Separating God's Two Kingdoms: Regular Baptists in Maine, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, 1780 to 1815

Ronald S. Baines
University of Maine, brittany.cathey@maine.edu

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SEPARATING GOD'S TWO KINGDOMS: REGULAR BAPTISTS IN MAINE, NOVA SCOTIA, AND NEW BRUNSWICK, 1780 TO 1815

By

Ronald S. Baines

B.S. Westfield State College, 1989

M.A. Reformed Theological Seminary, 2007

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Advisory Committee:

Liam Riordan, Professor of History, Advisor

Richard Judd, Professor of History, emeritus

Michael Lang, Associate Professor of History

James M. Renihan, Professor of Historical Theology, IRBS Theological Seminary

Scott See, Professor of History, emeritus
The trans-national Regular Baptist tradition in the northeastern borderlands of Maine, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick grew rapidly from 1780 to 1815. The spiritual imperatives of this Calvinistic group with its commitment to believer’s baptism of adults and closed-communion churches made them distinctive, and a central argument here is that the worldly implications of “Two Kingdom” theology, founded on the strict separation of religious and civil realms, was central to Regular Baptists’ success in the region in this period. Three leading ministers whose actions as authors, itinerants, and as organizational leaders receive especially close attention: Maine-based ministers Daniel Merrill and Isaac Case (whose important manuscript diary is little known), and Edward Manning, a leading figure in the Maritimes, who cooperated closely with Merrill.

Regular Baptists were dissenters to both the Standing Order and Anglican establishments in Maine and the Maritimes, which often sparked strong conflict with religious authorities. Moreover, the rigorous Calvinism of Regular Baptists that required adult baptism and only sanctioned closed-communion churches made high demands on members, making the tradition’s
expansion in this period especially notable. While these high standards might seem to isolate Regular Baptists as an exclusive group, active itinerancy, mission work, congregational organization, and associational efforts were key to the tradition’s expansion in this time and place. Regular Baptists were distinct from free-will evangelical groups that have been closely studied as central to the Second Great Awakening in the United States and were also quite different from adherents to the New Light Stir led by Henry Alline in the Maritimes in the 1770s and 1780s. Struggles over the proper function of associationalism (how to balance congregational autonomy with broader denominational cooperation) and the rigor of the closed-communion standard are especially important worldly implications of Two Kingdoms theology that need to be understood to achieve a full view of Regular Baptist success during their foundational period of growth in the northeastern borderlands.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

By James M. Renihan and Liam Riordan

This dissertation examines Baptist itinerant ministry and the expansion of the Regular Baptist spiritual tradition in Maine, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century. Regular Baptists were a major force in the evangelical surge of non-established churches across the northeastern borderlands in this period. Indeed, it was likely the largest single religious group in Maine, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick for several decades. However, its strong Calvinistic commitments set it apart from better studied “radical” free-will evangelicalism in the U.S. as well as from the potent New Light tradition in the Maritimes, led by Henry Alline in the 1770s and 1780s, out of which Regular Baptists arose in Canada. This dissertation pays particularly close attention to Two Kingdoms theology as the core belief of Regular Baptists. It explores the everyday implications of this theology for spiritual practice and ecclesiastical organization in the trans-national northeast. The author recovers the crucial roles of Daniel Merrill and, especially, Isaac Case, who were pioneering Regular Baptists ministers in Maine, and balances this attention to the U.S. side of the border with their missions to the Maritimes and consideration of key figures there, especially Reverend Edward Manning. The study concludes with an assessment of the impact of the War of 1812 upon Regular Baptists in the northeast that emphasizes how their spirituality, interactive itineracy, associational commitments, and common missionary work were major sources of solidarity that held them close together even as the war temporarily halted mutual work and strengthened national and imperial traditions in the United States, British North America, and the British Empire. Again,
Two Kingdoms theology, which stresses the separation of religious and civil realms, was an essential foundation for the trans-national identity of Regular Baptists in the northeastern borderlands.

When Ronald S. Baines (1956-2016) was writing this dissertation, neither he nor his faculty committee knew that he would never be able to revise it. In March 2016, Ron was diagnosed with a brain tumor. Almost immediately he underwent surgery, with a poor prognosis to follow. Only five months later a fall would cause his death. The University of Maine makes provision for the posthumous awarding of degrees in circumstances where the research project was close to completion, as was the case in this instance. Two members of Ron’s committee, dissertation supervisor Liam Riordan (Professor of History at the University of Maine) and external reader James M. Renihan (Professor of Historical Theology, IRBS Theological Seminary), worked together to make final revisions to the six substantive chapters and to draft this introduction. We are indebted to Brittany Goetting (History Ph.D. candidate at the University of Maine) for compiling the bibliography and for formatting the dissertation for submission. Prior to his diagnosis, Ron had submitted drafts of all six chapters, made significant revisions based on his advisor’s comments to several, while others remained in their initial draft state. Liam and Jim built on this material to craft the final version of Ron Baines’ dissertation. Some editorial decisions have been necessary, and we have done our best to reflect the intentions of the author and to make this valuable dissertation available to the scholarly community and other interested readers. We have undertaken finalizing this project out of a deep regard for Ron Baines as a scholar, minister, and friend, and we have done so with the approval of his family and the encouragement of the leadership and congregation of Grace Reformed Church in Brunswick, Maine, which supported their pastor’s research in this field.
“Separating God’s Two Kingdoms: Regular Baptists in Maine, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, 1780 to 1815” addresses interesting questions in ways not before considered. At the end of the eighteenth century, the District of Maine (which remained a part of Massachusetts until 1820) was lightly-settled by English speakers and had close ties to other New England states as well as to the British colonies of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick (with its creation in 1784). Regular Baptists were a dissenting church in these places and held a secondary status to the legally-established state-supported Congregational church of the Standing Order in Massachusetts and to the Anglican Church of England in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. While these establishments faltered in the nineteenth century, indeed the Anglican church was technically never established in New Brunswick, legal establishment remained the letter of the law in Massachusetts to 1833 and in Nova Scotia to 1852. While a shared dissenter status linked the Regular Baptist tradition in the trans-national region, this study is most attentive to the positive dimensions of what drew Baptist brethren together in the northeast with such success that it thrived in an extraordinary manner. Ronald Baines skillfully demonstrates the cross-border fertilization and growth of a religious movement that would have a notable legacy in Maine and the Canadian Maritime provinces.

The phrase Regular Baptist refers to Baptists in early North America who accepted the doctrines of Calvinism, valued order in worship and polity, evangelized with the anticipation of conversions, and adopted (in some form) one of the standard Baptist Confessions—the Second London Confession of 1677/1689, the Philadelphia Confession of 1742 (a version of Second London with two additional articles), and the Charleston and Warren, Rhode Island, Confessions,
both of 1767 (and identical to that of Philadelphia). The churches were regular in so far as they kept the rule as defined in these Confessions of Faith.

In the rapidly changing political landscape of the new United States, Baptists in Maine found themselves ready advocates of a brand of republicanism well suited to their circumstances in a lightly settled region. They adopted what Baines calls a “Two Kingdoms theology,” fundamental to all the decisions of their lives. This theology understood that the lordship of God was evidenced in very different ways, in two distinct kingdoms. One was the kingdom of Christ, which on earth manifests itself in his churches (note: not “church”), following carefully the mandates taught by Jesus and his apostles and recorded in the Scriptures. Each local congregation is, in itself, an expression of this Kingdom. The other domain is the divinely established political sphere. Only those who profess faith belong to the first, all people are subjects in the latter. This doctrine was developed against the so-called “One Kingdom theology” of the sacral society that had been dominant in European Christianity since the time of Constantine. In it, the church and state were largely co-terminus with one another. The state was the “nursing father” (to use a phrase from the 1646 Presbyterian Westminster Confession of Faith), supporting and even enforcing conformity to the religious practices of the church. In its strongest form, One Kingdom theology and its worldly implementation did not tolerate religious dissent.

The Baptists, as dissenters, long suffered under the hand of magisterial rulers and articulated a distinct conception of the relationship between the two realms. For them, religious and civil liberty were supreme values that required protection and sharp delineation. While the Standing Order (the established Congregational churches of Massachusetts and Connecticut) was

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nurtured by the state, Baptists protested vigorously. The body politic was not identical with the Kingdom of God, and the two must never be confused. Of course, the circumstances were very different for the nascent Maritime Baptist churches, and their struggles reflected their own conditions. Still, because the most numerous pre-loyalist Protestant migrants to Nova Scotia were Congregationalists from southern New England—the so-called “Planters”—who had been attracted to settle on former Acadian lands in the late 1750s and 1760s with the promise of religious liberty, the local popular religious culture in the trans-national region had deep underlying similarities. Indeed, the fact that Regular Baptists flourished across the region from, at least, the 1790s through the 1820s, is a powerful indication of the common spiritual and cultural landscape of the northeastern borderlands. This study demonstrates the profound ways that religious beliefs influence and inform the lives of individuals in both sacred and secular spheres. The Baptist doctrine very much reflected the Constitutionally mandated separation of church and the national government in the young American republic, and it also had lasting expression in the different political conditions of partial establishment in the British provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. 2

This dissertation makes a notable contribution to recent scholarly assessments of religion in this region due to its close attention to the Calvinistic emphasis and distinctive theology of Regular Baptists, which has not gotten careful attention in recent scholarship. Historian Stephen

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Marini’s important study of radical religious dissent in northern New England concentrated mostly on non-Calvinistic sects taking root on the frontier of New England, especially Shakers, Universalists, and Freewill Baptists. Shelby Balik has recently published a major study of frontier religion in northern New England, concentrating on how the rise of dissenting religion remapped its “religious geography” away from the traditional Standing Order system of southern New England. While these are valuable analyses, Regular Baptists fit uncomfortably in their studies. Moreover, neither give any consideration to parallel developments across the international border to the north.

Balik’s otherwise fine work judges Regular Baptists to share the more hierarchical structures developed by Freewill Baptists and Methodists to ensure organizational effectiveness and conformity. She recognizes, of course, that Regular Baptists adhered to the principle of congregational independency, but also claims that, like other dissenting groups, “all relied on itinerants and increasingly complex bureaucracies to administer their growing followings and extend their geographic reach while ensuring that consistent doctrine and discipline bound them together.” She further claims that Regular Baptists’ associationalism “centralized authority, even within a denomination that prized congregational autonomy.” Baines contends that Balik misreads how congregations and associations functioned for Regular Baptists. For him, the “godly republicanism” of the Regular Baptist polity privileged congregational autonomy above all and effectively guarded against the danger of consolidated power. Baines sees Regular

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4 Balik, *Rally the Scattered Believers*, 46.
Baptists as one of the foremost expressions of grass roots democracy in the early U.S. republic and believes this to be a direct fruit of their Two Kingdoms theology.

Unlike Methodists and Freewill Baptists, Regular Baptists did not need to develop new ecclesiological structures in the period under study. Rather than rely on individual charismatic leadership or innovation, they had a long-standing polity developed over more than a century via sustained religious dissent in England and North America.\(^5\) They did not need to establish new theological parameters through which to develop congregational polity. Their Particular Baptist forbears in England and Wales had already accomplished this work. Their ecclesiology was articulated in the London Confessions of faith published in 1644/46 and of 1677/89 and reissued as the Philadelphia Confession in 1742. It was brought to Maine by Baptists such as Hezekiah Smith, Isaac Backus, Job Macomber, and Isaac Case and served as the foundation for their Two Kingdom theology.\(^6\)

Given this disagreement with Balik’s assessment of Regular Baptists, it is notable that the most important regional study of evangelical religion in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick is also

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\(^5\) The first Regular Baptist church in Maine was founded in Kittery under the oversight of the First Baptist Church of Boston. William Scriven, a resident of Kittery, was licensed to preach to this congregation in January 1682, and the church was formally constituted in September. As their doctrinal foundation they chose the London Confession of Faith of 1677. The church did not last as most of the membership removed to South Carolina before the close of the century. Scriven would be the founding pastor of the First Baptist Church of Charleston, South Carolina. Oppression by the Standing Order in Kittery was likely a major factor in their removal. See Henry S. Burrage, *History of the Baptists in Maine* (Portland, Maine: Marks Printing House, 1904) 12-27; Robert A. Baker, Paul J. Craven, and R. Marshall Blalock, *History of the First Baptist Church of Charleston, South Carolina, 1682-2007* (Springfield, Missouri: Particular Baptist Press, 2007), 33-72; Robert Andrew Baker, *The First Southern Baptists* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1966).

centrally concerned with Regular Baptists’ associationalism and their gradual transition to require member churches to meet the exclusivist standard of closed (versus open or mixed) communion. In Nova Scotia and New Brunswick this occurred gradually from the late 1790s through 1809, as evangelicals struggled over how to advance the vital legacy of Henry Alline. Alline led the powerful New Light Stir in the region from 1776 to his death in New Hampshire in 1784. He and those who followed in his wake were anti-formalists for whom the specific expectations of Regular Baptists, such as full immersion of believers for meaningful baptism as well as believer’s only church membership, were seen as non-essentials that detracted from a more inclusive New Light spirit.7

Historian David Graham Bell is surely correct that the New Light to Baptist “paradigm” for Maritime religion in this period overstates the coherence of both sides in this fluid and dynamic spiritual moment. Still, Bell portrays the rise of Regular Baptists in rather coercive terms with a “Baptist coup of 1800” that was “stage managed” and then brought to fulfillment by the regional Baptist association’s requirement of closed communion in the “revolution of 1809.” Although a nuanced and learned study, it is hard not to hear him as somewhat wistful for the lost “Allinite ideal of Christian fellowship [that] was the major casualty of close communion.” Bell does note the importance of Maine-based missionaries like Isaac Case, Daniel Merrill, and, above all, Henry Hale, from New Brunswick who was especially effective in Nova Scotia. Still, for Bell, the success of “Boston-inspired” closed communion Calvinistic Baptists forced the Allinite tradition “underground” from 1809 until the Free Baptist conference met in 1832. The rift that closed communion caused among Maritime Baptists would not heal until the Baptist

7 While its title announces it primarily as an edited collection of original sources, Bell, The Newlight Baptist Journals, includes three long interpretive essays that are essential reading about evangelicalism in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia during the critical period of change from the 1790s to 1811.
In short, the implementation of the Regular Baptist vision of the church as the kingdom of God and its cross-border growth in the northeast warrants closer examination, which this dissertation begins to undertake.

A major challenge of any trans-national borderlands research project concerns how to build on, yet also elude, the national bias that lies at the heart of much historical scholarship. The strengths as well as the limitations of this scholarship are exemplified by the most influential current studies of evangelicalism in the United States and Canada in this period. Nathan O. Hatch’s *Democratization of American Christianity* offers a stirring assessment of “religious populism” in the early republic that characterizes the Second Great Awakening as the fulfillment of the American Revolution. For him, Protestantism triumphed as a “social struggle” where ordinary people were (and followed) “evangelical entrepreneurs.” Revivalism flourished because its “vendors” aligned so fully with the modern, liberal, and capitalistic trajectory of the new United States. This might aptly characterize much of the Second Great Awakening in the United States, but it does not speak directly to the Regular Baptist profile in Maine. Even more so, such a “republican” view of evangelicalism would seem to have been alien to the core values of most inhabitants of British North America from the 1780s to the 1820s.

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8 Bell, *The Newlight Baptist Journals*, 21, 22, 30, xiii, 33 (quotations); see, more generally, 25-36. On Maine missionaries in the Maritimes, also see 178-179, 181, and 197-98.


10 On the protean nature of republican ideology and its abuse as an analytical tool, see Daniel T. Rodgers, “Republicanism: The Career of a Concept,” *Journal of American History*, 79 (June 1992), 11-38. For a prize-winning rehabilitation of republican liberty as central to the early formation of the Canadian state, see Michel Ducharme, *The Idea of Liberty in Canada during the Age of Atlantic Revolutions, 1776–1838*, trans. Peter Feldstein (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2014; orig., 2010). Because it looks at Upper and Lower Canada and gives no attention to religion, Ducharme’s work has little direct bearing on this dissertation, other than as a useful caution that views of a retrograde “Loyalist” British Canada need to be reconsidered.
Interestingly, George A. Rawlyk’s canonical *The Canada Fire: Radical Evangelicalism in British North America, 1775-1812* shares some of the same distortions as Hatch, though from a Canadian point of view. Rawlyk deeply admired Hatch’s work, and they shared a strong commitment to the populist nature of radical evangelicalism in this era, what Rawlyk identified as the “New Birth paradigm” pioneered by Henry Alline. Yet, a crucial point of departure for Rawlyk is that because Canadian evangelicalism did not embrace the American Revolution it was “more radical, more anarchistic, more democratic, and more populist than its American counterpart.” This startling repositioning of Canadian evangelicalism falls prey to a need to foreground Canadian nationalism in two major ways. First, Rawlyk’s work links Maritime developments with ones to follow in Upper and Lower Canada (modern-day Ontario and Quebec, or “Central Canada”) in order to demonstrate a potent national Canadian religious tradition. However, this prevents him from pursuing evident connections between the Maritimes and Maine. Second, Rawlyk at times implies a certain disdain for U.S. evangelicalism, as in his praise for a revival in Nova Scotia in the late 1780s and early 1790s as “true democracy—devoid of all republican cant.”

The rich scholarship of Rawlyk and Hatch provide an essential starting point, but their nationalist frameworks obscure the bonds that united Regular Baptists in Maine, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick that are of central concern to this dissertation.

This study aims to contribute to a borderland understanding of common beliefs, structures, and work that connected Regular Baptists in three neighboring polities of the northeastern borderlands. Two significant recent monographs have studied the same region and time period as this project. The more recent one, by Joshua M. Smith, examines smuggling

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11 George A. Rawlyk, *The Canada Fire: Radical Evangelicalism in British North America, 1775-1812* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), xvi, 75. For another example of Rawlyk’s view of Canadian evangelicalism as superior to the U.S. version, because it was less individualistic and less capitalistic in this case, see 139-140.
across Passamaquoddy Bay. Due to its focus on economic matters and relations with the state, it offers only a passing mention of religious life in the region. The second monograph, Elizabeth Mancke’s comparative study of Machias, Maine, and Liverpool, Nova Scotia, includes a probing chapter-length assessment of the decline of Congregationalism in both communities. While Baptists were active in both places, they did not leave an extensive body of records and are not central to her assessment. Moreover, her fascinating structuralist argument about divergent forms of local governance in each place is at the heart of her explanation of why Congregationalism failed more quickly in Nova Scotia than in Maine. As a result, the theological foundations of religious life and the internal spiritual experiences of its practitioners, which are of greatest importance to Ron Baines, are wholly distinct from the approach pursued by Mancke. As for more conceptual assessments of borderlands in this region in articles and book chapters, most have been done by Canadian scholars, often with the strong support of the Canadian-American Center at the University of Maine (as was also the case with the monographs by Smith and Mancke). Unfortunately, much of the Canadian approach to Maritimes regionalism remains centrally informed by a nationalist rather than a borderlands perspective. The strongest expression of this view is by historian P. A. Buckner, whose borderlands critique is by an “unregenerate Canadian nationalist,” who sees regional history as chiefly significant in a national context.

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In this dissertation the northeastern borderlands refers to the territory and to the English-speaking people living in the three adjoining polities of modern-day Maine, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick. As a result, the shorthand of the Maritimes here refers only to the two Canadian provinces (with apologies to Prince Edward Island). In the second chapter, which follows this Introduction, the reader is introduced to the key figures for the start of the Baptist expansion in the District of Maine in the last third of the eighteenth century. Under the influence of the indefatigable Isaac Backus, ministers in Maine began to think carefully about the nature of the church and its relationship to the state. With a growing sense of the unique nature of the religious body, Baptist principles were accepted and disseminated. This was the Two Kingdoms theology taking root and flourishing on the northeastern frontier. This theology is exegeted at length with a nuanced examination of how it was employed against the established churches and their ministers. Ministers Daniel Merrill and Isaac Case, major recurring figures throughout the dissertation, as well as others, became the chief advocates of this old, but new to northern New England, perspective. Merrill’s conversion from being a Congregational pastor to a Regular Baptist one in Sedgwick, Maine, in 1805 makes him a key figure, and as the author of some twenty books (many reissued in multiple printings), his public impact is clear and well documented. Isaac Case’s significance as an itinerant minister, and the importance of his manuscript diary, which Baines worked with closely, is returned to at the close of this introduction.

Chapter Two also demonstrates that Two Kingdoms theology grew from the soil of the previous century, especially in England. The important and highly respected London minister

John Gill played a significant role through his influential publications, and Isaac Backus directly used the language of the English Baptist Confessions. This suggests interesting trajectories for future scholars—what role did the writings of English Particular Baptists play in the later development of North American Baptist doctrine and polity? Certainly, the question of influence is difficult and fraught with significant challenges, nevertheless an investigation of the trans-Atlantic traffic of Baptist principles would be enlightening.

The activism of the young churches was evidenced in the formation of associations that united local churches and mission societies to expand the kingdom. Associationalism receives extensive treatment in Chapter Five, while mission work is examined in Chapter Three as central to the strong Baptist commitment to itinerant ministry. While it is often stated that American Baptist missions began with the conversion of Adoniram Judson and Luther Rice to Baptist principles while en route to India, Baines demonstrates that the roots of American Baptist missions can be found in the efforts at kingdom expansion in the northeastern borderlands—especially from the District of Maine and into the Maritime provinces. This highlights a neglected aspect of the outward looking vision and spiritual commitment of Baptists. Their understanding of the heavenly kingdom demanded efforts at territorial expansion—not in terms of gaining terra firma for the church, but rather in bringing souls under the lordship of Jesus Christ. Once again, profound religious motivation affects worldly actions and experience. This kingdom was expanded by means of missionary activity not political power. The Baptist preachers sought to win converts by the persuasion of words.

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The third chapter, *Babylon Invaded*, directly engages this theme. The battle of the differing approaches to the Kingdom of God in the region was first joined by Regular Baptists in Berwick, Maine. When converts to Baptist principles refused to pay the tax in support of the Standing Order minister, arrests and a court case ensued. One Kingdom advocates refused to accept the validity of the credentials of the Baptists, whose Two Kingdom theology caused them to refuse taxation to support a minister (even should it have been one of their choosing). Lessons learned from this skirmish aided Baptist preachers as they moved north and east, itinerating in towns, islands, and villages. Portents of the difficulties to come were revealed in the incidents at Berwick, and these undergirded commitment to the Two Kingdoms theology. Attention is also paid here to Edward Manning, whose conversion at age 22 in 1789, began his emergence as an influential Baptist minister in the Maritimes, and an exploration of the complex relationship among New Light Congregationalists and Regular Baptists in the Maritimes in the 1790s.

These parallel developments in Maine and the Maritimes meant that no longer could Baptist preachers and their churches submit to past practices and the policies enforced by the established church and its allied civil government. Political and parish boundaries were irrelevant to their mission, so much so that they needed to be crossed without concern for ramifications. The greatest opposition would come from Congregational ministers who were often incensed when their territories were visited by itinerant Baptist preachers. The result was a direct challenge to “Babylon,” as Daniel Merrill called the regnant system.

Baptist itinerants were not satisfied with simply making converts to the faith, the next step was necessary— forming individuals into Baptist churches. Chapter Four investigates this process. On the surface it may seem a simple one— gather and organize the people. The actual work, however, could be very challenging. Opposition from Congregational ministers, who were
threatened by religious competition, was often intense. Diminished congregations, smaller tax collections, rival claims to religious superiority, and the prospect of the loss of position, among other worldly and spiritual factors, often moved these men to campaign tirelessly against Baptist church formation. In addition to sharp quarrels among New Light Congregational and Baptist evangelicals in the Maritimes, Anglican leaders there are well known for their wholesale condemnation of Baptists and other dissenters as threats to civic and religious stability.

Insisting upon baptism only by those of an age capable of independent decision making, the most obvious practice that made Baptists distinctive, was at the root of much of this trouble. Rejecting infant baptism struck at the foundation of sacral society in both the Congregational and Anglican social-spiritual order. Though New England theologians had grappled with the questions involved in the practice, and had accepted the so-called Half-Way Covenant, paedobaptism remained a pillar of society. The Baptist practice undercut this foundation by arguing that the ordinance was only rightly experienced by those able to make a conscious profession of faith without coercion. The consequence was especially profound in New England, now the Baptist church was a gathered body of professing believers, not a collection of all townspeople (who held differing levels of spiritual status within the Congregational church).

Not only did credobaptism unravel the foundation of the church and its holistic community ideal, its application and the development of new religious assemblies introduced other knotty civil questions. For example, who may legally solemnize marriages? In the Maritime provinces, this was the prerogative of the Anglican clergy. Could a dissenting minister, ordained outside of the establishment, officiate at a wedding? The theology of the Two Kingdoms, and the formation of Baptist churches, had wide-ranging implications for core social and domestic institutions and practices.
Chapter Five investigates the principles of associationalism. While Baptist doctrine advocated autonomy for each congregation, it never demanded isolation from similar groups. Opponents may have surmised that a radical form of independence would result from their principles, but this was not the case. The Two Kingdoms theology called the churches to mutual recognition and cooperation. Baines carefully demonstrates that the Baptist practice negotiated the straits between collaboration and congregational sovereignty. Two Kingdoms theology necessitated that each church maintain its independence from external authority structures (such as were present in the parish and consociation systems), while at the same time engaging in mutual efforts to extend the kingdom. This required great skill, and the associations were established in such a way as to respect both tenets. Several examples of the protective principles erected are provided, clearly demonstrating that power could not be consolidated in organizations outside the churches. At the same time, the assemblies provided advice and labor for the growth of the cause.

The ministers of the Standing Order were deeply concerned when one of their own, Daniel Merrill, the settled minister of the Congregational church in Sedgwick, Maine, adopted, and advocated Baptist principles, first from the pulpit of his established church, and then in the formation of a Baptist congregation. Chapter Six gives sustained attention to Merrill’s central place in the “watery war” of pamphlets, letters, and books that resulted from this momentous change and Merrill’s effective advocacy of Baptist belief and practice. He was well equipped to engage in credobaptist polemics, and he was set upon by several prominent Congregational ministers. Baines effectively conveys the nuances employed by the combatants in this decade-long clash.
Chapter Seven closes the dissertation with an investigation of the War of 1812 and its effects on cross-border relations among Baptist churches and associations in Maine and the Maritime provinces. Despite political differences, Baptist ministers and churches throughout the northeastern borderlands sought to continue their fellowship. The Two Kingdoms doctrine was at the root of this largely successful enterprise, as it enabled men to parse their views into distinct categories—the heavenly kingdom for church relationships, and the earthly kingdom for political differences. A commitment to keep each in their own proper domain supported ongoing regional ties despite martial and political tensions. Through an innovative comparison of Baptist association minutes from throughout the United States, Baines reveals that associations in New England and New York were more equivocal about the war than the more bellicose associations in the U.S. west and south. This sense of regional distinctiveness among U.S. Baptists is further underscored by the cross-border itinerancy that went both ways from the Maritimes into Maine and from Maine into the Maritimes as well as by warm personal correspondence between key figures like Daniel Merrill and Edward Manning. Even as national denominational consciousness grew in Maine and the Maritimes, Regular Baptist leaders continued to nurture a strong sense of spiritual and worldly solidarity in the northeastern borderlands.

This trans-national study of Regular Baptists in the northeast has an undeniable Maine-centric thrust. Had Ronald Baines lived longer and been able to revise the dissertation based on his deep knowledge of the subject, it would have been rewarding to learn if he would have deepened his recovery and championing of Maine Baptist leadership in this region, or if he might have expanded about the actions of Maritime Baptists, so that we might understand them more fully as co-equal laborers in the northeastern borderlands. As Baines notes at the start of Chapter Seven, Maritime Baptist itinerants were active in Maine in Passamaquoddy Bay and even as far
as Machias and Steuben in 1801 and 1802, long before Maine itinerants made their first forays into the Maritimes. Unfortunately, we cannot fully know where Baines’ final assessment about the balance of influence within the region ultimately stands.

Uncovering Isaac Case’s significance may well be the most important scholarly contribution that this dissertation makes, and it relies on painstaking work with Case’s difficult to read (and still only partially catalogued) manuscript material in the Isaac Case Papers owned by Special Collections at Colby College. Of the utmost value in that collection is Case’s diary that spans the period from 1783 to 1829, which, unfortunately, includes little internal indication of chronology. Pat Burdick, Assistant Director for Special Collections at Colby College, explains that Ron volunteered from 2010 to 2014 to organize the Case Papers, and “by 2012, he had reordered the pages using internal evidence as well as his extensive knowledge of regional Baptist history.” Erin Taylor was the special projects staff person at Colby with whom Ron worked most closely on the Case Papers, and she “enjoyed Ron’s gracious and generous nature, and his dedication to archival research. All of us are indebted to Ron for his years of diligent work with the Isaac Case materials.”

The co-authors of this Introduction could not agree more.

Building on a strong theological foundation, this study demonstrates the power of ideas and their thoroughgoing practical implications for religious practice as well as organizational activities and everyday life. Believer’s baptism by immersion in the wintry conditions of the northeast dramatically embodied the “watery grave” and a new birth in Jesus Christ via believer’s baptism, a powerful embodiment of spiritual values in practice. While ecclesiastical matters such as the commitment to closed communion churches and the proper bounds of associational-church relations may be less stirring, these were also essential worldly practices

15 Email communication from Pat Burdick to Liam Riordan, August 21, 2018.
derived from theological commitments that bound Regular Baptists in the borderlands together. This study is simultaneously attentive to the distinctive social and political context of the transnational northeast. Among the crucial forces that linked Maine and the Maritimes was a common majoritarian religious culture derived from eighteenth-century Congregationalism, the parallel place of imperiled establishments of the Standing Order and Anglicanism, and the practical challenges of living in a sparsely-settled, but rapidly-growing, frontier region.
CHAPTER 2
THE KINGDOM TORN:
BAPTISTS AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

On May 15, 1805, the well-known New England Baptist minister, Thomas Baldwin, soberly mounted the pulpit steps of the meeting house in Sedgwick, in the District of Maine, to address hundreds of gathered residents, visitors, and invited guests. He had made the arduous journey from Boston, where he held the pastorate of the Second Baptist Church, to participate in the baptism and ordination of Daniel Merrill. It was, according to Baldwin, “a season to us uncommonly solemn and precious.”

This event was of special interest to the Baptists of New England, for this was not Merrill’s first Sedgwick ordination; twelve years earlier he had been ordained over the Congregational Church of Sedgwick by a group of ministers of the Standing Order from Massachusetts and Maine. The May 1805 rituals marked the final stage of Merrill’s conversion from Congregational to Baptist principles. The path which led to these events was recounted by Merrill almost thirty years later and published in 1833, only days before he died at the age of sixty-two.

Merrill confessed that after some years in the ministry in Sedgwick members of his own congregation, as well as some others, challenged him to consider the subject of infant baptism more carefully. Intending to refute the “hurtful nature” of the Baptists’ practice by writing a book

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16 Thomas Baldwin, A Sermon, Delivered at Sedgwick, May 15, 1805, at the Ordination of the Rev. Daniel Merrill to the Pastoral Charge of the Baptist Church of Christ in That Place (Boston: Manning & Loring, 1805), 29.
17 The ministers present at Merrill’s first ordination were Samuel Spring of Newburyport, Peter Powers of Deer Island, and Elijah Parish of Byfield. See Samuel Spring, A Sermon, Preached at the Ordination of the Rev. Daniel Merrill, in Sedgwick, Sept. 17, 1793 (Newburyport, Massachusetts: Edmund Blunt, 1794).
confirming infant baptism, he took to “a careful and critical review of the oracles of God”
expecting to find “the certain scripture evidence of their errors.” To his “great disappointment
and extreme regret” he found he could neither refute the Baptists nor confirm his own practice of
infant baptism. The matter was exacerbated when eight children in the large Sedgwick
congregation were presented to him for baptism. Confessing “distressing uncertainty and
profound ignorance,” he “administered no gospel ordinance for nine months.” Struggling with
what he described as “an unconquered antipathy against being a Baptist” and not being able to
“bear the idea of being called one” he continued “from month to month, in Egyptian darkness.”
Finally, as he recounted, “by an unconditional submission to the will of God, I was enabled to
roll my burden upon him, and found peace.”

The capstone of his conversion to Baptist doctrine came after preaching seven sermons
on the subject of baptism, when he led the majority of his congregation to embrace Baptist
principles. His transition from Standing Order Congregationalism to Baptist doctrine and
practice, by his own admission, took the better part of two years, culminating in his May 15
submission to believer’s baptism and re-ordination as a Baptist minister. The newly formed
Sedgwick Baptist Church, once the largest Congregational Church in Maine, was now the largest
Baptist church in the northeastern region.

Merrill’s story is one of several Congregational clergy conversions in New England in
the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Isaac Backus, perhaps the most influential

19 Ibid., 3-4.
20 The seven sermons were published prior to his ordination as The Mode and Subjects of Baptism Examined, in
Seven Sermons; to Which Is Added, a Brief History of the Baptists (Salem, Massachusetts: Joshua Cushing, 1804). It
went through ten editions in eight years, strong evidence of its popularity.
21 For the size of the Sedgwick church, see Joshua Millet, A History of the Baptists in Maine; Together with Brief
Notices of Societies and Institutions (Portland: C. Day & Co., 1845), 263.
Baptist in America in the eighteenth century, underwent a very similar theological change. Backus, like Merrill, would become a lifelong leader in the Baptist movement. Historian C. C. Goen has shown decisively that the transition in southern New England of many lay members, clergy, and whole congregations to Baptist principles was widespread following the Great Awakening. Merrill’s story, though significant, was not unique.22

Merrill tirelessly served the Baptists in New England and the British Provinces the rest of his life as a pastor, itinerant evangelist, educator, and author, particularly as a polemicist for the Regular or Calvinistic Baptist cause. Being an educated Baptist clergyman on the frontier thrust Merrill into the forefront of the explosive growth of Baptists in the region in the early years of the nineteenth century.23 With this growth came the need to defend the Baptist system of thought from the alternative worldview of the paedobaptist communions throughout the region. In the thinking of the Baptists, who would be better suited than one who had converted from paedobaptism to that of anti-paedobaptism?

While the proper administration of baptism was a critical difference between the Baptists and the Standing Order, it would be an unfortunate oversimplification to think that this was the sum and substance of their dissimilarities. As Merrill discovered in his pilgrimage from paedobaptism to believer’s baptism, the Baptists held to a cluster of beliefs that uniquely defined them and determined their interaction with other corporate and social entities at many levels. One of the most important doctrinal differences was about the nature and subjects of the Kingdom of God. The Baptist doctrinal formulation of the Kingdom of God provided an

23 Merrill was awarded the master’s degree from Dartmouth College in 1789. See George T. Chapman, Sketches of the Alumni of Dartmouth College, from the First Graduation in 1771 to the Present Time, with a Brief History of the Institution (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Riverside Press, 1867), 51.
overarching framework through which they not only identified themselves in ecclesiastically distinctive ways from the Standing Order, it also shaped Baptists’ conceptualization of their place in the social and civil world of everyday life.  

For example, the Kingdom of God as a theological construct framed their understanding of civil liberty and the limits of political power, and, therefore, provided the paradigm through which the Baptists advocated the separation of church and state. Likewise, it governed their understanding of the nature and character of the church, and so was the template through which they viewed ecclesiastical communion and the necessity of departure from the state church; separation for the Baptists was bi-directional. Merrill came to realize that Baptists, though often “charged with a desire and purpose of dividing and breaking down all other churches,” more basically desired,

to preach the glad tidings of the kingdom of God, and so to preach them that they may have such an overcoming efficacy as to prevail with all the people of God, to leave the Pedobaptist church, and every other erroneous habitation, and be joined to this kingdom of God.

Understanding the Baptist doctrine of the Kingdom was foundational to Merrill’s own conversion to the Baptist ranks and is therefore crucial to understanding the Baptists’ insistence on civil liberty and ecclesiastical independence. To fail to distinguish the institutional limits of both church and state had led to numerous abuses in Europe and America culminating in the magistrate’s abuse of its citizens. Even during the Puritan era in America, Merrill noted, though the magistrate was apparently “seeking the well being of God’s kingdom,” citizens had been

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24 The literature uses the phrases “The Kingdom of God,” “the Kingdom of Christ,” “The Kingdom of Heaven,” and the like interchangeably. Consequently, no attempt is made to make the references uniform.

banished, whipped, and “some of the friends they hanged, to keep the peace in God’s kingdom.”

Over the next twenty-seven years Merrill published some twenty different works that reflected the characteristic Baptist paradigm of the Kingdom of God in distinction from the kingdoms of this world. Two of these works were direct expositions of his kingdom theology, while several of the others dealt with doctrinal subjects that directly derived from it, such as believer’s-only baptism and closed communion. In publishing on the kingdom of God, Merrill added his voice to a long transatlantic tradition of Baptist political and ecclesiastical thought that separated the Baptists from paedobaptists, on the one side, and Anabaptists, on the other. These documents allow a deep understanding of the world view that was at the center of Baptist self-identity in northeastern North America in this era.

While Merrill does not name them, he likely refers to famous dissenters such as the quasi-Baptist Roger Williams, who was banished from the Bay Colony, the Baptist Obadiah Holmes, who was whipped by the Massachusetts authorities, and Quakers, such as Mary Dyer, who were hanged on Boston Common. Prior to adopting Baptist practice Merrill published two small works. The first work, *Mr. Merrill’s answer to the Christians, and other inhabitants of Sedgwick also the confession and covenant of the Ch. of Christ in that place* (Newburyport, Massachusetts: Edmund M. Blunt, 1801), was a 16-page pamphlet which consisted of Merrill’s agreement to be the pastor of the Sedgwick Congregational Church as well as a reprint of the Church’s Confession and Covenant. It contains two references to the Kingdom of God, the first being an interesting footnote on Baptism and the second about the eschatological day of judgment. Neither give enough detail to determine the essence of Kingdom of God theology held by Merrill prior to becoming a Baptist. The second, an 1803 pamphlet titled, *The Constitution of a Society for Promoting the Education of religious Young Men for the Ministry, and Also for Sending the Gospel to the Destitute* (Salem, Massachusetts: Joshua Cushing, 1803), contains a two page “Address” by Merrill, the president of the Society, advocating its value. There is no reference to the Kingdom of God in this text.

