small measure due to “most of the men” either in the army or supporting the army by moving supplies.⁴³ The Baptist church in Charlotteville (Vittoria) had to deal with the war interrupting the activities of the church. The events of the war also contributed to the church’s move away from the Shaftsbury Association.⁴⁴ The Townsend minutes suggest that the Clinton Conference did not meet during the war.⁴⁵

American Support

While Baptists in the Bay of Quinte area started the Thurlow Association in 1802, Baptist churches in the Niagara region, along Lake Erie, and around the Thames River were satisfied with remaining in American associations.⁴⁶ The Baptist churches in Charlotteville, Townsend, Clinton, Oxford, and Malahide (Talbot Street) were all members of the Shaftsbury Association of Vermont, New York and Massachusetts. The Baptist church in Queenston was

attached to the New York Association. The system was flexible but not ideal, for distances meant that communication and visiting was difficult. The standard way for personal contact was for American missionaries to be the link between the churches and the association, but the war destroyed this system, for the commencement of hostilities meant that all communication between the churches and their American counterparts ended. In fact, Moir claims that Ontario Baptist’s considerable reliance on Americans meant that they were the worst off out of all denominations.⁴⁷

The minutes of various associations in the States indicate this breakdown. The New York Baptist Association minutes show that no messenger from the Queenston (Niagara) church visited the association meetings from 1812 to 1816,⁴⁸ and the minutes from the Shaftsbury Baptist Association show no messengers from the Clinton, Townsend and Oxford churches at the association meetings.⁴⁹ The Shaftsbury minutes also record the following message from two missionaries who could no longer travel

⁴³ Haldimand Baptist Church Minutes, page 67. See also Ivison and Rosser, *The Baptists in Upper and Lower Canada*, 87.

⁴⁴ *A History of the First Baptist Church of Charlottville (Vittoria), 1803-1987*, located at Canadian Baptist Archives. See also Ivison and Rosser, *The Baptists in Upper and Lower Canada*, 100.

⁴⁵ No delegate was sent to the Conference 1812-1815. See Ivison and Rosser, *The Baptists in Upper and Lower Canada*, 104.

⁴⁶ Landon claims that Ontario Baptist churches were too few and remote from one another to have their own associations. See Landon, *Western Ontario and the American Frontier*, 97.

⁴⁷ Moir, *The Church in the British Era*, 91.

⁴⁸ *Minutes of the New York Baptist Association* (1812), 4; *Minutes of the New York Baptist Association* (1813), 3; *Minutes of the New York Baptist Association* (1814), 3; *Minutes of the New York Baptist Association* (1815), 3; *Minutes of the New York Baptist Association* (1816), 3.

⁴⁹ *Minutes of the Shaftsbury Baptist Association* (1813), 4, 6; *Minutes of the Shaftsbury Baptist Association* (1814), 4-5; *Minutes of the Shaftsbury Baptist Association* (1815), 4-5; *Minutes of the Shaftsbury Baptist Association* (1816), 3.

to Upper Canada:

Elders Cyrus Andrews, and Daniel Haskall, whom we employed last year on a mission into the destitute parts of the north and west parts of the state of New-York, and the province of Upper-Canada, return accounts of their labors highly satisfactory to your committee. They report, that, in consequence of the present war existing between America and Great-Britain, they can have no access to many places where they have labored with success.⁵⁰

The Baptists churches in Lower Canada (in the Eastern Townships) belonged to associations in Vermont, and their experience mirrored that of Upper Canadian Baptists. A glimpse of this break can be seen in Benedict's *General History of the Baptist Denomination*. Benedict writes that the Fairfield Association in Vermont met in "great harmony" with their Canadian Baptist counterparts until 1812. In that year the churches planned on meeting in one of the three Lower Canadian churches of the association.⁵¹ However, once war was declared it was "deemed by the brethren in Vermont inexpedient" to go into Canada, and they met in the States instead.⁵²

Pastors

The pattern of Baptist church development in Upper Canada was that

American missionaries and itinerant pastors were the ones who founded, and then led, the churches. As will be seen below, a number of these men from the States remained loyal during the war. The problems were related to the conduct of Elijah Bentley and Elkanah Holmes (1744-1832). The details surrounding the pro-American sympathies of these two men will also be dealt with below, but suffice it to say that the churches associated with these two men suffered, and did not survive the war. Bentley planted a church in Markham in 1803 and became its pastor, but in 1813 he was arrested for sedition. The church in Markham was shattered by this experience, and it took twenty-five years before it was able to gather together enough people to meet again as a church.⁵³ Holmes was the leader of the local Baptist church in Niagara (Queenston), and he was eventually forced to flee to the States in 1813 after revealing his pro-American sympathies. The Niagara church did get Samuel Burdick to preach on alternate Sundays (on the other Sunday he preached at Clinton),⁵⁴ but the church struggled and eventually died.⁵⁵ The epitaph for the church can be read in the 1816 minutes of the New York Baptist Association:

Association (1813), 4-5.

⁵⁰ *Minutes of the Shaftsbury Baptist Association* (1813), 8.

⁵¹ St. Armond, Stanbridge, Duhman.

⁵² David Benedict, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America and other Parts of the World* (New York: L. Colby and Company, 1848), 492-93.

⁵³ See "Elijah Bentley," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Volume 5 (1801-1820)* (Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press), 64-66; Ivison and Rosser, *The Baptists in Upper and Lower Canada*, 100-102; 123-26.