The two works directly dealing with the Kingdom of God are Daniel Merrill, *The Kingdom of Heaven, Distinguished from Babylon a Sermon Delivered at the Introduction of the Lincoln Association, Sept. 21-22, 1808* (Buckstown, Maine: William W. Clapp, 1810); *The Kingdom of God: A Discourse, Delivered at Concord.*

Timothy George helpfully places the English Baptists’ view of the civil magistrate between the poles of Anabaptist pacifism and, at times, antagonism, and state church coercion; a position the Baptists frequently advocated for themselves, though often with disappointing results. See Timothy George, “Between Pacifism and Coercion: The English Baptist Doctrine of Religious Toleration,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 58, no. 1 (1984). George covers the origin and early development of Baptist toleration in the period from 1610-1625. Foundational to their *via media*, as George rightly notes, was a distinctive doctrine of the Church and the Kingdom of God. The long transatlantic tradition to which Merrill added his voice is evidenced in the doctrines of civil and ecclesiastical liberty which were at the heart of the debate with the paedobaptists in both Old and New England reaching back to the early seventeenth century. In 1646, Presbyterian heresiologist Thomas (Gangreana) Edwards lamented the proliferation of “Errors, Opinions, Practises” that were present in New and Old England alike, *The First and Second Part of Gangreana, or, a Catalogue and Discovery of Many of the Errors,*
The Baptist understanding of the Kingdom of God reached back into the early seventeenth century in both Old and New England. In the late eighteenth century, Isaac Backus (1724-1806), the most influential and prolific Baptist of his generation, wrote on the subject. The English Particular Baptist Abraham Booth’s work on the Kingdom went through at least four American editions between 1791 and 1811.\textsuperscript{30} In September of 1808, Daniel Merrill addressed the Lincoln Baptist Association meeting at the Baptist Church in Ballstown, Maine, on the subject of *The Kingdom of Heaven Distinguished from Babylon*, adding his voice to the Baptist tradition.\textsuperscript{31}

At the request of many who heard Merrill, some with approval and some, in Merrill’s words, “disgusted,” the sermon was published in 1810. The sermon gives a helpful framework for assessing the nature of the Kingdom of God and its implication in Baptist life and thought and

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\textit{Heresies, Blasphemies and Pernicious Practices of the Sectaries of This Time, Vented and Acted in England in These Four Last Years Also a Particular Narration of Divers Stories, Remarkable Passages, Letters : An Extract of Many Letters, All Concerning the Present Sects: Together with Some Observations Upon and Corollaries from All the Fore-Named Premisses, The third edition, corrected and much enlarged. ed.} (London: T.R. and E.M. for Ralph Smith, 1646), 2-3. In addressing Old England, Edwards doubted the integrity of the Particular Baptists, believing their recently published *Confession of Faith* (1644) was an attempt to merely appear to be consistent with reformed doctrine apart from some aspects of ecclesiology. Refusing to believe their professed distance from Anabaptist pacifism and assuming their total lack of integrity, he continues to call them “Anabaptists” and their *Confession* a “fraud” (108-109). Turning to New England, Edwards particularly had in mind the recent publication of Roger Williams, *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution* (Providence, Rhode Island: Narragansett Club, 1867). Having felt the sting of persecution and suffered banishment in Massachusetts for his separatist views, Williams advocated for ecclesiastical liberty in a printed debate with John Cotton of Boston’s First Church. Edwards zeroed in on Williams’ plea for ecclesiastical liberty as one example of the heresies flourishing in New England at that time. While Williams’ was an avowed Baptist for an extremely short period of time, New England Baptists did not stop owning him and his doctrine of ecclesiastical liberty as their own. See especially, “Appendix containing a brief account of the sentiments of the first Baptist churches in New England” in Isaac Backus, *The Doctrine of Sovereign Grace Opened and Vindicated* (Providence, Rhode Island: John Carter, 1771), ii-vi.


\textsuperscript{31} Ballstown comprised the present Maine towns of Whitefield and Jefferson. The Baptist Church was founded in 1788 and since 1796 was under the pastoral care of Joseph Bailey. See Millet, *A History of the Baptists in Maine*, 115-16.
provides the foundation for what follows, although other Baptist authors, especially Backus, will be used to frame the doctrine more fully.\textsuperscript{32}

**The Inauguration of the Kingdom**

Merrill began by asserting that the Kingdom of Heaven during the Jewish economy of the Old Testament was a “mystery . . . hid in God,” and not inaugurated by its “divine Author” until the New Testament, when it was “revealed in His holy Apostles and prophets.” The ecclesiastical and hermeneutical implications of this fact for Merrill and his Baptist brethren were crucial. If Merrill was correct, then all other ecclesiastical communions who looked to circumcision in Old Testament Israel as somehow paradigmatic for baptism in the Church were in error. In Merrill’s mind, this included all those within the fold of Rome and all Protestants who, though having left Rome and embraced the doctrines of the Reformation, still clung to Rome’s practice of “infant sprinkling, or infant baptism; and thus build all their Churches after the model of the Jewish Synagogue.” According to Merrill, the ecclesiology of Protestant and Catholic alike was defective. Hermeneutically, Merrill built on a long tradition of Baptist thinkers who saw a fundamental flaw in the typological paedobaptist practice of looking to Old Testament Israel as the foundation for infant baptism and church membership. This led them to see unwarranted typological connections between Israel and the Church as well as between Israel and the civil magistrate. In other words, the hermeneutical error of the paedobaptists had both ecclesiastical and civil implications: implications which Baptists believed provided long standing justification for civil and ecclesiastical tyranny in both Old and New England.

\textsuperscript{32} Merrill, *The Kingdom of Heaven, Distinguished from Babylon*. While it is possible that some of Merrill’s Baptist brethren were not in full agreement with the sermon’s sentiments, it is hard to imagine that the Association would request its publication if it failed to present a Baptist view of the Kingdom. It is most likely that Merrill’s “disgusted” listeners were paedobaptists, whether clergy or laity cannot be determined.
Writing as one banished from the Massachusetts Bay Colony for his dissenting religious views, Roger Williams in the seventeenth century challenged John Cotton and the New England Standing Order on this very point. Confronting John Cotton’s typology, specifically with respect to the Old Testament Israelite king, Josiah, Williams noted, “Josiah was in the type, so are not now the severall Governours of Commonweals, Kings or Governours of the Church or Israel, whose state I have proved to be a None-such, and not to be parallel’d but in the Antitype the particular Church of Christ, where Christ Jesus alone sits King in his own most holy Government.” As historian Timothy Hall rightly notes, Williams was no stranger to typology, “In his hands, however, typology drove a deep wedge between Old Testament law and seventeenth-century society, pushing the Old Testament further away from Massachusetts rather than drawing it closer.”

Williams would be followed by New England Baptists like Isaac Backus and Daniel Merrill as it would take more than a century of ecclesiastical and hermeneutical challenges to the Standing Order to bear lasting fruit. Backus’ voluminous writings as an apologist for New England Baptists began, like Merrill, with his conversion from the ranks of Separate Congregationalism in Connecticut in 1751 to closed communion Baptist in 1756. Like Williams before him and Merrill who would follow, Backus saw the hermeneutical issue of paedobaptist typology as foundational to the error of the Standing Order. Also like Williams, Backus felt the sting of Standing Order persecution for his convictions, and he wrote to defend his views and refute the errors of infant baptism.

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33 Williams, *The Bloudy Tenent*, 401.
Among Backus’ many writings, *A Short Description of the Difference Between the Bond-Woman and the Free* (1756) makes the point effectively. As historian William McLoughlin affirms, the purpose of this work was “to marshal all of the best arguments he could find to refute the Puritan claim that the covenant which God made with Abraham and the Jews in the Old Testament was carried over essentially unchanged in the covenant which God made with Christ and the Christians in the New Testament.”

Turning to typology, Backus, using the language of the Apostle Paul in Galatians, conceived of the nation of Israel under the covenant made at Sinai, “commonly called the covenant of works,” to be the bond-woman. Her children are “all that are born after the flesh . . . from which none can enter the kingdom of God.”

Backus defined the freewoman as “the glorious plan of salvation laid in the eternal mind from everlasting which in time has been made manifest, first by gradual discoveries thereof in the Old Testament, and then by Christ actually coming in the flesh.” The children of the freewoman are, therefore, those born “by promise.” Using this typological framework Backus distinguished Old Testament physical Israel, the bond-woman, from New Testament “spiritual” Israel, the Church. Framed in this way, for Backus and the Baptists, “the Jewish church . . . and the Gospel-Church are set as wide apart as the old covenant and the new.”

By affirming that the Kingdom of God did not commence with Israel in the Old Testament, Merrill, like Williams and Backus before him, was assigning to New Testament revelation the task of controlling typological interpretations respecting Old Testament Israel. If Israel was not the Kingdom of God, though it could point to the Church in a limited and

36 Ibid., 136-38.
37 Ibid., 140-41, 46.
typological way, it was not to be followed to any conclusion that the New Testament did not warrant. Thus, the Baptists saw the need to interpret the Old Testament in light of the New Testament; failing to do so would continue to have drastic consequences.\(^{38}\) As McLoughlin correctly noted, Backus left paedobaptism because he rejected the form of “covenant theology upon which the whole New England Standing Order was based.” For the Baptists, the New Covenant community was a spiritual community, the Church, and not the combined New England civil and religious institution typified by Old Testament Israel. Since the inauguration of the Kingdom of Heaven, the state and the church were no longer one, but separate institutions. In the words of McLoughlin, the Baptists separating the church and state constituted “not only an ecclesiastical revolution but a social one.” Is it any wonder some found Merrill’s 1808 sermon unsettling or even “disgusting”?\(^{39}\)

**The Subjects of the Kingdom**

The Kingdom of Heaven, Merrill insisted, like any other kingdom has its subjects. Interpreting Moses’ prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:15-19 of Christ, the future prophet, he concluded, “not one should have right to membership, but such as should *hear and be obedient to Jesus Christ.*” By describing the subjects of the kingdom in this way, Merrill affirmed “*the moral, or spiritual, character of the subjects of this kingdom.*”\(^{40}\) Since babies were not capable of

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\(^{38}\) One of the fullest expositions of typology from a Baptist perspective was that by Benjamin Keach. Keach, widely read by Baptists in both Old and New England, published a massive volume on typology, a portion of which was republished in Connecticut in 1817. While he saw a typological significance to Israelite circumcision, unlike the paedobaptists, it was not with respect to the subjects of baptism. Instead, he viewed circumcision as typical of regeneration, thus typologically negating infant baptism. The hermeneutical differences between the two positions could not be more pronounced. Benjamin Keach, *Preaching from the Types and Metaphors of the Bible*, Kregel Reprint Library (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1972), 993.


\(^{40}\) Merrill, *The Kingdom of Heaven, Distinguished from Babylon*, 5.
hearing Christ and only those who had professed faith in Christ could lay a credible claim to obedience, the subjects of the kingdom must be believers. As paedobaptists considered the baptized children of church members to be in the kingdom, the Baptists and the paedobaptists had differing conceptions of the subjects of the kingdom.

The important point at this juncture is that the difference between the Baptists and the Standing Order was greater than simply the “sprinkling” of children, the mode and subjects of baptism; it was the entire formulation of the nature of the Kingdom. If the Kingdom of God comprised the physical seed of believers, then baptizing children, like circumcision in Israel, brought them into the Kingdom. But if the Kingdom was spiritual, as the Baptists insisted, no amount of water would suffice. In the words of Isaac Backus, “Christ by his death had disannulled the covenant of circumcision” and “gave the pure gospel commission to none but regenerate persons.”

Only professed believers were subjects of the Kingdom. Among the problems with the paedobaptist churches was that their theological framework sanctioned the practice of mixed communion, i.e. church membership consisting of some who were regenerate and some whom were not.

This difference is underscored in Merrill’s description of Standing Order churches as Babylon. Merrill placed two biblical texts on the title page of his work reflecting the reference to the ancient Babylonians expressing a pretended desire to help ancient Israel rebuild their temple; a temple which had been destroyed by the Babylonians more than seventy years previous.

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41 Isaac Backus, *The Kingdom of God, Described by His Word, with Its Infinite Benefits to Human Society* (Boston: Samuel Hall, 1792), 9.
42 On the paedobaptist conceptualization of the Kingdom, see Thomas James, *A Short Treatise on the Visible Kingdom of Christ, and the Great Charter Privileges Granted by Him to His Subjects. ... By Thomas James* (Philadelphia: Benjamin Franklin and David Hall, 1749). James aimed to prove that the subjects of the Kingdom were the same under the Old Testament and the New.
Israelites viewed this as an attempt to mingle the religion of Israel with that of the Babylonians, something expressly forbidden in the Old Testament. They understood it as mixing of the true religion and the false. Baptists such as Merrill considered bringing unregenerate infants into the churches, a practice—in their historiography—instituted under the Church of Rome, as an attempt to combine true and false believers as subjects of the Kingdom. Hence Merrill’s title distinguishing Babylon, the mixed church, with the true Kingdom of God. As far as he was concerned, whether Protestant or Catholic, “the Paedobaptist Church is the visible Church of Babylon,” also known as “mystical Babylon.” Merrill was not denying the regenerate status of some within the paedobaptist churches, but the presence of unregenerate members in these Churches meant that they could not be a part of the Kingdom of God. The subjects of the Kingdom were foundational to his theology of the Kingdom.

Backus defended Baptist principles in a similar manner against the Congregational minister Reverend Joseph Fish of Stonington, Connecticut. Fish argued against the Baptist insistence on the church being comprised of visible saints and for the propriety of the church being of mixed communion. Backus knew Fish’s position was contrary not just to Baptist theology but to the founding Congregational polity of New England. Late eighteenth century Congregationalists like Fish had largely departed from their seventeenth century roots. One particular aspect of Baptist practice that galled Fish and other Congregational ministers was the call for true believers in the mixed communion Congregational Churches to come out from them and join the closed communion Baptists. Quoting the supposed Baptists, Fish noted, “They did not appear to grieve and mourn at the awful rent which they made, in the church and

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43 Merrill, *The Kingdom of Heaven, Distinguished from Babylon*, 18, 19. The practice of calling the Roman Church by the name of mystical Babylon had a long history among the Baptists. For a seventeenth century example among English Particular Baptists, see Hanserd Knollys, “Mystical Babylon Availed,” (London: 1679).
congregation: but seemed rather to glory in it; calling to others, that tarried behind, *Come out from among them, and be ye separate*; with this reflection, ‘If they are christians, why don’t they come away from the shades of Babylon!’

Backus did not deny Fish’s charge, but defended the practice noting the specific reference to Babylon. “I suppose the use of the word *Babylon* here was thought as criminal as any of their language, but as its significance is *confusion* or *mixture*, are there not at least the *shades* of it where civil and ecclesiastical affairs, *church* and *world*, are *confounded* together, as we have proved they are in our land?”

Backus and Merrill both advocated that the Kingdom of God was comprised of visible saints only. A credible profession of faith, baptism following that profession, and a life that evidenced its fruit was requisite to enter the Kingdom.

**The Church and the Kingdom**

Narrowing the subjects of the Kingdom of Heaven to be professed believers brought with it a re-assessment of the connection between the Kingdom of Heaven and the Church. The Kingdom of Heaven was not Old Testament Israel, being then a “mystery,” but was inaugurated by Christ sometime “between the period in which he began his publick ministry, and that in which he suffered.”

Since the subjects of the Kingdom were only those who made a credible profession of saving faith, then the relationship of the Kingdom of Heaven to the Church in Baptist theology set them far apart from the Standing Order.

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The Baptists held the state-church system to be fundamentally at odds with the New Testament revelation of the Kingdom of Heaven because of the necessary connection between the subjects of the two. If the Kingdom was spiritual rather than physical, then entrance into the Kingdom and membership in the church must both be spiritual as well. Backus believed missing this point led to carrying over Old Testament elements of “the covenant of circumcision,” where “regenerate and unregenerate were bound together in a national church,” leading to the theological justification for forming national churches. “But men . . . have generally held to the bringing of persons into the kingdom of God by blood, by their own wills, or by the wills of other men; and from thence have come all national churches.”

For Backus, Merrill, and the Baptists they represented, the Church was to be the visible expression of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. In other words, they are essentially the same; the Old Testament “mystery,” seen only in shadows and types, became a visible reality with the commencement of Christ’s earthly ministry. As Merrill noted, “we confined the setting up of the gospel Church, Christ’s kingdom on earth, to the time between his saying, ‘Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;’ and his declaration to the Pharisees, ‘The kingdom of God has come.’”

The Kingdom of Heaven was the companion doctrine with which Baptists defined the theology and practice of the church; Kingdom theology and ecclesiology mapped together. Equating the Kingdom of Heaven to the gospel Church meant only those who were subjects of the Kingdom could be admitted into the membership of the Church, all others must be barred. Since the Kingdom was a New Testament revelation, Old Testament circumcision held no

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import. The Baptists anchored the metaphorical doors of the Church in a different place than their paedobaptist antagonists. Instead of the entry to the church being the communion table, as in Congregationalism, the Baptists placed the doors to the church at the point of believer’s baptism. Only then could the church determine if one was in the Kingdom or not. As Merrill, describing the practice known as closed-communion, noted,

We purposely exclude from our communion all Churches, which admit to their community any of the unbaptized: for all such pollute, if not destroy, the Church of God, and are not baptized Churches; but are Churches, or Societies, of spurious origin; or Churches bewitched . . . the Paedobaptist Churches are NOT of the visible Church of Christ.  

In converting from paedobaptism to believer’s baptism, Backus and Merrill had undergone a fundamental paradigm shift.

Isaac Backus experienced the move from paedobaptist to Baptist principles fifty years earlier than Merrill, but their connections are unmistakable. Backus came to understand conversion as the prerequisite to baptism and baptism as the foundation of church membership in the 1750s. Subsequently, Backus held regeneration to be requisite to all other participation and blessing within the covenant community, the church.

Backus’ pilgrimage is instructive. Soon after being ordained to the gospel ministry, Backus became instrumental in forming the Separate Congregational Church in Titicut, Massachusetts, and as was customary, he drew up a Confession of Faith for the new congregation. Having rejected the Half-Way Covenant some years earlier, Backus was careful to formulate the new congregation’s doctrinal foundation along evangelical paedobaptist lines.

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49 Ibid., 16.
50 It is important to distinguish the different uses of the word “communion” in this debate. While the term often referred to the Lord’s Supper, it also frequently meant “the fellowship or mutual relationship between members of one church, or between bodies which recognize each other fully as branches of the universal Christian Church; membership of a church,” Communion, N., as defined in Oxford English Dictionary.
consistent with the Savoy Declaration and Cambridge Platform. The 1748 Article concerning baptism declared, “that true Believers and their infant seed and None but Such have a right to the ordinance of Baptism.” However mixed the baptized community might be, the Article following baptism narrowed the field for church membership.

That Whosoever Presumes to administer or Pertake of the Seals of the Covenant of Grace without Saveing faith are in Danger of Sealing their own damnation. Therefore The door of the Church should be Carefully Kept at all times against all Such as Canot Give Scriptural Evidence of their union to Christ by faith.

Backus and the Titicut Separate Congregational Church rejected Solomon Stoddard’s now common innovation of inviting unregenerate church members to the table of the Lord. In Titicut, the doors to church communion were clearly set between the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Unregenerate infants could receive the ordinance of baptism and by this enter the covenant community, but only those who subsequently were converted could participate in the Lord’s Supper and enter the full communion of the church. Additionally, only this later group could bring their children forward for baptism.

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53 On the Half-Way Covenant see Walker, The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism; Robert G. Pope, The Half-Way Covenant; Church Membership in Puritan New England (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969). One proof of the widespread existence of Stoddardeanism and its rejection among advocates of the revivals known as the Great Awakening can be found in the very church Solomon Stoddard pastored for over six decades. After his death, the First Church of Northampton was pastored by his now famous grandson Jonathan Edwards, renown as a revival preacher and the most prominent theologian of the revivals. Edwards came to reject
After adopting believer’s only baptism, Backus resigned his pastorate over the Separate Congregational Church in Titicut and in 1756 formed the Separate Baptist Church in Middleborough, Massachusetts, where he served the remainder of his life. In authoring a new confession to which all church members were to give their assent, Backus united the two ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper into one article and moved the doors of the church from between the two ordinances to precede the ordinance of baptism. The Article reads,

that Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are ordinances of Christ, to be continued until his second coming; and that the former is requisite to the latter, that is to say, that those are to be admitted into the communion of the Church, and to partake of all its ordinances,—who, upon profession of their faith, have been baptized by immersion in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.54

The importance of this Article for this study is evidenced by its verbatim incorporation into the “Summary Articles of Faith of the Lincoln Association” at their 1806 general assembly; Backus and Merrill were not only of one mind, they subscribed to the same Article of Faith. Closed communion was a priority for these men and for New England and Nova Scotia Baptists more generally.55

Stoddard’s communion table innovations and ultimately lost his pastoral charge over the Northampton, Massachusetts, congregation. See, Jonathan Edwards and David D. Hall, Ecclesiastical Writings, The Works of Jonathan Edwards (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1994). On Jonathan Edwards’ lengthy struggle and ultimate rejection of his influential grandfather’s communion policy, see John F. Jamieson, “Jonathan Edwards’s Change of Position on Stoddardeanism,” The Harvard Theological Review 74, no. 1 (1981); George M. Marsden, Jonathan Edwards: A Life (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2003). 54 Isaac Backus, “THE CONFESSION OF FAITH AND COVENANT,” in Hovey, A Memoir of the Life and Times of the Rev. Isaac Backus, A. M., 336-37. It is certain that this Article was not authored by Backus. I have not been able to discover with absolute certainty its original author, but it appears in almost the exact form in the Declaration of Faith and Practice of the Horselydown Church, London, authored by the famous English Baptist John Gill in 1729. It was also used by Gill in penning the same for the Carter Lane Baptist Church in 1764. See, Seymour J. Price, “Dr. John Gill’s Confession of 1729,” Baptist Quarterly 4, no. 8 (1929): 369. 55 Minutes of the Lincoln Association, Held ... In Warren, September ... 1806 (Wiscasset, Maine: Babson & Rust, 1806), 2. The entire Lincoln Association adopted closed communion principles two years before Merrill’s Kingdom sermon of 1808. It is likely that the Summary Article came to the Lincoln Association from the Bowdoinham Association from which it separated in 1805. It is prefaced to the Bowdoinham Association original records, Job Macomber, et al., “Records of the Proceedings of the Bowdoinham Association, 1787-1916,” (Maine Historical Society, Special Collections, 1787). It was also reaffirmed at the Bowdoinham Association general assembly in 1795 and printed in the Minutes for that year. Association Bowdoinham, Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting House in Readfield, August 19th and 20th, 1795 (Thomas Baker, 1795), 4. The Article
Both Backus and Merrill came to see the church, the visible expression of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, as a restricted communion, placing the metaphorical doors of the church at the point of believer’s only baptism and barring all unbaptized believers or baptized unbelievers from its membership. In doing so, the Baptists insisted that not only must the church be separate from the state, but it must be separated from all Christian communities which held to mixed communion; the Baptists not only envisioned tearing the church away from the state, but equally tearing the true church away from the state church.56 This point is unmistakably made by Merrill; “In short, the Paedobaptist Church hath ever, by Ecclesiastical censure, or by fire and sword, been seeking the ruin of the visibility of the Baptist Church, and the Baptists have been, by the force of truth, always aiming at the destruction of the visibility of the Paedobaptist Church.”57

By pursuing the “destruction” of paedobaptist churches by seeking to convert them to Baptist ones, Merrill evidenced a theological priority with long range ramifications for the Baptists. Foundational to the doctrine of the subjects and mode of baptism was the larger framework of the Kingdom of Heaven and Baptist ecclesiology. These were applied to jealously guard the purity of the church, the visible expression of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

Because the paedobaptist churches were “NOT of the visible Church of Christ,” the Baptists surely came to the Bowdoinham Association via Isaac Case, who had itinerated with Backus in Massachusetts and was convinced by Backus to go to Maine in 1783. David Benedict says of the Nova Scotia Baptists, “But what are called close communion principles were at length broached among them and caused no small stir in the churches. The Pedobaptist, and indeed several the Baptist members, were much opposed to the restrictions which they imposed. But as light and consistency prevailed, prejudice and tradition gave way, and in process of time, a reformation, as to external order, was effected; so that now, most of the churches in Nova- Scotia and New-Brunswick have adopted what our enemies call the monstrous doctrine of close communion.” David Benedict, A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America and Other Parts of the World (Boston: Lincoln & Edmands, 1813), 266.

56 Backus argued for a return to the concept of a “pure church,” which had been abandoned by many New England Congregationalists, some of whom went so far as to argue that a pure church ideal was contrary to Scripture. Backus confronted this error on theological and historical grounds in his pamphlet exchange with Reverend Fish. See Backus, A Fish Caught in His Own Net, in Backus and McLoughlin, Isaac Backus on Church, State, and Calvinism; Pamphlets, 1754-1789, 185-87.
57 Merrill, The Kingdom of Heaven, Distinguished from Babylon, 18.
could have no communion with them. Because of paedobaptism, Protestant and Catholic churches were viewed together as disorderly and in need of removal; the Kingdom would see to that.

The Protestants are all such as have protested against the more gross abominations of Popery, but yet retain *that portion which is the peculiar shelter from the cross, either infant sprinkling, or infant baptism*; and thus build all their Churches after the model of the Jewish Synagogue...This kingdom is to consume, and destroy all other kingdoms, and to bring to reproach, and everlasting contempt, all opposite schemes of religion, and all superstitious notions which both Papists and Protestants have imbibed of this.58

Merrill declined to view Baptist churches as Protestant because, in his mind, Baptists derived their ecclesiology from the primitive documents and practice of the New Testament Church thereby historically preceding Protestantism, having never submitted to the yoke of Rome and the practice of infant baptism, which he believed derived historically and theologically from “Popery.”59

While Merrill admitted to desiring the “destruction” of paedobaptist churches, he had no malice toward paedobaptist individuals. His desires were theologically driven, though rarely seen as so by paedobaptists.

58 Ibid., 3-4.
The Baptists are charged with a desire and purpose of dividing and breaking down all other churches, and this is said of them as though they had a mischievous purpose. Whereas all the Baptists desire in the case is, to preach the glad tidings of the kingdom of God, and so to preach them that they may have such an overcoming efficacy as to prevail with all the people of God, to leave the Pedobaptist church, and every other erroneous habitation, and be joined to this kingdom of God. \(^60\)

Taking the subject of church communion to what he believed was its logical conclusion, Merrill rejected exchanging pulpits with paedobaptist ministers. Believing “numbers of the Paedobaptist ministers are, manifestly born again, and are God’s people,” was no help, for “exchanging pulpits with them is encouraging them in their disobedience, and renders us accessory to their deeds.” \(^61\)

It is important at this juncture to see the larger implications of Merrill’s ecclesiology. Although he rejected communion with the churches and ministers of the Standing Order with whom he held substantial doctrinal affinity, he was willing to grant true church status to Arminian or Free-will Baptists and hold some level of communion with them despite a much more limited doctrinal agreement.

There is, however, a shade of difference, and, perhaps, not a small one, between some of the baptized Churches, as to doctrine, or sentiment. Some, it is alleged, hold to a free-will in natural men to do good as well as evil. Others hold to a free will to evil and to that only. It may be, that this difference is larger in appearance, than in reality. But let this difference be as it may, in Church building they agree. Not one will admit a person to baptism, without apparent evidence of discipleship; nor to membership in their Church, without his having been baptized. \(^62\)

\(^{62}\) Ibid., 16.
The shift for Merrill was profound. Prior to converting to Baptist doctrine, he sought union and communion with Baptists and included them in his Sedgwick Congregational Church. Now, as with many Baptists, the reassessment of the doctrine of the Kingdom of God colored their view of the world in ways that was life altering.63

The Sword of the Kingdom

One of the most important arenas of eighteenth and early nineteenth century Baptist public discourse was the contribution to the principles of civil and religious liberty, especially as it was articulated in discussions relating to what has come to be known as the separation of church and state. Happily, historians are recognizing the central place that religion played in the formulation of the U.S. Constitution’s First Amendment protection of the religious freedom of its citizens. What needs further exploration in this process, however, is the formative role that the Baptists’ doctrine of the Kingdom of God played in the larger debate over the limits of civil authority.64

63 Merrill claims to have desired communion with Baptists prior to his Baptist conversion, Autobiography, 2-3. The presence of Baptists in Merrill’s Sedgwick congregation appears in the Confession of Faith, to which the Church of Christ in Sedgwick agreed July 8, 1793. Merrill led the Church to adopt this anti-Stoddardean position upon his acceptance as pastor. The Church affirmed “infants descending from parents, either both or but one of them professing faith in Christ, and obedience to him, are in that respect within the covenant, and to be baptized.” However, this Article carries the only allowable exception in the entire document, which reads; “With respect, or in reference to this Article, and to its corresponding one in the covenant, the Church have passed the following vote. It has long been our opinion, and is still, that it becomes the disciples of Christ, to condescend to each other, in all things, which are not dishonorable to Christ, or prejudicial to his kingdom amongst men. We therefore agree, that the article respecting Baptism, which is inserted in our confession of faith, and in our covenant, is not considered by us to be so essentially binding upon any, who do not see it duty to practice infant baptism, as to render it a term of communion.” Mr. Merrill’s Answer to the Christians, 12. As a Congregationalist Merrill could accept mixed communion between Baptists and Congregationalists. Later, as a Baptist, he could not as its ecclesiology had become “essential.”

64 For a fine example of a historian’s recognition of the primacy of religion in the debate and adoption of the free exercise clause of the First Amendment, see Nicholas Patrick Miller, The Religious Roots of the First Amendment: Dissenting Protestants and the Separation of Church and State (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). Miller centers on the Protestant Reformation’s advocacy of the right of private judgment in interpreting Scripture as the most central religious doctrine culminating in the separation of church and state. My contention below is that the right of private judgment relates to the spiritual nature of the Kingdom of God.
A pivotal New Testament passage that defined the Baptists’ understanding of the separation of church and state was John 18:36, “Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.” Backus used this text against Stonington minister Joseph Fish, who sought to justify the interrelation of church and state in Connecticut. Having suffered under the coercive power of the state as a Separate Connecticut Congregationalist, and later advocating for Massachusetts Baptists under the yoke of religious tyranny in Massachusetts, Backus concluded from this passage, “therefore the dignity of his [Christ’s] government is maintained not by carnal but by spiritual weapons.”

Backus envisioned a world in which the civil and religious spheres were not intertwined, but distinct. Two kingdoms, one “carnal” (physical) and one “spiritual;” one ruled by Christ as redeemer over those to whom he had granted regeneration and who in response voluntarily gathered into visible churches, and the other governed by God and ruled by morally responsible leaders gathered into nations. As he noted in his discussion of the Kingdom of God, “his government of his church, hath ever been distinct from his general government of the world.”

Merrill, too, distinguished between the Kingdom of God, “a kingdom of righteousness and governed by the Prince of Peace,” and the kingdoms of this world, still governed by the sovereign God but separate from the church. Most, to be sure, thought it would be better if the interests of true religion were encouraged, advocated, or even dictated by the civil magistrate. Should the magistrate not use all the coercive power it could wield to further the Kingdom of God? According to Merrill the problem with the logic behind such questions, a logic imbedded

66 Backus, *The Kingdom of God, Described by His Word, with Its Infinite Benefits to Human Society*, 5.
in the thinking and confessions of the Standing Order, was a fundamental misunderstanding of the very nature of the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world. Merrill insisted, the kingdom, which the God of heaven hath set up, has never needed, so has never debased herself by soliciting, the secular arm to enforce the mandates of the Church . . . Of the civil authority she asks no more, than to have it stand out of her sunshine. That Cesar, in agreement with the ordinance of heaven, would look well to the management of Cesar’s kingdom, and leave it with the Lord to manage his.

The Shaftsbury (Vermont) Baptist Association expressed similar sentiments in its 1796 circular letter. The “kingdom of heaven . . . is not defended by carnal weapons” and “forms no alliance with the kingdoms and states of this world, but is distinct from them.” The Philadelphia Association likewise proclaimed, “Christ’s kingdom needs no support from union with the governments of this world; that the more distinctly the line is drawn between them the better.” Merrill added his voice to the larger body of Baptists at this juncture.

Backus was quick to counter the implications some might make of removing the civil magistrate from using the sword to enforce religious affairs. It was not that the unbelief or recalcitrance of the citizenry was acceptable to God or to the Baptists; rather, God had ordained a different means for addressing the unbelief and unrepentance of those outside the church. “The question between us is not, whether it be the duty . . . but it is, whether that duty ought to be

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67 The Westminster Confession of Faith, to which many New England Congregationalists subscribed, accords the civil magistrate power over the churches to ensure their prosperity and purity. The Savoy Declaration, the confession of Congregationalism, more generally, departs from the Westminster Confession and softens its Erastianism but still accords the civil magistrate authority in church matters, warranting the abridging of liberty where error and perceived heresy was found. For a parallel edition of the Westminster Confession, the Savoy Declaration, and the Baptists Confessions of 1644/46 and 1677/89, see James M. Renihan, True Confessions: Baptist Documents in the Reformed Family (Owensboro, Kentucky: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2004).
68 Merrill, The Kingdom of God: A Discourse, Delivered at Concord, 12, 38.
enforced by the sword, or only by instruction, persuasion and good example?"70 The Baptists argued for the later, the Standing Order for the former.

The Baptists were hopeful of being left alone, and that the proclamation of the truth would prevail to win the hearts where the sword could only coerce outward behavior. The kingdoms of this earth had their God appointed means whereby they might exercise authority as did the Kingdom of Heaven; each requisite to its ordained sphere. To the civil magistrate was given the sword, to the Church was given the proclamation of the truth; the sword was carnal, the proclaimed word was spiritual. This informed Backus’ response to the Norwich, Connecticut, Congregational minister, Benjamin Lord, “we . . . only desire peaceably to worship God according to our consciences, among ourselves; believing that Christ’s church is founded in the truth, and supported by it, against all the powers of earth and hell.”71 As he remarked elsewhere, “TRUTH and MERCY shine with equal luster in the glorious kingdom of the Redeemer, and to his works of this nature he appeals as his greatest witnesses against the powers of darkness, John v, 36, 37. Their united influence convey the golden oil into the church to make her the light of the world, Zech, iv, 2-14,”72

Using military language, Backus again referenced John 18:36-37 in his 1773 advocacy for religious liberty for New England Baptists, bringing to light the peculiar spheres of the two kingdoms and the primacy of the spiritual weapon of truth in the Kingdom of Heaven.

This is the nature of his kingdom, which he says, is not of this world: and gives that as the reason why his servants should not fight or defend him with the sword. John. 18. 36. 37. And it appears to us that the true difference and exact limits

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71 Isaac Backus, A Letter to the Reverend Mr. Benjamin Lord, of Norwich; Occasioned by Some Harsh Things Which He Has Lately Published against Those Who Have Dissented from His Sentiments (Providence, Rhode Island: William Goddard, 1764), 37.
72 Isaac Backus, Truth Is Great, and Will Prevail (Boston: Philip Freeman, 1781), 36.
between ecclesiastical and civil government is this, That the church is armed with light and truth, to pull down the strong holds of iniquity, and to gain souls to Christ, and into his church, to be governed by his rules therein; and again to exclude such from their communion, who will not be so governed; while the state is armed with the sword to guard the peace, and the civil rights of all persons and societies, and to punish those who violate the same. And where these two kinds of government, and the weapons which belong to them, are well distinguished, and improved according to the true nature and end of their institution, the effects are happy, and they do not at all interfere with each other: but where they have been confounded together, no tongue nor pen can fully describe the mischiefs that have ensued; of which the Holy Ghost gave early and plain warnings.73

Since the civil and ecclesiastical spheres were different, in Backus’s words “carnal” versus “spiritual,” so their weapons were different.74

The Baptists built on a long tradition of accepting the civil magistrate’s responsibility to govern outward moral behavior but having no ability or authority to control the consciences of men and women. So long as the subjects of the civil kingdom were obedient, they were good citizens and should be left to worship according to their own consciences. The Baptist arguments followed those of Roger Williams who more than a century earlier established his claims for religious liberty against John Cotton and the Massachusetts Standing Order upon twelve foundational premises, the sixth of which states:

73Isaac Backus, An Appeal to the Public for Religious Liberty, against the Oppressions of the Present Day (Boston: John Boyle, 1773), 13. McLoughlin notes that Backus wrote this as the Agent for the Baptists in New England, under commission from the Warren Baptist Association. This underscores that these sentiments respecting the Kingdom of God ere those of the Baptists at large and not simply of Backus personally. Backus and McLoughlin, Isaac Backus on Church, State, and Calvinism; Pamphlets, 1754-1789, 304. The importance of John 18:36 in Backus’s understanding of both civil and religious spheres is evident again in 1778, when he affirmed Christ “forbid the use of force in religion . . . because his kingdom is not of this world.” Isaac Backus, Government and Liberty Described; and Ecclesiastical Tyranny Exposed (Boston: Powars and Willis, 1778), 19.
74 Backus and McLoughlin, Isaac Backus on Church, State, and Calvinism; Pamphlets, 1754-1789, 195.
It is the will and command of God, that since the coming of his Son the Lord Jesus, a permission of the most paganish, Jewish, Turkish, or anti-Christian consciences and worships be granted to all men in all nations and countries, and they are only to be fought against with that sword which is only, in soul matters, able to conquer, to wit, the sword of God’s Spirit, the word of God.\textsuperscript{75}

One of the key features of the Baptists’ understanding of the Kingdom of God was the need for men and women to be free to act according to their consciences. This could only be guaranteed by unraveling the two kingdoms into their respective spheres. As subjects of a civil magistrate the Baptists insisted on the necessity of obedience and cooperation, even to the point of serving within civil government. In this manner, they showed themselves to be quite different from the Anabaptists, who advocated a more marked separation between the believer and the kingdoms of this world.\textsuperscript{76}

Where the Anabaptists saw serving within civil government to be a compromise with the world, the Baptists saw no conflict. It was not a compromise with the forces of evil, but service to God in the civil kingdom; civil magistracy could be a God honoring vocation. Both Backus and Merrill, and the Baptist Associations to which they belonged, owned the London Baptist

\textsuperscript{75} Williams, The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience, 3. Backus allowed for the free worship of those outside of Protestantism, quoting with approval Roger Williams’s advocacy for “impartial liberty for the consciences of Papists with others, as to matters of worship.” Backus, Truth Is Great, and Will Prevail, 33. I am not certain, however, that he would have been as open to some of the others listed by Williams.

\textsuperscript{76} The Anabaptists were bitterly persecuted in Europe for their separatism and pacifism that were grounded in a view of the world and the civil magistrate quite disparate from those of the Particular Baptists. For polemical reasons the paedobaptists were constantly attempting to mark the Baptists as Anabaptists, a point to which they regularly objected, as can be seen in the title given to their first Confession of Faith; The Confession of Faith, of Those Churches Which Are Commonly (Though Falsly) Called Anabaptists (London: 1644). While polemically it may have been effective, it was, in reality, dishonest. Though there were similarities between Continental Anabaptists and English Particular Baptists, especially in limiting the subjects of baptism to disciples alone, there were substantive dissimilarities as well. The doctrine of the Kingdom of God is foundational to understanding those differences. Anabaptism viewed the kingdoms of this world to be inaugurated as a direct result of the entrance of sin into the world. The Baptists, on the other hand, saw the kingdoms of this world as ordained by God and fundamentally for good. Thus, one could robustly be a participant in both without mixing the authority of the one with the other. For a fuller assessment of Anabaptist commitments, see Franklin H. Littell, The Anabaptist View of the Church; a Study in the Origins of Sectarian Protestantism, 2d ed. (Boston: Starr King Press, 1958). For further commentary on Anabaptist distinctiveness, see, especially, William Roscoe Estep, The Anabaptist Story (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1975), 179-81 and James M. Stayer, Anabaptists and the Sword (Lawrence, Kansas: Coronado Press, 1972), 336.
Confession of Faith of 1677/89, which clearly spelled out their view of the civil magistrate.

Article 24 Of the Civil Magistrate, reads in part,

God, the supream Lord, and King of all the World, hath ordained Civil Magistrates to be under him, over the people for his own glory, and the public good; and to this end hath armed them with the power of the Sword, for the defence and encouragement of them that do good, and for the punishment of evil doers. It is lawful for Christians to Accept, and Execute the Office of a Magistrate, when called thereunto. 77

Unlike the two kingdoms in Anabaptist theology, for the Baptists the two kingdoms were not antagonistic to each other. They were distinct, having different spheres, different governing rules, and different means for maintaining that rule. The Baptists did not seek to separate from the kingdoms of the world, but to see them operate within their God ordained spheres. When this objective failed, when the physical sword was used in support of the spiritual sword, it threatened trouble for both kingdoms. Untangling the kingdoms, however, required giving due attention to the ways God ordained for His kingdom to grow.

The Expansion of the Kingdom

At the time of his conversion to Baptist principles, Merrill was overseeing the training and preaching of three candidates for ministry. One, William Allen, according to historian Henry Burrage, was already a Baptist: the others soon followed suit. Phinehas Pillsbury, for some time a deacon in Merrill’s Sedgwick Congregational Church, adopted Baptist principles and was immersed by Baptist itinerant Isaac Case at Isleborough, Maine, in 1804 and ordained in Fayette,

77 *A Confession of Faith Put Forth by the Elders and Brethren of Many Congregations of Christians* (London: Benjamin Harris, 1677), 81. This Confession was adopted by the Philadelphia Baptist Association in 1742 with two additional Articles added. The Philadelphia edition was reprinted by the New England Baptists in Portland, Maine, in 1794, *The Baptist Confession of Faith: First Put Forth in 1643; Afterwards Enlarged, Corrected and Published by an Assembly of Delegates (from the Churches in Great Britain) Met in London July 3, 1689; Adopted by the Association at Philadelphia September 22, 1742; and Now Received by Churches of the Same Denomination, in Most of the American States. To Which Is Added, a Short Treatise of Church Discipline* (Portland, Maine: Thomas Baker Wait, 1794).
Maine, in January of 1805, just 5 months before Merrill in Sedgwick. The third man, Henry Hale, received baptism on the island of Vinalhaven on October 28, 1804, again by Isaac Case, and was ordained as an evangelist at Sedgwick on April 22, 1807. Hale’s ordination sermon was preached by Merrill and subsequently printed. In this sermon Merrill outlined his thinking on the expansion of the Kingdom of God; “As the kingdom of the Lord Jesus, or the kingdom which the God of heaven was to set up, was begun and increased, so it appears it must be augmented and completed.”

In bringing about the augmentation of his Kingdom, Merrill described the process of setting apart men to the gospel ministry using the military analogy of “rangers.” The “gospel rangers” have four qualifying characteristics; first, they have experienced regeneration. Using the language of Ezekiel 36:26, Merrill described them as men whose “heart of stone is taken away, and an heart of flesh, a new heart is given.” Second, Christ gives them a soldier’s “courage,” and a heart to engage in the spiritual battle for men’s souls, a spiritual “holy war,” wresting unbelievers from the domain of the enemy and winning them to Zion. Third, using language reminiscent of the military preparation that rangers might need, Merrill insists they are nourished by the “King” in ways that will sustain them for the “long” and “hard” journey which awaits.

For Hale’s baptism, see Isaac Case, “Diary 1783-1829,” Colby College, Special Collections, entry for October 28, 1804. Burrage notes Hale’s baptismal location as Vinalhaven. Case refers to the location as nearby Fox Island. Burrage, History of the Baptists in Maine, 112-13. Millet, A History of the Baptists in Maine, 444, 53. Millet indicates that the Baptists on Vinalhaven were an extension of the Thomaston church until formed into a church around 1806, at which time they appear as members of the Lincoln Baptist Association. Ibid., 189-90; Association Lincoln, Minutes of the Lincoln Association, Held ... In Warren, September ... 1806 (Wiscasset, Maine: Babson & Rust, 1806), 4. The exact date of this church is a bit uncertain as it joined the Lincoln Association at some unrecorded earlier point. See further, Seward E. Beacom, Silent Fingers of Faith: A History of the Churches of North Haven, Maine 1784-1981 (North Haven, Maine: North Haven Historical Society, 1981), 13-15. The first meeting house was apparently constructed on the North Island in 1808 under the leadership of John Haines, the first settled minister of Vinalhaven. A Brief Historical Sketch of the Town of Vinalhaven, from Its Earliest Known Settlement (Rockland Maine: Star Print, 1900), 58.

Finally, the King gives them the knowledge requisite to complete their task: “He gives them to understand the doctrines of the cross, and the mysteries of the grace of God.”

Merrill followed the discussion of their qualifications with their calling, that internal work of the Holy Spirit drawing them into the work of the Kingdom, and their commissioning, the church’s affirmation that the individual is both qualified and called.

Hence, such as run to and fro should be commissioned as well as qualified and called. It is true, no commission, which can be given by men or angels, can of itself give authority to any of these runners; but, such as are qualified and called of God may have their commission by the instrumentality of men, or it may be in this way made visible.

Merrill elucidated the Baptists’ desire to avoid two errors evident in the all too frequent reality of unfit men in the ministry. History and experience had taught them that churches were plagued by men who lacked either the practical or spiritual qualifications necessary, who were especially common in frontier settlements. The function of the commissioning process, the ordination service, was to show that the church had examined both the qualifications and calling of the man put forward and had good reason to believe that the man under review was properly fitted. The expectation was that the Kingdom would be advanced by their faithful labors because they were owned by the King.

Backus dealt extensively with these same subjects in his debates with Rev. Joseph Fish. Like many paedobaptists, Fish questioned the legitimacy of the ministerial vocation of many of the Baptists and Separate Congregationalists. While the two groups embraced important theological differences, especially respecting the proper subjects and mode of baptism, they

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80 Ibid., 6-7
81 Ibid., 7-8.
agreed on many doctrinal tenants. The nature of the call to the gospel ministry was one of them.\textsuperscript{82}

One practice of the “common minsters” that Backus sought to correct was the custom of accepting “an ordinary call” to the gospel ministry as sufficient to their being set apart thereto. By an ordinary call Backus meant they were “called only by men,” or in Merrill’s terms above, having a commission after a fashion but not the evident call of Zion’s king. Backus believed this to be true of “a great part of the ministers in the land.” His task, then, was to defend the necessity of an internal call as a nonnegotiable prerequisite in the gospel ministry.\textsuperscript{83}

Backus also had to counter the criticism of Fish, and others, regarding indefensible subjectivism. Apparently, Fish suggested that Backus and the Baptists held to an internal call, but “we hold to nothing external.” Fish suggested further the Baptists exalted in the lack of education among their ministers claiming an inverse relationship between education and usefulness; claiming a sort of Baptist motto - “\textit{the less learning the more of faith}.”\textsuperscript{84} Like Backus, Merrill lamented the misunderstanding of the place of education in the ministry in two ways. Those who held “a knowledge of Greek or Roman literature to be the principle qualifications of a Gospel minister” were as wrong as those who “ignorantly despise all scientific knowledge as being beneath the attention, and detrimental to the heralds of the Prince of Peace.”\textsuperscript{85} Backus’ refutation of Fish mirrored Merrill’s affirmation; “a person that is called to

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item Proof of this in Backus’ life is widespread. His first published work was on the necessity of an internal call to the gospel ministry, penned in 1754, while he was pastor of the Separate Congregational Church in Titicut, Massachusetts.
\item Isaac Backus, \textit{All True Ministers of the Gospel, Are Called into That Work by the Special Influences of the Holy Spirit} (Boston: Daniel Fowle, 1754), viii.
\item Backus, \textit{A Fish Caught in His Own Net}, 90-91.
\item Merrill, \textit{The Gospel Rangers}, 16.
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preach has not a right to act in those things which are peculiar to an officer in the church till he is 
publicly set apart therein.”

Besides properly discerning and setting apart servants in the Kingdom, for “Not all 
Christ’s visible Church are to be his heralds. They are to be a picked company, called, chosen, 
faithful,” Merrill dealt definitively with the arena of their labors. As the Kingdom was spiritual, 
rather than physical, the boundaries of each servant’s labors defied geographical limitation. Since 
its inception, the Standing Order churches in New England mirrored almost exclusively the 
geography of the towns in which they were set. All those within the geographical boundaries of 
the township were considered the simultaneous subjects of both civil and ecclesiastical 
institutions. The Baptists recognized no such geographical or ecclesiastical limitations; they had 
no qualms about “trampling upon parish lines, and upon every hedge, erected by selfish 
ingenuity to prevent perishing souls from receiving divine knowledge.”

Merrill proclaimed the commissioned minister’s field of labors in global terms; “Christ’s 
Rangers will penetrate the wilds of America, the burning sands of Africa, the vast regions of 
Asia, and make their way among the learned and rude of Europe. For their rout[e] lies through 
every part and place under heaven.” In addition to breaking geographical boundaries, there was 
not a person under the sun who was off limits for the itinerant’s gospel ministrations; “wherever 
they can find a saint to comfort, or a sinner to teach.”

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86 Backus and McLoughlin, Isaac Backus on Church, State, and Calvinism; Pamphlets, 1754-1789, 251. 
88 Ibid., 20. On the parish system in New England and its breakdown during the early republic as a direct result of 
Baptist and Methodist itinerancy, see especially Shelby M. Balik, “The Religious Frontier: Church, State, and 
On the end of the parish system in Virginia for similar reasons, see the classic study by Rhys Isaac, The 
This understanding of the call to the gospel ministry meant that Baptist ministers were ready to travel wherever they saw the opportunity. In fact, many, if not most, who took a settled pastorate over a specific congregation, made the freedom to pursue itinerant work a condition of their settlement. Maine Elder Henry Kendall, for example, confessed, “Baptist ministers were few in this region . . . In these days I was wont to devote one-half of my time to travelling and preaching lectures.”

As “rangers” of a world-wide spiritual kingdom, these men had a vast vision commensurate with their global commission; to “go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” The resulting outlook of the Baptists has been noted by historian Shelby Balik, under the itinerant system, religious ties among far-flung believers superseded the relationships between individual congregations and their towns. Rather than looking inward upon their own clustered communities, members of local churches looked outward to other, often faraway congregations with whom they shared common doctrines and rituals.

To this end they developed two vital structures intended to assist in this endeavor; regional associations and mission societies. Associationalism had been brought over to the colonies by English and Welsh Baptists in the seventeenth century and was expressed in the London Baptist Confession of 1677 in Chapter 26:

As each Church, and all the Members of it, are bound to pray continually, for the good and prosperity of all the Churches of Christ, in all places; and upon all occasions to further it (every one within the bounds of their places, and callings, in the Exercise of their Gifts and Graces) so the churches (when planted by the providence of God, so as they may enjoy opportunity and advantage for it) ought to hold communion amongst themselves for their peace, increase of love, and mutual edification.

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Among the confessional Particular Baptists, the first Baptist Association formed in the colonies of British North America was the Philadelphia Association in 1707. The first in New England was the Warren Association; Backus, representing his Middleborough Baptist Church, was present at its founding in September 1767, and his Church formally joined in 1769. *The Sentiments*, outlining its value and purposes was published that same year:

That such a combination of churches is not only prudent but useful, as has appeared even in America by the experience of upwards of 60 years, Some of its uses are – Union and communion among themselves – maintaining more effectually the order and faith once delivered to the saints – Having advice in cases of doubts, and help in distress, Being more able to promote the good of the cause.  

The Baptist Associations in Maine developed as a direct result of the work and cooperation of the Warren Association.

The second structure, the mission society, was another English innovation of the mid-seventeenth century *interregnum* to facilitate the separate (i.e., non-Anglican) English churches’ material support of the work of John Eliot and Thomas Mayhew in New England. This missionary support structure would be adopted by the English Baptists in the late eighteenth century and would be replicated in America in the nineteenth century with remarkable success as the push for foreign missions exploded. The differences between the organizational structures of associations and missions would later become a point of contention and, ultimately, division

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among nineteenth century Baptists, but, for the present, they were cooperative institutions among Baptists to further the Kingdom.96

While Baptist Associations drew Baptist churches together to advance the interests of the churches in a particular region, mission societies sought to draw Baptist attention to areas currently outside the Baptist fold in more remote areas. Thus, in 1802, the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society, which according to Albert L. Vail was the first Baptist missionary society in America, was formed in Boston with a view to “the enlargement of the Redeemer’s Kingdom.” To this end, the Committee given oversight of the appointment of missionaries settled on three men, two to travel to the north and one to the west. Rev. Isaac Case, was sent to itinerate in “the British Provinces, and the District of Maine” by the Baptist Church in Dighton, Massachusetts, in 1783.97

Because the missionaries were specifically appointed to the work of the Redeemer’s Kingdom, they were cautioned about the dangers of mingling the two kingdoms in their endeavors, especially the challenges that political involvement could bring.

97 Albert L. Vail, The Morning Hour of American Baptist Missions (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1907), 96. W. H. Eaton, Historical Sketch of the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society and Convention, 1802-1902 (Boston: Massachusetts Baptist Convention, 1903), 13-14. One of the founders of the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society, Boston minister Samuel Stillman, confirmed that the Baptists were encouraged to begin their efforts in “imitation” of the Massachusetts Missionary Society, a Congregational missionary endeavor begun in May 1799. Samuel Stillman, A Discourse, Preached in Boston, before the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society (Boston: Manning & Loring, 1803), 5. It is important to note that the Maine Baptists’ interest in pursuing a “Gospel Mission” predated the formation of the Massachusetts Society by several years. For instance, the Bowdoinham Association began cooperatively raising money for missions at their 1799 annual General Assembly. See Association Bowdoinham, Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting-House in Livermore, August 28 and 29, 1799 (Portland, Maine: Benjamin Titcomb, 1799), 6., and missionary Isaac Case’s “very pleasing account, of the advancement of the Redeemer’s Kingdom” the following year; Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting-House in Green, August 27 and 28, 1800 (Portland, Maine: Eleazer Alley Jenks, 1800), 6.
The Committee most strenuously recommend that you solicitously avoid all interference and allusions to those political topics which divide the opinions and too much irritate the passions of our fellow citizens. Subjects of this description are not merely irrelevant to the spiritual purposes of missionary exertion, but manifestly subversive to all reasonable prospect of success.98

For missionaries traveling throughout the northern frontier and into the British North America, encountering divergent political views was a certainty. Failing to exercise themselves in a non-political fashion not only jeopardized the mission’s purpose in a practical manner but it ran afoul of ecclesiological understanding by confusing the nature of the Kingdom of Heaven with the kingdoms of this world.

Associations were meant to bring together churches of like faith and practice for mutual fellowship and support, including preaching in churches destitute of a settled minister. Evangelists like Henry Hale and Isaac Case and itinerant preachers such as Daniel Merrill would cross local boundaries as well as regional ones. Discerning the distinction between the Kingdom of God and the worldly kingdoms in which they itinerated was crucial to develop and expand the interconnections within the Kingdom of God that would eventuate in a global conquest by the Redeemer.

Case, Hale, and Merrill would travel frequently into the provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick influencing several Allinite converts and churches, many of whom adopted their particular closed communion Baptist doctrines. This eventuated in Maritime Baptists establishing associations that formalized relations with several of the Maine Baptist associations. They would speak of each other in affectionate and familial terms; they were sister associations in the Kingdom of God.99

Beginning in the late eighteenth century, Maine and the Maritime Provinces were under national governments headed in very different directions, generating tensions on both sides of the Atlantic. This would continue into the early nineteenth century as the War of 1812 unfolded. At the same time, spiritually, many churches in the northeastern region had been going through a process of drawing closer together. The Baptists in the region recognized that an overemphasis on their political differences, the kingdoms of this world, could well generate strained relations in the Kingdom of God, which crossed their national boundaries and, of course, had far greater importance. The War would test these relationships as the two earthly kingdoms came to cross-purposes and provides a rich opportunity to examine the ways in which Baptists on both sides of the border responded to the conflict.¹⁰⁰

Maine and Maritime Baptists would need to manage their complex spiritual and political relationships closely. One example of the Baptists’ awareness of their two kingdoms theology providing a framework for managing their political and spiritual differences is reflected in the correspondence between Daniel Merrill of Maine and Edward Manning, one of the most

¹⁰⁰ For a brief and limited analysis of American Baptist views of the War of 1812, see Peirce S. Ellis, Jr., “Baptists and the War of 1812,” The Chronicle 11, no. 11 (1948). Ellis confirms that U.S. Baptists were not uniform in their views, but that Baptists in the Northeast were far more likely to reflect a form of neutrality in contrast to those churches located in the south or west. This certainly runs counter to broad-sweeping generalizations about the War made by historians such as William Gribbin. Declaring the Baptists to be “foremost among the pro-war churches,” Gribbin lacks the regional nuance of Ellis’ work. William Gribbin, The Churches Militant; the War of 1812 and American Religion (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1973), 78. Considerable cross-border associationalism in Vermont was interrupted by the War of 1812 as well, see Stuart Ivison and Fred Rosser, The Baptists in Upper and Lower Canada before 1820 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956). While this will be examined in greater detail later in this work, it appears reasonable to assume that the close spiritual ties of northeastern Baptists on both sides of the border further elevated the importance of two kingdom theology and contributed to their neutral tendency.
prominent Baptist leaders in Nova Scotia. Merrill had come to develop a close relationship with Manning as a result of their mutual itinerant work across the region. Their work was prohibited by the War of 1812.\textsuperscript{101}

Merrill served in the Massachusetts legislature representing Sedgwick as the prospect of war loomed. The civic responsibilities laid on him by the citizens of Sedgwick prohibited him from attending the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Baptist Association, held in Upper Granville, Nova Scotia, in June 1812, as a representative of the Lincoln Association of Maine. As the War had not yet been declared, and pleased that Elder Henry Hale could attend the Nova Scotia meeting in his absence, Merrill wrote to Manning from Boston in terms that highlighted his Two Kingdoms perspective:

\begin{quote}
My Dear Brother, I am for the present, very much occupied. The Legislature, of which I am a member, is now in session, and upon important business. They are about memorializing the general government, relative to the subject of peace or war. I wish the differences between your government and ours may be so accommodated, as to promote the good of both, and subserve Zion’s best good. But I fear a contest is before us. However the differences may be between the governments among men, be it our concern to be in obedience to the government of God.\textsuperscript{102}
\end{quote}

Merrill saw the two men as under two different governments respecting their national identities but under a single government as respected their spiritual identities.

Manning also struggled with the challenges he faced nationally and denominationally during the war. Cross-border fellowship quickly diminished after the declaration of war as the Associations suspended the practice of sending messengers to each other’s assemblies and

\textsuperscript{101} On Edward Manning see, especially, Daniel C. Goodwin, \textit{Into Deep Waters: Evangelical Spirituality and Maritime Calvinistic Baptist Ministers, 1790-1855} (Montréal, Québec: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), 98-125.

\textsuperscript{102} Letter from Daniel Merrill to Edward Manning, June 2, 1812, Manning Collection, Esther Clark Wright Archives, Acadia University, Wolfville, Nova Scotia.
itinerants were required to stay within their own national borders. The effect was recorded by Manning in his private journal on January 9, 1813, only six months after the war had begun:

“This day felt uneasy in the morning and unpleasant sensation. But in reading and meditation found my mind sweetly led after God and a sweet union to American brethren, notwithstanding the dreadful war that exists between the two powers.” Manning powerfully reflects how the disunion between the “two [civil] powers” failed to curb his contemplation of the “sweet union” with Merrill and the other Baptists in New England to whom he had become attached.¹⁰³

What drives home the importance of these references is that both men reflected on the actions of the other’s civil magistrate during the conflict. Merrill felt the US government to have been vindicated by the war, and Manning felt the English government was clearly in the right. Neither, however, would allow their civil differences to realign their ecclesiastical associationalism. The distinction between the civil kingdom and the kingdom of God was clear enough for these men to maintain warm feelings for one another, even though their governments were at arms.¹⁰⁴

The attitudes of Merrill and Manning were also reflected associationally as relations were restored after the war. This effect was most strikingly recorded by the Bowdoinham Association of Maine. In the corresponding letter for 1815, the Maine Baptists rejoiced at restored cordial relations with the Baptists of the Maritime provinces,

¹⁰⁴ For Merrill’s views respecting the British, see his post-war sermon, Daniel Merrill, Balaam Disappointed a Thanksgiving Sermon, Delivered at Nottingham-West, April 13, 1815 a Day Recommended by the National Government (Concord, New Hampshire: Isaac & W.R. Hill, 1815). For Edward Manning’s assessment of error on the part of the US government, see his comments upon the news of the defeat of Napoleon in his journal under the dates of May 24 and 27, 1814.
through the blessing of returning peace, we once more are at liberty to communicate our friendship, and relate the state of our churches, not only to correspondents within the limits of our own territory, but also to our beloved brethren in the neighboring provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, with whom also, we have walked in company to the house of God, and there taken sweet council together.\(^{105}\)

This was further exemplified by their receiving and seating the Maritime Association’s messenger, David Harris, and by inviting him to preach the assembly’s final sermon. The Bowdoinham Association reciprocated by appointing Isaac Case as their messenger to the next annual assembly of the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Association. He carried out this appointment. The Maritime Baptists’ response to Case’s postwar reappearance among them was recorded as “very pleasant to us.”\(^{106}\)

The itinerancy, associationalism, mission societies, and cross border connections of the Baptists all reflected their desire to see the Kingdom of God expand and evidenced the ways in which parish boundaries, national borders, and frontier settlements or foreign lands were viewed through the lens of their Kingdom of God theology. As they saw it, both their commission and their task were global. The result was a shared identity that transcended localism in important ways. These institutional ecclesiastical activities were to continue unabated, and, it was hoped, would flourish until the consummation of the Kingdom of God.


\(^{106}\) “Minutes of the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting House, in Cornwallis, June 26th and 27th, 1815,” (1815). This meeting voted to establish a mission society replicating the model of the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society. Maritime Baptist Thomas Chipman wrote the Corresponding Letter for the Association that year and made specific reference to the New England Baptist’s “spirited” efforts in “forming so many societies for the advancement of the Redeemer’s Kingdom.” Quoted in Brackney, “The Planter Motif among Baptists from New England to Nova Scotia, 1760-1850,” 296.
The Consummation of the Kingdom

As Merrill looked to the future of the Kingdom of Heaven, he believed it would overcome obstacles from without and within and would “increase and roll along, till it shall have broken in pieces, and consumed all the mighty men, and mighty things which rise in opposition.” The kingdom, in its present earthly condition, was moving toward a higher spiritual goal. Merrill saw the “extension” of the kingdom of God during his own lifetime as evidence that the kingdom would soon “fill the whole earth, as the waters do the seas.” Merrill spoke in eschatological terms using the imagery of the “beast” and “harlot” of the Book of Revelation to describe current events that would pass as the kingdom expanded. He expected that following the Baptists’ Kingdom of God paradigm would bring global results reflected “in every clime, every nation, tribe, and language; then will the kingdom of God come.”

However much the kingdom would yet expand, it would one day usher in the eschatological kingdom. For Backus, the parable of the tares of Matthew 13 was instructive. Rev. Joseph Fish confusedly interpreted the parable of the wheat and tares to indicate the “field” as the Church; regenerate and unregenerate would alike be in the church of Jesus Christ until the consummation. Backus found this almost laughable. Reminding his audience of their ability to judge for themselves, his readers could readily see that Christ taught the field was not the church, but the “world.” This distinction brought into relief the differing eschatological visions of Backus and Fish. For Fish, there was really one kingdom marrying ecclesiastical and civil authority. For Backus, there would always be two kingdoms, that of the nations of the world, the tares, and those who were members of the kingdom of God, the wheat. For Backus and the

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108 Ibid., 8-9.
109 Ibid., 8-9.
Baptists, the separation of wheat and tares would be brought about by Christ himself at his second coming.\textsuperscript{110}

The difference between Backus and Merrill was not one of Kingdom Theology but of eschatological emphasis. Merrill appears to see the consummation happening at the dawn of the millennium, while Backus pointed to the event of the second coming of Christ.\textsuperscript{111} In either case, both men saw the kingdoms of this world and the Kingdom of God as separate until the coming consummation. Merrill described the Baptist perspective of the expanded kingdom looking forward in marked contrast to what they had experienced in the past.

*Then* would the rulers be nursing fathers to Zion. Not by enacting laws to compel belief, the practice, and the support of religion: but by countenancing each, by their example and exhortation. By discriminating clearly between this kingdom and those of men; between the religion from heaven and the superstitions of mortals. By so clearing the legal ground from the trappings of bigotry, that no more of the friends of God’s kingdom shall be forced to prison, or their goods despoiled.\textsuperscript{112}

Backus and Merrill agreed that a free state would allow the Kingdom of God to flourish unhindered, which would lead toward the consummation of that greater Kingdom.

Conclusion

The Regular Baptists of Maine and the Maritime provinces of British North America were at the crossroads of several different developments. They participated in the revival tradition coming out of the Great Awakening and were unfailing in their efforts to expand God’s Kingdom wherever they went. The frontier settlements received special attention as associations and mission societies targeted the special needs of such places and developed for this express purpose. They sought to redefine the social, ecclesiastical, and political thinking of the day. The church must be wrested from the control of the government, from which it had not yet been freed, and it especially needed to be saved from the clutches of state churches. The marriage of church and state was rapidly being dismantled for the first time in millennia, and the mixed-communion paedobaptist churches were rapidly losing numbers and control. These Baptist ideals sought to free the Kingdom of God to allow it to flourish and expand. As Baptist numbers rapidly increased, they would tirelessly call regenerated individuals in paedobaptist churches to come out and join the redeemed communities, as they challenged a one kingdom view and gave expression to the Two Kingdom theology that defined and infused their world view. Worldly circumstances were rapidly changing in ways that Baptists embraced and that paedobaptists feared and resisted.

When Isaac Backus embraced Baptist beliefs in the mid-eighteenth century, the goal of a realized Two Kingdoms was only the hope of a future vision. Fifty years later, as Backus closed his life of ministry as a Baptist, men such as Isaac Case, Daniel Merrill, Henry Hale, Edward Manning, and others were taking up the mantle with vigor and energy in the northeastern borderland of North America. Their vision was global, and their Kingdom of God paradigm explicitly defined in Scripture was the blueprint from which they worked. Its fruit would be
evident in explosive growth during the religious fervor of the Second Great Awakening, and a society nested with churches, but functioning in new and distinct ways.

What follows is a closer look at the Regular Baptists’ engagement with the world, their methods, their battles, their struggles, and their successes. What also follows is a look at some of the unintended consequences that they found as well. By the second decade of the nineteenth century, the paedobaptists had lost much ground, and the political changes which were always only a future vision for Backus had, in several respects, come to fruition for the next generation. But the War of 1812, the proliferation of alternative theological and religious groups, such as Freewill Baptists and Methodists, and internal opposition to several of the extra-ecclesial denominational structures put in place were beginning to have significant effects. By 1814 the Regular Baptists would have a national mission organization giving expression to a national identity. But regionalism was evident even then, with Baptists in the South, West and the North each expressing distinctive hopes for the emergent society. The Two Kingdom theology of the Baptists had grown, been partly realized, and faced new challenges.
CHAPTER 3

BABYLON INVADED: THE EXPANSION OF THE KINGDOM,
ITINERANCY IN MAINE AND NOVA SCOTIA

Good Conscience men allow, they say.
But must be understood,
To say as they themselves do say,
Or else it can’t be good.
Goddard

The rapid expansion of the Regular Baptists and the kingdom of God in the northeast after 1783 was driven by the itinerant activity of Baptists from Massachusetts created during the Great Awakening and its aftermath. Recalling the military motif of itinerants as Gospel Rangers, used by Daniel Merrill in his 1807 ordination sermon for Regular Baptist evangelist Henry Hale, there were intermittent but effective itinerant excursions into the District of Maine by two Massachusetts Baptists in the mid-eighteenth century that led the charge for the later invasion initiated by Job Macomber and Isaac Case in the early 1780s. Regular Baptist expansion was almost exponential thereafter. This chapter will first explore the place of itinerancy in the establishment of the first lasting Regular Baptist church in the District of Maine as an exemplar of the expansion that would come some twenty years later. We will then consider the sustained expansion of Regular Baptists after 1783 when their influence became marked by more permanent itinerant preachers and peripatetic pastors resident in Maine and Nova Scotia.

113 This short verse appears on the title page of Isaac Backus, A Seasonable Plea for Liberty of Conscience, against Some Late Oppressive Proceedings; Particularly in the Town of Berwick, in the County of York (Boston: Philip Freeman, 1770). It is quoted on the title page of the anonymous, A Dissenting Protestant, A Letter to a Gentleman, Containing a Plea for the Rights of Conscience, in Things of a Religious Nature (Boston: Samuel Kneeland, 1753).

114 The first Baptist church founded in the District was established in Kittery under the leadership of William Screven in 1682. The majority of its members removed to Charleston, South Carolina, before the end of the century, largely due to persecution from the Standing Order. See Burrage, History of the Baptists in Maine, 12-27; Baker, Craven, Blalock, History of the First Baptist Church of Charleston, South Carolina, 1682-2007.

115 On the Standing Order churches of New England as Babylon, see Merrill, The Kingdom of Heaven, Distinguished from Babylon. For Merrill’s ordination sermon for Hale, see Merrill, The Gospel Rangers.
will also look at the emergence of a growing Regular Baptist identity in Nova Scotia as New Light Allinite preachers embraced Regular Baptist theology. Led by ministers such as Edward Manning in Nova Scotia and Isaac Case in Maine, itinerancy fueled Baptist growth as the religious developments in two distinct political areas linked more and more theologically as well as socially, even as their once shared colonial identity was sundered.

**Itinerants and The First Baptist Church of Berwick, District of Maine**

The Rev. Isaac Backus (1724-1806) and Rev. Hezekiah Smith (1734-1805) were two of the most important New England Regular Baptists of the late eighteenth century and did more than any others to initiate and foster the growth of Baptists on the northeastern New England frontier. Their importance for New England Baptists is reflected in their presence at the founding of Rhode Island College, the first Baptist college in the British colonies of North America. Both men were also present at the founding of the Warren Association of Baptists in 1767, the oldest Baptist Association in New England, and the second oldest in the British colonies.¹¹⁶

In addition to their settled pastorates and their cooperative efforts to foster Regular Baptist cooperation in association and education, Backus and Smith spread the gospel and established new Baptist Churches through frequent itinerant labors in New England. They realized early on that expanding the kingdom of God would only come by sending duly ordained

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men into the destitute backcountry north and east of settled New England. In their personal efforts to “extend the Redeemer’s kingdom” into the District of Maine, Backus’ and Smith’s itinerant paths converged in the community of Berwick, Maine.\textsuperscript{117}

Backus’ first acquaintance with Berwick townsfolk occurred in September 1751 when, as a newly converted Regular Baptist itinerating in the District of Maine, he was greeted coolly by the staunchly Old Light Congregational minister, Rev. Jeremiah Wise. The conflicts Backus encountered there were mostly contained within the ecclesiastical community of Congregationalism. The issue of baptism does not appear to have come to the fore. The Old Light vs. New Light challenges faced in Berwick surfaced throughout New England as a direct result of the revivals later denominated the Great Awakening. Backus was no stranger to the conflicts fomented by the Great Awakening and the numerous separations among New England Congregationalists that it fostered.\textsuperscript{118}

The first stirrings of Baptist ecclesiastical dissent in Berwick surfaced over a decade later when Joshua Emery invited the Haverhill Baptist minister, Hezekiah Smith, to preach in his Berwick home during in 1767. Not yet a Baptist, Emery separated from the Old Light Congregational Church apparently because of his New Light leanings (Smith calls him a “Separate Minister” prior to baptizing him in June 1768). Over the course of several months in 1767-68, Emery and several other Berwick residents came to embrace Baptist principles and

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\textsuperscript{117} Millet, \textit{A History of the Baptists in Maine}, 30. The remarkable extent of the itinerant labors of Isaac Backus is reflected in his manuscript “List of Journies,” a small hand-stitched volume among the Isaac Backus Papers at the Trask Library, Andover-Newton Theological Seminary. There Backus recorded every itinerant journey he took that exceeded ten miles between the years 1746 and 1802. It records 918 journeys totaling 68,499 miles!

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joined Smith’s Haverhill, Massachusetts, Baptist Church. At the time, it was the nearest Baptist Church to the Maine town. The irregular attendance of the Berwick brethren at Haverhill was excused, as a later commenter noted, “provided the person or persons live at such a distance that they cannot attend to be received into the church in the usual order.” Baptist interest in Berwick was clearly growing.119

It was commonplace for a small group of Baptist members who lived a considerable distance from the meeting place to seek to become a standalone church, which Baptists in Berwick soon pursued.120 At their request, Rev. Smith, Elder Greenleaf, and two of the deacons from the Haverhill Baptist Church traveled the forty or so miles to Berwick to formally organize them into a church. Likely anticipating civil and ecclesiastical opposition, Smith was careful to ensure that three ordained officers of a properly organized church participated in the proceedings and gave formal approval. On June 28, 1768, Smith and the three officers formally united seventeen Berwick residents into a Baptist church with Emery as their un-ordained teacher. This made them only the second Baptist church in the District at the time, Smith and his colleagues having gathered the Baptists in Gorham, Maine, into a church only a few days before. The Haverhill Baptists officially recognized the infant Berwick and Gorham congregations in July 1768 when they “voted to approve and confirm the proceedings of our pastor, Deacon Whittier, Deacon Shepherd, and Elder Greenleaf, in dismissing members from this church, and

119 Arthur Savage Train, Centennial Discourse Delivered on the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Organization of the Baptist Church, Haverhill, Mass.: On the Ninth of May, 1865 (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1865). As quoted in Edmund Worth, Centennial Discourse: Delivered on the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Organization of the Baptist Church of North Berwick, Me., September 10th, 1868 (Biddeford, Maine: J.E. Butler, printer, 1868), 10. 120 Broome, Hezekiah Smith, 71, 128.
constituting two Baptist churches, one in Gorham and the other in Berwick.” They were subsequently acknowledged by the First and Second Baptist Churches of Boston as well.\textsuperscript{121}

When the Berwick Baptists subsequently objected to paying the Congregational minister’s salary on grounds of liberty of conscience, they incurred the ire of ecclesiastical and civil authorities alike. Seeking to force their will on these unwelcome dissenters, the Standing Order churches enlisted the aid of the civil magistrate in the District. The Congregationalist tactic was to reject the establishment of the Baptists as a properly organized church and thereby force their continued taxation. Baptists viewed this common practice as tyrannical.

Two Berwick Baptists were consequently imprisoned for refusing to pay the minister’s rates or salary. This was a figure set by all the voting members of the local parish and collected by the tax assessor as a tax due from all residents in the parish whether they were church members or not. Joshua Emery and John Gowan objected to being taxed, claiming it violated their liberty of conscience to pay the salary of a man whom they did not sit under and could not sit under because of fundamental theological differences. They had been very careful to provide the required certificates of membership in the Baptist Church, but as was often the case, it was to no avail. On one occasion Emery’s horse was taken by the tax collector, while he visited a sick person, and on another occasion “a collector came and seized his pewter.”\textsuperscript{122}

\textsuperscript{121} Millet, Baptists in Maine, 30-32. The articles of faith and the names of the seventeen members of the Berwick Baptist Church are noted by Burrage, History of the Baptists in Maine, 31-37; Broome, Hezekiah Smith, 339-40; Worth, Centennial Discourse, 11, 13.
In June 1770, Backus was again itinerating in and around Berwick. On June 8, Emery invited him to preach in his home and over the next several days Backus preached several more times in Berwick and the surrounding region. In addition to preaching, Backus involved himself in the local conflict between the Baptists and the Congregationalists over oppressive taxation. It is likely that Backus was enlisted to help the Berwick brethren due to his 1769 assignment on the Warren Association’s “committee of grievances.” Part of Backus’ committee labors included collecting verified accounts of grievances to use as evidence of tyrannical actions by local clergy and tax collectors. These would also reinforce a proposed petition to be presented to the English crown. In support of this effort the committee published an appeal in the *Boston Evening-Post* on August 6, 13, and 20 titled; “To the Baptists in the Province of Massachusetts Bay, who are and have been oppressed in any Way on a Religious Account.” This appeal ran shortly after Backus returned home from Berwick.\(^{123}\)

The next controversy over taxation in Berwick was fostered by the refusal of the Rev. Matthew Merriam of the North Berwick Parish to recognize the Berwick Baptists as legitimate dissenters. At the founding of the Baptist Church, Abraham Lord separated from the North Parish, noting particularly his opposition to the practice of open communion along the lines of the Half-Way Covenant, a practice common among Congregational Churches in Maine.\(^{124}\)

Lord began attending the Baptist Church in Berwick. His wife Elizabeth also left the North Parish after submitting a request for dismissal which was stubbornly denied based on “it


being a society with which we are not in communion as a regular church.” Not being a “regular church” was the very charge Rev. Hezekiah Smith sought to avoid by ensuring that at least three officers from the Haverhill Baptist Church gave sanction to the founding of the Berwick Baptist Church two years earlier. After Rev. Merriam censured both Abraham and Elizabeth, he led the North Parish in their excommunication. Merriam insisted on their continued taxation for the Standing Order minister’s salary. If Merriam could not force their spiritual submission via church censure, he would nonetheless enlist the aid of the magistrate to coerce their taxation, thus causing them to suffer the consequences of both institutions. Merriam was unsuccessful.125

On June 15 Backus returned to Berwick noting in his Diary, “wrote an answer to what the north church in this town have wrote to two of their members.” The “answer” was a response to Rev. Merriam and the magistrate on behalf of the Berwick Baptist Church, which sought Backus’ aid in dealing with the abuses suffered at the hands of the Standing Order. Because of Backus’ prominence among New England Baptists, his assistance to the Berwick brethren ensured that the matter would not end here. After preaching in the meeting house the next day, Backus baptized “Abraham Lord and his wife [Elizabeth]” formalizing their membership into the Berwick Baptist Church.126

In September 1770 Backus attended the Warren Association meeting in Bellingham, Massachusetts, at which his Middleborough Church was formally received into membership. As per their Boston Evening-Post appeals, it was also the meeting at which the Warren Association

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126 Backus and McLoughlin, Diary, vol. II, 764-5. Mrs. Lord’s written “experience” is among the Backus Papers and recounts her reception into “Mr. Wise’s Church” soon after her conversion. It appears that the manuscript is divided in the collection. Manuscript No. 771 is the first page and No. 2560 appears to be the remainder of her relation of her experience of salvation. See Mrs. [Abraham] Lord, “Brethren in the Lord,” Elizabeth Lord, “Conversion Relation,” Isaac Backus Papers, Andover Newton Theological School, now at Yale Divinity Library.
intended to deal more fully with the abuses suffered by Baptists in New England. In addition to the usual associational business, the churches heard grievances against the Standing Order, the most famous being from Baptists in Ashfield, Massachusetts. Other cases from Connecticut and the matter from Berwick, Maine, were also included. The Association had reached the point of action and began to make formal arrangements for redress from king and parliament. Hezekiah Smith was appointed “to carry our case to England unless speady (sic) relief be granted.” According to Backus’ *Diary* entry, “it appeared so plain that while our countery (sic) are pleading So high for liberty, yet that they are denying of it to their neighbors.”