⁵⁴ Ivison and Rosser, *The Baptists in Upper and Lower Canada*, 58-59.

⁵⁵ See "Elkanah Holmes," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Volume 6 (1821-1835)* (Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press), 100-101.

"A letter from our venerable brother Elkanah Holmes, was reported by brother Parkinson, giving the painful intelligence that the church at Niagara, owing to their dispersion during the war, and other circumstances, is dissolved."⁵⁶

II. Resilient Cross-Border Evangelicalism

John Howison's observations on his extensive trip to Upper Canada after the war paint a bleak picture of postwar American-Canadian relations:

The Americans returned their hostility with vehemence; and the two nations became so completely estranged from each other, that the long peace which followed the rebellion had little effect in restoring harmony between them. However, the invasion of Canada in 1812 removed all chance of reconciliation, and made both parties more personal, and more inveterate, in their dislike. And, as the social and moral condition of the two countries is growing more dissimilar every day, the aversion, with which their inhabitants regard each other, is not likely to diminish."⁵⁷

If Howison were even only partially correct, it would seem that postwar Ontario

Baptists would have had little to do with their American coreligionists.⁵⁸ But they did, and without the rancor that Howison identified. It speaks to the power of the evangelical impulse that Baptists were able to transcend the animosities that inevitably follow from a border conflict that had turned increasingly vicious and vindictive.

While there was a trajectory established that led to increased independence from American associations, there was no significant immediate postwar animosity between the Canadian churches and the American missionaries or their sending associations. American missionaries played a part in the life of the Clinton Conference in the months and years immediately following the war. For instance, the Hamilton Baptist Missionary Society from New York State sent three missionaries in 1816: Nathan Baker,⁵⁹ Timothy Sheppard,⁶⁰ and John Upfold (an Englishman who had lived in America).⁶¹ After an itinerant ministry across Ontario, Upfold ended up accepting a call to pastor at the Clinton church where he stayed for nine years before returning to the

falo/ London: University of Toronto Press), 324-25; Ivison and Rosser, *The Baptists in Upper and Lower Canada Before 1820*, 112-14; 137-42; Beamsville Baptist Church Minutes, 10 September 1813.

⁵⁶ *Minutes of the New York Baptist Association* (1816), 4-5.

⁵⁷ Howison, *Sketches of Upper Canada*, 275-76.

⁵⁸ A number of contemporary scholars agree that the war jeopardized cross-border relations. Errington argues that the war eroded the bonds between the prominent Upper Canadians and their American contacts. See Errington, *The Lion, Eagle and Upper Canada*, 8. Landon writes that the war "was to weaken the American connection" among Baptists. See Landon, *Western Ontario and the American Frontier*, 97. Rawlyk argues that the war "unleashed" anti-Americanism in Upper Canada. See Rawlyk, *The Canada Fire*, 123.

⁵⁹ Account of Baker's visit in August 1815 in Anderson, 49-50.

⁶⁰ Account of Sheppard's visit in Anderson, 51-52.

⁶¹ Account of Upfold in Anderson, 52-54; Peck and Lawton, *An Historical Sketch of the Baptist Missionary Convention of the State of New York*, 232-235. The Beamsville minutes record the arrival and some

States.⁶² The Hamilton Baptist Missionary Society continued sending missionaries to Upper Canada as late as 1819.⁶³ The Shaftesbury Association quickly sent missionaries who travelled, preached, and helped the churches.⁶⁴ Stephen Olmstead, an American missionary with the Shaftesbury Association, was moderator of the Clinton Conference in 1816.

American Baptist missionaries and preachers continued to arrive into the 1820s. A number carried out extensive itinerant ministries and returned to the United States, whereas others remained to plant churches. For instance, in the fall of 1821, Thomas Tallman arrived near Oxford in order to settle his son (Tallman was the pastor of First Free Communion Baptist Church of Worchester, Sharon and Cobuskill, New York). He returned shortly thereafter in April 1822 to establish a church in the town of Oxford. In the years that followed, Tallman also assisted other Baptists in the surrounding area.⁶⁵ One example of an itinerant in the 1820s was David Marks, who crossed the Niagara River in October 1822, attended local services (including a number of

Methodist services) and preached the gospel. He departed a few days later, only to return to Upper Canada a month later for further ministry among Baptists.⁶⁶

Even into the 1830s the majority of ministers were from the United States, a number of pastors received financial support from the States, and missionaries still travelled to the province.⁶⁷ The following report in the *Canadian Baptist Magazine and Missionary Register* reveals the continued American presence in the churches, but also a growing British trajectory in the churches.

There are, in the Upper Province, about fifty Baptist churches; some of them flourishing, others stationary, and a few, we fear, dying. In the Lower Provinces the number is not so great; but the influx of English Baptists last year into the Eastern Townships would give great facility to the formation of new ones, if there were but preachers to instruct and organize them. The majority of pastors in the Upper Province are, we believe, from the United States; and to that quarter the churches look principally for supplies. Several British missionaries are now to be found settled in both provinces, and these have exerted themselves, at different times, but of

of the ministry of Upfold. See Beamsville Baptist Church Minutes, April 1816 to January 1817.

⁶² Henry A. Renfree, *Heritage and Horizon: The Baptist Story in Canada* (Mississauga: Canadian Baptist Federation, 1988), 72; Ivison and Rosser, *The Baptists in Upper and Lower Canada*, 59.

⁶³ Peck and Lawton, *An Historical Sketch of the Baptist Missionary Convention of the State of New York*, 60-61.