As an extension of the efforts to counter the religious establishment’s oppression, Backus published his first public appeal on behalf of Baptists, *A Seasonable Plea for Liberty of Conscience Against Some Late Oppressive Proceedings; Particularly in the Town of Berwick in the County of York*. Nicholas Miller speculates that Backus may have patterned his title after the publication of Connecticut Standing Order minister Rev. Elisha Williams, whose 1744 work on religious liberty was sub-titled, *A Seasonable Plea for Liberty of Conscience and the Right of Private Judgment in Matters of Religion*. Williams’ voice for religious liberty was radically out of sync with the Standing Order, and the publication brought their displeasure down upon him. Backus’ *Plea* recounted the accusations of the North Berwick Parish against Mrs. Lord and supplied responses to those accusations. Further, Backus struck at the heart of the union of church and state to which the Baptists so clearly objected: the cooperation between tax collector, civil courts, and Standing Order ministers. Driving home the danger of civil and ecclesiastical

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128 Backus’ *Diary* records final edits were made to his “plea” on August 8, 1770 after which he “left it to be printed.”
union and the need for a Two Kingdoms theology, he noted “though many may think this picture sufficiently odious already, yet the finishing stroke is yet behind; which is for the secular arm to finish what the church has begun.”129

The fight for religious liberty would engulf Backus and Baptists in southern New England even as the coming war with England disrupted the regular work of itinerancy. Rev. Hezekiah Smith, for instance, would serve as a chaplain to the American forces, interrupting his itinerant activity.130 Backus would become the main spokesperson for the Baptists regarding religious liberty and the separation of church and state. Nevertheless, a permanent Baptist presence in the District of Maine had begun.131

The labors of Smith and Backus, and the difficulties encountered by the Berwick Baptists preceded the main period covered in this study by fifteen years. What is important to note is how these itinerants anticipated how the expansion of the kingdom into Maine and Nova Scotia would be pursued. The experiences of the two Baptist ministers also presaged the challenges Baptist itinerancy would confront from the clergy and civil magistrate as they disrupted the Standing Order. The Baptists’ Two Kingdoms theology insisted that state and established parish boundaries were of no concern to them in their vigorous pursuit of itinerancy. Furthermore, their Two Kingdoms theology meant that the state church, in its theological formulation, was not in their estimation a true church. Crossing parish boundaries and calling converts out of the

129 Backus, A Seasonable Plea, 8. Former Connecticut Yale tutor and rector Elisha Williams (1694-1755) was one of the very few Standing Order ministers who agreed with the Baptists’ Two Kingdoms view. His objections to the state authored abuses of the New Light itinerants were published as The Essential Rights and Liberties of Protestants. A Seasonable Plea for the Liberty of Conscience, and the Right of Private Judgment, in Matters of Religion, without Any Controul from Human Authority (Boston: Kneeland and Green, 1744). Miller’s speculation respecting Backus’ title has substantial merit. Miller, however, missteps in stating that Berwick was in Connecticut rather than in York County, District of Maine. Nicholas Patrick Miller, The Religious Roots of the First Amendment, 102-3.

130 On Hezekiah Smith’s labors as chaplain, see Guild, Chaplain Smith.

131 Burrage, History of the Baptists in Maine, 38.
Standing Order churches, not surprisingly, would not go uncontested, and itinerancy in the northeastern borderland would explode after the War for Independence ended. Post-war itinerancy in Maine and Nova Scotia, therefore, became the means not only of expanding the kingdom by preaching the gospel and establishing Baptist churches, but also of disestablishing what Daniel Merrill called “Babylon,” the mixed communion state church.132

The itinerancy of Regular Baptists in Maine and Nova Scotia expanded the kingdom beginning in the 1780s. The labors of Maine Baptist pastor and itinerant evangelist Rev. Isaac Case and of Nova Scotia Baptist minister Rev. Edward Manning were especially critical. These two Baptist “fathers,” as they came to be known by their brethren, proved to be pivotal in the growth of Baptists in the northeast.

**Regular Baptist Itinerancy in Maine: Isaac Case**

Rev. Isaac Case (1762-1852) was one of the most important pioneering figures among the Regular Baptists in Maine. Affectionately referred to as “Father Case” by the next generation of Baptist ministers, historian Joshua Millet wrote “Many of the ch[urche]s in M[ain]e owe their existence to his efforts, and multitudes of souls, their salvation to his instrumentality.” Case is important in this study for several reasons. He provides an exemplar for the way in which ordination, itinerant preaching, and pastoral ministry would be pursued by the Baptists in the District. His place as one of the “fathers” was more than a title of honor. However, Case never published a defense of the Baptists nor did he even publish as single sermon. While Maine Baptist ministers such as Daniel Merrill came to the fore in the early nineteenth century due substantially to their education, public standing, and eloquence, Case remained in the

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background laboring for the expansion of the kingdom. Though men like Merrill were important for the public face of Regular Baptists in the northeast, especially through their apologetic publications, the explosive growth the Baptists realized at the dawn of the nineteenth century can most fundamentally be attributed to the labors of evangelists and the peripatetic ministries of men like Isaac Case.133

Case was a licensed itinerant preacher in Massachusetts before being ordained and coming to the District of Maine. He subsequently pastored two Maine churches that he helped to organize, the first in Thomaston, from 1784 to 1792, and the second in Winthrop (later Readfield), from 1792 to around 1799. During these pastorates he frequently itinerated to more “destitute” regions of the District. After resigning the pastoral charge of the Winthrop Baptist Church, he served as an itinerant evangelist throughout northern New England and the British provinces of North America until age and infirmity necessitated his retirement.134

He was born February 25, 1761 in Rehoboth, Massachusetts, the fourth son of yeoman farmer William Case (1731-1777) and Abigail Bell (1735-1826).135 Rehoboth, like many of the

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133 For the reference to Father Case, see Burrage, History of the Baptists in Maine, 447.
134 Millet, A History of the Baptists in Maine, 438. Millet indicates that Case served the Readfield church as pastor until 1800, but the Bowdoinham Association Minutes show that the church lacked a settled minister beginning in 1799. Case continued to represent the Readfield Baptists at the Association meetings, but as an ordained messenger, and not as settled pastor.
135 Several secondary sources list Case’s birth-year as 1762, e.g., James N. Arnold, Vital Record of Rehoboth, 1642-1896: Marriages, Intentions, Births, Deaths (Providence, Rhode Island: Narragansett Historical Publishing Company, 1897), 586. The year, however, was most certainly 1761. Case records his birth as February 25, 1761, see Isaac Case, “Autobiographical Sketch,” Colby College, Special Collections. On three separate occasions he noted his birthday in his Diary. On February 25, 1784 he recorded, “this Day is my Bath Day I am 23 years old I kept the Day in fasting and prayer to god.” Again, on February 25, 1805, he wrote, “this day I am 44 years of age.” Finally, on February 25, 1816 Case wrote, “Lords day february 25 this day is my Bathday I am 55 years of age.” In each case the resultant birth year is 1761, “Diary 1783-1829,” Colby College, Special Collections). 1761 is further confirmed in The Diary of Isaac Backus who noted it in July 1781: “Isaac Case of Rehoboth met me at Baxter’s, and is still with me; he was converted in Decr. 1779,” adding in the margin, “He was born Feb. 25, 1761.” Backus and McLoughlin, The Diary of Isaac Backus, 1074. Case’s gravestone acknowledges 176, as do the biographical sketches found in Burrage, Millet, and Sprague. Case was still alive when Millett wrote his work and Burrage appears to have been working from an autobiographical account written by Case.
surrounding communities, had a long Baptist presence. William and Abigail were married by Elder Richard Round of the Second Baptist Church of Rehoboth in 1754, making it almost certain that Case was raised by parents of Baptist persuasion. In his early years Case would have been exposed to Baptist doctrines in the preaching and teaching ministry of Elder Round.

Though Elder Round held some doctrines in common with the Six-Principle Baptists, the Case family would have been regularly exposed to the Calvinistic doctrines held by the Regular or Separate Baptists under his ministry. Isaac Backus recorded Round’s Calvinistic orthodoxy in his *Diary* in February 1756. He found “Rounds to be quite clear as to the doctrines of grace.”

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136 Arnold, *Vital Record*, 94. It is unlikely that William and Abigail would have been married by a Baptist minister had they been Congregationalists; Backus and McLoughlin, *Diary*, I, 405. Further confirmation of the orthodox Calvinism of Round is proven when Elder Round and two other brethren from the Rehoboth church attended the initial meeting of Regular Baptist ministers, which culminated in the formation of the Warren Association in 1767. However, of the eleven churches represented, only four brethren were willing to join at this time; the Rehoboth church was not one of the four. Exactly why Elder Round withheld joining is not known but if it was because of objections to the Calvinism of his Baptist brethren it is highly unlikely that he would have attended the meeting at all. Even so staunch a Calvinist as Backus witheld joining because he was concerned over the proposed association’s encroachment on local church autonomy; a fear that was alleviated the following year, which opened the way for Backus to subsequently join. George H. Tilton claims that Elder Round and his church were Six-Principle Baptists, and thus free will in doctrine. The name Six-Principle comes from the adoption of Hebrews 6:1-2 as foundational for New Testament Churches, one of the six being the necessity of the laying on of hands as a condition of church membership and communion. George H. Tilton, *A History of Rehoboth, Massachusetts: Its History for 275 Years, 1643-1918* (Boston: George Henry Tilton, 1918), 195. While Tilton is correct regarding the Arminianism of the Six-Principle Baptists, it is more likely that the church was a Calvinistic Baptist Church and that the practice of laying of hands came through the common practice among Calvinistic Baptists who held to the Philadelphia Confession of 1742. A footnote in Tilton’s work indicates that Backus and McLoughlin in their *History* for 275 Years, 1643-1918 mention the *Philadelphia Confession of 1742*. On the Six-Principle Baptists see Richard Knight, *History of the General or Six Principle Baptists, in Europe and America* (Providence, Rhode Island: Smith and Parmenter, Printers, 1827). David Round is mentioned on 301-02. McLoughlin is less willing to affirm Round’s Calvinism, claiming it was “not clear.” But Backus’s *Diary* entry is unequivocal. Backus’s reference to Round’s orthodoxy respecting the “doctrines of grace” proves this, as this phrase is a shorthand reference to the major points of Calvinistic orthodoxy. Certainly, if his Calvinism was “not clear,” as McLoughlin asserts, Backus would never have so boldly affirmed Round’s acceptability. Furthermore, Backus affirms Round “held this doctrine to the last.” Backus, *The Doctrine of Sovereign Grace Opened and Vindicated*, x. What is likely behind McLoughlin’s uncertainty was the division that occurred between Elders Round and Hix. Hix separated from Round’s church, stating as one of the reasons that “the church did not maintain the pure doctrines of grace.” However, this was not an accusation leveled at Round, but at the church and some whom Round apparently permitted to preach from his pulpit. Round countered Hix’s accusation by claiming the church had come back to more consistent discipline on this issue. Be that as it may, Round does not appear to have given up the doctrines himself. Backus and McLoughlin, *Diary*, 403-04, 567-68. For McLoughlin’s comment, see 404, n. 2. Elder Richard Round’s attendance at the inaugural meeting of the Warren Association is noted in Backus and Weston, *History of New England*, II, 437, 09.
As Case entered manhood the ecclesiastical affairs of the community became intertwined in the civil unrest that presaged the coming war with England. Like most Baptists in the colonies, and even some in England, Case supported the American Revolution. The Baptists hoped that independence from England would not just bring civil liberty but also the religious liberty that they had so long hoped for, and for which they had suffered under the yoke of New England Congregationalism. In their estimation, the two conflicts were woven into the same cloth.137

As the civil conflict loomed, the core New England Baptist response was threefold. First, they collected accounts of religious oppression from Baptist churches and published a number of these accounts, including Backus’ *Seasonable Plea*. The publications appeared to have had a modest dampening effect on Congregational intolerance. Second, abandoning their initial plan to appeal their grievances to the crown, they renewed their formal appeal to the civil magistrate for redress and sent a delegation, including Backus, to the Continental Congress to seek guarantees of the rights of conscience that were denied to them under British colonial rule. The results were disappointing. Third, they enlisted in the military in large numbers in aid of the cause, some as soldiers and some as chaplains to the Continental Army.138

Isaac Case enlisted in the army when he was just fifteen years of age. In later life, he recorded serving five American Revolution enlistments. One enlistment was on behalf of his brother, “we had buried our father the June before, Joseph being the oldest son, could not be

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spared off the farm, and I was received as his substitute for the term of six weeks. . . . Thus did I serve my country in the Revolutionary War, ten months and one half.139

Case made no profession of faith before the war, though he experienced his first religious stirrings at the age of nine upon the death of a “profane” lad in the community with whom he was acquainted. Apparently, he had ongoing concerns for his spiritual state, but did not act on them until he was eighteen years of age. “At that time,” historian Henry Burrage informs us, “he was led to see his lost condition” and in December 1779 “he came into the light and liberty of the gospel of Christ.” He subsequently “united with the Baptist Church in the neighboring town of Dighton.”140

The Baptist Church in Dighton was formed through the leadership and effective preaching of Enoch Goff. Backus notes that Elder Goff’s “advantages as to human learning were not great,” though he was doctrinally a careful man. Isaac Case seems to have been well instructed under his ministry. It may be that Goff’s limited educational advantages were an encouragement to the young Case not to allow his own educational disadvantages to deter him from the Christian ministry. Burrage captures the young man’s conflict as he considered the call to pastoral service. “The claims of the Christian ministry were pressed upon him, but he looked upon himself as unqualified for the work. He could read with difficulty, and how, without an education, could he proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ?”141

Despite his educational shortcomings and perceived inadequacies, the Dighton Baptists moved forward with testing Case’s gifts and calling. As was customary, the examination of a

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139 Joanna Case Haynes, “Biographical Sketch of Rev. Isaac Case,” February 1, 1895, 2-3, Isaac Case Papers, Colby College, Special Collections.
potential ministerial candidate began with the congregation hearing the candidate preach. The Dighton Baptists set a time and date for the young Case to preach. Choosing John 14:17 as his text, he arrived to find the crowd too large for the meeting house, so the service was moved to a nearby open field. Case recounted later, “I was much straightened, and got through the exercise with difficulty, so that I did not answer my own mind, nor the mind of my hearers. From this circumstance I was ready to conclude that I was mistaken respecting my duty, and was deceived in my exercise about preaching.” Despite his misgivings, invitations were subsequently offered to him to preach.142

Finally, believing Christ was calling him to preach despite his limited education, Case surrendered to Christ with language reminiscent of David before Goliath in the Old Testament and the Apostle Paul in the New Testament. “Thus I ventured out, not having on Saul’s armor, nor with the advantage of being brought up at the feet of Gamaliel; but I was brought down to the feet of Christ, and was taught of him; was furnished with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”143

The external call to preach by the Dighton Church was formalized with a license in July 1780. Whatever reservations Case or local Baptists may have experienced initially, Case’s effectiveness was soon evident. Backus records that Case had been remarkably instrumental in some conversions in 1781 on Cape Cod, especially at Barnstable. Burrage provides some numerical assessment, noting that the membership of the Baptist church was nearly doubled as a result of his evangelistic endeavors.144

143 Ibid., 67.
For three years Case traversed Massachusetts and Vermont preaching wherever an opening was afforded to him. These labors gave the Dighton Baptists greater evidence that Case was effective in bringing souls into the kingdom of God. Though licensed to preach, he was not yet ordained and so could not officiate over the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. In the early spring of 1783, Case witnessed Elder Whitman Jacobs baptize eight individuals in Westminster, Vermont. Reminiscing about his itinerant labors in Westminster the year previous, Case recorded, “the Reformation begane hear Last deisember year 1782 the lord was Pleasd to send me hear at that time and he Cround my labours with success I taried hear foure weeks and there was a Considerable Number Brought [to] the knowl[edge] of Christ.”

By 1783 the proof of his calling was evident, and Case was formally ordained. Just when this move was in the mind of the young preacher is unknown, but it appears to have been precipitated by Case’s interactions with Isaac Backus. Case preached on Cape Cod during the months of July and August 1783 after which he returned to Rehoboth and preached in several adjacent communities. On August 25 he visited Backus who encouraged him to seek ordination, and then “to go East Ward” into the District of Maine.

The opportunity to be of service in Maine was spurred by a letter that Backus received from former church member and licensed preacher Job Macomber. Macomber lived in New

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145 Case, “Diary,” April 7, 1783. Often when the call to gospel ministry was being tested without a pastoral charge in mind, a candidate would be licensed rather than ordained. The licensee would then begin itinerant ministry until a pastoral call was received, at which time he would seek ordination. Among Regular Baptists the administration of the ordinances was reserved for ordained ministers alone, accordingly, during this period Case refrained from baptizing converts and administering the Lord’s Supper. Backus and McLoughlin, *Diary*, 1074.

146 Case, “Diary.”

147 Macomber was the son of a deacon in the Middleborough congregational church who, along with his wife, was baptized and joined Backus’s Middleborough Baptist Church on July 19, 1772. Macomber began preaching in 1774, and by 1782 he had moved with his family to Maine and was active in the Baptist Church in New Gloucester. In October 1782 Backus and the Middleborough brethren entertained a request from the New Gloucester Church to
Gloucester, Maine, and itinerated with Capt. Woodman in North Yarmouth and Parker’s Island in December 1782. They found themselves amid a spiritual awakening that had been going on for several months. In January 1783 Macomber gave Backus an account of the work in progress, which included meeting Potterstown resident James Potter. Potter was described by Macomber as a man “near forty years old” who “met with a change about eighteen months ago.” Soon after his “change” Potter began preaching. When Macomber and Woodman arrived, he joined with them in their itinerant labors in several coastal communities. Macomber summarized the trip for Backus, “as for my own part, I can tell you that I never had so great satisfaction in any visit or journey in all my life, nor so great freedom in preaching. These words were often in my mind: ‘The wilderness shall blossom as the rose.’”

Backus urged Case to commit himself to the work of establishing Baptist churches in the District of Maine. The description of Maine as a blossoming wilderness combined with Backus’ encouragements must have had a direct influence on the young itinerant, as he immediately consented to Backus’ suggestion. On September 7, 1783, Case “met with my brethren at Dighton,” presumably to let them know of his desire to seek ordination and go to Maine.

The Dighton brethren responded favorably and at ten in the morning on Wednesday, September 10, the ordination council met to examine Case. Along with Elder Goff of Dighton, the council comprised Elder Elisha Carpenter Jr. of Attleboro, Elder David Seamans, formerly co-pastor in Dighton with Elder Goff, recently settled over the Baptist Church in Freetown, Elder Amos Burris, also of Freetown, and Elder Charles Thompson of Swansea. Thompson was the

ordain Macomber, but as they were not seeking to install him as their own pastor, Backus recorded, “we had not clearness in ordaining him as a minister at large. Backus and McLoughlin, Diary, 1109.


149 Case, “Diary.”
lone college graduate among the ministers examining Case and had trained several young men
for the gospel ministry. Case would have been fully scrutinized with Thompson present. The
council’s deliberations were recorded by Case,

I told my experience and call to preach the gospel. They all manifested
satisfaction. Eld. Tompson preacht the sermon from 1 Cor 4:1 and then Eld Goffe,
Eld. Simons, and Eld. Carpender laid their hands upon me and praid. Eld
Carpender gave me a solom charge; Eld Goffe gave me the right hand of
fellowship. There was three deakons ordaind in the ch[urch.] It was a solom time.
And may the lord bless the labours of the day for his own sons sake. Amen and
Amen.

The following day, September 11, 1783, the newly ordained Rev. Isaac Case headed eastward.

He arrived in Brunswick, Maine, in late October and would labor the rest of his life in Maine and
the Maritime Provinces of British North America.

Isaac Case and Baptist Success

Case’s calling, ordination, and ministerial life are revealing for several reasons. One of
the most significant features of Baptist success in the northeastern borderland was their ability to
supply preachers to destitute churches struggling to survive on the frontier. Case largely led the
surge of Regular Baptist evangelists into the newly settled region, especially east of the
Kennebec River. He also exemplified the approach to ministerial calling that gave Baptists an
advantage over the Standing Order. Itinerant ministers enabled Baptists to gain footholds for the
kingdom of God in many regions that were underserved or totally lacking in ministers of the
Standing Order. Isaac Case served as an exemplar of this ability in several ways.

150 For biographical notices of these men, see Backus and McLoughlin, Diary. William B. Sprague, Annals of the
151 Case, “Diary.”
152 This is not to suggest that the Baptist churches never lacked ministers, they did. But the Baptists were much more
adept at dealing with the shortage of ministers and in supplying new ministers than the Standing Order. For the
challenges faced by Congregationalists in supplying laborers for the frontier regions of the new republic, see, James
The Process of Ordination among the Regular Baptists. Case illustrated the normal process of ordination among the Regular and Separate Baptists of his day. Though Baptists mobilized rapidly, there was a recognized pattern in the process of setting apart itinerant evangelists and ministerial candidates that not only facilitated this mobilization but also followed what they deemed to be a more Biblical and balanced approach to the gospel ministry. Case’s ordination to the gospel ministry exemplified this approach. The orderly process necessitated: 1) relating one’s experience of personal regeneration, 2) the articulation of an internal call of the Holy Spirit to preach, and 3) the recognition of this call by the local church after the grace of regeneration and the gifts requisite to ministry were evident to the gathered assembly. The numerous ordination sermons published by Baptists give ample evidence of this process. Furthermore, the importance of these endeavors reveals the primacy of the independent local church in the expansion of the kingdom. There was certainly no place for the state in this process. Whether a ministry was deemed “learned” or otherwise was not the jurisdiction of the state or even of a consociation of local ministers. The process was important as an expression of the separation of the two kingdoms.

Personal Regeneration. Standing Order Congregationalists in late eighteenth century New England were seen by Baptists to have wrongly downplayed the need for ministerial candidates to relate their experience of regeneration. Instead, they relied almost solely on academia for the preparation of ministerial candidates and looked to ministerial consociations to test the candidates. Certainly, the Baptist practice was more local church focused and spiritually

dynamic. Though formal education was not denigrated, it was recognized to be an advantage but not a necessary qualification for ministry.\footnote{McLoughlin summarizes the shift in New England Congregational ordination from a spiritually dynamic emphasis in the early colonial days to more formal ministerial consociation practiced in \textit{Connecticut and Massachusetts in Isaac Case’s day in New England Dissent, 1630-1833}, 30-31. For specific examples of this shift, see Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, \textit{The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England} (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 128-29. Backus argued that the Baptists were more in line with early colonial New England Congregational practice. Backus, \textit{All True Ministers of the Gospel}.}


As a participant in the awakenings of the time, the necessity of a converted ministry was crucial for Isaac Backus in his pilgrimage from New Light Congregationalist to Separate Congregationalist and finally to Separate Baptist. The Baptists understood the visible expression of the kingdom of God on earth to be the church, and in their theological understanding, the church must be composed of only those who gave evidence of regeneration. Consequently, the foundation of a Baptist minister’s calling was regeneration. He must be in the kingdom to call others into the kingdom. Ministers lacking regeneration were what Backus called “carnal” or “legalists.” He asked two pertinent questions, “The nature of their work is \textit{spiritual}; and how can
carnal men perform it? . . . And if he cannot see [the kingdom of God], how can he act in it as he ought?” Unregenerate ministers, by Backus’s definition, had no place in the membership of the church and certainly no business in the pulpit.  

Boston Baptist minister Samuel Stillman’s sermon at the ordination of Samuel Shepherd of New Hampshire in 1772 stuck the same chord.

Here I beg leave to premise, that every man who engages in this office, ought to be previously called out of darkness into marvelous light . . . one who has experienced the influences of the Spirit of God, in opening his blind eyes, and turning him from darkness to light: and from the power of satan unto God.  

Boston Baptist minister Thomas Baldwin asserted regeneration as a prerequisite to a minister’s calling was simply “common sense.” How could anyone, he asked, bereft of regeneration, irrespective of their “learning” and “moral character,” expect to “be of any spiritual or saving advantage to the souls of their hearers?” In the installation sermon for John Peak over the Baptist Church in Barnstable, Massachusetts, Baldwin acknowledged that this was a qualification added by the New Testament that was not required “under the Mosaic dispensation” in the Old Testament. As Baldwin concedes elsewhere, “a graceless preacher of the Gospel of Grace, would seem a very inconsistent character.”

Baptist minister Thomas Green echoed Baldwin when preaching the ordination sermon in Readfield, Maine, for James Murphy. Murphy was being set apart as an evangelist and Green

155 Isaac Backus, Evangelical Ministers Described, and Distinguished from Legalists (Boston: Philip Freeman, 1772), 8.
reiterated the qualifications incumbent upon such a calling. He began with regeneration, “it is an indispensable pre-requisite in the qualification of a preacher,” he told the candidate and the church. William Batchelder of Berwick, Maine, in preaching the ordination sermon for Otis Robinson over the Baptist Church in Dover, New Hampshire, averred that to lack regeneration would mean the preacher simply “pretends to instruct others . . . He must be acquainted with the work of regeneration.” When preaching the ordination sermon for Abner Flanders, Batchelder again referenced the necessity of regeneration as the starting point for gospel ministers, “first, they must be renewed by the spirit.” Samuel Stillman of Boston concurred when he preached the ordination sermon of Lucius Bolles over the Baptist Church in Salem. The precondition of regeneration for Gospel ministers among the Baptists was “universally allowed.”

Regeneration’s importance cannot be overstated. In the Standing Order churches of New England, the practice of infant baptism brought most members into the congregation without a formal profession of faith, they were, after all, baptized as infants and brought into the fold. The adoption of the Half-Way Covenant and the practices of many Old Light Congregationalists further ensured that the evidence of regeneration was downplayed for admittance into the church and acceptance at the Lord’s Table. Many who were raised in these churches were expected to give evidence of their orthodoxy, but not necessarily their regeneration, in order to qualify for ordination. On the other hand, Baptists demanded a regenerate church membership, and so the starting point of the Baptist’s prerequisites for ministry was from within the membership of the

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local church, all of whom publicly professed regeneration. As exemplified in Isaac Case’s ordination, the congregational examination process was repeated when a candidate was brought forward for ordination.159

**The Internal Call to the Ministry.** As noted earlier, at his ordination council Case related his “call to preach the gospel” to the ministers and congregation assembled in Dighton. Ministerial candidates were expected to confirm an internal compulsion to enter the Gospel ministry and further the kingdom. It was understood that God would give this discernable call. From the perspective of the Baptists, men who lacked regeneration also failed to exhibit the necessary internal call of the Holy Spirit to the pastoral office.

Standing Order Old Light strongholds in Connecticut and Massachusetts diminished, or even abandoned, the earlier Congregational practice of assessing a candidate’s internal call. Isaac Backus represented the Baptists when he insisted that the Congregational ministerial consociations had no authority to dismiss this prerequisite or to substitute academic credentials in its place. The kingdom of God would suffer in such circumstances as it was a spiritual kingdom with spiritual qualifications for ministry. In the words of historian William McLoughlin, the Baptists “claimed to heed a higher authority than the learned clergy and fatherly magistrates.” Regeneration and the subsequent gifting of God culminating in an internal call to ministry were prerequisites for Baptist ministers. Case satisfied the church that he had received a moving internal call.160

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159 For more on the necessity of a public profession of regeneration, see Gregory A. Wills, *Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South, 1785-1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 15-16. Though Wills addresses mostly Baptists in the southern colonies, for the requirements of church membership he draws on John Asplund’s work which was denominational rather than geographical. Southern Baptists and northern Baptists were united on the necessity of regeneration.

The External Call of the Church. The third stage for Baptist ordination was for the candidate’s internal call to be confirmed by the external call of the church. The local church must concur that God had regenerated, gifted, and called this individual to the gospel ministry. Again, the spiritual nature of the kingdom demanded a spiritual exercise. In their theological understanding of the church, a body of regenerate saints alone had the spiritual authority and discernment vital to testing and extending an external call to a specific candidate. The church needed to take under advisement the ministerial council’s assessment of the candidate and then vote to approve his ordination or decline to do so. The church’s vote of affirmation was the external call.

Baptists believed they charted a middle way between errant practices of the day. The institutionalized Congregationalists insisted on a learned ministry tested by the ministerial consociation apart from the local congregation and they occupied one end of the ecclesiastical spectrum in New England. This was viewed as an abuse of ministerial authority and was fraught with downgrading the spiritual qualifications of candidates. At the other end of the ecclesiastical spectrum stood radical sects like the Quakers. In New England, as well as old England, radical dissent highlighted the dangers of a hyper-individualized and underqualified, if not unqualified, ministry. The Quakers claimed to have the Holy Spirit’s calling without the need of confirmation; in short, they denied the external call of the local church. If the Congregationalists were in danger of eliminating the internal call of the Holy Spirit and relying solely on the external call of the consociation, the Quakers, in the Baptist mind, were most surely guilty of eliminating the external call or confirmation of the congregation and relying solely on the individual’s assertion of an internal call to preach. The Baptists’ middle way, as Case
exemplified, required both an individual element, the internal call, and an institutional element, the external call to gospel ministry.\textsuperscript{161}

The Regular Baptists had a recognized theology of the call to the gospel ministry which Case would bring with him to Maine, replicating it numerous times in the years ahead. The self-replicating spiritual nature of the kingdom meant there was no place for civil or extra-ecclesial interference. Ordination was handled within the confines of the local church as a visible expression of the kingdom. The Baptist practice was so customary that Rev. William Staughton of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, writing the annual circular letter on the question, “What are the qualifications of a gospel minister?” concluded; “the process a church, in the fear of God, observes in the call of a member to the ministry being stated so fully in the discipline of our churches, it is unnecessary to enlarge upon it in the present letter.”\textsuperscript{162}

**The Importance of Local Church Independence.** Assembling a council of ordained ministers to examine a candidate for ministry was customary among Regular Baptists. Nonetheless, it was far from the ministerial consociations practiced by eighteenth century New England Congregational clergy. The assembled Baptist ministers acted solely in an advisory capacity to the local church: Baptist councils lacked ecclesial authority. Regular Baptists jealously guarded the power and independence of the local church. Proof of this was evident in 1767 when Isaac Backus’s Middleborough Baptist Church declined to join the newly constituted Warren Association. Seven of the eleven churches present feared “some usurpation of authority by the associated body, over the particular churches.” Only four churches joined the first year. To


\textsuperscript{162} Gillette, *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, 1707 to 1807*, 445.
alleviate their fears, the Sentiments and Plan of the Warren Association, was reworded to give Backus and the others reassurance that “the association did not assume any jurisdiction over the churches.” The independence of the local church was more important than Baptist associationalism.163

The independence of the local church was affirmed from the beginning of Regular Baptist associationalism in America, as the first Baptist association in Philadelphia formalized its confessional commitment in 1742. Publishing its slightly expanded addition of the confession adopted by the Particular Baptists in London in 1677, the Philadelphia brethren included A Short Treatise of Church Discipline, which included important practical features such as establishing a church, calling a minister, and setting up deacons and elders. In addressing the nature of a “true and orderly gospel church,” they affirmed,

A number of believers thus united under Christ, their mystical head, are become a church essential; and as such is the first and proper subject of the keys, and have power and privilege to govern themselves, and to choose out their own ministerial officers. Acts 14:23. Chap. 6. 3.164

They believed each local church to be independent under the direct headship of Christ, and thus to have all the power vested in its members by Christ. This included the authority to enact all church business, including choosing their own ministers. It was tied directly to their view of the kingdom of God. For others to meddle in church affairs would be for outsiders to interfere with Christ’s direct rule over his church, an unwarranted and unwanted hindrance

163 Guild, History of Brown University, 76; The Sentiments and Plan of the Warren Association; Hovey, A Memoir of the Life and Times of the Rev. Isaac Backus, A. M., 156.
164 The Baptist Confession of Faith: First Put Forth in 1643; Afterwards Enlarged, Corrected and Published by an Assembly of Delegates (from the Churches in Great Britain) Met in London July 3, 1689; Adopted by the Association at Philadelphia September 22, 1742; and Now Received by Churches of the Same Denomination in Most of the American Colonies. To Which Is Added, a Short Treatise of Discipline (Philadelphia: Anthony Armbruster, 1765), 74-75.
between the king and his subjects. Denying that the “keys” belong to either the civil magistrate or any other individual or external body politic than the local church, the Baptists professed their corporate subjection to Christ directly.

The importance of local church independence for Case’s ministry in Maine should not be overlooked for it fostered Baptist effectiveness on the frontier. They did not need to wait for an extra-ecclesial entity such as a consociation of ministers to enact formal church business, including recognizing and installing duly qualified leadership. Neither did they recognize the authority of the state to impose ministerial qualifications on the local congregations. This would violate their Two Kingdoms theology. The authority for all church matters resided with the entire church, not a subset of the church or any external entity. This meant each local assembly was spiritually self-sufficient. Case was not ordained by the ministers gathered in Dighton, but by the church, albeit with their counsel. This spiritual “republicanism,” as Daniel Merrill called it, was pivotal to their explosive growth in the northeast.165

**The Subordination of Formal Education.** A final way in which Isaac Case exemplified Baptist thought and practice, enabling him to labor effectively on the frontier, was the place ministerial education was given to the overall qualifications for ministry among the Baptists. The Baptists were firmly convinced that the Bible’s teaching on the Two Kingdoms of God provided a middle way between the cumbersome educational requirements of New England Congregationalism and anti-intellectualism of many radical sects.

New England Congregationalism held to a single kingdom theological perspective. Drawing on Old Testament theocratic examples, Moses and Aaron were to work together for the

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good of church and state. The state wielded coercive power and the church cooperated in expressing where coercive power should be applied in spiritual and ecclesiastical matters. Part of Congregationalism’s attempt to maintain hegemonic control of the church was in the demand for a “learned” ministry. Consistent with the marriage of church and state, the requirement was incorporated into the laws of Massachusetts such that each incorporated community must settle an “able, learned, and orthodox” minister and support him via taxation. This amounted to the necessity for each town church to have a college educated minister.\textsuperscript{166}

This requirement also applied in the District of Maine. In the 1730s, for example, the Pejepscot proprietors made provision for the settlement of a minister in Brunswick, Maine. They assigned “‘Lot Number Eight’ be granted to the first ‘Learned and Orthodox Minister who shall be Ordained and Settled there and shall continue in the Ministry there for the space of seven years.’” In 1768 the town of Topsham set aside one hundred acres to the same end. Historian Robert Hale commented on the cooperation between church and state in early Maine, “no matter connected with church affairs seemed trivial to the town.”\textsuperscript{167}

The challenges encountered on the northeastern frontier to settling a learned ministry were many. Problems included quelling candidate’s dislike of isolated and remote parishes, fears of perceived harassment of settlers by disgruntled indigenous people, and limited financial resources to support ministerial salaries. College educated men were attracted to more secure communities and sought higher salaries. This resulted in many vacant frontier pulpits.\textsuperscript{168}

In effect, the church-state union that cemented the requirement for educated clergy in order to keep dissenters out of meeting house pulpits had the opposite effect on the frontier. Where no

\textsuperscript{166} Backus and, \textit{Isaac Backus on Church, State, and Calvinism; Pamphlets, 1754-1789}, 67.
\textsuperscript{167} Robert Hale, \textit{Early Days of Church and State in Maine} (Brunswick, Maine: Bowdoin College, 1910), 16, 24.
\textsuperscript{168} See the specific examples of York and Wells, ibid., 37.
strong local Congregational presence was found, frontier itinerants were often free to roam and usually found not only ready audiences, but available pulpits.\textsuperscript{169}

The possibility that a man might lack formal education yet prove to be a fit ministerial candidate, was underscored by Isaac Case. He considered himself of meager learning. Henry Burrage claims that he “could read with difficulty,” suggesting he was on the verge of illiteracy. However, Burrage may have overemphasized Case’s educational limitations. He could write tolerably well, although his spelling was often idiosyncratic, and he mentions reading the Bible without noting any difficulty. He also frequently contributed journal extracts from his evangelistic tours for publication in the \textit{Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine}. Furthermore, at times his “Diary” refers to preachers who were intolerably illiterate. Case distinguished the form of illiteracy that made a man almost incoherent in the pulpit from one who simply lacked collegiate training. On one rare occasion Case commented that a Congregational brother laboring on Mount Desert, by the name of Ebenezer Eaton, to be “a man of little learning but of Great piety.”\textsuperscript{170}

Though Case was “unlearned,” he was not illiterate and far from Biblically ignorant. The Baptists expected ministerial candidates to exhibit proficiency in their knowledge of the Bible. Though a college education was not a Baptist prerequisite to ministerial calling, many Baptist ordination sermons reflected a respect for formal education as a subordinate aid in the work of

\textsuperscript{170} Burrage, \textit{History of the Baptists in Maine}, 66. On Case reading, see Diary entry for October 10, 1799, for Eaton, September 16, 1799. Eaton’s lack of education was deemed problematical by the Hancock Association of Ministers, who, according to Case, “hath laid restrictions on Brother Eaton” at their ministerial meeting for September 18, 1799, including the study of English grammar. In order to encourage Eaton to make sufficient progress, the ministerial association threatened to force him to “forfit his credenches to preach.” Eaton must have improved, since he continued to serve on Mount Desert for more than twenty years. Clark, \textit{History of the Congregational Churches in Maine}, II, 324-26, 81.
the kingdom of God. For instance, William Batchelder of Berwick, Maine, admonished Abner Flanders to consider the necessity of “spiritual” qualifications in taking up the cross as a minister of Jesus Christ. However, Batchelder did not disdain formal education. On the contrary, concurring with Jonathan Edwards, he went on to say, “I do not by these remarks, wish to exclude the use of literary acquirements, for as President Edwards observed, they may be used as a handmaid to divinity.”\footnote{Batchelder, 	extit{A Sermon Delivered at Buxton}, 7-8.}

In 1805, Boston’s Thomas Baldwin was called upon to preach the ordination sermon for Daniel Merrill of Sedgwick, Maine. Merrill was a graduate of Dartmouth College and certainly was a learned man. Baldwin reminded the Baptist convert that a “sermon, as a piece of composition, may display much taste, and may be enriched, and even loaded with all ‘the lumber of a learned world;’ yet if Christ be left out, the main thing will be wanting.” The Baptists recognized learning could be useful, to be sure, but it was not necessary to the pursuit of ministry.\footnote{Baldwin, 	extit{A Sermon, Delivered at Sedgwick}, 8.} That Baldwin stressed this as part of Merrill’s transition from a Congregational to a Regular Baptist pastor is especially telling.

Thomas Green, a medical doctor and minister of the Baptist Church in North Yarmouth, Maine, reminded James Murphy of Readfield that ordination to the office of evangelist was the prerogative of King Jesus, and none had a right to add to those qualifications. To require “seminaries of education for his gospel ministers” was, in his words, “criminal.” Rather, “as sovereign in his kingdom . . . the great shepherd of his flock is . . . as likely to call them from the plough, or some other occupation, as from seats of learning.”\footnote{Green, 	extit{Gospel Ministers the Workmanship of Jesus Christ}, 14.}
Green underscored the separation of church and state as the center of Two Kingdom theology. Unlike some of the radical sects which eschewed any human institution, the Baptists recognized the legitimacy of the state in its separate sphere, but the church was under the direct rule and reign of Jehovah. Green stressed that it was not anti-intellectualism that fueled dissent from the prerequisite of collegiate education but Two Kingdoms theology. By marrying the church and state, the Standing Order was giving the state the right to interfere with the sovereign leadership of Christ in and over his church.

Baptist ordination sermons also labored to counter the enthusiasm of more radical sects that often thrived on the frontier. Though formal education was not required by Regular Baptists, neither was it denigrated. Negative views of education were usually the case with those who refused to have any ecclesial confirmation of the calling of Christ to the work of ministry. The radical itinerancy of the Quakers and Shakers, for example, seemed at times to boast in their ministers’ uneducated status.

In this vein, Thomas Baldwin compared the ministry with the medical profession and conceded, “it must be acknowledged there are quacks and imposters in divinity as well as in physic.” John Tripp went so far as to assert, “God does not employ ideots [sic], or persons underwitted, in the service of the ministry. The apostles, though chiefly unlearned, were doubtless men of good natural abilities.” Thus, to draw on Tripp’s analogy, it is safe to conclude that Isaac Case was, though unlearned, neither dull-witted nor Biblically ignorant. Though Case lacked the formal education advocated by the state church, the Dighton Baptist Church believed
him to have the King’s blessing in his ordination to the gospel ministry. With the Dighton Church’s ordination in hand he came to Maine to seek the expansion of the kingdom of God.”