⁶⁴ *Minutes of the Shaftesbury Baptist Association* (1816), 8.

⁶⁵ R.W. Sawtell, *The History of the First Baptist Church, Woodstock, Ontario: for the First Seventy Years – from April 22, 1822, to April 22, 1892* (The Woodstock Times, 1892), 7-12.

⁶⁶ Marks, *Memoirs of the Life of David Marks*, 91-96. For examples of other American missionaries and church planters in the 1820s, see Stewart, *The History of the Freewill Baptists*, 408-409.

⁶⁷ Landon, *Western Ontario and the American Frontier*, 97. For instance, the American Baptist Home Missionary Society had one missionary in Lower Canada and seven in Upper Canada. See "The Canadas," *Canada Baptist Magazine and Missionary Register*, September 1837, 93.

late more actively, to obtain help from their native land.⁶⁸

By this time not everyone was pleased with the American presence among the churches.⁶⁹ There had been discussion in 1835 about who should fund the churches—British Baptists said the American Baptists should due to proximity, but American Baptists said that British Baptists should due to their being in British territory⁷⁰—but the issue was still not settled in 1837 when the *Canadian Baptist Magazine and Missionary Register* made its reports. The trend, however, was for seeking British Baptist aid for the churches.⁷¹

Not to be overlooked was the arrival of slaves from America who sought freedom in Upper Canada. The underground railway began to develop around 1820, and the arrival of fugitive slaves in Ontario led to the establishing of African-American Baptist churches. As early as 1817 fugitive slaves arrived around Amherstburg, and around 1838 an African-

American Baptist church was formed. By 1841 a number of African-American Baptist churches in the area bordered by Toronto, Niagara Falls and Windsor formed the Amherstburg Baptist Association, and cross-border relations continued with African-American Baptists in Detroit.⁷²

It should be noted that these American missionary visits and contacts were not forced upon the churches; on the contrary, American participation was coveted and requested as soon as the war ended (similar to the actions of leading Upper Canadian elites⁷³). For instance, the minutes of Beamsville Baptist indicate that as soon as peace was declared the church decided to send a letter to the Shaftsbury Association in order to re-establish contact.⁷⁴ The ministry of these American preachers was also quite successful. The Haldimand church minutes recorded the following about the visit of Elder Shepherd:

In 1816 the church was reorganized after the

⁶⁸ "Canada," *Canada Baptist Magazine and Missionary Register*, June 1837, 17.

⁶⁹ British visitors in 1835 thought that Upper Canada should have British rather than American preachers. F.A. Cox and J. Hoby, *The Baptists in America*, 222. See also Landon, *Western Ontario and the American Frontier*, 98-99. Note that this opposition was from outside the province, for those inside the province no doubt realized that the churches could not survive without the support of their American coreligionists.

⁷⁰ F.A. Cox and J. Hoby, *The Baptists in America*, 213; "The Canadas," *Canada Baptist Magazine and Missionary Register*, September 1837, 92-93. See also Landon, *Western Ontario and the American Frontier*, 98.

⁷¹ "Canada," *Canada Baptist Magazine and Missionary Register*, June 1837, 17-20; "British Baptist Missionary Society in Canada," *Canada Baptist Magazine and Missionary Register*, June 1837, 21-22. Some churches in Lower Canada remained in American associations as late as the 1880s. See Iverson and Rosser, *The Baptists in Upper and Lower Canada*, 167.

⁷² James K. Lewis, *Religious Life of Fugitive Slaves and Rise of Coloured Baptist Churches, 1820-1865, In What is Now Known as Ontario* (New York: Arno Press, 1980), 17, 54-55, 69.

⁷³ Errington identifies how quickly "leading residents" of Upper Canada acted to re-establish contacts with the United States. See Errington, *The Lion, Eagle and Upper Canada*, 120.

⁷⁴ Beamsville Baptist Church minutes, 1 April 1815.

war. Meetings were held near the lake shore about old Mr. Wyatts and the Lord wrought upon the minds of the people in a wonderful manner and mostly upon young and married people...about the first of February Elder Shepherd came from the States on a mission preaching the word of life. He was a son of consolation to the new-born babes in Christ declaring glad tidings of great joy and he baptized many in Haldimand and Hamilton, and since that many converts have dated their first awakenings from his preaching.⁷⁵

The cross-border relationships were cut off during the war, but what is remarkable is how the relationships picked up very quickly almost right where they left off. These seemingly collegial visits and the quick reintegration of American leadership in the churches suggest that the devastation of the war did not lead to as much hatred as supposed, and that a process of Canadianization was not as immediate as some assume. They also support Moir's contention that anti-Americanism was not a dominant motif in the postwar years—at least for Baptists.⁷⁶ It also indicates that Baptists did not experience a post-war purging of American leadership like the Methodists.⁷⁷

But why the willingness to be reunited with people who were just recently the enemy? Errington argues that in the eyes

of prominent citizens the formal and informal contacts were deemed to be “vital to the colony's well-being.”⁷⁸ For Baptists, the involvement of American missionaries was crucial to the well being of the fledgling churches. Along with desperate need (heightened due to the absence of any immediate aid coming from British Baptists), friendships and family ties were factors in the quick reinstatement of relationships. It was almost, as Errington suggests, as if the border states were not even a part of the United States.⁷⁹ However, one important ideological reason for the willingness to accept the Americans back so quickly was the bond and purpose that transcended national identity.