The Settling of Peripatetic Pastors

Rev. Isaac Case at Thomaston (1784-1792) and Readfield (1792-1799)

The Baptists view of Two Kingdoms implied the kingdom of God was not geographically delimited. Baptist ministers actively itinerated in underserved regions; a practice that has come to be known as peripatetic ministry. Conversely, Congregational clergy were often constrained by parish boundaries that potentially limited their field of labor. Shelby Balik refers to their differences as “competing religious geographies.” While the parish model was challenged in various ways during the Great Awakening, it continued to be a dominant feature of the Standing Order into the nineteenth century. The one-kingdom theology of most of the Congregational clergy meant that the geographical boundaries of the civil community were simultaneously the parish boundaries of the settled minister. This did not always mean the minister was forbidden from itinerating, but it was often discouraged by the church-going taxpayers of his settled parish. Many did not like the idea of paying the salary of a minister who often preached elsewhere. Furthermore, some pastors, especially Old Light ministers, felt they had no authority to cross boundaries with other clerics. These constraints made establishing and supporting solid Congregational churches on the frontier very challenging due to a lack of suitable preachers. This left the frontier ripe for Baptist ministry. In addition to providing itinerant evangelists when they were available, once settled in pastorates many Baptist ministers continued preaching in destitute areas. For example, when Isaac Case arrived in Brunswick, Maine, in October 1783, he

labored on the islands that make up present day Harpswell, Phippsburg, and Georgetown in the coastal regions of the Kennebec, Androscoggin, and New Meadows Rivers, and in inland areas like Bowdoinham and Topsham. Harpswell had a settled minister, Samuel Eaton Jr., who succeeded his father as pastor of the Congregational Church in October 1764. Case met Rev. Eaton soon after his arrival in Brunswick and preached in the Harpswell meeting house a few times. He also met the settled ministers of Bath and Georgetown and preached in the meeting houses in both locations. Sensing that he was not welcome in Congregational pulpits, Case preached almost exclusively in homes and barns on invitation from their owners.\textsuperscript{175}

Case left Brunswick in January 1784 to itinerate further to the “Eastward.” On his arrival at Thomaston, Maine, Case found a group of people waiting for him with anticipation, and as a direct result of his preaching many souls soon professed faith. Case remained in Thomaston baptizing a considerable number of converts in February, and on May 27, 1784 gathered them into a Baptist Church. He recorded the founding of the church in his Diary,

\begin{quote}
Thursday May 27 [1784] Met at Mr Robins Barn at ten in the Morning for to imbody in A Church. I opend the Meating by prayer and took the Lead of the meating. Chose Brother Samual Brown Clark and then proseded. Red the Baptis articals of Faith and Ch Covinent they were all agreed Exsept five Brethren they were for comuning with unbaptized persons and the Rest were agreed in prinsable and gave them selves up to god and to one another. There was 47 male and females that imbodied in the church.\textsuperscript{176}
\end{quote}

Seeing this as a tangible example of Christ expanding his kingdom, Case exclaimed, “Ride on King Jesus.”

\textsuperscript{175} When Case arrived in Brunswick he mentioned meeting several other itinerants including Benjamin Randall, founder of the Freewill Baptists, see I. D. Stewart, \textit{The History of the Freewill Baptists for Half a Century}, 2 vols. (Dover, New Hampshire: Freewill Baptists Printing Establishment, 1862); Case, “Diary,” October 1783 to January 1784.

\textsuperscript{176} Case, “Diary,” May 27, 1784.
This newly constituted closed-communion Baptist Church immediately called Case to be their pastor. It is important to note that during his pastoral years in Thomaston, Case never ceased itinerating throughout the region, baptizing believers and organizing churches. Though a settled minister, pastoral duties included ambitious itinerancy. For instance, after settling in Thomaston on Thursday, May 27, 1784, he preached in Damariscotta and New Castle to the south. He then traveled to Warren, then northeast to Camden, before returning to Thomaston for Sunday worship. Monday, he took passage to Fox Island (present day North Haven) in the heart of the Penobscot Bay. He preached on the island Monday and Tuesday, and on Wednesday he crossed over to Deer Island and preached several times before returning to Fox Island, where he remained for services on Sunday. Monday, he returned to Thomaston for a week before turning his attention south again preaching at Damariscotta, New Castle, Woolwich, and then Bath on July 2. In addition to his preaching and travels during this timeframe, he visited several members of his flock, attended church conferences, and conferred privately with spiritually troubled individuals. He preached at least twenty-one sermons during this five-week period. Case exemplified the active peripatetic ministry of even settled Baptist pastors.\footnote{Ibid. Unfortunately, Case’s “Diary” from July 2, 1784 through September 1799 is lacking.}

**Rev. Edward Manning of Nova Scotia (1766-1851)**

The Baptist movement in Nova Scotia was just beginning to emerge as Isaac Case was itinerating through the coastal regions of Maine in the 1780s. To be sure, Baptists had been in Nova Scotia since the New England Planters had arrived there in the 1750s and 60s. As New Englanders took up the opportunity for affordable farmland after the expulsion of the Acadians, Baptists embraced the prospect as its promotion also promised religious toleration. As many Baptist laypersons migrated north, they were joined by a handful of Baptist preachers. Probably
the most well-known of these men, Ebenezer Moulton, left Brimfield, Massachusetts, and joined the immigrants at Yarmouth on the shores of the Bay of Fundy. In 1763, he gathered a Baptist church at Horton, Nova Scotia, which is recognized as the oldest surviving Baptist church in the Maritime Provinces. Moulton later returned to Massachusetts, but the congregation continued.

Be that as it may, the largest gains for Baptists in Nova Scotia would not come through the fledgling churches established by immigrants from New England. Many of those works died out entirely and others languished after a short period of time. This was especially true as their pastors frequently returned to New England or simply gave up pastoral ministry to take up farming out of the need to provide for their families. As New Englanders emigrated to Nova Scotia in the mid-eighteenth century, Congregational churches far outnumbered Baptist ones, but would prove to be the seedbed for Baptist growth as the century closed.178

The effects of the Great Awakening in New England and in Nova Scotia several decades later mirrored each other in significant ways. The explosive growth of Baptists in New England came as a direct result of the Great Awakening within the Congregational churches of the mid-eighteenth century. Like Isaac Backus, numerous Congregational New Lights began to question various church practices. The resulting conversion of numerous New Light Congregational churches to Separate Congregational churches and subsequently to Separate Baptist churches marked a familiar pattern.179

In Nova Scotia the Great Awakening, or “New Light Stir”, was almost exactly coterminous with the American Revolution (1776-1783). The most significant personality of the

178 Isaac Backus records Baptist migration to Nova Scotia in Backus and Weston, History of New England, II, 437, 447. I. E. Bill confessed that “many of the New Light Congregational Churches were in reality transformed into New Light Baptist Churches,” see Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches of the Maritime Provinces of Canada, 16.
179 Goen, Revivalism and Separatism.
“Stir” was undoubtedly Henry Alline. Alline was a Congregationalist, who became a New Light radical after a conversion experience on March 26, 1775. Sensing a call to preach and waiting for no one to commission him to the task, Alline began itinerating in Nova Scotia in April 1776 and helped to form many New Light congregations. The conversion experience was of such importance that Alline considered other ecclesiastical issues to be non-essential. Thus, he gave little to no attention to either baptism or the qualifications for communion and paid scant attention to limiting the vocal expression of laymen and women. Theologically, he self-consciously distanced himself from the Calvinism of the Congregational churches of Nova Scotia and New England. After several years of itinerant ministry in Nova Scotia, and despite serious illness, Alline turned his attention to New England. He left Brunswick, Maine, on October 21, 1783 for Freeport, Maine, the same day Isaac Case arrived. Soon Alline’s illness became acute and he was taken to Northampton, New Hampshire, where he died February 2, 1784. Alline’s desire to preach the gospel throughout New England would never be fully realized.

The fruit of Alline’s work in Nova Scotia, on the other hand, was abundant. First, he helped revitalize personal piety among those who attended Congregational churches that embraced his New Light gospel. The awakening of new converts and the reviving of those already within the fold breathed new life into the congregations. Second, Alline encouraged an

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onslaught of new preachers who felt that Christ called them into his service. Alline had little
formal education, and certainly was no college graduate: in the eyes of the established churches
he was both unlearned and unordained. His example made it easier for others of like
backgrounds to pursue the call to preach. These “successors” dedicated themselves to pastoral
ministry over New Light Churches and pursued itinerant evangelism.¹⁸¹

Several of these successors eventually became closed-communion Calvinistic Baptists,
among the most prominent of whom was Edward Manning. He was born October 16, 1766, the
third son of Irish immigrant parents who settled in Falmouth, Nova Scotia, in 1770. Edward’s
father, Peter Manning, was tried and executed in 1776 for the murder of a neighbor, when his son
was just ten years old, a tragedy that Manning never mentions in his voluminous diary.¹⁸²

Manning met Henry Alline the same year his father was executed, and although it was a
memorable meeting (historian Daniel Goodwin says it was an “experience that remained with
him the rest of his life”), it did not eventuate in his salvation. In fact, Manning’s conversion was
not realized until May 25, 1789, at the age of twenty-two. Although five years after Alline’s
death, it had Alline’s imprint as his awakening was experienced through the revival preaching of
another Allinitie convert, John Payzant. Ironically, it was Payzant’s stepfather that Edward
Manning’s father had murdered some thirteen years earlier. According to Payzant’s journal,

¹⁸¹ Edward M. Saunders, History of the Baptists of the Maritime Provinces (Halifax, Nova Scotia: J. Burgoyne,
1902), 24.
¹⁸² For biographical details of Edward Manning’s life, see ibid., 27-28; Daniel C. Goodwin, Into Deep Waters, 98-
125; Barry Moody, “From Itinerant to Settled Pastor: The Case of Edward Manning (1767-1851),” Canadian
Society of Church History, Papers (1981): 1-20; “Edward Manning” in Dictionary of Canadian Biography (Toronto:
Edward’s brother James was converted at the same time. James, like his younger brother Edward, would become a Baptist minister in Nova Scotia.\(^{183}\)

Manning later related that his change of heart began in April. After Payzant preached, he witnessed several new converts “confessing their Lord and Master with much sympathy of soul for poor sinners, and for me in particular, my heart was broken.” He remained in this “broken” condition distressed over his “lost” state for the better part of a month. Resigned to at least “go to hell begging for mercy,” he returned to Horton to hear Payzant preach on May 25, a thanksgiving day declared “for the recovery of His Majesty’s health.” While there he found that “love kept increasing,” until finally declaring, “I was intensely filled with supreme love to God. I saw his glory in everything around me.” He immediately joined Payzant’s Cornwallis Congregational Church; he had become a New Light Congregationalist in the Allinite tradition.\(^{184}\)

Not long after his conversion Manning felt the call to preach and, though lacking ordination, preached his first sermon in February 1790. This “began an itinerant ministry that would take him all over the Maritimes and into the State of Maine.” The next several years proved tumultuous for the new preacher. Apparently following the radical lead of Lydia Randall and joined by his brother James, Harris Harding, and others within the Cornwallis congregation, Manning began to embrace an antinomian form of evangelicalism, which came to be known as the New Dispensation. Believing that direct revelation from God was the fruit of the new birth, these young leaders and their radical followers rejected the Bible as “a dead letter” and condemned “Church Rules.” Manning later explained the genesis of the movement’s name;\(^{185}\)

\(^{185}\) Moody, “From Itinerant to Settled Pastor,” 3. Harding was another Allinite preacher who initially followed in the footsteps of Freeborn Garretson as a Methodist before becoming a Baptist. In the 1790s he was probably the most
At a certain time when their extravagancies began to appear a Number of Ladies were in company of an afternoon when some remarks were made upon the Novelty of the Doctrine, when a young Lady rather partial to the new way Said, O Madam! This is a new Dispensation. From this circumstance those that neglected the ordinances were called new Dispensationers, whose distinguishing Tenets are to neglect all Christian duties except when they feel the Spirit.\footnote{Moody, “Edward Manning,” “Edward Manning.” Dictionary of Canadian Biography (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1985), accessed November 12, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/manning_edward_8E.html. According to Daniel Goodwin, Lunt and Woodstock formed a small breakaway group known as the Hammondites. Goodwin, Into Deep Waters, 103. For further information on the New Dispensation, see Bell, The Newlight Baptist Journals, 14-19.}

As Maritime religious historian Barry Moody notes, “the chaos and disorder- both doctrinal and social- brought on by this movement, and the uncontrolled excesses to which some of its people went, showed Manning and other would-be leaders that they had unleashed forces they could no longer control.”\footnote{Moody, “Edward Manning,” “Edward Manning.” Dictionary of Canadian Biography (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1985), accessed November 12, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/manning_edward_8E.html. According to Daniel Goodwin, Lunt and Woodstock formed a small breakaway group known as the Hammondites. Goodwin, Into Deep Waters, 103. For further information on the New Dispensation, see Bell, The Newlight Baptist Journals, 14-19.}

The extent of the New Dispensation’s antinomianism shocked Manning when he discovered some insisted that promiscuous sexual relations with others in the movement were acceptable to God. This was promoted most notably by New Light preachers John Lunt and Archelaus Woodstock in New Brunswick. Historian David Bell confirms that Manning drew the line here, and “searching” the Bible concluded that “the Scriptures were the only Rule of Faith and Practice.”\footnote{Bell, The Newlight Baptist Journals, 15.}

This “commitment to a more orderly faith,” as Goodwin observes, was central to Manning’s shift away from the more radical elements of the New Dispensation. Nevertheless, his personal confession reveals that the even more foundational shift was in a reassessment of the

radical of the New Dispensation leaders eventually coming up on charges that included his impregnating Mahitable Harrington. Harris repented and the two were subsequently married. Despite bringing moral scandal to an already disgraced movement, he was allowed to continue in ministry, although some fellow ministers had reservations. He removed to Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, where he remained the rest of his life. See George Rawlyk, Wrapped up in God: A Study of Several Canadian Revivals and Revivalists (Toronto: McGill-Queens University Press, 1993), 70-73; Goodwin, Into Deep Waters, 42-74.\footnote{Bell, The Newlight Baptist Journals, 15.}

Bell, The Newlight Baptist Journals, 15.
competing authorities in the life of converts and their churches. Leading up to the scandal, Manning, like many other New Dispensationers, gave almost sole authority to the internal promptings of the Holy Spirit. In their view authority was communicated directly to the individual from God himself. The authority of the local church and the primacy of Scripture were dismissed. As indicated above, Manning initially embraced this practice, but now came to believe that the sole authority for the life of the believer was the “Scriptures.” Authority had become objectified; life and practice had an external standard by which they could be tested and held accountable. Private spiritual impressions, if they were given any place at all, had to be subordinate to Scripture. This theological shift was critical to Manning’s departure from the New Dispensation, and it became the foundation for his move toward a more objectively definable and defensible ministry that drew him into the Regular Baptist fold.189

Manning’s transition also brought with it a reassessment of the orderliness of the “Faith and Practice” of the community of believers. Each individual’s practice needed to be held to an objective standard that was subject to accountability by the church as a corporate community. In other words, Manning’s theological shift necessitated a reassessment of the local church. Having rejected the New Dispensation with its hyper-individualism, Manning also began rethinking his Allinite ecclesiology. Over the course of the next few months three discernable ecclesiological shifts resulted: Manning’s ordination, his baptism by immersion, and his becoming a convinced Baptist.

189 Saunders, speaking of the New Dispensation, says, “these deluded people would not take the Scriptures alone for their guide and authority in matters of faith and practice. The Holy Spirit’s revelations to them, they asserted, were even superior to the teachings of the Bible,” see his History of the Baptists, 84. Goodwin’s suggestion of a more “orderly faith” for Manning is certainly true. He came to see his earlier position as “a corrupt system.” Goodwin, Into Deep Waters, 104, 268.
Edward Manning’s New Light Congregational Ordination. During this period Edward Manning assumed the pastoral leadership of the deeply conflicted Cornwallis church formerly led by John Payzant. Problems soon arose over Manning’s connection to the New Dispensation. A significant question presented itself: Manning was not properly ordained. This would prove challenging and only corrected after he publicly confirmed his unqualified commitment to the church’s articles of faith and order. This established to many that Manning was now willing to own and submit to ecclesiastical documents and scriptural authority, although, Payzant averred, “some Scrupled his Sincereity.” Despite some opposition, on October 19, 1795, Edward Manning was formally ordained. John Payzant preached the ordination sermon and “Mr. Harding gave the charge Mr. Dimock the Right hand of fellowships.” The following Lord’s Day, October 25, the Cornwallis church celebrated the Lord’s Supper. Though ordained and settled as pastor over the Cornwallis Church, Manning faced further reforms.190

Edward Manning’s Baptism by Immersion. The next key event in Manning’s move towards Baptist principles came in 1797. Hoping to find a way to further distinguish themselves from the more radical elements of the New Dispensation (Harris Harding continued to push his more extreme theology and practice), Payzant suggested to Manning that they establish an “association . . . [which] Should be Sound, as Relating to their doctrine and practice.” The two called a meeting with James Manning and Thomas Handley Chipman at Cornwallis and on July 12, 1797 they agreed on a plan to “walk together in fellowship as ministers of Jesus Christ.” They scheduled the first meeting of “The Nova Scotia Association, Congregational and Baptist” for June 1798. The association’s goal was to provide a publicly identifiable form of accountability.

190 Payzant, Journal, 71-72. Payzant’s journal shows how tumultuous these times were, not just within the churches but among the leaders as well.
This would ensure conceptual distance from the enthusiasm of the New Dispensation, including the practical and theological errors propagated by Harding, and provide a more orderly management of affairs between the represented churches.\textsuperscript{191}

Their goal was realized in June 1798 as the “Nova Scotia Association” was formally constituted. Along with Payzant, the two Manning brothers, and T. H. Chipman, Harris Harding was in attendance. He apparently desired to be restored to the fellowship of the churches represented, and after making due confession and expressing repentance for his moral lapse was admitted.\textsuperscript{192} It was further noted that Chipman’s congregation had divided into two churches, thus expanding the church base of the Association. James Manning would take pastoral charge of the new church.\textsuperscript{193}

The infant mixed Congregational and Baptist Association proved important for the Baptist cause in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick for two main reasons. First, it would become the first solely Baptist association in the Maritimes after a turbulent transformation, which will receive close attention below. Second, it provided the catalyst for Edward Manning to become a convinced Baptist. Before this could happen, Manning needed to reassess the subject of baptism, for as an Allininte, the ordinance had little significance.

\textsuperscript{191} Harding, according to Payzant, held that man had “two natures that [of] God & [of] the Divel. And therefore it was impossible for God to fall; and for the Divel to be saved.” This opened the door for the antinomianism that engulfed the movement. Payzant quipped in his journal that Harding’s sexual misconduct “showed the effect of the new wonderful opinion that was so admired.” Ibid., 73-74. Not suprisingly, most of this period of Harding’s life is passed over in silence in John Davis, \textit{Patriarch of Western Nova Scotia: The Life and Times of the Late Rev. Harris Harding} (Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island: Compiler, 1866). Also see Payzant, \textit{Journal}, 75-77; Saunders, \textit{History of the Baptists}, 84-85; Bell, \textit{The Newlight Baptist Journals}, 18.

\textsuperscript{192} George Rawlyk suggests that Harding may have been innocent of the sexual accusation and “trapped into marriage by a scheming Hetty Harrington.” While conceivable, it is difficult to imagine that Harris would have married the young woman, moving to Yarmouth, and leaving the ministry for a time to take up teaching were the accusations not valid. George A. Rawlyk, “From New Light to Baptist: Harris Harding and the Second Great Awakening in Nova Scotia” in \textit{Repent and Believe: The Baptist Experience in Atlantic Canada}, ed. Barry Moody (Hantsport, Nova Scotia: Lancelot Press, 1980), 18.

\textsuperscript{193} Saunders, \textit{History of the Baptists}, 85-86. Harding’s confession was recorded in Payzant, \textit{Journal}, 76-77. Payzant noted that Harding found it difficult to give up his antinomianism and continued to teach strange doctrines.
Manning’s reevaluation likely began around 1795. According to historian David Bell, the “series of ministerial immersions that laid the basis for a distinct Baptist party began in 1795 with Joseph Crandall.” Crandall had settled in Chester, Nova Scotia, in August 1795 and joined Joseph Dimock’s church; his baptism followed in the autumn. Daniel Goodwin affirms that this was the same year that Edward Manning began to have concerns over the mode of baptism, another sign that the Allinite indifference to the order and ordinances of the church was becoming increasingly problematic for some of his followers. Two years later Edward’s brother James Manning was baptized by immersion.

The final move for Edward Manning came after witnessing a baptismal service following the ministerial meeting in June 1798. He appears to have finally settled in his mind that Baptists were correct respecting both the mode and proper recipients of baptism. As he later reminisced:

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

The shift from indifference respecting the ordinances after the Allinite fashion to the confession of baptism as a “sacred rite” and the now avowed commitment to the immersion of believers

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194 Bell, *The Newlight Baptist Journals*, 20. Crandall records that he was baptized by immersion as a result of a dream one Sabbath morning. J. M. Burnsted, “The Autobiography of Joseph Crandall,” *Acadiensis* 3, no. 1 (1973): 84. In spite of Bell’s classifying him as the beginning of “ministerial immersions,” it does not seem that Crandall had yet entered the ministry, although he claims to have exhorted others in Joseph Dimock’s congregation. One wonders if the issue of baptism by immersion had been encouraged by Dimock, whose father had been a Baptist elder. Whatever the case, Dimock did not join the Baptist Association for some years after its formation.

195 Goodwin, *Into Deep Waters*, 104. Goodwin notes that there is some disagreement as to whether Manning was baptized in 1797 or 1798 (269, n. 37). Barry Moody and David Bell suggest 1798, while Goodwin and J. M. Cramp opt for 1797. The primary sources are scant, and I have not found sufficient evidence to confirm either year definitively. See ibid., 268, n. 37; Bell, *The Newlight Baptist Journals*, 20.

alone nearly completed Edward’s personal pilgrimage into the Baptist ranks. His own immersionist baptism followed, and Manning returned to his own mixed-communion Cornwallis Church, theologically, at least, now a New Light Baptist.

**Conclusion**

The Baptist nature of the kingdom of God clearly gained force in the mind of Edward Manning and several others among the Allinite churches of Nova Scotia. When Manning reversed his position on private revelation, other theological dominoes began to fall. With his baptism by immersion, most of them had toppled.

As noted above, when Manning confessed scripture alone to be the foundation of “Faith and Practice” he simultaneously confessed Christ as “Lawgiver and King.” The double kingdom implications of this confession should not be overlooked. The first respects Christ’s position in Manning’s theology. Christ is “King,” thus, he ruled directly and not via the arm of the civil magistrate. Second, as lawgiver he was the kingdom’s legislator. Alline’s earlier approach to ministry, with its almost exclusive focus on personal conversion, had a problematic reliance on the individual narrative. In several instances this unqualified emphasis on the individual’s internal experience of God proved untestable and irrefutable. The excesses of the New Dispensation were hardly unpredictable and built from this flaw. As historian David Bell acknowledges, “the subversive implications of Alline’s teaching were apparent to some Newlights even during his lifetime.”

When Manning confessed Christ as “Lawgiver,” he rejected the New Dispensation theology of men like Harding (who at least in the late 1790s believed sin could not affect the

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197 Bell offers this based on the 1780 letter of William West that reflected on Alline’s followers’ rejection of “the Scriptures” as “the only Rule of Faith and Practice,” see *The Newlight Baptist Journals*, 15.
believer’s spirit). He also rejected the extreme antinomianism of Lunt and Woodstock in New Brunswick, who entirely disallowed the authority of the moral law. According to the New Dispensation, ethical boundaries, especially those respecting sexual behavior, no longer held sway. It is hard to imagine Manning confessing Christ as Lawgiver of a lawless kingdom. Manning recognized that Christ, the Lawgiver, ruled an orderly kingdom from his throne as king via the scriptures alone.

A second important factor stemming from Manning’s confession was the realization that the kingdom of God was more than a conglomeration of converts. Christ’s kingdom was intended to be expressed in ordered churches. The emphasis of Alline and his followers on conversions was not abandoned, Manning preached that end for the remainder of his life. However, Manning’s ecclesiology matured as he began to think more carefully about the rule of the Lawgiver over his gathered subjects in local churches. If the New Dispensation was an almost predictable result of Alline’s narrow focus on the kingdom of God in individualistic terms, it is hardly a surprise that Manning’s rejection of extreme individualism and antinomianism would subsequently result in a more intentional ecclesiology as the corporate expression of the kingdom of God came into sharper focus.

Finally, if the path to the New Dispensation came through at least an under-emphasis on the authority of scripture for faith and practice and the necessity of properly ordered churches, especially with respect to membership and the sacraments, then Manning’s recovery of the primacy of scripture had the opposite ramifications. Rejecting the New Dispensation on the grounds of Christ as lawgiver and king ultimately meant that Manning’s alignment with Allinitism was coming to an end.
Manning later reminisced about his days as a mixed-communion Allinite New Light and the break signaled by his adoption of immersionist baptism in the 1790s. On a couple of “cold” late November days in 1820 Manning was reading former Nova Scotia Congregationalist Jonathan Scott on Henry Alline’s theological assertions and the Allinite revivals of the 1770s and early 1780s. Scott was the settled pastor in Yarmouth and met Alline when the young itinerant arrived unannounced among Scott’s congregants one Sunday. Scott witnessed disruptions in his own congregation as a result. As a convinced Congregationalist in 1784, Scott took up his pen to address the theological aberrations of Alline and the practical havoc he stirred up in the settled churches of Nova Scotia. As Manning noted in his journal;

Nov. 27, 1820 . . . Have been reading Mr. Scott against Mr. H[enry] Alline. Scott is in the right, and A[lline] of course is in the wrong . . . Nov. 28, 1820. Spent this day pretty much in reading Mr. Scott’s publication. Poor man, he had much affliction on account of Mr. Alline. Mr. A[lline] was very erroneous, but I hope is gone to his rest, but his errors did not die with him. NO, they live to the Sorrow of many, and me among the rest.

More than twenty years after his becoming a New Light Baptist Manning still opined over those he deemed tinged with “the old leven of Allinitism.”

The theological shift from New Light Allinite to Regular Baptist invigorated Manning, and he helped to stoke revival fires across the province as he, and others, returned to their

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congregations. Revivals were burning in Maine as well in 1799, and Isaac Case was at the heart of the work. As the Two Kingdom theology of the Baptists spread, Manning in Nova Scotia, like Isaac Case in Maine, shared four major characteristics.

The first was the importance of pastoral oversight in their settled congregations. Manning did not embrace closed-communion Baptist practices for a few years yet, but he clearly moved in that direction. We will look more closely at this later, and especially at how Case was partially responsible for Manning’s change. For now, Manning, like other settled ministers, would need to address more specifically the discipline of his own congregation. If the church was the expression of the kingdom of God on earth, as the Baptists believed, the ordained leadership of the churches, and not the civil magistrate, had to oversee the discipline this kingdom required. Rejecting state oversight, however, did not mean an individualistic free-for-all. The church leadership and its members jointly owned the responsibility to maintain order and discipline. This was not a strength of Allinite ministers, nor the churches that they gathered. In fact, they seemed, at times, more effective at disrupting the discipline than overseeing or maintaining it. This task would tax and challenge Manning.

The second characteristic shared by Manning and Case was the continuation of their robust itinerant evangelism even as settled pastors. Their field was not delimited by civil geography, as historian Shelby Balik has ably proven. The kingdom would expand through the

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201 The Nova Scotia revivals were reported by two Nova Scotia preachers, one Rev. J. D. and Rev. T. H. C., presumably Joseph Dimock and Thomas Handley Chipman, in letters to “a friend” in Boston in mid-1799. The Maine revivals were reported on Deer Isle, Mount Desert, and among the Baptists in Bowdoinham. See, Thomas Baldwin [attributed], A Brief Account of the Late Revivals of Religion in a Number of Towns in the New-England States, and Also in Nova-Scotia (Boston: Manning & Loring, 1799), 15-25. These revivals excited the interest of the Baptists in many regions as the pamphlet had at least 10 printings, not just in New England and Nova Scotia, but also in New York, New Jersey, England, and Scotland.

202 Balik, Rally the Scattered Believers.
preaching of the gospel by ordained Baptists. Their robust peripatetic pastorates continually spread the Baptist faith into newly settled regions.

While examples of this abound among Maine Baptists, Manning provides a fitting Nova Scotia example. I. E. Bill gives a firsthand account of Manning’s peripatetic pastoral ministry in somewhat flowery language:

The pastoral work of Father Manning extended to every nook and corner of Cornwallis, that garden of our Dominion. Over mountain 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 . . . But while Father Manning retained his pastorate over the First Cornwallis Church until he went up to join the Church triumphant, he did not, so long as he was able to travel, confine his labours to Cornwallis; but extended them, as opportunity offered, to various sections of all the Maritime Provinces and beyond.203

Joanna Case Haynes made a similar observation of her grandfather. Whereas Manning transitioned from itinerant evangelist to settled pastor, Isaac Case moved to a life of itinerant evangelism after almost two decades of pastoral ministry in Thomaston and Readfield. Speaking of her grandfather after having read his journal, Joanna commented that it,

contain[ed] a detailed account of his journeys through the wild woods of Maine, Vermont, and the Provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, often traveling for days where not a single habitation could be found, guided only by spotted trees, as there were no roads in those days. I have wondered as I have read these pages that any man could go through the privations he endured, the hardships he encountered, for weeks and months absent from his family, unable to obtain any intelligence from them.204

Joanna’s familial embellishments aside, the prominence of Baptist itinerant preaching in the northeastern regions of New England and the Maritime provinces of Canada cannot be missed.

203 Ibid., 4; Bill, Fifty Years with the Baptist Ministers and Churches of the Maritime Provinces of Canada, 131-32.
204 This appears to be an address by Haynes to those present at Colby College upon her donation of the Isaac Case Papers to that institution. Joanna Case Haynes, “Address” (1895) in Isaac Case Papers, Colby College, Special Collections.
Manning and Case itinerated throughout their ministerial lives until age and infirmity prohibited it. The primary place they held as a result of more than half a century of labor among the Baptists in the northeast is indicated by each being referred to by the title “Father.” Manning and Case shared a common Baptist identity rooted in Two Kingdoms theology and their parallel itinerant preaching was an important engine for its expansion.\footnote{On Father Case, see footnote 15 above. Burrage’s \textit{History of the Baptists in Maine} indicates that no other early Baptist in Maine was afforded this designation.}
CHAPTER 4

THE KINGDOM CONSOLIDATED:
ESTABLISHING CLOSED COMMUNION BAPTIST CHURCHES

I have had occasion to baptize 82 persons since I came to this
town, and there are a number more I trust will be soon. The
brethren hear have embodies themselves into a church in the
baptist order. I trust the Lord hath done this for his own glory, &
oh! that the Lord would water them with the dow [dew] of heaven!

--Letter from Isaac Case to James Lovel, June 22, 1784

In the summer of 1782, Rev. Nathaniel Lord of Wells, Maine, was itinerating in the
vicinity of Brunswick. After preaching two sermons in Potterstown (now Bowdoin) he was
questioned as to his Baptist affiliation by James Potter, a prominent resident of the town.
According to Potter, Lord “was the first Baptist we had seen or heard.” Potter came to
experience the effects of the revival then stirring in the region. Following what he described as
“the tradition,” he had joined the Congregational Church in Harpswell the previous year, but
found it spiritually disappointing;

I went to Harpswell, where was a congregational church, and had conversation
with the minister: he informed me that their communion season would be in a
month, when I should be propounded, and then to attend: I did so, and expected
he would question me concerning my hope and faith, but he did not. I paid
attention to the sermon, but was so confused in mind that I had no satisfaction.
Before he broke bread, he requested me to come forward; I went into the broad
isle, expecting to be questioned concerning my standing and faith, but was not.
The minister read the covenant, to which I assented, and then took my seat. I
partook with them, but felt neither union nor fellowship. In this duty I neither
prayed nor searched the scriptures, but followed the tradition which I had been
taught from my youth up. I afterward saw the minister, and told him there were

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206 Potter was born in Brunswick, February 22, 1734. James Potter, Narration of the Experience, Travels and
Labours of Elder James Potter (Boston: Lincoln & Edmands, 1813), 13.

207 Potter’s name was entered in the church records by Eaton with his frustration unnoted. Harpswell Congregational
Church, “Harpswell, Maine - Congregational Church Records 1764-1821” in Miscellaneous Manuscript Collection,
Bowdoin College, Special Collections. Potter acknowledged that there were only two Congregational churches in
Bowdoin the area when he joined Harpswell, presumably the other was First Parish Church of Brunswick. Why
Potter chose Harpswell over a slightly closer option is unknown.
many things in that church which I could not fellowship, and must decline further communion, till I was better satisfied.\textsuperscript{208} Potter’s frustration reflects the struggles that led many revival converts to embrace the evangelical preaching of itinerants like Nathaniel Lord and Isaac Case.

Finding a church to join in the northeastern borderlands often proved challenging for various reasons. Many communities lacked churches, especially as settlers moved inland from the coast. This frequently left settlers ripe to the attractions of dissenting groups that moved into the interior more quickly than Standing Order churches. When converts experienced “reformation,” many, like Potter, if they were to have any church association at all, were forced to travel long distances on the Lord’s Day for worship and communion. For Potter, the distance was not prohibitive, but it was substantial.\textsuperscript{209}

Traveling long distances to settled churches was not the only challenge new converts confronted. Potter’s dissatisfying experience was also ecclesiastical. Historian Calvin Montague Clark notes that almost all the Congregational churches in Maine at this time were modeled after the Half-Way Covenant. When Potter joined the Harpswell church in November 1781, he experienced this firsthand. At a subsequent meeting with Rev. Eaton and some other “brethren” Potter confessed his dissatisfaction, “I said I could not see any warrant in scripture, or their own platform, to baptize unbeliever’s children . . . I then asked them by what rule they received unregenerate persons into the church.” Upon further scriptural reflection, Potter’s objections to the New England Way rejected both the subjects and mode of baptism practiced in Harpswell. When he expressed his disapproval of the entire practice of infant baptism and baptism by

\textsuperscript{208} Potter, \textit{Narration}, 14.
\textsuperscript{209} The revival literature of the period frequently uses the term reformation to describe the rapid religious changes taking place, individually and regionally. It is essentially synonymous with the term revival when used regionally and a description of personal renewal or awakening when used individually.
sprinkling, “they cried out, it is the Baptist delusion.” Despite reading the church’s recommended “books” on infant baptism, his connection with this church ended when he was “confirmed in believer’s baptism.”

Potter’s commitment to Baptist principles was sealed by his conversation with Rev. Nathaniel Lord that summer day in 1782. Potter recounted the substance of the exchange in his 1813 Narration. After inquiring about Lord’s identification as a Baptist, Potter described his own convictions “concerning the faith and order of the primitive church of Christ.” Lord replied that if these statements were true, Potter should also consider himself a Baptist. In the spring of 1782 Potter began itinerant preaching to the consternation of the Congregational clergy as he was “without license or recommendation.” He took advantage of his membership in the Harpswell church to give him “freer access,” assumingly to Congregational pulpits, finding open doors where they might otherwise have been closed.

When Isaac Case arrived in Brunswick, Maine, in fall 1783, he had already heard of Potter through a letter by Job Macomber read to him by Isaac Backus. While preaching in the New Meadows area of Brunswick he crossed paths with Potter at the home of Samuel Woodward, and they began to labor together over the next several months. Despite his Baptist

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210 Clark, History of the Congregational Churches in Maine, Vol. 2, 227. Potter, Narration, 15. When Potter mentions “their own platform” he is using language typical of Congregational polity. Particularly this refers to the Cambridge Platform, the fruit of the synod held in Cambridge, Massachusetts from 1646-48. Potter may also have been referencing the Halfway Covenant of 1662, but the latter seems less likely as he rejected the entire doctrine of infant baptism, not just the Half-way Covenant’s modifications to the ordinance. On the Platforms of Congregationalism see esp., Walker, The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism.

211 Potter, Narration, 17.

212 Ibid., 17-18.

213 Samuel Woodard, whom Millet calls “among the first [Baptists] at Brunswick,” was the Baptist pastor in East Brunswick from 1792 to 1801, after which he resigned, but remained an active member of the congregation until his death in 1831. Millet, A History of the Baptists in Maine, 460; George Augustus Wheeler and Henry Warren Wheeler, History of Brunswick, Topsham, and Harpswell, Maine, Including the Ancient Territory Known as Pejepscot (Boston, Somersworth: A. Mudge & Son, Printers; Reprint, New Hampshire Publishing Co., 1878, 1974 Reprint), 378.
convictions, Potter had not yet been baptized, nor does it appear that he was administering the ordinance among converts in Bowdoin or elsewhere. Neither Potter nor Case record the event, but it appears that Case discussed this with Potter. Noting in his diary:

Brother potter sees duty to Be Baptized and I Believe that he will as soon as he... heave an oppertunity to talk with Mr Etan and the Church. He saith the Lord show him Duty to Cumout from amongst them for he seese that sprinkling is the inventions of men and oh that others might have their Eyes open also.  

The fruit of Case’s co-laboring with Potter would not fully ripen for almost two years. On January 20, 1785, the Baptist Church in Harpswell was organized at New Meadows, and Potter was ordained over the church in October “with liberty to travel.”

Two things in Case’s November 19 diary entry are important for this study. First, Potter is the initial preacher that Case, at least in part, converted to Baptist principles. If the kingdom of God was to expand, it would require gathering converts into properly ordered churches and raising up pastors and preachers to fill the pulpits of the new churches. Several future Baptist pastors would come over from the ranks of Congregationalists, including many who were already active in preaching and pastoring.

Second, Case’s comments reflect his desire to see the kingdom furthered by the establishment of closed communion Baptist churches. It is not that Potter was hesitant in his conviction of believer’s baptism, but for some time he appears to have held that view within the

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214 Case, “Diary, 1783-1829,” November 19, 1783. Millet claims Potter was baptized sometime between January and October of 1785 but provides no source for the assertion. Case’s diary for this period has been lost but it appears to have been available to Millet. Burrage notes the silence over Potter’s baptism and references the short history of the Bowdoinham Association written by Rev. E. S. Small who asserts “one can hardly...believe that the ordinance had been omitted by such unflinching Baptists as these were.” Millet, A History of the Baptists in Maine, 100; Burrage, History of the Baptists in Maine, 87. Burrage’s quotation from Small is found in Edwin Sumner Small, A Centennial Review of the Bowdoinham Association of Baptist Churches in Maine: Delivered at the One Hundredth Anniversary Meeting at Bowdoinham, Sept. 13, 1887 (Portland, Maine: B. Thurston, 1887), 9. It may be that Millet’s reference to Potter’s baptism is an inference similar to Small’s.

215 Potter, Narration, 25. By liberty to travel Potter was ensuring that he could continue to itinerate throughout the region thus joining the peripatetic practices so common among the Regular Baptist pastorates.
communion of the Congregational church. Whether this was simply a pragmatic position to access Congregational pulpits and congregants as he itinerated in the area seems likely. But Case soon saw the need to “cumout” from the Harpswell church and join fully with the Baptists. It was not enough to seek the conversion of sinners, the kingdom necessitated establishing churches not married to the civil magistrate nor marred by unbelieving members. The kingdom was made up of churches, not simply converts. This chapter moves beyond Potter to look more closely at the expansion of the kingdom that he introduces through the formal organization of Regular Baptist closed communion churches in Maine and Nova Scotia.

**Kingdom Expansion in Maine: Establishing Baptist Churches**

The “reformation” of the 1780s described by James Potter spread throughout the region around Brunswick, fueled by an onslaught of itinerant preachers crisscrossing the region. For example, Potter himself had been influenced by the itinerancy of the Regular Baptist Rev. Nathaniel Lord of Wells. Hezekiah Smith also preached in the region and was instrumental in helping to form the Baptist Church in New Gloucester.²¹⁶ Only two days after arriving in Brunswick, Isaac Case was directed to a meeting at the Harpswell meetinghouse. He recorded the challenge of his nighttime arrival in his diary, but also noted another Regular Baptist itinerant in the area.

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From that we went on our way the dark throw the woods the trees were Blown down Across the path and the way was very wet and muddy got to the Meating about the time that it Began I was allmost surprised to see somany people together found old Brother Emerson from Duglass he had apointed to preach but as I was there he desired that [I] wold preach to the people I atempted to from Isa 45:22.217

Case mentions others preaching around Brunswick that autumn as well. The first week of November he heard Freewill Baptist founder “Brother Randall” preach. Later that month he crossed paths with two other Freewill Baptist itinerants, a “Mr. Hibbard and Mr. Tingly.” He witnessed the last two perform a baptism that he deemed irregular; “I don’[t] see throw Mr Hibbard Meathod of Baptizing he only Baptises in the Name of the lord Jeasus.”218 Job Macomber had moved to Bowdoinham and had been preaching in the area, although he was in New Gloucester when Case first visited Bowdoinham on November 22, 1783.219 He also mentions that “Brother Emerson,” the local settled minister at Georgetown, itinerated actively in the area. Emerson, a graduate of Princeton, appears to have been one of the few New Light Congregationalist preachers in Maine and likely did not adhere to the Half-Way Covenant.220

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217 Case, “Diary,” October 23, 1783. Case met “Old Brother Emerson” earlier in 1783 while the two were preaching in New Providence, Massachusetts, a community in the present town of Cheshire, Massachusetts. It had a thriving Baptist community.

218 Daniel Hibbard appears to have been a Regular Baptist, who, like Benjamin Randall, gave up his Calvinism and joined the Freewill Baptists. Tingley was a Congregationalist who also joined the Freewill Baptists. The two pastored in New Gloucester, where Job Macomber first settled upon coming to Maine. It may be that the refusal of Backus and others in Middleboro to ordain Macomber in 1782 at the request of the New Gloucester Baptists (noted above) was due to its Freewill leanings. During this period the Shakers also gained a foothold in New Gloucester. It was, to say the least, a religiously diverse, if not divided, community. For more on the New Gloucester, see Burrage, History of the Baptists in Maine, 98-100; Marini, “Religious Revolution in the District of Maine,” 118-45, especially 130-135. Macomber left New Gloucester and settled in Bowdoinham in 1783. On Hibbard and Tingley, see Stewart, The History of the Freewill Baptists for Half a Century, I, 50-52. Case’s objection to Hibbard’s baptismal practice would be his failure to use a Trinitarian formula when performing the ordinance.

219 Case, “Diary.”

220 My assumption that Emerson was a New Light Congregationalist stems from two factors. First, he was a graduate of Princeton in 1763, when it was considered a New Light school. Second, Case positively notes that he “preached as of [if?] he knew the truth.” On Emerson, see Jonathan Greenleaf, Sketches of the Ecclesiastical History of the State of Maine, from the Earliest Settlement to the Present Time (Portsmouth New Hampshire: H. Gray, 1821), 79-81; Maine Historical Society, Collections of the Maine Historical Society, VI (Portland, Maine: Published by the Society, 1895), 312-14. Case, “Diary,” October 31, 1783.
By the time Case headed farther east on January 24, 1784, he had not only crossed paths with several itinerants during his three-month ministry, he also listened to many converts relate their experiences. He summarized his final few weeks around Brunswick:

I have Ben for this twenty one days visited several parts with sum satisfaction of mind. I find the Lord works Like his self in these parts aspecially on Sabascodegan Island in the town of Harpsweel. I Believe there is Near seventy that haith Ben Converted to god with in one year. They seame Rejoicing in the Lord. Their Conversation is upon Heavenly things. It seams wonderful to hear such Language Cumout of the mouths of such Children Mouths. Oh the wonderful work of god in this place. Oh that the Lord keep his Children in his fear that they Might Adorn their profession By living near to him. Even so Lord Jesus Amen and Amen

Case not only left with the knowledge of conversions under his preaching, he headed “down eastward” with two local “Brethren” including James Potter.

The magnitude of the revival in the Brunswick area highlights that Case’s Two Kingdom theology required more than simply bringing residents to saving faith. They were not properly in the kingdom until they had been baptized by immersion upon a profession of faith and subsequently gathered into local churches. Furthermore, not all who professed Christ under Case’s and Potter’s itinerant ministry embraced their Baptist distinctives (the doctrinal struggles in New Gloucester show this), but many did. Two Kingdom theology required those who came to saving faith to be properly baptized and gathered into Baptist churches to enter fully into the kingdom of Christ. Apparently the “near seventy” converts in and around Brunswick were not yet ready for this final step. Many had been baptized, but Case made no move to formulate a Regular Baptist church at this juncture, though he would soon return for this purpose.

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221 Case, “Diary.”
222 Potter, Narration, 21.
223 There was no Regular Baptist church in the Brunswick area when Case arrived in 1783, yet there were Freewill Baptist churches formed in Woolwich, Squam Island, and Georgetown between 1781 and 1783. Their strength is
The Regular Baptist theology of baptism was not unheard of on the northeastern frontier when Isaac Case began preaching in Maine, but it was, as James Potter revealed, uncommon. Two major factors contributed to its acceptance among converts at this time. The first was their agreement with the biblical justification for the practice of the ordinance. The second was the powerful way that Baptist practice illustrated and buttressed their theology.

We will look closer at the vital issue of Baptists’ apologetic defense of believer’s only baptism in the northeast in a later chapter, but first we will examine the particular sequence respecting the fit subjects of baptism and a specific mode of baptism as biblically mandated. The failure to observe both carefully would make baptism null and void to Regular Baptists. Potter expressed this realization in his *Narration*,

I went into the house, took the New Testament, and sat down in a room by myself, opened to and began to read the eighth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. I read till I came to these words, “here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?” I was stopped here, but had no opening of the passage in my mind. I prayed to God to enlighten my understanding to receive instruction, and that he would open and reveal to me his will and my duty by his word. I began the chapter again, and read to these words “if thou believest thou mayest.” In a moment my eyes, and understanding, were opened to behold things in a different light. I saw myself unbaptized, and all others, who were not baptized by immersion upon a profession of faith.²²⁴

Potter had a profound personal experience when he came to the realization that biblical baptism, as he now understood it, required close attention to both the regeneration of the subjects of

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baptism and the mode by which it was performed. Regeneration must precede baptism, and the mode must be by immersion.

Potter was “disappointed” when others in the Congregational Church did not share his newfound commitment. In fact, he tasted firsthand how disruptive the Baptist theology and practice could be when they declared that he was “deluded.” Others would experience similar castigation, for example, when Isaac Case began to lead new converts to the ordinance.

On November 4, 1783 in Harpswell, Maine, Case performed his first baptism as an ordained Regular Baptist. His diary captured the essentials,

Met at the Meating House for Aday of prayes to almighty god. There was Agreate Number of people Met. Spent the fore Noon in prayer and Exertation and in the after noon I preacht Asarmon to them and after wards there was Awoman told hur Experance gave satisfaction and was Baptized. She is the first that Ever was Baptized on this Island and the first that I Baptized. I found Agreate Blessing in the following Christ in the ordennence.225

As Case continued preaching in Harpswell he came across several individuals from Potterstown who experienced conversion in the previous months and requested that he go there and administer the ordinance of baptism. It was a clear sign of how much the Baptist itinerants had successfully propagated their theology in the region. After acquiescing to their desire, Case noted “three parsons told their Experience and was Baptized.” This brought the number of baptized converts in Potterstown to fifteen, although they were not all in agreement over other doctrines. From there he “went to little River whare thee Lord gave me greate fredom in preaching the truth two men told their Experence gave satisfaction and was Baptized.” He then made his way to

225 Case, “Diary.”
Bowdoinham and again was implored by several new converts to baptize them. It proved tumultuous.²²⁶

Bordingham Munday Nov 24 [1783] Rose up in the Morning Meaning to go out of the place But Sister Broker Came in and said that I was not agoing away hur Husband Ment to Be Baptized. so I concluded to stay and the people Came together and Not only he But six man to[ld] their Experience, five was Resieved one gave No satisfaction the rest were Baptizd and after we came up from the water one woman seamd to have it so imprest upon Hur mind that she told what the Lord had dun for hur sole. she gave greate satisfaction and was Baptized also. I understand that there haith Ben 23 Before Now. one I understood man seamd to Be in a Drunful Rage About his wife Being Baptized Declard that He would Kill himself if she was. one of the Brethren went into his house and the man said that he wished that the Baptis was kept under water. But we had Ameating to his house and he seamd to Be sumthing struck and said that he was Apoor Creature and Desired we wold pray for him oh that god wold Bring him to know the truth for Christs sake.²²⁷

The first significance of these exercises is to illustrate the proper subjects of baptism from a Baptist perspective. As the various candidates came forward for baptism, they were required to relate their conversion “experience.” They needed to satisfy the other converts present that the experience was genuine. The aim was to weed out those who were counterfeit or otherwise under concern, but, in the mind of the converts, had not fully “cumout.” In Bowdoinham five of the six were successful in convincing the others of the genuineness of their conversion experience, but one did not. The importance is that the process combined the subjective experience of conversion with the objective assessment of the experience by the believing community. There was nothing like this among the paedobaptist churches in the area. Relating their conversion experience to the church community was new for almost all of those present.

²²⁶ Case, “Diary,” November 15, 19, 1783.
²²⁷ Case, “Diary.”
While baptism was an ordinance to which, from a Baptist perspective, the individual was duty bound to submit after they experienced regeneration, it was also a corporate exercise for the body of believers to detect counterfeits. A defensible experience of conversion was a prerequisite to the ordinance. The responsibility for this oversight lay with the entire believing community. The minister did not have individual authority here, he acted as part of the local community of faith. This is one of the reasons Daniel Merrill referred to the community of faith as a “Gospel Republic.” The kingdom of heaven was not in the hands of the magistrate nor the Standing Order clergy, it was restricted to the believing community.228

The second point the Bowdoinham baptism illustrates is how domestically and socially disruptive the baptism of new believers could become. This would be repeated time and again as converts came to the water. When Case and Potter proceeded to Thomaston in late January 1784, a number were brought to conversion. In June, Case recounted the fruits of their labor there in a letter to brother James Lovel of Barnstable, Massachusetts,

I have had occasion to baptize 82 persons since I came to this town, and there are a number more I trust will be soon. The brethren hear have embodies themselves into a church in the baptist order. I trust the Lord hath done this for his own glory, & oh! that the Lord would water them with the dow of heaven.229

Case did not to recount in the letter how troublesome the baptismal service could be. For this, we turn to his diary:

Thomaston sunday May 23 [1784] Met M’ Robins Barn there was Alarge number of people. Preacht two sarmons, there was six peersons Resieval to baptism and had the ordinense administered to them. There was one man at the water (A ship carpender) made Disturbance he made as tho he thought I was a going to Baptise his Brother again tho he had no Reason to think so. He onely Did it to Disturb

228 Merrill, The Gospel Rangers, 30.
the people. I told him I had no thoughts of Baptising him again. Go to hell then said he. One of the Brethren that was chosen wordeen by the town went to him
And Disired him to besivil. Mr. oaks said he would split his Branes out and Bipt [spit?] out an oath. But he was not promitted to hurt him. It gave me a sight of what man is by Nature. But we was inabled to Adminis
ter the ordenence in Deasence and in order.\textsuperscript{230}

Believer’s only baptism could be deeply unsettling to the family and the community.

On the other end of the spectrum, however, believer’s baptism powerfully exemplified proper practice as it appeared in the New Testament. Potter referenced Acts 8, a favorite text for Baptists, in which an Ethiopian eunuch was baptized by the apostolic delegate Philip from Jerusalem. The connection between the scriptural example and the Baptist practice was crystal clear for many and a source of strength for Baptists.

London Particular Baptist minister John Gill exemplifies how a Baptist would address this text, and his commentaries were valued by American Baptists. As to the prerequisite of regeneration for baptism, Gill commented on Acts 8:

\begin{quote}
\textit{And the eunuch said, see here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?} This question shows, that he had some knowledge of the ordinance of baptism, which he had received from the ministry and conversation of Philip; and that he had some desire after it, as regenerate persons have, after divine things, after Christ, his word, and ordinances; and that he was willing to take the first opportunity of submitting to it, but was jealous lest he should not be qualified for it; and therefore modestly proposes the affair to Philip, and desires to be examined and judged by him: and it also suggests, that there are some things which might be a just bar to this ordinance, as want of grace, and a disorderly life and conversation. . . . and these are sufficient ones, even though persons may be born in a Christian land, and of believing parents, and have had a good education; yea, though they may have much notional light and speculative knowledge: but where the good work of grace is begun, and when a soul is spiritually enlightened, and has evangelical repentance for sin, and true faith in Christ, and sincere love to him, nothing should hinder.\textsuperscript{231}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{230} Case, “Diary.”
As to immersion as the proper the mode of baptism, Gill further commented, quoting John Calvin to bolster his Baptist interpretation:

*And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him:* upon which Calvin has this note; “hence we see what was the manner of baptizing with the ancients, for they plunged the whole body into water.” And indeed, other mode had been practised then, as sprinkling or pouring of water, there would have been no necessity of their going out of the chariot.

According to Gill and the growing number of Baptists in the northeast, a plain reading of scripture testified to the baptism of believers only by immersion. When it came to the bodily practice of the biblical example, the Baptists made a persuasive case.

Since there were very few Baptist churches on the northeastern frontier in the 1780s, observing a Baptist baptismal service was extremely rare. Many had never witnessed such an event. Moreover, most settlers could not even remember their own baptism. Rather than undergo immersionist baptism as a professed believer, they had been sprinkled as newborn infants.

Likewise, the baptisms they would have witnessed would have taken place in the meeting house by a paedobaptist minister, who would simply sprinkle some water on the infant’s face or head. Many would have argued that visually this hardly stirring and verbally there was no profession of faith as modelled by the Ethiopian eunuch.

As Case noted, Baptist baptismal services often drew large crowds that gathered to witness the spectacle. Some occasionally came to jeer and disrupt the service, others assembled

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to satisfy their curiosity. But it seems that many were genuinely interested, even intrigued, by the
whole event. Whatever the reasons that an audience gathered, the power of witnessing the
physical ritual and communal event was an important dimension of Baptist expansion in this
period.233

Henry Hale, a Baptist evangelist in Maine and the Maritime provinces of British North
America in the early 1800s, noted the effects a baptismal service could provoke from spectators.

Saturday [June]13 [1807]. In the afternoon, met in conference and examined
candidates for Baptism. Twelve came forward and gave evidence of a work of
grace in their souls.Lord’s-day [June] 14. Preached at Br. Davises, in the forenoon
fr Ps. 79. 17. In the intermission two came forward and gave evidence of having
passed from death unto life. In the afternoon preached fr John 10. 27. Met again at
5 o’ clock then went to the water and Baptised nine, this was a precious season,
some came out of the water praising God, and many spectators were in tears.234

Baptists were not above using performance to their advantage. Because they needed enough
water to immerse the candidate, they generally chose rivers, streams, or an ocean and settings
that could accommodate large audiences with good visibility; the baptism was to be witnessed.

At one baptismal service Hale noted “the spectators were very numerous.” At another service in
May 1810 in Carleton, New Brunswick (now part of Saint John), he recorded, “there were
between 1000 and 2000 spectators, many of them appeard solemn; but some mocked.” These
were opportunities for publicizing Baptist commitments far and wide.235

Perhaps the most powerful descriptions of believer’s baptism by immersion occurred
during the winter. Case’s first baptism in Thomaston is a fitting example.

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233 The literature recounting baptismal services by Baptists during this period are riddled with references to large
crowds. Baptists may have exaggerated the size of some crowds, but there is no reason to question that interest in
observing immersion spread beyond the Baptist fold. Isaac Case rarely supplied an exact count, but frequently
referenced that a “grate number” attended baptismal services.
235 Ibid.
thursday feb 26 [1784] Met at Brother [Elisha] Snow’s. Spent the forenoon in confering together. There were Eleven men and fore woman that gave satisfaction of a work of grace on thier soles Mr Green offered himself But was Not Resieved. Preacht a sarmon and then Baptized the Eleven men and the fore women. The Lord Asisted me in Body and mind. People were very solom and sum gratefully affected at the water. The people that was Baptised came out of the water praising god, it was asweet Day to anumber of soles.

Case specifically records that some were “grately affected at the water.” This must have been doubly so as New England waters in February are frigid! The devotion of the new converts and their ability to brave the cold and even to exit the water “praising god” must have had a powerful effect on witnesses.236

Winter baptisms highlighted another spiritual message beyond the expression of devotion by the new converts and the stamina of Baptist preachers. As Baptist ministers were quick to note, baptism was a symbol of union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. John Gill, commenting on the Book of Romans, noted particularly how baptism by immersion paralleled this spiritual reality.

*Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death,* - The nature and end of baptism are here expressed; the nature of it, it is a “burial”; and when the apostle so calls it, he manifestly refers to the ancient and only way of administering this ordinance, by immersion; when a person is covered, and as it were buried in water, as a corpse is when laid the earth, and covered with it: and it is a burial with Christ; it is a representation of the burial of Christ, and of our burial with him as our head and representative . . . for believers, whilst under water, are as persons buried, and so dead; *that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the father, even so we also should walk in newness of life . . .* and as baptism is designed to represent the resurrection of Christ, which is done by raising the person out of the water.237

Gill’s exposition of Romans 6 also appears in the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith, republished with two additions by the Philadelphia Association in 1742, and printed by Benjamin

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236 Case, “Diary.”
Regular Baptists frequently abridged or summarized these two confessions, and they were codified as proper Baptist practice. The Philadelphia Confession was also printed in Portland, Maine, in 1794. Article 30, *Of Baptism*, of both editions, stated:

Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, to be unto the party baptized, a sign of his fellowship with him, in his death and resurrection; of his being engrafted into him; of remission of sins; and of giving up into God, through Jesus Christ, to live and walk in newness of life.\(^{239}\)

The published Confessions also make specific reference to Romans 6 in the proof texts supplied with this article.

The biblical and theological reasoning behind the Baptist practice of immersion highlights the mutual reinforcement of practice and theology. Considering the association of baptism with Christ’s own death, burial, and resurrection, Case commented on more than one occasion about the power of a winter baptism. In January 1806, Case officiated at a baptism in Steuben, in far eastern Maine.

Wensday [January 15, 1806] continued stormey and cold - but anumber came from Dyres Bey about 3 m[iles] distance and related their Expearance with anumber more that gave Evidence of awork of grace. Thursday Jan, 16 1806 Baptised 9 persons, one was alittle garle abouts 12 years old and another about 14. What rendred the season more sollom than ushal, aplace was cut in the Ice which resembled a grave. The are [hour?] was very cold but the preasents of the Lord maid the season Delightful.\(^{240}\)

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\(^{239}\) The *Baptist Confession of Faith: First Put Forth in 1643; Afterwards Enlarged, Corrected and Published by an Assembly of Delegates (from the Churches in Great Britain) Met in London July 3, 1689; Adopted by the Association at Philadelphia September 22, 1742; and Now Received by Churches of the Same Denomination, in Most of the American States* (Portland, Maine: Thomas Baker Wait, 1794), 65. In the 1689 London Confession this is Article 29 with identical wording.

\(^{240}\) Case, “Diary.”
A few days later Case was in Eastern Bay, on the northeastern shore of Mt. Desert, and presided over another winter baptism.

Lords day [January 19, 1806] - the wather was very cold and blustering yet the people flockted to gether to hear the good word of the kingdom. [I p]reacht one sermon and then went [to the streeme that was clost by the school house where our meeting was whare aplace was prepard for the holy ordinance by cutting the Ice which was about afoot through- here six went into the lickwed grave and was buried with their Lord in Baptism- it was wonderful to see with what calmness composure and corage they went for ward. After shifting our cloths we returnd to the school house whare the Lords supper was sillebrated.241

Even when the water was not frozen and there was no need to cut a hole in the ice, Case frequently referred to the baptismal liquid as a “watery grave.”242

Before converts would be invited to undergo believer’s baptism, they needed to relate to the believing community the particulars of their salvation experience, to give “satisfaction” that they were genuinely united by faith to Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. This was both a subjective expression of an internal change and an objective expression of consent by the believing community. Having given “satisfaction,” they were invited to the waters of baptism by immersion, where the image presented by the ordinance outwardly mirrored their internal “experience” of regeneration. They were, however, only at the doors of the kingdom of God. A further step was still needed to fully bring them into the kingdom of God. They needed to be “gathered together” into properly ordered Regular Baptist churches. It is to this practice of gathering Regular Baptist churches that we turn next.

241 Ibid.
Gathering Believers into the Kingdom: Establishing Regular Baptist Churches

Standing Order churches on the frontier were dependent for their existence on two significant factors that derived from the marriage of church and state. The first was the need for civil authorities to establish parish boundaries, which included setting aside the lot where the meeting house would ultimately be built and earmarking the minister’s lot. It was a system that encumbered ecclesiastical growth since it had to follow civil development in most instances. It was also burdened with the need for emerging communities to gain enough stability to build a meeting house, a task that often took a back seat to other needs. Many meeting houses stood incomplete for considerable periods of time. This posed a significant practical barrier for the growth of the One Kingdom theology of established churches.

The second factor limiting the foundation of Standing Order churches was the challenge of attracting “learned” ministerial candidates, a requirement imposed by both church and state. While at times new towns were quite successful in gaining a suitable candidate, in many instances infant Congregational churches stood with empty pulpits, either because they could not attract a fit candidate or because they could not keep one. In 1790, General Benjamin Lincoln complained that there were twenty-one incorporated towns in the newly formed counties of Hancock and Washington, yet there were “not more than three ordained ministers from the Penobscot River to Passamaquoddy.”

The ability of emerging frontier communities to financially attract good candidates depended directly upon local taxation. Many times, ministers had to settle for substandard compensation, especially compared to the salaries offered in southern New England. On the

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other hand, congregations might have to settle for substandard candidates who appeared to have moral or ministerial deficiencies. In both instances, frontier Standing Order churches were limited by the marriage of church and state imposed upon them from without.

A cogent example of these challenges is provided by the town of Warren, Maine, just interior to the coast from Thomaston. Prior to Isaac Case coming to Thomaston, a Scottish Presbyterian minister by the name of John Urquhart preached in both towns for a time but was never formally settled as some “misconduct” was discovered. The denominational historian Calvin Clark says of him,

In 1775 there came to Warren Rev. John Urquhart, who is said to have been licensed before he left his Scottish home by the Allon Presbytery. Prior to coming to Warren he had preached at Newcastle (Sheepscot), having been in America about a year. Mr. Urquhart received a call from Warren (which was incorpored in 1776) to be settled as the town minister, and worked as such for nearly eight years. His character being called in question, at the urgent solicitation of the towns people he was regularly removed by the Salem Presbytery convened at Salem September, 1783, but did not leave the town till the following year, finally going [far to the east] to Ellsworth.244

The difficulty the town faced with Urquhart appears to have revolved around his claim that his first wife had died before he arrived in America. As local historian Cyrus Eaton notes, “the story Mr. Urquhart had told of his wife’s death, turned out to be, at least in the opinion of his parishioners, not genuine.” She appears to have made passage to America and eventually caught up with her husband. Whereas a frontier town seems to have held a certain appeal for Urquhart, such communities faced a range of difficulties in attracting suitable candidates.245

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244 Clark, History of the Congregational Churches in Maine, II, 143.
245 For an extended discussion of the Urguhart’s troubles in Warren, see Cyrus Eaton, Annals of the Town of Warren: With the Early History of St. George’s, Broad Bay, and the Neighboring Settlements on the Waldo Patent (Hallowell, Maine: Masters, Smith & Company, 1851), 173-99. The Minutes of several Baptist Associations in the period reflect similar examples of immigrant preachers who appear to have been motivated to leave their homeland to escape civil or domestic problems.
The problem did not diminish after the American Revolution, in fact, the surge of post-war migration into northern New England exacerbated the problem. Historian Stephen Marini calculated that the Congregational churches of Maine numbered thirty-five in 1780. By 1820 they had increased to ninety-seven. This growth of sixty-two congregations, however, may look more impressive than is warranted. The truth is that this is barely more than one new Congregational church per year. When one factors in that the population grew roughly eightfold in this period, the Congregational decline was alarming. Congregational churches had little difficulty gathering a congregation, any community with legal civil boundaries would have constituted the established church congregation. However, creating a viable church was far more complex than just gathering an audience.246

Dissenting churches suffered neither of these limitations. For Regular Baptists, Two Kingdom theology dictated that the church and state were separate. The church was not dependent on the state to establish its boundaries, and, as noted in Chapter One. There were no geographical boundaries in the Two Kingdom ecclesiology of the Baptists. The church also refused to recognize the civil magistrate’s right to set minimum educational and ordination standards for ministerial candidates; the calling of fit candidates was viewed as an interaction between the congregation, the candidate, and the spiritual king over his kingdom. Each local congregation, then, was a microcosm and expression of the kingdom of God, in their minds ruled by Christ and independent from the state. From this framework, civil limitations on ecclesiastical affairs were inappropriate, the only limitation placed on establishing churches was the ability to draw together congregations that were theologically cohesive and fundamentally committed to the preservation of the church.

246 Marini, “Religious Revolution in the District of Maine.”
The practical challenges facing Standing Order churches on the frontier often played to the advantage of dissenting bodies. Many times, itinerants came into a frontier community with a ready congregation, but no Standing Order minister or usable meeting house. The exponential growth of dissenting churches and ministers in Maine is well known. When Isaac Case came to Maine in 1783 there were approximately forty Congregational churches statewide and only three or four Regular Baptist churches. By 1820 the Congregationalists could only fill 69 of their 97 pulpits, while the Regular Baptists had grown to 154 congregations and 122 ministers, almost double that of the Congregationalists. Add to these numbers the Methodist, Freewill, Quaker, Shaker, Universalist, and other dissenting groups in Maine, and the rate of expansion becomes staggering. Marini calculated that by 1820 there were some 463 dissenting congregations in the State with over 415 ministers.247

Each dissenting group faced distinctive challenges based upon differing spiritual commitments and their worldly implications. Some dissenting groups, like the Freewill Baptists, developed new ecclesiological frameworks different from the communions out of which they emerged; this was true of several aspects of their theology and practice.248 The Methodists, on the other hand, developed set patterns and regulations for their churches and circuit riding preachers through the organizational genius and tireless oversight of Francis Asbury.249 Other dissenting groups arose on the frontier, as well, including Shakers and Unitarians.250 In many of

247 Ibid.
250 On the rise of Unitarianism a good starting point is Conrad Edick Wright, American Unitarianism, 1805-1865 (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society: Northeastern University Press, 1989). The most sophisticated assessment of the religious landscape in early republican northern New England is now Balik’s Rally the Scattered Believers,
these cases the new groups developed unique ecclesiastical structures or even the commitment to a lack of structure.

**The Formation of the Church: The Church Covenant.** When Isaac Case began his itinerant ministry in Thomaston in January 1784, Eaton observed that “no ‘town minister’ had been settled, no religious society organized, nor public worship for any length of time maintained, before his coming.” By late May several individuals agreed to form the nucleus of a Baptist church. Case recorded the formation in his Diary:

wensday May 26 [1784] Returnd to thomaston found Brother Snow at home he told me that the word of God was going on at Dammescote under Brother Prudens Exorting. I understand that there are anumber Brought to the Light and greate many under concern and old Christans are very lively in Religion. Ride on King Jesus…

Thirsday May 27 [1784] Met at Mr Robins Robins Barn at ten in the Morning for to imbody in A Church. I opend the Meating by prayer and took the Lead of the meating. Chose Brother Samual Brown Clark and then proseded Red the Baptis articals of Faith and Ch[urch] Covinent they were all agreed Exsept five Brethren they were for comuning with unbaptized persons…The Rest were agreed in prinsable and gave them selves up to god and to one another. There was 47 male and females that imbodied in the church and there was 4 more Baptized. 3 of them [joined] the Ch. O Lord I trust thou haith Bilt thy self a ch[urch] hear and may it be Blest with grace. O that thy Blessing be upon ad to its graces and to its gifts o Lord. Mmay it be agolden candle stick in Deed may the Light of the gospel shine amongst them and may there be added to their number of such as shall be saved.

Case’s description of the formation of the most eastern Regular Baptist church in Maine at the time is instructive. First, it reflects that the Baptist churches were self-consciously voluntary societies. Townsfolk who had been baptized by Case based upon their profession of

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but the classic national view of the period, Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* remains a powerful assessment.


252 Case, “Diary.”
faith were free not to join, and it appears that five of them declined to do so. Membership in the Baptist church was neither mandatory nor coerced. Case’s description supports the assertion by historian Gregory A. Wills that the Baptists “organized autonomous local churches free from tyrannical hierarchies, and they practiced a church government by democracy rather than by priest, bishops, or elders. However, they combined their populist democracy with ecclesiastical authority.”

Wills’ assertion is further confirmed when one takes into consideration Case’s reference to the Thomaston church’s founding documents, especially its covenant that sealed the voluntary commitment of the baptized believers to mutually walk together as a Regular Baptist church. Church covenants were certainly not new when the Thomaston church was formed, nor were they limited to Regular Baptists. Baptist church covenants, like their confessions of faith, had a long transatlantic history. The First Baptist Church of Boston used a church covenant in 1658, and they appear in Maine with the establishment of the first Baptist church in Maine at Kittery in September 1682. In fact, church covenants are almost ubiquitous in the literature and records of the Baptist churches.

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254 Gillette’s reprinting of the *Minutes of the Philadelphia Association* notes specifically that six churches constituted between 1701 and 1748 had church covenants. Other references to the covenant in the minutes of the Association confirm this was a regular Baptist practice from the earliest times in North America.
Unfortunately, the early records of the Thomaston Baptist church are lost, and so we cannot with absolute certainty replicate the church covenant to which members vowed. However, the Baptists borrowed from each other, and the Thomaston Baptist Church, led by Isaac Case, almost certainly built its foundational documents upon those developed by Isaac Backus for his Middleborough Baptist Church in 1756. Backus’ covenant was a widely followed template.

As with the Thomaston Baptist Church, Case mentions numerous situations when churches “covenanted” together as a focal point of their constituting as Regular Baptist churches, a ceremony in which the founding members read the church covenant and articles of faith and to which all gave their assent. When Case assisted in constituting the Livermore Baptist Church, August 7, 1793, they used Backus’s Covenant. Two years later it was published in the Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association, which met this year in Case’s hometown of Readfield.

The covenant functioned in a few ways within the church. First, it formalized the voluntary commitment of each member to each other and to the whole. Regular Baptist Churches

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257 Eaton claims they were taken by Deacon Samuel Brown, who, along with several others, was removed from the church for his Arminian leanings around 1792. Apparently, Brown was church clerk, kept the church records in his possession, and refused to hand them over. He later moved to Ohio, “carrying the records with him.” Eaton, History of Thomaston, Rockland, and South Thomaston, Maine, I, 192.
258 This covenant was in use among Baptist churches around Rehoboth, Massachusetts, confirming it was a model before Case came to Maine. For example, it was used at the formation of the Baptist Church in Dartmouth in May 1780. See Andrews, A Sketch of Elder Daniel Hix: With the History of the First Christian Church in Dartmouth, Mass, 42-43. Deweese confirms Backus’ covenant enjoyed “wide influence” in New England and beyond. Deweese, Baptist Church Covenants, 45. It gained equal standing among the Baptists in Maritime Canada, see Charles W. DeWeese, “Prominent Church Covenants of Maritime Baptists, 1778-1878,” Baptist History and Heritage 15, No. 2 (1980), 26. Its standard use in Maine is evident in its adoption by the Bowdoinham Association. Deweese notes that a special version was printed as an insert to the 1805 Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association with the following suggestion; “These Articles and Confession are printed in a small page that they may be taken from the Minutes, and put into a Bible or Hymn Book.” 45. They were reprinted in the Minutes of the Lincoln Association in 1806, and the Eastern Maine Association in 1821 among others.
259 The most widespread church covenant form may be found in Alvah Hovey, A Memoir of the Life and Times of the Rev. Isaac Backus, A. M, 338-39.
260 First Baptist Church of Livermore, Records, 1793-1900, Maine Historical Society; Association Bowdoinham, Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting House in Readfield, August 19th and 20th, 1795 (Portland, Maine: Thomas Baker Wait, 1795).
were not coerced societies but voluntary associations. Unlike the Standing Order churches, one could not be brought into the covenant through infant baptism by another. Each person stood on their own in covenanting to be part of a particular Baptist church. But even as a voluntary association the church understood that the ground of association was a common commitment to a shared core of beliefs, obligations, and practices. The covenant may have been voluntary, but it was entered by a serious oath. Individual commitment was fundamental, and those who had not covenanted together were not members of the community.

Second, the covenant delineated the mutual obligations of each member to the whole in conduct and practice, and it became the means whereby each member could hold one another to an agreed upon standard. The moral parameters were clear, and accountability was expected. Members who strayed risked being considered covenant breakers and expulsion from the group was possible.\footnote{See especially, Deweese, \textit{Baptist Church Covenants}, 81-88.}

Third, the covenant formalized the interaction of members in such a way that the church could thrive even if leadership vacancies arose. The obligations equally devolved on all members; the covenant was not a commitment to a hierarchy but to the whole body. This was underscored many times in church confessions by language such as “a Bishop or Elder hath no more power to decide any case or controversy in the Church than any private member.” The church was, in its ideal form, a democratic society. This point is important, for while outside individuals, such as neighboring or itinerant preachers, would come in from time to time to teach, preach, and oversee the ordinances, they wielded no authority. The same was true when the churches agreed to participate with other churches in various associations. The independence
of the local congregation was maintained, and the equal authority of all members was protected.\footnote{262}

Fourth, the covenant was a document to which the church could be called back, thereby renewing and refreshing mutual commitments and obligations. Renewing the covenant individually, when one had lapsed, or corporately, prior to celebrating the Lord’s Supper, was commonplace. For example, the Brunswick Baptist Church “voted that the third Lord’s Day in every other month be the season to administer the sacrament & the Saturday before the third Lord’s Day in each month to attend Conference Meeting.”\footnote{263}

Like the Brunswick Baptists, churches would regularly meet the Saturday immediately preceding the Lord’s Day for the celebration of the Lord’s Supper for “Conference.” This was a time to ensure that all members were in good standing, lapsed members could be restored, and any new concerns over the conduct of members could be aired and addressed. When commitments to the covenant were suspect, a lapsed member could repent and renew commitment. It was an opportunity for a fresh start that put all members on the same plane again. Lapsed members could thus be fully restored to all the benefits and obligations of the covenant.

The struggling Eden Baptist church on Mt. Desert is a good example of this process. When Isaac Case came among the brethren in June 1803, he found them in a “low, dejected, and broken condition.” This was in part the result of ministerial misconduct, although Case does not specify exactly what it was.\footnote{264} Still, other problems existed, as well, as he noted in his \textit{Diary}:

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\begin{itemize}
\item[262] See the Confession of Faith of the Livermore Baptist Church, Livermore, “Records.”
\item[263] First Baptist Church Brunswick, Records, 1799-1873, Maine Historical Society.
\item[264] Millet suggests that Benjamin Downs, who was installed in 1801, was guilty of “unchristian conduct,” and the Eden Church was unable to settle another minister until 1812. In 1814 the church suffered another ministerial setback as pastor Swett also apparently fell into misconduct and was dismissed. The church survived, nonetheless. Millet, \textit{A History of the Baptists in Maine}, 309.
\end{itemize}
A number of the members of the church hath walked Disorderly. Saterday [June 25, 1803] the church met for their monthly confarance. After joining in prayer two members came forward and confess their falts and was restord by their Brethren. The Brethren told their travels [travails] and Exersises of their minds and their hearts were nit together. I preacht three sermons to them the next day and administrd the Lords supper to them. There seemd to be anew face put upon things sence I came upon Mt. Desert.265

Conference was also a time to examine new converts before baptism to affirm that their “experience” was genuine in the church’s best judgment. If the covenanted membership was satisfied, the candidate or candidates were often baptized that day or the following Lord’s Day and then invited to the Lord’s Supper. Similarly, they would own the covenant formalizing their membership in that particular Baptist church. Case provides a fitting example:

Saturday October 5 [1799] went on as far as Elum by attended the chhs monthly conference and heard them tell their travils and trials. Sum complaind of coldness and Darkness others spake with asollom scence of Gods Goodness and arevival they had lately Expeianced - one woman came forward and told hir Experiance and offord hirself for Baptism and to Join the ch[urc]h. She was unanimously Received. Lords day october 6 [, 1799] preacht in the school house whare the ch[urc]h commonly meet with greate freedom for me to feele and in the Intermiscian Baptised the Before mencian person.266

Baptist associational minutes and circular letters also make frequent reference to covenants when exhorting churches and members to faithfulness. It was the foundation for appealing to the brethren to renew their faithfulness to their voluntary commitments.267

265 Case, “Diary.”
266 Ibid. I have not been able to identify with certainty this church. It was clearly near Steuben, as Case was there the previous day.
267 The Philadelphia Association Minutes encapsulated this concept in 1739 when asked by a church what could be done with those who absented themselves from the “communion of the church . . . Solution. That the church shall send messengers once more to such, to inform them, that if they further absent themselves, without giving sufficient reason, the church may deal with such offenders as covenant breakers, and as despisers of the authority that is given to the church by Christ her head,” quoted in Gillette, Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, 1707 to 1807, 40.
The doctrine undergirding the church covenant among the Baptists in the northeast was their commitment to the Two Kingdoms theology. The covenant was written to underscore this in two ways. As already mentioned, it guarded the local assembly from outside influences, especially potential impositions that could be made by civil magistrates. One had to own the covenant to participate in the life and direction of the church. The church was self-contained and self-sustaining. Its expectations were explicit, and its limitations were implied.

The second way the covenant underscored Two Kingdoms theology was that they considered the gathered body of believers, irrespective of gender or social standing and independent of all other entities, to be directly under their “Leader” and “Head.” In their view, Christ did not rule them through priest or magistrate, but directly and actively through his word. The church was the visible expression of the kingdom on earth, which drove home the necessity to live in accordance with the standards set by the king. Those standards were revealed in the word and rehearsed corporately in the church, and so the members covenanted to “be guided by the Spirit of God in his word; expecting that he will yet further and more gloriously open his word and the mysteries of his kingdom.”

In short, the covenant advanced godly republicanism. It was true republicanism because it gave equal weight and responsibility to each member. It was godly in that it insisted on an unmixed community with spiritual kingdom concerns given to the church alone. As Daniel Merrill, the Baptist minister in Sedgwick, Maine, insisted,

\footnote{Ibid.}
the kingdom, which the God of heaven hath set up, has never needed, so has never debased herself by soliciting, the secular arm to enforce the mandates of the Church. . . Of the civil authority she asks no more, than to have it stand out of her sunshine. That Cesar, in agreement with the ordinance of heaven, would look well to the management of Cesar’s kingdom, and leave it with the Lord to manage his.269

In the Baptist mind, the Lord would “manage his” kingdom through the covenanted community by means of his spirit and his word.

**The Formulation of the Church: The Church Confession.** Where the church covenant expressed a commitment by all members to the local practice of the godly community and articulated the headship of Christ over the covenanted group; the confession of faith more carefully articulated this theologically. The church covenant defined the responsibilities and privileges of local brethren; it did not define how one came to the point of commitment to and acceptance within the community. Carefully defining the proper subjects invited into the community via covenant was the task of the church’s confession of faith.