A number of scholars have noted the cross-border links between denominations in the United States and Canada. Mark Noll notes the importance of not downplaying the “significant commonalities that have always bounded Canadian and American churches together.”⁸⁰ Both Rawlyk and Christie have identified the strength of evangelicalism during this period, and how it was a dynamic cross-border movement.⁸¹ More recently, Sam Reimer has identified a subculture that continues to exist among evangelicals in the States and Canada that, in many ways,

⁷⁵ Haldimand Baptist Church Minutes, 1816.

⁷⁶ Moir, “American Influences on Canadian Protestant Churches before Confederation,” 440.

⁷⁷ Moir, *The Church in the British Era*, 93.

⁷⁸ Errington, *The Lion, Eagle and Upper Canada*, 120.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁸⁰ Mark Noll, “Canadian Evangelicalism: A View from the United States,” in *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience*, edited by George A. Rawlyk (Montreal/Kingston/London/Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 7.

⁸¹ Christie, “In These Times of Democratic Rage and Delusion.”

transcends national boundaries.⁸² In the War of 1812 one gets a glimpse of this type of dynamic evangelical subculture that united evangelicals from New York State and Ontario; they were more than Americans, British subjects, or even Canadians, they were Baptists engaged in seeking converts and building the church.

Michael Gauvreau notes how “early nineteenth-century evangelicalism was, first and foremost, a passion, a living force, a pulsating energy infusing the individual soul and human communities.”⁸³ And one of the passions of Baptists was the necessity of personal conversion and the obligation to spread that message. This emphasis on evangelism at all costs should not surprise, for one of the defining characteristics of evangelicalism was the need for personal conversion.⁸⁴ Once the war ended, missionaries and pastors were desperately needed to carry out the work of the church, and nationality was not something that was to get in the way of such a task. Consequently, Baptists on both sides of the border had what they deemed a higher purpose and loyalty, one that called them to rise above the postwar rancor.

III. Political Loyalties

While the trans-national evangelical impulse was strong enough to

survive the bitterness of the war, it was not so strong as to eliminate all vestiges of political loyalties. In the evidence that remains, there are glimpses of loyalty to the British Crown, as well as clear examples of Baptists who were on the side of the American invaders. There was also a trajectory of Canadianization in regards to organization, but this seemed to be a practical decision devoid of any nascent Canadian nationalism.

While many of the motives behind the actions of pastors remain unknown, there does seem to be a discernable pattern to political loyalties. Contrary to what Strachan assumed, a number of Loyalists were not members of the Church of England,⁸⁵ and the diversity of Loyalist backgrounds can be seen in the examples of Baptists with Loyalist pedigree. What is important for this research is to note that whereas a number of Baptist ministers that remained loyal (or neutral) had a Loyalist and/or British background, ministers that remained loyal to the United States came to Upper Canada primarily for the land and/or fought for the United States in the Revolutionary War.⁸⁶ This observation is not an attempt to resurrect old Loyalist myths about saving Canada, for Norman Knowles has shown how such myths tended to be invented stories

⁸² Sam Reimer, *Evangelicals and the Continental Divide: The Conservative Protestant Subculture in Canada and the United States* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003).

⁸³ Michael Gauvreau, “Protestantism Transformed: Personal Piety and the Evangelical Social Vision, 1815-1867,” in *The Canadian Protestant Experience*, edited by George Rawlyk (Welch, 1990), 52.

⁸⁴ David Bebbington's four-fold characteristics of evangelicalism are generally recognized as the most helpful description of evangelical identity: Biblicism, Conversionism, Activism and Crucicentrism. See David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730's to the 1980's* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989).

⁸⁵ Fahey, *In His Name*, 12.

⁸⁶ However, Loyalist background did not guarantee a pro-British position, for, as Craig notes, there

rather than inherited truths.⁸⁷ However, it is to say that allegiances going into the war had a bearing on how various Baptist pastors responded to the pressures of divergent wartime calls for loyalty, and that apparently not all political loyalties were eclipsed by the evangelical impulse.

Loyal to the Crown

In regards to the support for the war, there are examples of American-born Baptist pastors who remained in Upper Canada and did not stir up resentment towards the British cause or support for the Americans. In fact, there is evidence that Baptists served in the militia or helped the military with transporting goods. There is also no record of Baptists having the same types of crisis of conscience, as did the Mennonites, Tunkers or Quakers in this regard.⁸⁸

Hobbs' research indicates that Baptists fought in the militia. He bases this conclusion on a comparison of militia rosters with church membership lists: he claims that a number of Baptist names are on the militia rosters.⁸⁹ Bits of other evi-

dence confirm that a number of Baptists fought for the Crown. The minutes of Haldimand Baptist Church indicate that most of their male congregants fought and supported the war effort:

For six years during the war 1812 to 15 most all the men were enlisted in ranks or engaged moving goods & men and supplies. They drew cannon to Toronto with Ox teams. My grandfather and 3 of his sons were from home. There was very little to record of the doings of the Church.⁹⁰

American-born Joseph Winn, pastor of the Baptist church in Ameliasburg (later referred to as Murray Baptist Church), assisted the government by using his team to carry supplies for the troops. This support is not surprising, since Winn had fought for the Loyalists in the Revolutionary War and saw himself as a United Empire Loyalist.⁹¹ American-born settler Jonathan Wolvertine, a member of the Clinton (Beamsville) Baptist Church, took the oath of allegiance when he, his wife, and four children arrived in 1800, and then took it again in 1812 to prove his loyalty. Although he was in his sixties

were examples of some with Loyalist backgrounds supporting the American cause or showing sympathy for it. See Craig, *Upper Canada*, 75. Norman Knowles also argues that the "Loyalist response to the call to arms during the war was, at best, equivocal." See Norman Knowles, *Inventing the Loyalists: the Ontario Loyalist Tradition and the Creation of Usable Pasts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 19.

⁸⁷ Knowles illustrates how the Loyalist tradition played a "prominent place" in nineteenth and early twentieth century political and social discourse in Canada, and how Loyalist identity and tradition was invented, not inherited. See Knowles, *Inventing the Loyalists*.

⁸⁸ See Robynne Rogers Healey, *From Quaker to Upper Canadian: Faith and Community among Yonge Street Friends, 1801-1850* (Montreal/Kingston/London/Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 46-50; Brock, "Accounting for Difference," 19-30.

⁸⁹ This information is not published, but was passed on to me through correspondence with Ray Hobbs.

⁹⁰ Haldimand Baptist Church Minutes, page 67. See also Ivison and Rosser, *The Baptists in Upper and Lower Canada*, 87.

⁹¹ Ivison and Rosser, *The Baptists in Upper and Lower Canada*, 153-54. See also Stuart Ivison, "Joseph Winn – Forgotten Pioneer," *Quest*, 18 April 1965, 15.

during the war, he also aided the government by driving his team to transport supplies and troops.⁹²

Other Baptist leaders also remained in Ontario, but their involvement in the conflict is unknown. American-born Titus Finch was both a farmer and preacher who was a charter member of the Charlotteville Baptist Church.⁹³ Abel Stevens came from Vermont, and played an important role in bringing settlers from Vermont to Upper Canada.⁹⁴ Peter Fairchild was the pastor of Townsend Baptist Church during the war years.⁹⁵ All three of these men had previously fought for the Crown, or had allied themselves with it, so one may infer with a degree of confidence that they remained in the province out of loyalty to the Crown.

American-born Reuben Crandall arrived in Upper Canada in 1794, and very quickly began an itinerant ministry helping to plant churches in Cramahe

and Haldimand townships.⁹⁶ There is no record of his activities or thoughts during the war, but he is another example of an American-born minister deciding to stay in Upper Canada. James Hulse, pastor at Rawdon in 1825 (and later Thurlow), may have fought for the Crown during the war. Not much is known of Hulse, however, so whatever he thought and did during the war remains a mystery.⁹⁷

The story of John Upfold is quite different. His experience provides a glimpse into the loyalties of a Baptist pastor who had lived in England, America and Upper Canada. He was born in England in 1766, but immigrated to America in 1801. Upfold lived in the States during the war, but was unsympathetic to the American cause. He moved to Canada in 1816, and became the pastor of Clinton (Beamsville) Baptist Church, as well as a widely recognized leader among Baptists in Upper Canada. He eventually

⁹² Ivison and Rosser, *The Baptists in Upper and Lower Canada*, 111-12.

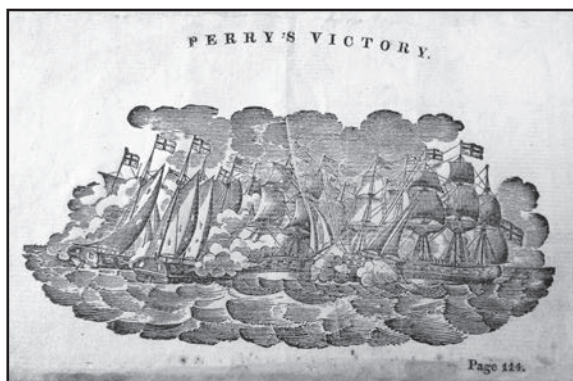
⁹³ During the Revolutionary War Finch had fought on the side of the Crown in the Prince of Wales Regiment, and after the war he immigrated to New Brunswick. He then moved to Upper Canada in 1798 or 1799 where he helped plant the church in Charlotteville. There is no record of his activity during the war, but it is unlikely that he would have been sympathetic to the American side after having spent years fighting against them a few decades earlier, and the burning of his mill by American troops certainly would not have endeared the Americans to Finch. See Ivison and Rosser, *The Baptists in Upper and Lower Canada*, 135-37.

⁹⁴ He convinced over two hundred settlers to move northwards to settle in the townships of Bastard and Kitley; he also preached in Baptist churches and helped to plant new ones. There is no record of his activity during the war, but having remained loyal to the Crown during the Revolutionary War it is likely he supported the British side in 1812. He chose to remain in Upper Canada until his death c.1826. See Stuart Ivison, "Abel Stevens, U.E.L.," *Quest*, 4 December 1960, 784; Ernest Cruikshank, "The Activity of Abel Stevens as a Pioneer," *Ontario History* 31 (1936), 56-90; Ernest Cruikshank, "The Adventures of Roger Stevens, a Forgotten Loyalist Pioneer in Upper Canada," *Ontario History* 33 (1939), 11-37.

⁹⁵ He was on the official United Empire Loyalist list, but there is no record of his activities during the war. See Ivison and Rosser, *The Baptists in Upper and Lower Canada*, 133-34.

⁹⁶ "Reuben Crandall," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Volume 8, 1851-1860* (Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 180-81.