As with the covenant, the Livermore Baptist Church would most likely have used Case’s Articles that were identical to those of the Bowdoinham Association of Baptists.270 There are two sections to the Livermore “Confession of Faith.” The second part addresses specifically their ecclesiology of the “visible Church.” Its seven paragraphs are almost an exact copy of the second section of the Confession of Faith penned by Isaac Backus, and subscribed by the First Baptist Church of Middleborough, Massachusetts, at its founding on January 16, 1756.271

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270 That Livermore’s Confession and Covenant were the same as the Bowdoinham Association is noted in the Church Record Book at its founding meeting. Livermore, Records, Maine Historical Society.
271 See “Appendix 19,” Backus and McLoughlin, *The Diary of Isaac Backus*, III, 1588-91. The differences between the two confessions amount only to occasional word changes.
The first of these seven paragraphs underscored the voluntary nature of church membership or “communion” and that membership was by “mutual agreement.” It clearly expressed that membership in a particular church was neither commanded nor coerced. True to its democratic ideals, the final paragraphs reiterated the “every saint” focus of the church. Though there were elders and deacons, their responsibilities were limited and specific. For elders, it was teaching and preaching the word and “administering the sacraments.” But their position did not elevate the officers in such a way as to give them authority over the whole. Even the “power to choose and ordain . . . officers” did not devolve on them, but on the entire body. The exercise of church authority remained with the whole church.

Recognizing that “Christ” was active in “his church” they reiterated that “every saint is commanded to be faithful.” Not just faithful to the Lord, but to the duties and responsibilities incumbent on them as members of Christ’s kingdom. Covenanted saints were to be under Christ’s rule as expressed in the church, wholly gathered to deal with kingdom business whether it was the discipline of erring members, receiving of new members, dismissing members to other churches when properly requested, ordaining leadership, and restoring those who had lapsed. The confession carefully defined the limits and exercise of church authority and the responsibility of the entire church to wield this authority. In this fashion the church carefully guarded their “gospel liberty, or freedom” in the “the worship and service of God” and “his cause in the world.”

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272 It is important to note that the confessions used the word communion in this instance to indicate church membership. This distinction is critical in the discussions that follows. For a full discussion of the different uses of “communion” in Baptist polity, see Renihan, *Edification and Beauty*, 156-61.

273 The quotes over the next several paragraphs are from the Livermore Baptist Church records at the Maine Historical Society.
Considering their understanding of the church as a body of voluntarily covenanted believers, where each member had “liberty” to participate under the authority of the whole, how one became a member was crucial. It was also at precisely this point that the distinctions between the Regular Baptists and the Congregationalists were especially apparent. The distinction between the two was often confused by Congregational members and clergy and even when understood, was frequently rejected. The Confession of Faith underscored the differences, which included baptism, of course, but was far more than that. It was a difference in the entire makeup of the church and the understanding of the kingdom of God.

This became evident in a couple of ways. The first was the unsuccessful attempt on the part of some Congregationalists to accommodate the Baptists’ emphasis on immersion as the proper mode of Baptism. For example, Samuel Eaton of the Harpswell First Church attempted to hold back the tide of Baptist conversions this way. Case’s initial encounter with Rev. Eaton was on his first Sunday in Brunswick, when he was received rather coolly:

Sunday October 26 [1783] went to the Island with Brother Potter and a number more. Came to the Meating House. Mr Eten the Minis[ter] of the town was at prayer and he Red Asarmon in the fore Noon. Had sum talk with him in the internision. He did Not seame free. I co[u]ld Not see that He Rejoicet any at the work of God hear. He seemd loth that I should preach But the people were very urgent that I should so he gave away Rather than to offend his people.274

This was not Case’s final encounter with Eaton and the Harpswell congregation. Case baptized his first convert on the Island on November 4, 1783, and his Diary records that he and James Potter enjoyed significant appeal, including from one of Eaton’s deacons. Over the next couple of months, several baptisms followed.

274 Case, “Diary.”
In January 1784, a few days before leaving the Brunswick area for “ajurny down Eastward,” Case reviewed his sustained itinerant activity in the area, especially on Sabascodegan Island, where the Harpswell meeting house stood, and celebrated that “near seventy that haith Ben Converted to god with in one year. They seame Rejoicing in the Lord. Their Conversation is upon Heavenly things. It seams wonderful to hear such Language Cumout of the mouths of such Children Mouths. Oh the wonderful work of god in this place.”

Even though Case soon left this region, the effects of his ministry in the area did not subside. In fact, the first Baptist Church to emerge from this activity was constituted in Bowdoinham on May 24, 1784. Three days later the First Baptist Church of Thomaston followed. Rev. Samuel Eaton responded to all this turmoil in his Congregational church in somewhat contradictory ways. It can hardly be coincidental that at a meeting held on May 31, 1784, the Harpswell church books record three votes relative to the ordinances of the church. The first vote documented what appears to be a reiteration of the Half-Way Covenant, affirming that those who “cant see their Way clear to come immediately to ye Lord’s Table . . . may have their Baptism for their Children.” The question of infant baptism was brewing, and Eaton may have sought to limit discussion of the matter.

The second vote required the deacons to “inspect the Walk of Professors.” The discipline surrounding the Lord’s Table was clearly being tightened. It may be that Eaton and the Harpswell Church had become somewhat lax in fencing the table, and the revival activity over the previous months highlighted the need to tighten up the discipline at the Lord’s Table. As

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275 Case, “Diary,” January 24, 1784.
276 Burrage, History of the Baptists in Maine, 72.
277 Harpswell, Maine, Congregational Church, Records, 1764-1821, George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections & Archives, Bowdoin College Library.
historian C. C. Goen has chronicled, in greater New England during the Great Awakening, revivals among the Congregational Churches forced questions respecting the ordinances, especially the Lord’s Supper, to the fore. When this happened divisions between Old Lights and New Lights often followed, and many New Light Congregationalists separated and later went over to the Baptists.278

The final vote emphasized this point particularly. “Voted [tha]t the Pastor has Liberty, provided he sees his way clear, to baptize by Immersion, those who conscientiously desire it, provided they give Satisfaction to ye Ch[urc]h of their Faith in X [Christ], & live holy Lives.” Rev. Eaton clearly attempted to accommodate divergent factions in the church. It seems likely that he assumed flexibility respecting the mode of baptism might be sufficient to retain Baptist-leaning members. It was a common misconception among the Congregational clergy that the mode of baptism itself was the major issue. If this was his assumption, he was in for disappointment as the Baptists organized the First Baptist Church of Harpswell with Isaac Case’s aide on January 19, 1785. James Potter took pastoral charge of the congregation for its first three years.279

The three votes reveal that while Rev. Eaton and the Harpswell Congregationalists attempted to accommodate the mode of baptism advocated by the Baptists, they had no interest in addressing the more fundamental issue, the conceptual and spiritual placement of the doors of the church. This was articulated in the Baptist Confession of Faith. The Livermore Baptist Church, like many other Regular Baptists, combined their understanding of the ordinances with their commitment to a regenerate membership in two explicit places. The first describes two

278 Goen, Revivalism and Separatism in New England.
279 Harpswell, Maine, Congregational Church Records; Millet, A History of the Baptists in Maine, 100.
ordinances, emphasizing that baptism must precede admission to the Lord’s Supper, and the
second asserting that “the door of the Church” must be guarded against the admission of any who
cannot demonstrate the genuine nature of their faith. These two articles confirm that in the
ecclesiology of the Regular Baptists believers were not properly in the kingdom until they were
formally united to a properly ordered church.

To admit unbelievers, no matter how moral, to the table of the Lord was to misplace the
doors of the church and to advocate a mixed communion. This was understood by Regular
Baptists as the major failing of Congregationalism. The same was true of admitting unbaptized
or improperly baptized believers into church membership; this was the perceived failure of open
communion Baptist churches, like the Freewill brethren. Having a profession of faith for
admission to the church was certainly better than not, but it was insufficient. Furthermore,
admitting unbelievers, most particularly infants, to the ordinance of baptism had the same effect.
Discernable faith must precede admittance to both ordinances. To Regular Baptists, the mixed
communion of paedobaptist churches was the epitome of Babylon. True churches, in their
theology, must be closed communion Baptist churches. Anything else admitted unbelievers, or
improperly admitted believers, into the church, and, even more alarmingly, compromised the
kingdom of God.

The pursuit of itinerancy with a commitment to a rigorous scriptural view of the practice
of Two Kingdoms theology were pivotal to the growth of the Regular Baptists in Maine. While a
commitment to itineracy and an evangelical ethos was shared by many other fast-growing
religious groups, Two Kingdoms theology set Regular Baptists apart in crucial ways. Their
understanding of the kingdom not only required conscious conversion and believer’s baptism by

Livermore, “Records.”
immersion, it also demanded the formation of closed communion churches. Maine Regular Baptists’ evangelicalism mirrored the preaching and zeal of the Henry Alline, the famed New Light revivalist, who was active across the northeast borderland, and especially in Nova Scotia, from the mid-1770s to his death, in New Hampshire, in 1784. In their ecclesiology, many Allinite brethren in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick followed the lead of Regular Baptists in Maine, though the changes in the Nova Scotia movement over time and variations within evangelicalism across greater Nova Scotia demand close attention.

**Kingdom Expansion in Nova Scotia**

When Edward Manning submitted to baptism by immersion in 1798, he became a New Light Baptist. Historian David Bell notes that Manning, and the other New Lights who had been immersed, could now “in a certain sense be called Baptists,” even though “they did not feel that immersion was an issue sufficiently important to render themselves into a distinct group.”281 To be sure, Manning did not immediately embrace Regular Baptist ecclesiology, nor did he initially advocate closed communion churches, but he moved in that direction and would become a pivotal figure in the emergence of the Regular Baptist tradition in Nova Scotia, akin to Isaac Case in Maine. Both pioneering itinerant ministers also worked in the wake of a key figure who preceded them, but whereas Case built directly on the foundations of Isaac Backus, Manning would make pivotal decisions over the course of his career that moved him away from the radical antinomianism of many Allinite followers in Nova Scotia in favor of the Calvinistic commitments of the Regular Baptists.

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As observed in the previous chapter, Edward Manning insisted to his brother James in 1798, “I will never sprinkle another old or young as long as I live. Go tell the parents who have brought their babies to be baptized, tell them of my decision and that I request them to take their infants home.”282 One needs to be cautious about reading too much into Manning’s exclamation. Whatever his convictions that day, this is not a full expression of the doctrine of believer’s only baptism. Proof of this is found in the fact that the Cornwallis New Light Congregational Church continued its mixed communion with Manning as pastor. Was Manning suggesting that he had come to believe that immersion was the only scriptural mode of baptism? Had he come to change his deeper views on the subjects, or just about the mode of baptism? This statement certainly does not necessitate this, although if this quotation is to be taken seriously, it appears that Manning had given up the mode of baptism by sprinkling and infant baptism altogether.283

Undoubtedly following up this exclamation with his own submission to the ordinance suggests a deepening practical attention to the doctrine among converts under his leadership. It is likely that Manning did not reform his faith and practice entirely at once; it was a work in progress. Reforming the practice of the ordinances as an itinerant and pastor required thought and time.

A fresh wave of revival broke out in the summer of 1798, which provided him, and other recently baptized Allinite preachers, the popular support to continue religious reforms. Revivals broke out in Annapolis County in towns like Granville, Willmouth, Nictau, and Aylesford. Joseph Dimock reported Horton and Cornwallis in Kings County as affected, and further

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282 There is a slight variation in the wording, though not the substance, of Manning’s statement to his brother regarding baptism between Saunders, as I have quoted here, and Cramp, as quoted in Goodwin, Into Deep Waters, 105; Saunders, History of the Baptists, 86.
283 Saunders, History of the Baptists, 86.
mentioned Lunenburg as an area visited by revival. In July 1799, Thomas Handley Chipman exclaimed, “our Congregations have increased greatly.”

With the revivals came a new emphasis on baptism. In one instance Joseph Crandall gave a graphic description of a winter baptism that mirrors the Regular Baptist examples from Maine in this period.

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

What is reflected in this compelling account, like that of Isaac Case in Maine, is the power these baptisms conveyed. This particular baptism was originally set for one woman who specifically requested it. The remainder were moved by the event itself to come forward.

The powerful example of believer’s only baptism is hard to miss. It brought to the fore the primitive examples of the New Testament in such a striking way that, as Crandall exclaimed, “the bible was altogether a new book to them.” The practice of sprinkling or the baptism of infants inside church structures could not convey the theological fullness that was so powerfully

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285 The most influential monograph to assess Canadian evangelicalism in this era is Rawlyk, *The Canada Fire*. Rawlyk directly compares the New England and Maritime movements in “A Total Revolution in Religious and Civil Government”: The Maritimes, New England, and the Evolving Evangelical Ethos, 1776-1812” in Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington, and George A. Rawlyk, eds., *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond, 1700-1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 137-155, which argues that evangelicalism in this period was more radical in Canada than in New England because it was untethered by a republican civic-spiritual public culture.
287 Ibid.
brought home by the immersion of professing believers. Baptism became commonplace. Chipman mentioned baptizing 173 new converts. Joseph Dimock recounted baptizing thirteen on one occasion, twenty-seven on a second, and twenty-eight on a third. All of this was followed with great interest in New England.288

The baptisms drew popular attention in Nova Scotia as well as wary concern from the Anglican establishment.289 New Light evangelistic success often brought consternation from Church of England ministers. Yet, they appear to have been minimally effective in their attempts to “keep their congregants free from the contagion,” as one of them referred to it. As far as they were concerned the people of Nova Scotia were “distracted by the prevalence of the enthusiastic and dangerous spirit among a sect . . . called New Lights.” 290 Where the practice of baptism had been treated as a secondary matter by Alline, it came much more to the fore among his disciples in the late 1790s and early 1800s. Often the ordinance was performed before “vast collections of people.” In the pejorative opinion of Anglican minister Rev. Jacob Bailey, the colony was suffering from a “great rage for dipping.” 291

The power of baptism by immersion is underscored by the comparison historian Brian Cuthbertson makes between this round of revivals and the previous ones of the 1780s and early 1790s. As he reports, there were losses by the Anglicans in the earlier revivals to New Lights, New Dispensationists, and especially Methodists. But apparently when the enthusiasm died

288 Baldwin, Brief Account of the Late Revivals, 23-25.
289 Rawlyk, The Canada Fire, 164.
290 C.F. Pascoe, Classified Digest of the Records of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1701-1892 (London: Published at the Society’s Office, 1894), 118.
291 Ibid. There is some confusion among historians over the source of this phrase. Since Fingard and Cuthbertson provide specific citations attributing it to Jacob Bailey, he is the most likely source. See Judith Fingard, The Anglican Design, 122-23 and Brian Cuthbertson, The First Bishop: A Biography of Charles Inglis (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Waegwoltic Press, 1987), 182.
down or became so radical that many could not tolerate it, most disillusioned Anglicans trickled back to their home churches. “By 1797 the [Anglican] Church seemed to have weathered the revivalist storm and was showing signs of renewed growth.” Such was not the case two years later, when revival fires flared again. It was in the context of this later revival that Bailey witnessed a rage for dipping. The Anglicans would fight back, but with less effect than in previous revivals.292

What made this later revival different? Could it be that baptism by immersion distinctively set apart the New Light Baptists from the Methodists, Anglicans, Presbyterians, New Light Congregationalists, and the New Dispensationists? Baptism was a personal identification of major proportions, and its effects were being displayed in numerous parts of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Cuthbertson’s point should not be missed; conversion might occur under any effective revival preacher. People flocked to hear them for a range of reasons from mere novelty to serious spiritual conviction. When the revival energy and emotion ran out, however, as it always eventually did, many converts simply returned to their previous communion. Especially where little difference in the practice of the ordinances existed between the various groups, converts could easily move among them. With respect to baptism, especially, they were all either paedobaptists by definition (Anglicans and Methodists) or paedobaptists by acquiescence (New Dispensation and New Light Congregational). In such cases the reverse trickle effect is entirely understandable. The revival of 1798-99 appears to have substantively interrupted this fluidity, largely because it was uniquely marked by believer’s only baptism by immersion.

This revival was more than just a moving individual expression of faith. To be sure there was a clear grass roots character to the revivals, and especially to baptism, as it was the new convert’s responsibility to come forward and declare their new-found faith to the satisfaction of the other believers. But the revival also expressed a change from the “top down” as New Light ministers came to embrace believer’s only baptism as part and parcel of their rethinking of the whole construct of the church. In other words, the revivals reflected both renewed individual experiences and reoriented ecclesiastical understanding by the ministers. A distinctively Baptist identity was emerging.293

This identity grew out of the revival that broke out in 1798-99 and was marked by another important feature of the growing Baptist interest in the Maritimes. In late 1799 Boston Baptist minister Thomas Baldwin published revival accounts from Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine in the United States, Nova Scotia in the British dominions of North America, and news of revivals in Ireland, Scotland, and England as well as missionary work taking place in foreign lands. The letters from Nova Scotia are from Thomas Handley Chipman and Joseph Dimock, both with connections to Baptists in New England. The letters supplied to Baldwin reflect two things. Obviously, they chronicle the work taking place in various parts of Nova Scotia and piqued the attention of Baptists in New England. The formation of the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society after this publication substantiates this point. We will look closer at this organization in the next chapter, but at their founding they desired to be of help and influence in both New England and the British provinces of North America.294

293 One does not have to agree with everything Rawlyk posits to see that he captures the double nature of this movement well. It was simultaneous “energized from the bottom up and could be controlled from the top down.” Rawlyk, *The Canada Fire*, 162-84.

The published letters likewise reflect budding trans-Atlantic connections among Baptists elsewhere. David Bell points to Nova Scotia New Lights’ connections to Boston Baptists, especially between Thomas Handley Chipman and Rev. Samuel Stillman, apparently through a family tie in his church. Joseph Dimock also visited New England in 1797, including a trip to Boston where he was entertained by both Stillman and Thomas Baldwin. While Boston and Nova Scotia ministers clearly interacted, there was a far stronger relationship than is evident in the limited literature at hand. This slender pamphlet of 24 pages would appear in at least 10 reprints in 1799 and 1800, one of them in Halifax. This account of wide-ranging revivals across the northeastern borderlands helped to shape Regular Baptist identity in Nova Scotia.

Furthermore, the English Particular Baptists in the Northamptonshire Association inaugurated the wave of modern missions by forming the Baptist Missionary Society, sending William Carey to India in 1792. This move deeply interested evangelical and mission-minded Congregationalists and Baptists on both sides of the Atlantic. Letters and accounts of the progress of the work, reminiscent of the revivals under George Whitefield, were printed and reprinted in a dizzying array of publications. Again, it is almost impossible that the Nova Scotian brethren were unaware of these trans-Atlantic developments. In fact, the founding documents of the soon to be formed Baptist Association reference the desire to reinforce their formal connections to Baptists on both sides of the Atlantic.

Whatever the trans-national connections, it appears that Baptist theology of baptism in Nova Scotia came to full expression not long after Edward Manning and other New Light

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295 In fact, Bell is quite critical of Chipman and his connection to Boston asserting that this was the major impetus in his bringing about a “coup” among the New Lights who soon embraced closed communion Baptist principles. Bell, *The Newlight Baptist Journals*, 22.

ministers submitted personally to immersion. As the New Light ministers came together for their annual Association meeting in June 1799, ecclesiastical concerns over church discipline and the administration of the ordinances, especially baptism, was raised to a higher priority. Levy indicates that the 1799 Association asked Manning to “prepare a Plan of an Association to be discussed at next year’s gathering.”


When Edward Manning returned to his Cornwallis church, the news of his baptism by immersion was not well received. While there might be people who found his baptism by Chipman off-putting because he had not brought the matter to the church first, there are other likely reasons for the tension it produced, not the least that Manning declared a change in his oversight of this ordinance. As he said to his brother James, anyone contemplating having their infant sprinkled would have to look elsewhere. This change in church practice would certainly be troubling to those who had not followed Manning’s baptismal lead. Moreover, it was pastorally insensitive to the church’s mixed communion stance. His practice of baptism and his theology of the church was coming into greater focus. Under Allinite leadership there was a broad indifference to the ordinances; they were of no spiritual value. Manning could no longer relegate this practice to the category of adiaphora (i.e., things indifferent, non-essential), and it is important to explore why this was the case.

As historian David G. Bell notes, this period of religious history in the Canadian Maritimes is “dominated by a ‘Newlight to Baptist’ paradigm.” In exploring the shift, historians have attempted varied explanations as to why Edward Manning, and many others, so completely

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repudiated their New Light mixed communion origins. As Bell and others suggest, it is certainly possible that they did so to shake off the negative implications associated with the moral failures of the New Dispensation. Its radicalism clearly became unacceptable, especially to ministers who sought good order in their congregations. But this alone falls short of explaining the shift from New Light to Baptist. For example, why did some, such as John Payzant, never leave their New Light Congregational commitment to mixed communion to join other former Allinites in becoming convinced Regular Baptists?

It is likewise suggested that the Allinites were embarrassed by the New Dispensation movement and sought a route to greater respectability. From this view, alignment with Baptists in Boston might be prudent, but it would come at a cost. The baptismal divisions between the New Light Baptists and the mixed communion Allinites were sharply expressed at the 1800 Association meeting. A closer look at that meeting, however, makes the “respectability thesis” problematic. To be sure internal motives are often complex and difficult to fathom, and this is surely the case with the Mannings, Chipman, and others who became convinced Baptists. Chipman traveled to Boston in 1799, some suggest to confer with Samuel Stillman and to gain Boston

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298 Goodwin and Rawlyk concur with this assertion, see Goodwin, Into Deep Waters and Rawlyk, The Canada Fire.
299 Bell agrees that his assessment is a judgment call and highlights independent support from Rawlyk’s independent agreement from the early 1980s. Bell, The Newlight Baptist Journals, 48, 79. Yet, Rawlyk later softened his support for Bell. What changed for Rawlyk? He came to see the people’s move toward immersionist baptism as an incredibly powerful grassroots movement. From this perspective, he surmised that the Allinite ministers adopted Baptist principles “reluctantly” in order to hang onto their converts. The “Baptist patriarchs became more or less ardent Baptists largely because they were compelled to do so in order to survive as minister.” (Rawlyk, Canadian Fire, 162). Unfortunately, Rawlyk does not explain why this required closed-communion Baptist polity. Might open communion Congregational polity have satisfied? And why did Payzant not lose his ministerial standing upon refusing to follow the populist movement? Furthermore, Rawlyk fails to address the difficulty in his thesis when Manning finally became an “ardent Baptist” in 1807, yet only seven congregants followed him out of the New Light mixed communion Cornwallis Church to form the First Baptist Church of Cornwallis. Not only did Manning not follow the crowd, the crowd declined to follow him. It seems more convincing that Manning, and those like him, were powerfully moved by immersion and made the change as a spiritual imperative.
Baptist recognition. This alignment would provide the desired respectability. However, the events that transpired at the 1800 Association meeting that birthed the first decidedly Baptist Association in the Maritimes were not set in motion principally by Chipman’s visit to Boston in 1799 as Bell seems to imply. This is not to deny the impact of Boston Baptists on the Nova Scotia brethren. The New England-Maritime Baptist connections were deeper than a single trip to Boston in 1799 would suggest, such as earlier visits of Thomas Chipman and Joseph Dimock to New England. Dimock, for instance, preached in several places in Connecticut and Massachusetts, including Boston, during a trip he made in 1798. More analysis and evidence are needed to better support the respectability thesis as the major reason that New Light ministers joined the Regular Baptist fold in the Maritimes.

The only known direct recollection of these events appears in the journal of John Payzant, who angrily refused to move away from mixed communion. Three important developments prior to the 1800 meeting merit attention to better assess Payzant’s antagonistic assessment. The first is the limited place given in the secondary literature to the New Lights’ being influenced by closed-communion Regular Baptists in Nova Scotia. Historian William Brackney makes a compelling case for strong elements of Regular Baptist polity and practice in Nova Scotia since the time of the Baptist itinerant Ebenezer Moulton, who preached across much of Nova Scotia from 1761 to 1771. Though the Nova Scotia Regular Baptists were indeed a small band (Bell suggests there were only “two or three Baptist churches in the Maritimes” in

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300 What is not addressed in the “respectability thesis,” as I have labeled it, is why the New Lights chose to court the favor of the Boston Baptists rather than the New England Congregationalists, whose polity more closely resembled their own. Identification with the Congregational churches would have provided greater respectability than from dissenting New England Baptists.

301 Bell claims that Chipman’s 1799 visit was foundational to the stage-managed “coup” of 1800. Dimock’s visit is chronicled in The Diary and Related Writings of the Reverend Joseph Dimock (1768-1846).
1797), the Allinites had had longstanding contact with Baptists committed to closed communion for some time. There is evidence that Allinite New Light ministers were present at the meeting of the Nova Scotia Regular Baptist Association in 1799, some of whom would later join the Association. This suggests, contrary to the “respectability thesis,” that it is likely Nova Scotia Regular Baptists had a more influential place in the formation of the 1800 Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Baptist Association than previously thought.302

The second development to be noted is Payzant’s absence from the mixed communion Associational meeting in 1799. Payzant’s journal confirms this, “in the year 1799 the Church did not think it to be prudent to let Mr. Payzant go to the Association, for there was much disturbances in the church.”303 This absence explains Payzant’s relative surprise at the events he witnessed at the 1800 meeting. The transactions may have been far less a “coup” than Bell claims. This leads to the third point. At the June 1799 Association meeting, “Edward Manning was chosen to prepare a Plan of an Association to be discussed at next year’s gathering.”304

These pieces of information require reassessment, and lead to heretofore unanswered questions. For instance, the Association already had unanimously adopted Articles in 1797.305 Why were new documents needed? Furthermore, though no record of the meeting survives, it is likely that all those present at the 1799 meeting had already begun to formulate the design to move the Association from a mixed communion to a strictly closed communion Baptist

302 Brackney, “The Planter Motif among Baptists from New England to Nova Scotia, 1760-1850”; Bell, The Newlight Baptist Journals, 19; Rand, “An Historical Sketch of the Nova Scotia Baptist Association.” Levy claims that the Regular Baptist “churches at Halifax and Ragged Island did not send delegates [to the 1800 Association meeting]; presumably, because they had adopted close communion from the outset, and felt they could not have fellowship with churches, though Baptist in name, which still clung to mixed communion.” Levy, The Baptists of the Maritime Provinces, 1753-1946, 71.
305 Payzant’s Journal confirms this.
Association. Otherwise it is difficult to explain why the 1799 Association messengers determined that they needed a plan, especially since only Payzant appears to have been surprised by events in 1800. To that end, in 1799 Manning had been tasked with providing a new “Plan of an Association,” a long-standing practice of New England Baptist Associations.\(^{306}\)

The conclusion of these points is that it appears that Chipman’s trip to Boston was probably not a private attempt to orchestrate a “coup” among the Nova Scotia brethren, but may have been the agreed upon fruit of the 1799 meeting that Payzant did not attend.\(^{307}\) Furthermore, Bell gives too much credit to the supposed respectability of the New England Baptists in 1800 as central to Chipman’s motive. It is true that some Boston Baptist ministers, like Stillman and Baldwin, were accorded respect by some of the city’s Standing Order ministers, but Congregationalism was the mainstream and orthodox faith of New England. If respectability is what the Nova Scotia brethren sought, why did they not seek to draw nearer to the New England Congregationalists? Especially since many of them were already happily committed to mixed communion congregations? It most certainly would have avoided a division with Payzant and the sorts of ecclesiastical challenges that several committed Baptist ministers would soon face.

Bell attributes the respectability of Baldwin and Stillman to the entire body of New England Baptists, and this was certainly not the case.\(^{308}\) Boston, even in 1799, stood out as unusual in its positive treatment of these Baptist ministers. Elsewhere in New England, Baptists were still being oppressed, although it was clearly lessening. In fact, the 1800 Minutes of the Warren Association, to which Baldwin and Stillman belonged, contained the following note, “We are sorry to learn that the Baptist Church in Partridgefield, under the case of Rev. Ebenezer

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\(^{307}\) Payzant, *Journal*.
Smith, have been and still are greatly oppressed by being taxed, to a large amount, towards building a Congregational meeting-house in that place.” The 1800 Warren Association meeting reinstated the practice of establishing a committee to hear grievances from oppressed churches. In 1800 the Baptists were anything but respectable in the eyes of the Standing Order in Maine. Whatever respectability the Nova Scotia New Light’s may have desired, the move to closed communion Baptist principles warrants a fuller explanation on its own terms.309

**Becoming Bona Fide Baptists: The Enoch Towner Case.** Thomas Chipman, according to Payzant, returned from his 1799 trip to Boston with “certificates,” which he brought to the Association meeting in 1800. Apparently, they were attempting to deal with the Anglican instigated government crackdown on marriages performed by dissenting ministers.310 One of their own, Rev. Enoch Towner, the minister of the Sissiboo Baptist Church in Weymouth, was in legal difficulty for this very reason. Payzant’s term “certificates” has significance in New England Baptist life, as the Massachusetts government inaugurated a cumbersome “certificate” system to attempt to ensure that professed Baptist churches, whose members were theoretically exempted from taxation in support of the Standing Order, were legitimate. The process was supposed to prohibit tax evasion by scofflaws who only pretended to be Baptists. It also opened a legal route for Baptist churches to gain incorporated status, thus being fully recognized as churches by the civil magistrate. The process, as noted in the previous chapter respecting the founding of the Baptist Church in Berwick, Maine, formalized the legal standing of the Baptist church. With this legal standing, religious privileges, such as ordaining men to the ministry and officiating at weddings, would be beyond government interference.

310 See Cuthbertson, The First Bishop, 184.
While the freedom to solemnize marriages was the legal issue at hand, at its core lurked the theological point about keeping the two kingdoms separate. Baptists were not denying the right of the civil magistrate to exercise authority within the civil realm, but they argued against the right of the civil magistrate to interfere with church matters. If the Baptists were to become recognized as legitimate churches, they should be at liberty to do all that churches were expected to do.

Could it be that what Chipman sought and what the “certificates” implied was a path to stronger legal standing that would potentially alleviate the problems the dissenting New Light ministers faced regarding solemnizing marriages? This would account for Chipman’s supposed confession that the New Light mixed communion churches were “looked on as nothing,” especially since this statement was made in the context of the discussion over Enoch Towner and the marriage controversy. Chipman could have been referring to their legal status, rather than their status in society at large. In the eyes of the magistrate, they had no legal standing and so were “looked on as nothing.” Theoretically, without the certificate, the churches and their ministers had dubious legal standing. If this theory is correct, for the Baptists in Boston to authenticate the churches in Nova Scotia as Baptist, they needed assurances that the Association churches were not paedobaptist. This is likely where Chipman’s trouble surfaced.

The marriage controversy and the Enoch Towner case should not be ignored. At stake was the separation of church and state that was so foundational to Baptist doctrine and polity. Towner had been ordained at the previous year’s Association meeting. If the Association

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312 Cuthbertson confirms the New Lights’ dubious legal standing, see The First Bishop, 110, n. 26.
313 There is some uncertainty regarding the location of the Association meeting in 1799. I. E. Bill says Towner was ordained and his Sissiboo Baptist Church constituted at a minister’s meeting in Lower Granville in 1799 and that this was where the Association ministers were meeting “to consider the propriety of forming the Churches into an
churches, like the Separate Congregational Churches of southern New England after the Great Awakening half a century earlier, had no legal standing, then Towner might well be in trouble before the law. Historian C. C. Goen’s important work on this issue proves this point with clarity for New England Separate Congregationalists. Ironically, due to crown action, Baptists had better legal standing as dissenters under English law in New England than New Light Separate Congregational Churches in the mid-eighteenth century.314

Towner’s case was yet to be heard in the Nova Scotia courts, but there was reasonable hope that being bona fide Baptists with proof from Boston Baptists of their solidarity would give legitimacy to his ordination and aid his legal position. Otherwise, why did they own this as an Association? When they addressed the case at the 1800 meeting they acknowledged that his situation “effects the whole Body.” They further chose “Brother Chipman, Brother Dimock, and Brother Edw[ar]d Manning” to “accompany” Towner to Halifax, where his case was to be heard. They were to be advisors to their ministerial brother. It is clear that they understood the wider implications of Towner’s legal case.315

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315 “Minutes of the Nova Scotia Baptist Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting-House in Granville, June the 23rd and 24th, 1800,” Atlantic Baptist Collection, Acadia University, Special Collections.
The stature of the attorneys on both sides in the case and the court’s decision in favor of Towner bears out its significance. In the words of historian Susan Shenstone,

The trial, held in Halifax in 1800, was prosecuted by Attorney General Richard John Uniaké, with equally distinguished Simon Bradstreet Robie defending Towner. The judgment came down in favor of Towner for a number of sensible reasons, as well as the two legalistic ones that the Church of England had not been formally established in Nova Scotia by a special act of the provincial legislature and that the officiating clergyman was a regularly ordained pastor, loyal and teaching the essential tenets of the Established Catechism.\textsuperscript{316}

The issue of solemnizing marriages by Baptist ministers would resurface in a few years, especially in New Brunswick. Bishop Inglis and the other Anglican ministers may have suffered a setback in the Towner case, but they were not finished attempting to use the strong arm of the civil magistrate to limit dissent. For now, the Baptists had escaped the snare of Bishop Inglis. Historian Thomas Vincent confirms the larger church-state issue, and the effect the Towner case produced: “this decision was a significant landmark in the weakening of Church of England authority in Nova Scotia.”\textsuperscript{317}

Bell is correct that Chipman pushed for the 1800 Association to become solely and strictly Baptist. It might also be true that he did so without being entirely open with Payzant, and therefore the 1800 meeting became heated. But, as Bell admits, it is also probable that the other ministers were already on board with the move before the meeting convened, especially since it was agreed upon in some fashion the previous year. Thus, Payzant’s descriptions of Chipman’s


deception are grounded as much in his own ignorance of the prior year’s proceedings, and his personal frustrations that the organization that he had been pivotal in forming was taking its leave from him.\textsuperscript{318} The fallout at the 1800 Associational meeting between Payzant and the rest of the Baptist brethren is undisputed. While several of these ministers were not yet pastoring Regular Baptist churches, they had theologically and publicly come to embrace Regular Baptist polity and the Two Kingdoms theology of their brethren in England and the United States. Their doctrine was fundamentally the same, and formal ties would soon be established and strengthened.

\textsuperscript{318} Bell, \textit{The Newlight Baptist Journals}. 
CHAPTER 5

THE CONNECTION AND PROTECTION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD:
LOCAL CHURCH AUTONOMY AND ASSOCIATIONALISM IN THE NORTHEAST

I wish the differences between your government and ours may be so accommodated, as to promote the good of both, and subserve Zion’s best good. But I fear a contest is before us. However the differences may be between the governments among men, be it our concern to be in obedience to the government of God.

-Rev. Daniel Merrill, Sedgwick, Maine, to Rev. Edward Manning, June 2, 1812

The theology and practice of associationalism is important for the study of Baptists in northeastern North America for several reasons. First, it provided a means to counter some of the radical individualism of groups like the New Dispensationists in Nova Scotia and those of like radicalism in Maine, by linking Baptist churches together along common theological lines. And yet, while countering radical individualism, it simultaneously guarded local church independence. The assessment of careful balance between church autonomy and shared associationalism can help avoid overly simplistic generalizations, especially that associational control might dominate local church affairs.

Second, Baptist associationalism reflected Two Kingdoms theology in consequential ways. This is evidenced in the practical interconnections fostering cooperative efforts to expand the kingdom of God: theology and practice were intertwined. Further, the Two Kingdoms theology helped to counter encroachment by the pursuit of church-state relations that were

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319 Bell, The Newlight Baptist Journals.
320 As Gregory Wills notes, “Baptists were religious populists, but they were suspicious of individualism… Conscience was not supreme.” Wills, Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South, 1785-1900, 33.
theologically inconsistent with the Confession of Faith. In other words, while it pressed for the separation of church and state, it simultaneously nurtured the cooperation of church with church.

Finally, associationalism advanced a more effective expression of the spiritual kingdom reflecting the Baptists’ emerging regional, trans-national, and even trans-Atlantic identity. This was especially apparent as the connections among churches and associations crossed national boundaries in the northeast, giving a distinct shared spiritual identity to politically and nationally diverse brethren. This would show itself in particularly striking ways as the associational ties of Baptists in the northeast were tested during the War of 1812.

This chapter explores the formation of Baptist associations in Maine and Nova Scotia and then further explores the ways the associations enhanced and protected the kingdom. Because the presence of Regular Baptist associations in Maine predate the Nova Scotia formation in 1800, we will look first at their development in Maine and then turn to Nova Scotia. The historical development of the Nova Scotia Association was outlined in the previous chapter, so rather than entirely recount that history here, we will consider key features that flowed from its creation.

**Associations and the Question of Local Church Independence**

**The Rise of Regular Baptist Associations in Maine: the Bowdoinham Association**

Beyond the reception and dismissal of member churches, the more important work of the association was to assist and cooperate with associated churches to extend the kingdom of God. The association was not intended to be a collaborative mechanism for the churches to support jointly the work of the kingdom. The association was subservient to the churches—the smaller units were the visible expression of the kingdom of God on earth. Within fifteen months of Isaac Case’s arrival in Brunswick three Regular Baptist churches were established in mid-coast Maine. These were directly connected to the revival unfolding as Job Macomber, James Potter, and Isaac
Case itinerated there in the 1780s. From their ongoing peripatetic ministry, churches were gathered by baptized believers covenanted to become local churches. The first to do so was the Bowdoinham Baptist Church, constituted on May 24, 1784. Job Macomber, formerly a member of Backus’ Middleborough Baptist Church, had recently moved his family to the area and joined this new congregation. Macomber was subsequently ordained by the church and settled as pastor on August 18, 1784. Rev. Case came down from Thomaston and preached the ordination sermon. Rev. Simon Locke from the Baptist Church in Lyman assisted in the ordination. Rev. Macomber remained in this pastoral relation until 1810.

The second Baptist Church in this region was formed in Thomaston under the care of Rev. Case, where on May 27, 1784 in “Mr. Robins barn . . . there was 47 male and females that imbodied in the church.” Case was installed as their minister the same day. Several more individuals were baptized and added to the church over the next weeks. One of the members was Elisha Snow, a prominent town citizen who had been “awakened” under Case’s preaching. Snow soon joined Case as an itinerant preacher in the area. Rev. Case also baptized others in Snow’s family, most particularly his daughter Joanna, and on June 26, 1785 Case and Joanna were married.