⁹⁷ Ivison and Rosser, *The Baptists in Upper and Lower Canada*, 142.



moved back to the States where he died in 1828.⁹⁸

How are these examples to be interpreted? Limited as they are, they indicate that not all Baptists were disloyal and that the authorities could count on a number to support the war effort (or at least to remain acquiescent). As for motives, a number of these Baptist leaders may have remained in Ontario out of a sense of loyalty to the Crown, and others may have merely been waiting to see how the war developed. Their sympathies may have been with the Americans, but their sense of duty to their congregation may have led them to keep quiet. As for those who fought on the side of the British, was it for money, for patriotism, or due to co-

From Michael Smith's Geographical View of the Province of Upper Canada.

ercion? What is clear is that a number of Baptist did remain in the province (and a number fought for the Crown), despite their American background.

Loyal to the Republic

If the evidence for loyalty to the Crown is difficult to interpret, the examples of a number of Baptist leaders who remained loyal to their land of birth are not. 1813 and 1814 were difficult years for Upper Canadians, and increasingly sympathy grew among its citizens for the American cause.⁹⁹ As Ernest Cruickshank and others have noted, the government in Upper Canada had serious concerns about the loyalty of its citizens and took great pains to counter pro-American propaganda and activities.¹⁰⁰ The sheer number of American settlers meant that no one could assume widespread loyalty to the Crown, and, contrary to what Theo Gibson says about republican bias among Baptists being “probably rare,”¹⁰¹ an examination of three Baptists indicates that there was ample justification for such fears.¹⁰²

Michael Smith was born in Penn-

⁹⁸ Renfree, *Heritage and Horizon*, 72; Ivison and Rosser, *The Baptists in Upper and Lower Canada*, 59, 150-53.

⁹⁹ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 77, 81.

¹⁰⁰ Ernest A. Cruickshank, “A Study of Disaffection in Upper Canada in 1812-1815,” in *The Defended Border: Upper Canada and the War of 1812*, edited by Morris Zaslow (Toronto: MacMillan, 1964), 205-23; Ernest A. Cruickshank, “John Beverley Robinson and the Trials for Treason in 1814,” *Ontario History* (1929), 191-219; William Renwick Riddell, “The Ancaster ‘Bloody Assize’ of 1814,” *Ontario History* 20 (1923), 107-25; R. Arthur Bowler, “Propaganda in Upper Canada in the War of 1812,” *American Review of Canada Studies* 18:1 (1988), 11-32; Errington, *The Lion, Eagle and Upper Canada*, 64-66.

¹⁰¹ Gibson notes that a number of American missionaries, whether consciously or not, were bringing a republican bias into their ministry. However, he claims that it was “probably rare.” See Theo Gibson, *Robert Alexander Fyfe: His Contemporaries and His Influence* (Burlington: Welch Publishing, 1988), 29.

¹⁰² The arrest of American Baptist pastor Rev. Avery Moulton indicates that there was suspicion

sylvania, but moved with his family to Upper Canada in 1810 where he taught school at Niagara-on-the-Lake.¹⁰³ His decision to move to Upper Canada was based on the availability of free land, however he purchased his land to avoid making an oath to the King. In December 1812 he and his family fled back to the United States because he refused to take the oath of allegiance as demanded by the government (all who did not would be considered spies or prisoners of war). Back in the States he supported himself by occasionally preaching in Baptist churches and to troops. One reason why we know of Smith is that he wrote an eyewitness account of the geography and politics of Upper Canada, and in his actions and writing we see the very attitudes that were at the root of government fears of settler disloyalty. Smith pointed out that the majority of settlers (6 of 10) were American-born and only came to Upper Canada for the free land. He wrote how in the opening days of the conflict Brock had tricked many of the militia into joining, and had they known the truth they would not have joined. He

also claimed how there would have been a rebellion if the Assembly had suspended *habeas corpus* as a wartime measure. He did note that while the American settlers in the militia would not have fought against Hull in the early weeks of the war, they also would not have fought against the British—they just wanted to be left alone with their farms. Despite Smith's assertion to be neutral in his observances, his conduct was quite pro-American. In his summary of the province, he noted defensive locations, numbers of troops, shipbuilding potential, and the best place for Americans to attack; he also celebrated Perry's naval victory over the British. His closing words on the final page reveal where his sympathies lay: "And further I will remark, that I am a firm friend of my native country, the United States; in consideration of which, I left the province of Upper Canada, where I was settled with my family, and all the property I had in the world, rather than fight against my countrymen."¹⁰⁴

Smith was not alone in his pro-American sympathies. Elkanah Holmes was another Baptist who could not bring

directed to Baptist pastors even in Lower Canada. The account of his arrest and release reads: "A reformation was in progress in Compton and Ascott. Some thought that he would be carried to Montreal as a prisoner. There were those wishing baptism before his departure. On the day that his trial came he baptized them in front of the very house where the court was to be held. Changing his clothing, he entered the house and faced judges and accusers with such an innocent, noble look that 'an awful silence pervaded the assembly.' He made his own defense, weaving in Scriptural instances of the imprisonment of the apostles. 'Amen!' resounded from the gathered crowd, and the trial assumed the appearance of a religious meeting. His innocence was so clear that he was honorably dismissed." See G.A. Burgess and J.T. Ward, *Free Baptist Cyclopedia: Historical and Biographical* (Free Baptist Cyclopedia Company, 1889), 443.

¹⁰³ Material on Michael Smith taken from Smith, *A Geographical View of the Province of Upper Canada*; Smith, *A Narrative of the Sufferings in Upper Canada*; "Michael Smith," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Volume 5, 1801-1820* (Toronto/Buffalo/ London: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 765-66.

¹⁰⁴ His account includes a reference to a Methodist minister, George W. Dinsmore, who also fled Upper Canada rather than fight against his homeland. See Smith, *A Narrative of the Sufferings in Upper Canada*, 50-51.

himself to fight against his American compatriots.¹⁰⁵ After a career as a chaplain and soldier fighting for the Americans in the Revolutionary War, he began a missionary work among the Native Americans in western New York State. He was a missionary with the New York Missionary Society, and helped to establish a church in 1808 at Queenston (Niagara) as well as pastor at the church in Clinton (Beamsville). He welcomed American troops advancing into Upper Canada in 1813, and even entertained their officers in his home. When the Americans were later forced to retreat in December of that same year, the elderly Holmes and his wife were forced to flee with them; the American officer had kindly sent them a wagon to aid in their flight. The adventure was not over, and the following days read like a movie script. Advancing British troops captured Holmes. Lieutenant Colonel Cyrenius Chapin, whose daughter had married one of Holmes' sons, then led a daring and successful two-hundred-man rescue mission that whisked him away to Buffalo. He had to flee once again when the advancing British burned Buffalo. As noted above, the church in Queenston did not survive the departure of Holmes, nor did his conduct do anything to allay government fears of loyalty among American-born settlers and church leaders.

Elijah Bentley, the pastor of the Baptist church in Markham, also welcomed the invading American troops.¹⁰⁶ Bentley was born in the United States, but arrived in Upper Canada in 1799. He eventually settled in Markham in 1801. He helped to plant the church in Markham in 1803, and in the following years was active in Baptist life in the province. The American capture of York in 1813, and reports of pro-American sentiments being expressed during the American occupation, led to the government cracking down on what they deemed to be treasonous behavior. Over thirty people were arrested; Bentley was one of them. The charges were sedition, spreading false intelligence, and encouraging the militia to accept Dearborn's offer of parole. His ardent zeal for American republicanism was exactly what some feared about evangelicalism. He was arrested in October 1813, tried in March 1814, found guilty, and sentenced to six months in prison. It is not clear whether or not he served the entire sentence, but it seems that upon his release he and his family fled back to the States. The church in Markham did not survive the scandal and loss of leadership, and it took twenty-five more years before the church met again.

Sample claims that while there were some pro-American Methodists in Up-

¹⁰⁵ Material on Elkanah Holmes taken from Parkinson, *The Funeral Sermon of Elder Elkanah Holmes*; "Elkanah Holmes," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Volume 6, 1821-1835* (Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 324-25; Ivison and Rosser, *The Baptists in Upper and Lower Canada*, 137-42.

¹⁰⁶ Material on Elijah Bentley taken from depositions from his trial, Upper Canada Sundries, microfilm #C-4508; "Elijah Bentley," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Volume 5, 1801-1820* (Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 64-66; Ivison and Rosser, *The Baptists in Upper and Lower Canada*, 123-26.

per Canada, most were “sincerely loyal to the British cause.”¹⁰⁷ The evidence for Upper Canadian Baptist conduct is more embarrassing for those who want to claim denominational loyalty to the Crown. There certainly were those who fought and assisted the government in its war effort. However, there were at least three high-profile examples of American-born Baptists whose loyalties lay south of the border. Many settlers either fled southward on their own, or were forced to flee because they refused to swear an oath of allegiance; how many of these unnamed people were also Baptists? There is no way of knowing. What is known is that there seems to be ample reason for the authorities to fear the political loyalties of Baptists.

Not surprisingly there was a spirit of loyalism in Upper Canada after the war, and pressure to prove that a denomination was loyal to the Crown.¹⁰⁸ The Methodists and Presbyterians sought to demonstrate just that. The formation among Upper Canadian Baptists of a distinctly Canadian Conference in 1819 (and then a more formal Association soon after) was a move in that direction, but the continued presence of American missionaries and connections to American asso-

ciations indicates that the Canadianizing process among Baptists was slow. Much has been made out of Church of England Archdeacon John Strachan’s reaction to dissenters (especially Methodists) as pro-American. However, it seems that Strachan should have been just as concerned with Baptist loyalty.¹⁰⁹ The reason for his ignoring the Baptists is most likely due because Baptists were numerically and politically insignificant compared to the Methodists.¹¹⁰

Loyal to Canada?

Errington’s admonition that “the historian must accept that early Upper Canada is a foreign world and translate its historical records accordingly” needs to be kept in mind when looking for the development of Canadian identity and loyalty within the postwar churches,¹¹¹ partly because of the creation of previous myths regarding the role that the war played in the formation of Canadian national identity,¹¹² but mainly because of the paucity of evidence for such a shift within postwar Baptist churches.

Both Grant and Moir note that after the war there was a move towards Canadianization within Upper Canadian denominations.¹¹³ Denominations that had

¹⁰⁷ Semple, *The Lord’s Dominion*, 45.

¹⁰⁸ See Moir, *The Church in the British Era*, 92-94; Christie, “In These Times of Democratic Rage and Delusion,” 41-42.

¹⁰⁹ Strachan was aware of Bentley, for in September 1813 he was a signatory to a list of accused that included Bentley. See depositions from Bentley’s trial, located at National Archives, Ottawa.

¹¹⁰ Moir suggests this as well. See Moir, “American Influences on Canadian Protestant Churches before Confederation,” 451.

¹¹¹ Errington, *The Lion, Eagle and Upper Canada*, 9.

¹¹² For instance, see Knowles, *Inventing the Loyalists*.

¹¹³ Grant, *A Profusion of Spires*, 68-70; Moir, *The Church in the British Era*, 91-92.

been reliant on American leaders and support not only had their loyalty questioned, but were also vulnerable during any future crisis. Consequently, there was a need for more indigenous Canadian leadership, and well as loyal leaders from Britain rather than questionable ones from the States. Once peace had been declared, Baptists in Upper Canada, like other denominations such as Methodists and Presbyterians,¹¹⁴ began a shift away from reliance on their American supporters. However, the Baptist move away from American influence was not as fast as Grant and Moir seem to imply.

At least two changes were in progress in Upper Canada that began to move Baptists towards a more indigenous and increasingly “Canadian” identity. First, the arrival in 1816 of British Baptist immigrants from Britain began to change the composition of the denomination away from its American origins.¹¹⁵ Over the next few decades, subsequent waves of British immigrants transformed the Upper Canadian Baptists into a more distinctly British (and thus loyal-to-the-Crown) denomination. Second, the churches began to develop their own associations. Renfree suggests that the one good of the war was that it forced Upper

and Lower Canadian Baptist churches to mature more quickly and find local support systems.¹¹⁶ The cross-border relationship had benefited the churches in Upper Canada, but the war had shown that the relationship was untenable in times of political tensions.

The earliest association in the Canadas, founded in 1802, was the Thurlow Association in the Bay of Quinte area comprised of Cramahe-Haldiman, Hallowell and Thurlow Baptist churches.¹¹⁷ Upper Canadian churches had formed the Clinton Conference in 1810, but this was more of an informal network rather than an official association. In 1816 the Clinton Conference formed “The Upper Canada Domestic Missionary Society for the sending of the Gospel among the Destitute of this Province and parts adjacent,” and began to operate as an association. In 1819 the Shaftesbury Association officially dismissed its Canadian churches so that they could join the Clinton Conference; other churches, such as the one at Queenston, joined as well. Over time, the Clinton Conference evolved into the Western, Eastern, and Grand River Associations.¹¹⁸

But as the previously-noted activities of postwar American missionaries indi-

¹¹⁴ Semple, *The Lord's Dominion*, 46-47; Moir, *Enduring Witness*, 68-69.

¹¹⁵ Landon claims that the war began a “strong feeling of British allegiance” among Upper Canadians that was strengthened by waves of British immigrants in subsequent decades. Landon, *Western Ontario and the American Frontier*, 42. See also Renfree, *Heritage and Horizon*, 72-74; Gibson, *Fyfe*, 25; Woolley, *Baptist Advance*, 160; Stuart Ivison, *First Baptist Church, Brockville, 1844-1979* (no publisher, c.1979), 1-3. For a summary of the British influence in the denomination, see Robert S. Wilson, “British Influence in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Baptists in Canada: Search for Identity Amidst Diversity*, edited by Jarold K. Zeman (Burlington: G.R. Welch, 1980), 21-43.

¹¹⁶ Renfree, *Heritage and Horizon*, 71.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹¹⁸ Ivison and Rosser, *The Baptists in Upper and Lower Canada*, 167.

cates, these organizational shifts did not immediately Canadianize the churches. The on-going and much-needed presence of American missionaries, pastors, settlers, and financial support meant that postwar Upper Canadian Baptists remained a denomination with a decidedly American flavor into the 1830s, and in some cases, beyond.¹¹⁹ The evidence of divided loyalties during the war provides even more evidence that among Baptists there were divergent loyalties, and signs of the republicanism that many saw as the threat of evangelicalism.

Conclusion

The disparate wartime reactions of Baptists like Michael Smith and Joseph Winn provide concrete examples of the impact of the war on a small struggling evangelical denomination, as well as a glimpse of the range of political loyalties that existed within Upper Canadian Baptist churches. They also illustrate the central argument of this article: the war did not entirely eclipse evangelicalism's cross-border relationships, nor did evangelicalism completely erase national identities.

Almost a century later Canadian Baptists were ardent nationalists, imperialists, and often criticized their coreligionists in the States.¹²⁰ In fact, almost a century later there was often a mean streak of anti-Americanism in their literature. But that

was not the case during or immediately after the War of 1812. To be sure, the war had wrought devastation upon Upper Canadian churches, and Baptist churches were no exception in this regard. During the war Baptists were isolated from their American colleagues, friends, and support, and they had suffered even more through the ignominy of disloyal pastors and the closure of churches.

The involvement of Americans in Upper Canada in the months immediately after the war, and in the following decades, indicates that there was not a virulent postwar anti-Americanism among Baptists. There may have been a purging of Americans from the Methodists of Upper Canada due to external political pressure and internal desire for gaining broader social acceptance, but that was not the case for Baptists. The desperate need among Ontario Baptists for American help was certainly a factor in this willingness to have American missionaries return, but a significant ideological reason for this rapprochement was the evangelical impulse that stressed spiritual realities rather than political loyalties. However, the strength of the evangelical impulse was not able to eclipse political loyalties entirely. Smith, Bentley and Holmes were three Baptist ministers who felt no loyalty to the crown, and risked and lost much in maintaining their allegiance to the United States, even at the cost of their churches.

¹¹⁹ Sheppard argues that the war did contribute to nationalism, but it was a much later development (1840s). See Sheppard, *Plunder, Profit and Paroles*, 10.

¹²⁰ For instance, see Heath, *A War with a Silver Lining*.