The third church constituted in the mid-coast region was the Baptist Church of Harpswell, formerly part of North Yarmouth. Harpswell was largely an island community

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322 Macomber may have left New Gloucester, because the spiritual work there had Freewill Baptist leanings that he became uncomfortable with. See Potter, Narration, 23. It may also have been due to taxation pressed upon local Baptists by the town; Burrage, History of the Baptists in Maine, 99-100.
adjacent to Brunswick. Maine Baptist historian Joshua Millet records that on January 19, 1785 this church was organized by Case and Macomber and that it consisted of thirty-one members. In October, James Potter was ordained over this church, as noted earlier, with “liberty to travel.” Though settled as pastors over specific congregations, Case, Macomber, and Potter continued to itinerate, especially among Penobscot Bay islands and new interior settlements.325

By 1787, with three churches duly established and the number of converts growing, the Thomaston, Bowdoinham, and Harpswell Baptist churches agreed to form the first Regular Baptist Association in the District of Maine.326 To this end the churches sent ministers and “messengers” to Bowdoinham, and on May 24, 1787, formally established the Bowdoinham Association. Thomaston, the largest of the three churches with one hundred three members, was represented by Rev. Case. The Bowdoinham church was the smallest of the three with thirty members and was represented by messengers James Buker and Caleb Western. The Harpswell Church, with fifty members, was represented by Rev. Potter and messenger Joseph Dinslow. Others present were Ebenezer Kinsman and James Purington.327

The Bowdoinham Association became the mother association from which several others would be formed in the coming years. Its theology and practice were consistent with Regular Baptist associations in other parts of New England and would be replicated as Regular Baptists expanded throughout the northeast. Indicative of the popularity of the faith in the northeast, by

326 These three churches were not the first Baptist churches in Maine to join an association. There were some Regular Baptist churches in southern Maine that were already part of a Baptist association in New Hampshire.
327 The Minutes for the 1787 Bowdoinham Association meeting (and for several subsequent years) were copied into a Record Book now in the possession of the Maine Historical Society. Internal evidence for the 1788 meeting suggests that this written record dates from 1820. It does not appear that the minutes for the first few years were published. Edwin S. Small claims that Rev. W. O. Grant copied the manuscript minutes in 1820 into a bound volume and deposited them with the Bowdoinham Association. It seems likely that the Maine Historical Society Record Book is this copy. Edwin Sumner Small, A Centennial Review of the Bowdoinham Association of Baptist Churches in Maine, 10.
1819 there were five Regular Baptist associations in Maine comprised of one hundred forty-five churches.\textsuperscript{328}

**Protection of Local Church Independence and Interdependence.** The associated churches were established along self-declared Regular Baptist doctrinal lines usually accompanied by summary doctrinal statements in their records. Their founding “Articles of Faith” and “Covenants” often specifically referenced the long-standing Confessions of the London (1677/89) and Philadelphia (1742) Baptist Associations as the fuller doctrinal expression to which they subscribed. If no specific reference was made to these two confessions, the church frequently referred to the “Articles of Faith” of one of the current Regular Baptist associations as their agreed upon doctrinal source. The Brunswick Baptist Church claimed their doctrinal statement to be that of the Bowdoinham Association of Baptists. The association’s articles in turn would declare either or both London and Philadelphia Confessions as the embodiment of their system of belief.\textsuperscript{329}

The propriety of associations was delineated theologically in the 1689 London Confession and the Philadelphia Confession of 1742. Article 26 of the 1689 London Confession, “Of the Church,” addresses the benefits of association, “so the churches, when planted by the providence of God . . . may enjoy opportunity and advantage for it, ought to hold communion

\textsuperscript{328} The five associations in 1819 were Bowdoinham formed in 1787, York founded in 1800, Lincoln formed from the Bowdoinham Association in 1805, Cumberland formed from the Bowdoinham Association in 1811, and the Eastern Maine Association formed from the Lincoln Association in 1819. The combined minutes of these associations is the basis for the assertion of 145 churches.

among themselves, for their peace, increase of love, and mutual edification.” It further outlined their usefulness in cases of church difficulty where outside assistance may be deemed helpful.\textsuperscript{330}

In cases of difficulties or differences, either in point of Doctrine or Administration; wherein either the Churches in general are concerned, or any one Church in their peace, union, and edification; or any member, or members, of any Church are injured, in or by any proceedings in Censures not agreeable to truth, and order: it is according to the mind of Christ, that many Churches holding communion together, do by their messengers meet to consider, and give their advice in, or about that matter in difference, to be reported to all the Churches concerned; howbeit these Messengers assembled, are not entrusted with any Church-power properly so called; or with any Jurisdiction over the Churches themselves, to exercise any Censures either over any Churches, or Persons; or to impose their determination on the Churches or Officers.\textsuperscript{331}

The association was intended to assist the churches should they request help in maintaining peace and unity. Difficulties encountered within churches were not infrequent, and the Confessions recognized the benefit of outside assistance. However, outside assistance was limited to providing counsel or advice. The association had no authority to step in and take charge of local matters, even in explosive situations.

The confessions of faith owned by these pastors and their churches rejected the One Kingdom theology of the Standing Order. They firmly believed the kingdom of God was made up of regenerate members who were subsequently baptized by immersion and gathered into properly ordered churches. They further believed that each local church was an independent expression of the kingdom of God on earth. The secular world should have no part or jurisdiction over the affairs of this kingdom. However, the custom of referring to other Regular Baptist Associations and the involvement of other churches in the constituting process ensured that these

\textsuperscript{330} \textit{A Confession of Faith}, 92. The wording of the Philadelphia Confession is identical to that of the 1689 London Confession. However, in the Philadelphia Confession “Of the Church” is article 27 rather than 26.

\textsuperscript{331} Ibid., 92-93.
churches did not evolve into expressions of radical individualism. They saw themselves as part of a larger theological and practical tradition.

As important as it was to be part of this larger tradition, Regular Baptists jealously guarded local church independence. This necessitated a careful articulation of the interplay between associations and the local churches that participated in them. Historian Shelby Balik insists that Regular Baptist associations in New England were a means for Baptist leadership to gain “centralized authority.” Unfortunately, the voluntary nature of the Regular Baptists’ understanding of the church and the protection of local church independence guarded by the churches and the associations is not thoroughly analyzed by Balik. As suggested earlier, dissenting religion on the frontier often had top-down leadership structures. Such was the case with the Methodists and Freewill Baptists, for example, but not for Regular Baptists. At the foundation of their associationalism is the definition of “church,” and the conviction that individual churches cooperating together provide the sole authority for the larger body. Many paedobaptists define “church” in multiple ways- e.g. the local body, a Synod, a General Assembly of collected local congregations, or even a national entity encompassing all believers within certain political boundaries. However, Baptists restrict the definition of church to the local congregation or to the Universal or Invisible Church, which consists of all believers in all ages.

As a matter of Baptist principle, there can be no earthly body above the individual congregation. An association is not therefore a denomination or a church per se, but a gathering of messengers from autonomous churches. These messengers act as representatives of the constituent congregations. At the association meetings, these representatives deliberate on various matters, and the collective advice or conclusions of the entire body define the nature of the actions of the Association. In some cases, the advice or decisions of the Association cannot
be enacted until they are subsequently approved by each member church. In theory, this prevents powerful individual leaders from taking control and directing events. Consequently, the independence of the local churches and the interplay between the churches and regional associations requires more detailed analysis that we turn to now.\textsuperscript{332}

\textbf{From the Bottom Up: Local Church Protection of Local Church Independence.} The Regular Baptist tradition valued the independence of the local church at the center of Two Kingdoms theology. This was evident in their founding documents and in their regular practice. When local churches were without pastors, they were often serviced by pastors or missionaries from outside the congregation. These preachers never had more than an advisory function when they were invited by the churches to attend the church’s monthly conference meetings. At the conference meetings, the church’s membership attended to the business of receiving, transferring, and disciplining individual members. They also transacted other congregational business including voting on appointing elders and deacons and, if necessary, leadership dismissals. They met at conference to elect messengers to represent them at the annual association meetings as well. Only the members of that particular church had voting authority at local church conference meetings. Those outside the membership could be invited to attend but were not permitted to vote.

When they had their own buildings, some churches would even vote whether to hear itinerant preachers. For example, when Rev. Isaac Case arrived in Vermont in May 1783, he stopped to visit the brethren in Manchester and attended the church conference. Having no authority at the local church level, he preached, solely at the “desire” of the people.\textsuperscript{333} In another

\textsuperscript{332} Balik, \textit{Rally the Scattered Believers}, 46. As noted in the previous chapter, Rawlyk holds a similar of ministerial aggrandisement as central to the formation of the Baptist association in Nova Scotia.

\textsuperscript{333} Case, “Diary.”
instance, in October 1799, Case was itinerating among communities on the northeastern shore of the Penobscot Bay in Maine. On Saturday, October 5, he attended a church conference where a woman came forward seeking baptism and church membership. The decision as to whether she was an acceptable candidate for baptism and church membership was not a decision for the minister but for the entire membership of the church. Case recorded,

attended the ch[urc]hs monthly conference and heard them tell their travils and trials. Sum complaind of coldness and Darkness. Others spake with asollom scence of Gods Goodness and arevival they had lately Expeianced - one woman came forward and told hir Experiance and offord hir self for Baptism and to Join the chh. She was unanimously Received.334

Regular Baptist Church record books and itinerant and missionary journals and diaries abound with examples of congregational primacy and authority.335

The protection of local church independence and the authority of its members would be codified in each church’s founding Articles of Faith. Many Maine churches adopted the articles from Isaac Backus’s Middleborough Church. Thus, churches carefully protected their individual autonomy, a practice that Daniel Merrill called “godly republicanism.” For example, the Articles of the Livermore Baptist Church confessed,336

a church thus gathered hath power to choose and ordain those officers that Christ hath appointed in his church, viz., bishops or elders, and deacons, and also to dispossess such officers as evidently appear to walk contrary to the gospel, disciplining their members therein; in some such cases it is convenient and profitable to request the advice of neighboring churches of Christ.337

Importantly, when neighboring churches were consulted, it was only to give advice.

334 Ibid.
335 This is confirmed in the excellent study of southern Regular Baptists, Wills, Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South, 1785-1900.
336 As quoted above.
337 First Baptist Church Livermore, Records, 1793-1900, Maine Historical Society. The same Article was adopted by Backus’ Middleborough Church several years before. See Hovey, A Memoir of the Life and Times of the Rev. Isaac Backus, A. M., 337.
The churches also guaranteed there could be no single individual or entity, like a board of elders, to lord over the flock by specifically limiting the authority of the leadership. The Brunswick Baptist Church adopted the “Articles” of the Bowdoinham Association at its founding in 1799, which mirrored the Livermore Baptist Church Articles, in limiting the authority of the officers: “A bishop or elder hath no more power to decide any case or controversy in the church than any private brother.” Members and clergy were on the same footing when it came to matters requiring a vote of the church.338

**From the Top Down: Association Protection of Local Church Independence.** Regular Baptist churches were strongly opposed to outside control and any form of internal hierarchical coercion. But was this true at the associational level? Historian Shelby Balik seems to think otherwise yet provides insufficient proof of her assertion. The rules of the Bowdoinham Association permit insight into how local church independence was ensured by the terms of the association itself. This was also the custom in other Regular Baptist Associations in New England. The founding member churches of the Bowdoinham Association borrowed their “Articles of Faith,” “Covenant,” and “Plan of the Association” from the Stonington Association of Connecticut. These documents clearly defined the relationship between the Association and its churches. As noted above, the Articles of Faith and Covenant affirm the independence of the local church as the visible expression of the kingdom of God on earth. As far as each local church was concerned, the association could not intrude into local church business. However, the association could be invited to give council and advice.339

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338 Livermore, Records.
339 The *Sentiments and Plan of the Stonington Association* was essentially the same as the one for the Warren Association, including references to the London Baptist Confession of 1689. Rev. Isaac Backus was present at the founding of the Stonington Association as a representative of the Warren Association.
By adopting the Articles and Covenant of the Stonington Association, the Bowdoinham Association reaffirmed the Baptist commitment to local church independence and ground that on theology. The document stated, “we utterly disclaim all classical power, and superiority over the churches; acknowledging the independency of each particular church.” These are technical ecclesiological terms. “Classical power” refers to forms of Presbyterian and Standing Order practice, “independency” harkens back to the fundamental notion of local church autonomy. These protections were core values for the Baptists upon which associations cannot and must not intrude or impose.

The protection of local church independence was further safeguarded by the association insisting that voting messengers from associated churches bring letters of appointment from their individual churches. The process of presenting church letters ensured that the voting messengers were present solely by the authority of the local church. Furthermore, the association was not an association of ministers; the churches were free to select any member as a messenger provided, they were “men expert in the laws of their God–knowing and judicious in the Scriptures.” The association wanted men qualified to address theological and doctrinal questions, but who might qualify as such was wholly under the control of the local church.

Additionally, lay authority was protected by ensuring that ordained ministers could not gain a majority at the association meetings, and thus potentially establish some sort of ministerial control over the collective organization. In the printed Minutes of annual association meetings, the seated messengers and ministers were named along with their churches, each messenger and minister seated having an equal vote in the proceedings. The Bowdoinham Association allowed

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340 Sentiments and Plan of the Stonington Association.
341 Ibid.
each church to send up to three messengers in addition to the pastor. Published minute records indicate that lay representation was considerably higher than ministerial representation and lay members were more active at association assemblies.\footnote{342 Sampling the published \textit{Minutes} of the associations confirms this handily. The number of messengers and ministers for the Bowdoinham Association for the first ten years of published \textit{Minutes} reveals the following: 1790 (ministers: 4, messengers: 12), 1791 (no \textit{Minutes} available), 1792 (ministers: 4, messengers: 25), 1793 (ministers: 6, messengers: 35), 1794 (ministers: 8 messengers: 42), 1795 (ministers: 13, messengers: 42), 1796 (ministers: 11, messengers: 41), 1797 (ministers: 17, messengers: 29), 1798 (ministers: 15, messengers: 42), 1799 (ministers: 19, messengers: 74), 1800 (ministers: 18, messengers: 79). These figures reveal that churches seated 431 messengers and 116 ministers. Lay representation was almost four times that of ministers.} Consequently, Baptist associations were not like a presbytery or a Congregationalist consociation of ministers.

The Bowdoinham Association, like other Regular Baptist associations, fully safeguarded the independence of local churches. In the Bowdoinham Association \textit{Record Book} (begun no later than 1820) they wrote out longhand the “Design in Associating Together.” It placed the Association in the double context of local church independence and the kingdom of God.

In associating together we disclaim all pretentions to the least control on the independence of the particular churches; our main design is to establish a medium of communication relative to the general state of religion – recommend such measures, give such advice, - & render such assistance as shall be thought most conducive to the advancement, peace, & enlargement of the Redeemer’s Kingdom in the world.\footnote{343 Bowdoinham Association, Records of the Proceedings of the Bowdoinham Association, 1787-1916.}

Examples of this commitment to local autonomy abound in the records of Regular Baptist churches. Following the founding of the Brunswick Baptist Church in 1799, the newly formed church clearly expressed the primary of local identity even as its desired membership in the Bowdoinham Association. Its Record Book noted:
At a Conference meeting the third Saturday in August it was Voted that Elder Williams and Deacon Samuel Dunlop be our Messengers to the Bowdoinham Association & also petition that we as a Church be admitted into the association which was accordingly voted.344

The cooperative ways in which the association and churches ensured local church independence was of fundamental importance.

**The Rise of Regular Baptist Associations in the Maritime Provinces**

In 1800, messengers from Nova Scotia churches approved the “Plan of the Association” adopted and published in 1790 by the “Danbury Association in New England” (Connecticut, more specifically). They became the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Association, the first Baptist Association in Canada.345 Ironically, in many respects, this worked in reverse order to that of most Baptist Associations, as some ministers came into association as Regular Baptists before their churches. Though they adopted Regular Baptist closed communion principles, their practice lagged behind their theological commitments for a time.346 Edward Manning, the clerk, and Joseph Dimock, the moderator, admitted such to Payzant during the meeting.

I told Messrs. Dimock and Manning that I Should have not[h]ing to do with it, as it was a plan that was neather agreable to myself; nor the Church that I Represented and that it was a new thing to me. To which they answered, neather could they on account of the Churches to which they belong’d, but for themselves they could.347

344 First Baptist Church Brunswick, Records, 1799-1873, Maine Historical Society.
345 The Minutes of the 1800 meeting have never been published, but a manuscript copy exists. Minutes of the Nova Scotia Baptist Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting-House in Granville, June the 23rd and 24th, 1800 (presumably at the Atlantic Baptist Archives, Acadia University, Wolfville, Nova Scotia).
346 T. H. Chipman appears to have brought his church to adopt closed-communion Baptist principles before the June meeting. Bell, The Newlight Baptist Journals, 48, n. 78. Payzant claims Chipman’s church improperly altered their article on baptism along closed communion lines before the 1800 Association meeting, see Payzant, Journal, 81.
347 Payzant, Journal, 79. There is some confusion in the literature over the “Plan” adopted by the 1800 Association. The manuscript Minutes claim that it followed the plan as published in the Minutes of the Danbury Association after their first meeting in 1790, see The Minutes of the Baptist Association. Held in Danbury. The Danbury “Plan” was clearly modeled after that of the Warren Baptist Association, published in 1769, but there were significant differences. Silas T. Rand confesses in “An Historical Sketch,” published in the Halifax Christian Messenger in 1849, that he could find no copy of the 1800 Minutes, but he nevertheless provided a printed copy of “the Preamble and Rules then adopted,” which was modeled after the Warren Association Plan. Some clarity can be brought to this
Closed communion marks a crucial pivot in the history of evangelicalism in the Canadian Maritimes, because the pioneering evangelical in the region, Henry Alline, had strongly opposed formalism. Thus, to adopt closed communion was to move away from the legacy of a towering figure who had died in 1784. As a result, it is instructive to trace the theological shift that Manning and the other newly Associated Baptists had come to embrace. As clerk for the 1800 meeting, Manning was tasked with writing the circular letter, an annual practice of Baptist associations to communicate among their churches. The 1800 letter was styled by Manning as “a small description of A True Church of Christ with the order thereof.” In it he outlined the scriptural doctrine of the church of as he now understood it.  

He began by distinguishing the invisible church, of which “all God’s elect” are a part, irrespective of local church affiliation. He proceeded to focus on the biblical identification of the “visible church,” as a body of believers who “first gave their own selves to the Lord, then to the church.” Manning was getting to the heart of the church as a body of visible saints. In this understanding, there was no room for unbelievers as church members. Finally, the church was a body of “true believer’s” who voluntarily agreed “to walk together in all the commands and situation. The manuscript Minutes of the 1800 Nova Scotia Association meeting specifically references the “Plan of the Association Prepared by Eld. M[anning] by appointment which was agreeable to that of the Danbury Association in New England,” but did not copy the “Plan” into the Minutes. Scholars appear unanimous on referring to the Plan of the Nova Scotia Association as that of the Danbury Baptists; however, the copy of the Plan provided by Rand largely matches the copy of the “Plan” written in the manuscript Minutes of the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Association for 1808 with the following note; “This Plan in substance was adopted by this Association at their meeting at Granville in the year 1800 on the first Monday after the 20th of June.” It seems most likely that Rand was working from the 1808 manuscript, but never actually compared the three different Association Plans. Determining with certainty which “Plan” was adopted in 1800 remains elusive, but without further information it appears wisest to take them at their word and assume it was the Danbury Plan. If for some reason the 1808 Minutes are to be considered more trustworthy, it was the Warren Plan that was adopted. It is also possible that Nova Scotia brethren saw the Danbury and Warren Plan as sufficiently similar and did not bother distinguishing between them.  

ordinances of the Gospel.” This was the core definition of “a True Church of Christ” for Manning as a Regular Baptist.\textsuperscript{349}

As the ordinances were foundational to a true church, Manning turned to these next. Repudiating disinterest in the ordinances by Alline and his disciples, Manning insisted that baptism could not be relegated to a secondary matter but was “an institution of God much owned by him.” If one does “really take the Scriptures to be the only Rule of Faith and Practice,” the ordinance of baptism will have due importance. Furthermore, he addressed the proper subjects of baptism “from what has been said Respecting the Institution we Safely infer that Real Believers according to the Scriptures are the only subjects of Baptism.” Finally, Manning asked, “what is the right mode of baptism?” To this he answered,

> the Apostle Paul’s words seem to be key to the Scriptures, when he so often mentions our being Buried with Christ in Baptism which if we allow Baptism to be an outward and visible sign of an inward Spiritual Grace (as Almost all denominations of Christians do) must prove Immersion to be Right. As an outward Burial signifies a spiritual one, more clear than any other act whatever.\textsuperscript{350}

Manning and the associated brethren in the Maritimes had fully embraced believer’s only baptism by immersion as the entry door of the visible church. Manning expressed in the “Circular Letter” what the ministers had doctrinally committed themselves to in June 1800; that is, all but John Payzant.\textsuperscript{351}

Their doctrinal and practical commitments reflect Baptist ecclesiology as derived from Two Kingdoms theology. A statement from the Association Covenant illustrates this well. It

\textsuperscript{349} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{350} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{351} The New Light Baptists were deemed by Payzant to be erroneous in their doctrine of the mode and subjects of baptism. See his 1808 letter to the Granville New Light Church arguing from the Greek text of the New Testament that there was no support for immersion as the proper mode. For him, in true Allinite fashion, “baptism is only an outward sign.” Quoted in Saunders, \textit{History of the Baptists}, 88.
declared, “we take one only living and true God to be our God,” the “Scriptures … to be the revealed mind and will of God,” and that, “without the least reservation,” they voluntarily and publicly had given themselves up “soul and body… to this one true God thro’ Jesus Christ.” They further declared their Covenant promises “to hold communion one with another in the worship of God according to Christ’s visible kingdom…looking and watching for the glorious Day, when the Lord Jesus Christ will take to himself his great Power and Reign from Sea to Sea and from Rivers to the end of the Earth.”

The well-known dissent of John Payzant made plain that there were significant differences among New Lights as they approached this key issue. The theological shift that led many Allinite ministers to adopt Regular Baptist theology and practice was much more substantial than simply a commitment to immersionist baptismal practice. Closed communion, more than any other doctrine, clearly displayed the difference. Payzant never gave up his open communion stance, yet most other New Light ministers, like Edward and James Manning, Chipman, and Dimock, would eventually lead closed communion churches.

Communion was a major issue, but another that has been understudied in the formation of the Nova Scotia Association concerns local church independence and limits on associational power. Commenting on the 1800 meeting at which the Nova Scotia Association was formed, Payzant recorded:

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352 Manuscript copy, Plan, Covenant, and Articles of the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Baptist Association, recorded at their June 27, 28, and 29, 1808 meeting, apparently compiled by a committee consisting of John Burton of Halifax, T. S. Harding of Horton, Elder Manning of Cornwallis, T. H. Chipman of Annapolis, and Joseph Dimock of Newport, Minutes of the Nova Scotia Baptist Association, June the 23rd and 24th, 1808, in Baptist Collection, edited by Acadia University, Special Collections, 1808.
Previous to my coming to Granville, Mr. Chipman had a church meeting where a few of his Church met, and as they had not regular notice few attended, and he put to a Vote wether they should alter their Articles, from an open Communion to a close one, which was carried by a Majority, as I was informed at that time. Which made a great deal of talk and much uneasiness. For Mr. Chipman and the Church had [no] right to alter their Articles, without the consultation and advice of the Associated Churches and Ministers. But Mr. Chipman said they had. 353

It is hard to say with certainty whether the “uneasiness” Payzant described is simply his own or was present among the majority of the ministers at the meeting. Either way, two important points appear here. The first is the democratic way Chipman led his congregation to adopt closed communion prior to the Association meeting. At first read, it seems that Payzant objected to the small number of members present who voted to adopt closed communion. On a closer read, however, it is apparent that Payzant objected to the church deciding without associational oversight. The second point is the authoritarian way Payzant conceived of the open or mixed communion Congregational and Baptist Association, which, to his dismay, became defunct at this meeting.

It is evident from the references to the “Plan” adopted by the Nova Scotia Association in 1800 that the New Light Baptist ministers who formed the Nova Scotia Association were now committed to the Regular Baptist doctrine of the local church. Edward Manning’s “Circular Letter” to the churches makes this ecclesiastical commitment undeniable. This was underscored by the Articles or Confession of Faith, which defined the church as a visible community of saints.

Furthermore, as their documents reveal, the saints all stood as redeemed men and women, on the same footing with each other as part of the visible kingdom of God. 354 Like the Baptists in

354 After the sixteenth century Reformation, the early modern churches acknowledged that the doctrine of justification by faith alone ensured equal salvific standing before God for different ethnicities, people from various
Maine and the rest of New England, the clergy were given no greater voting authority on church matters than any other member in good standing. It may well be that this godly republicanism, as Merrill called it, fueled Nova Scotia Anglican Bishop Charles Inglis to write his 1799 letter decrying “New Light Fanaticism.” As a loyalist who fled New York during the American Revolution, further reeling from the excesses of the French Revolution, Bishop Inglis was hypersensitive to what he believed were grass roots efforts to further democracy in British North America. Writing on April 3, 1799 to Rev. Joseph Bailey, another Anglican loyalist now serving in Nova Scotia, Inglis opined,

society is threatened with danger. Fanatics are impatient under civil restraint & run into the democratic system. They are for Leveling every thing both sacred & civil; & this is peculiarly the case of our New Lights, who are, as far as I can learn, Democrats to a man – the Methodists will probably fall into the same plan.355

Historian Brian Cuthbertson acknowledges that the issue facing Inglis in 1799-1800 was the rise of Baptists in Nova Scotia, and the Anglicans Rev. Joseph Bailey and Rev. Roger Viets shared Inglis’ concern for the supposed rise of democracy that accompanied the revival.356

Inglis’ letter was written during the “rage for dipping,” discussed earlier, and was, as Inglis noted, somewhat narrow in its denominational focus on New Light Baptists. It described Inglis’ fears as a result of the rise of Baptist principles under his bishopric. Cuthbertson, however, placed Inglis’ paranoia in context:

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socio-economic statuses and the two sexes. This did not, however, undermine traditional societal roles, such as male-only leadership in the church.

what was missing from these charges leveled by Inglis, Bailey and Viets was any actual evidence that the New Lights were at all propagating revolutionary doctrines. Those reading Paine were more likely to be educated Anglicans, Presbyterians or Methodists; New Lights displayed no interest in politics, and one of the hallmarks of Nova Scotian Baptists was to be their conservatism.357

Cuthbertson’s insight regarding the Baptists conservatism suggests that it was not the Baptists’ political ideology, but their ecclesiology which fueled Inglis’ opposition. In his mind, democracy of church must ultimately translate into democracy of state; republicanism was dangerous even if there was no overt civil evidence. It is likely that the unchurched converts of the New Light Baptists who attended Anglican services objected to the differences in ecclesiology. This would be especially true as they encountered the high church episcopacy of the loyalist clergy, who were deeply committed to enhancing church-state interconnections in the Maritime Provinces. Anglicans certainly did not value lay leadership for congregational decisions. Anglican clergy proved unable to keep their people away from non-established churches, which boomed as Anglican popularity stalled and declined, even during the so-called loyalist period.

Cuthbertson’s claim of political conservatism also highlights how the New Light Baptists managed to hold differing political philosophies in tension. They could robustly confess the church to be a godly republic under the direct rule of King Jesus, while simultaneously being subjects to a civil government that was, in most ways, opposed to republicanism as an anarchic impulse. The Baptist confessions of faith acknowledged the legitimacy of human governments and the necessity of the redeemed to submit to legitimate civil authority. Yet they simultaneously rejected the intrusion of the magistrate in church affairs. The confession adopted by Backus’

357 Ibid., 185.
Middleborough church, which was adopted in whole or in part by many Baptist churches throughout the northeast, illustrates this point well.

That God hath appointed the ordinance of Civil Government for the defending of the poor as well as of the rich, in their civil rights and privileges; and the work of the civil magistrate is, to punish moral evils, and to encourage moral virtue, without touching upon anything that infringes upon the conscience, or pretending to dictate and govern in the worship of the Eternal God; which belongs only to Jesus Christ, the great law-giver and head of his Church.\textsuperscript{358}

Bishop Inglis’ panic over the spread of democracy as allied with New Lights’ adoption of Regular Baptist ecclesiology derived from his belief that church and state needed to be unified and mutually support one another. By contrast, the Baptist Two Kingdoms theology demanded the independence of the local church that was itself a godly republic and answerable to Christ alone. Such a vision appalled Inglis and most of his fellow Anglican clerics, but they were out of touch with popular opinion in Nova Scotia in this era.

Another indication of the importance of local church autonomy for Baptists can be found in the views of another critic, the New Light Rev. John Payzant. He opposed the way the Rev. Chipman’s church adopted closed-communion Baptist principles, because he thought the Association should play a more dominant role in this decision. When Payzant claimed that Chipman was at fault for “alter[ing] their Articles, without the consultation and advice of the Associated Churches and Ministers,” he contends that the Association had some power or authority over the churches. There seems to have been some elements of Congregational consociationalism in Payzant’s understanding, and he certainly sought to join Congregationalists and Baptists together in single churches.\textsuperscript{359}

\textsuperscript{358} Hovey, \textit{A Memoir of the Life and Times of the Rev. Isaac Backus, A. M}, 336.
\textsuperscript{359} Payzant, \textit{Journal}, 81.
Payzant also criticized other ministers in the Association who moved to adopt closed-communion principles. When Payzant claimed that he had personally “contrived” the Association, he seems to have demanded some sort of ministerial authority in setting the direction of the Association and its churches. He did not acquiesce to the will of the churches nor did he recognize individual congregational independence. It may be that Payzant was simply exasperated by the changes, but his language speaks more to a concern over congregational action without associational approval that moves well beyond simple frustration. In the years following 1800, however, most New Light ministers appear to have sided more with Chipman than Payzant.

What appears in stark relief in this interchange is the theology of associationalism imbedded in the Regular Baptists’ Plan of the Association. The Baptists recognized that the Association had no power to regulate affairs within the individual congregations. In the words of the Danbury Association’s *Sentiments*, “such an Association is consistent with the independency and power of particular Churches, because it pretends to be no other than an Advisory council, utterly disclaiming superiority, jurisdiction, coercive right and infallibility.” Yet, this self-imposed restriction did not eliminate the right of the Association to govern its own membership. The purpose of the Articles of Faith, Covenant, and the restrictions to membership articulated in the Plan gave the Association the tools of oversight. A church was free to act as it deemed best; the Association was then free to determine if the church should remain a member in good standing or be removed from the rolls.361

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What could cause a church to be removed by the association? Certainly, failure to uphold the theological commitments reflected in the Articles of Faith would give the Association cause to reconsider a church’s membership, or whether to seat its messengers. A prime example of an association acting against a church with theological transgressions respects the well-known U.S. Baptist John Leland. He was charged with “neglecting the ordinances of God’s house and maintaining no discipline.” In 1812, the Shaftsbury Association appointed a committee to examine the matter and return with a report to the association. In 1813 the committee “reported that ‘the church would not receive them.’”

At the 1814 Association meeting held at Shodack, Leland and the Cheshire church were reconsidered, and though the Association was convinced the church was “negligent in discipline, and also in commemoration of the Lord’s supper,” they were not ready to act against the church. Things, however, continued to deteriorate, and as Baptist historian Stephen Wright commented,

Whether in every respect, the Association acted wisely in their efforts to promote peace among the Cheshire Brethren, and preserve their connection with the Body, may admit of a doubt. But that the sentiments of Elder Leland, as embodied in the schedule of Aug. 22, 1811, are not according to sound Scripture doctrine, we think no Baptist of this day, has the least doubt. They virtually nullify the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper, by the authority of his feelings, as much as the Quakers do, both the ordinances of Christ’s house, by their conscientious scruples of all external ordinances, save a broad hat, and a drab coat.

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363 Minutes of the Shaftsbury Baptist Association, Held at Schodack, June ... 1814 Together with Their Circular and Corresponding Letter (Lansingburgh, New York: Tracy & Bliss, 1814), 8-9.

364 Wright, History of the Shaftsbury Baptist Association, 154.
The final step was taken against Leland and the Cheshire, Massachusetts, church was when the Shaftsbury Vermont Association was queried about their relationship to Leland by the Leyden Association in 1817. The Leyden Association sent Leland’s Cheshire Church’s articles to Shaftsbury with a single question, “if we hold in our fellowship a public character or Church that embraced such sentiments: - Voted, unanimously, that this association hold fellowship with no man or Church, embracing or countenancing such sentiments as contained in the paper then presented.” Leland’s Cheshire congregation was no longer considered a part of the Shaftsbury Association.  

This example highlights that the association was voluntary. They had no authority to correct the perceived problems in Cheshire or to call Leland before the body for some form of disciplinary action. Their confession acknowledged the association had no right of “censure.” The only measure they could enact in the face of Leland’s unacceptable theology and practice was to protect their own body from being influenced by Leland. This was done through a process of disfellowship that removed the elder and his church from the Shaftsbury Association.  

Another reason the association might remove a church was because of inattention to associational business. If the church failed to participate in the association for a specified period, this could be grounds to act, as the Nova Scotia “Plan of the Association,” recorded in 1808,

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366 The Philadelphia and London confessions both affirmed this practice. Wills explains, “to disfellowship a church was to announce that it had departed too far from the scriptural norms to retain its status as a New Testament Church. It had broken union; it was schismatical.” Wills, Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South, 1785-1900, 100. Yet, this definition appears to be a bit too narrow. Not all churches so treated were deemed to have lost their status as New Testament churches. Daniel Merrill acknowledged that Arminian Churches, because they had a correct view of baptism and church membership, were indeed true churches. However, a church abandoning Calvinism would certainly give cause to be removed from the Regular Baptist Association, although one suspects in most instances the church would have withdrawn before it was removed.
stated, “Any church belonging to this Association refusing to present themselves in the
Association for any three years successively, are to be dropped from the Minutes.” The
Bowdoinham Association also addressed member church “neglect,” although it did not put
definitive time constraints on the regulation.367

Baptist Associations in New England and Nova Scotia jealously protected the local
church from intrusion by the association. This was an important practical necessity since
associational intrusion would violate local church autonomy and could impose extra-ecclesial
structures, interfering with Christ’s direct reign and rule over his subjects through local churches.
In other words, protecting the local church from outside influence, both ecclesiastical and civil,
was central to the Two Kingdoms theology of Baptists. This was not to say, however, that
associations could be of no assistance in furthering the kingdom. In fact, association’s protection
of local autonomy was part and parcel of enabling churches to assist one another in the spread of
the kingdom of God.

**Associations and the Furtherance of the Kingdom**

**Associations and Local Church Assistance**

Beyond the reception and dismissal of member churches, the more important work of the
association was to assist and cooperate with associated churches to extend the kingdom of God.
The association was not intended to be a collaborative mechanism for the churches to support
jointly the work of the kingdom. The association was subservient to the churches—the smaller
units were the visible expression of the kingdom of God on earth.

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367 Minutes of the Nova Scotia Baptist Association, June the 23rd and 24th, 1808, in Baptist Collection, Acadia
University; *Sentiments and Plan of the Stonington Association*, 2.
Examples are, again, widespread. The Bowdoinham Association in 1798 sought to “afford . . . counsel” to the Buckfield Church that was going through some unnamed difficulties. They voted a committee of eight members, four elders and four brothers, to consider the matter and “to make a report at our next annual meeting.” The involvement of both lay messengers and ministers reflected the Regular Baptist theology of equality of members and ministers in church affairs. The committee reported back the following year, apparently to the satisfaction of the Association; whatever the issue may have been it was apparently resolved with the advice and counsel of the Association.  

In similar fashion, in 1810 the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Association was notified of an unspecified “Brethren opposed to good order” disturbing the “Church of Salsbury.” In addition to voting for the churches of the association to observe a united day of fasting regarding the concern, it was further “voted that a Church meeting be appointed, and Brethren chosen to visit, advise, admonish and exhort, in meekness and in much love, the above described Brethren.” Recognizing that assistance might be rejected, the Association further voted “should their endeavours prove fruitless, it is our advice to exclude them.” In accord with their Confession, instances of assisting associated churches in times of difficulty are common in the minutes of Baptist associations. Consistent with the theological commitment to the independence of each local church, they acknowledged that the most they could do in the case of the council’s failure was to simply remove the church from the association.

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368 Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting-House in Brunswick, August 22 and 23, 1798 (Augusta, Maine: Peter Edes, 1798), 5.

369 Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting-House in Livermore, 6; Minutes of the Nova Scotia and New-Brunswick Baptist Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting-House in Sacville in the County of Westmoreland, June 25 & 26, 1810; Together with Their Circular and Corresponding Letters (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Printed by John Howe & Son, 1810), 5.
The association continually guarded against becoming a magisterium or consociation. For instance, in 1801 Rev. Isaac Case was again seated at the Warren Association annual meeting as a messenger of the Bowdoinham Association. He would have returned to his Maine brethren with a copy of the “Corresponding Letter” from the Warren brethren to its sister associations.

The associations annually communicated to sister associations via Corresponding Letters carried by the visiting messengers. The 1801 Warren Association’s letter reminded the sister associations to limit their authority.

Let us watch with the eye of jealousy, and discountenance with the frown of indignation, every attempt of our associated bodies, to exercise authority over the churches, or infringe their right of independence; while we keep in prospect the horrid monster, Ecclesiastical Tyranny, and dread more than death his introduction among us, with the terrible train of consequences always attending him; while, like the faithful centinel in the night of danger, we would always keep our watch awake within, let us present the point of the sword of the Spirit against those without, who, under the mask of religion, morality, and good order, would deprive us of the richest gift of Heaven, religious liberty.\(^{370}\)

Though the association may be called in to assist churches struggling with internal affairs, it denied any presumed authority, acting solely as advisors to the churches.

There was more to concern themselves with than assistance to churches with internal difficulties. The further propriety of associating together as churches was delineated practically in the Sentiments of the association’s Plan. For instance, the Nova Scotia Sentiments maintain,

\(^{370}\) Minutes of the Warren Association Held at the Meeting House, Belonging to the First Baptist Church in Sutton, September 8 & 9, 1801 (Boston: Manning & Loring, 1801), 10.
That such a combination of churches is not only prudent, but useful, as has been proved by the experience of many years in England and America. Some of its most obvious uses are: - Union and Communion among the several Churches - maintaining more effectually the faith once delivered to the Saints - obtaining advice and counsel in cases of doubt and difficulty, and assistance in distress; and in general, being better able to promote the cause of God.371

From these Sentiments it is evident that the associations functioned as servants to the churches rather than as additional layers of ecclesiastical bureaucracy. This is important because Maine and Nova Scotia Baptists, while they recognized that they were part of a trans-Atlantic and trans-continental Regular Baptist identity stretching back almost two centuries, denied any form of continental or trans-Atlantic denominationalism in the formal sense. Their shared identity was theological and most fully realized in the doctrine of the church.

**Associations and Local Church Cooperation**

Over and above providing advice and counsel, associations enabled the churches better to pursue the furtherance of the kingdom in several ways. One of the most helpful was in providing occasional pulpit supply to churches destitute of pastors. With the number of churches growing rapidly during this period, keeping up with the demand for preachers and ministers was challenging. Granted, requiring less formal education than the Standing Order in New England or the Anglican Church in Nova Scotia simplified the qualification process, but the Baptists struggled nonetheless in supplying their churches with ministerial candidates.

The association and church statistics bear this out. Historian Stephen Marini calculated that Regular Baptists in Maine grew from 3 churches in 1780 to 154 churches by 1820, almost three times as fast as the Congregational churches of Maine. Of the 154 Baptist churches established in Maine by 1820, 32 were without pastors. When the Nova Scotia Association was

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formed there were apparently nine churches who covenanted to associate together. By 1820 the Association boasted 28 churches, 11 of which had no minister. In each case the association provided much needed aid to pastor-less churches.\footnote{372}

Expecting Baptist ministers to itinerate meant that local churches were accustomed to their pastors being away from their pulpits from time to time preaching in surrounding communities. It was considered normal for local churches to help bear the burden of nearby pastor-less communities. By meeting the needs of the churches, ministers who were able and willing to travel ensured regular preaching to destitute churches at stated intervals throughout the year. This was especially helpful as it would provide ordained men able to lead in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, a task that required a properly ordained minister. The coordination of these ministerial visits to destitute churches fell to the annual gathering of the association. The printed minutes of the association meetings contain extended sections detailing ministerial supply assignments agreed upon at the annual assemblies. In some instances, aside from asking messengers to write Corresponding and Circular Letters, the singular major issue addressed concerned assigning supplies to destitute churches. An example of this is found in the Bowdoinham Association Minutes for 1790.\footnote{373}

It has been suggested that such supply assignments were one way the associations “concentrated” their authority and increasingly compromised “congregational autonomy.”\footnote{374}

\footnote{372} Marini, “Religious Revolution in the District of Maine.” The statistics for the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Association were calculated for 1800 from the data supplied in Levy, The Baptists of the Maritime Provinces, 1753-1946, 71. For 1820, I used the data supplied in Minutes of the Nova Scotia and New-Brunswick Baptist Association, Held at the Sackville, N. B., June 21st, 22nd & 23rd, 1820; Together with Their Circular and Corresponding Letters (Saint John, New Brunswick: Henry Chubb, 1820).

\footnote{373} Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association, Held at Harpswell, September 29th and 30th, 1790 (Boston: Samuel Hall, 1790).

\footnote{374} Balik, Rally the Scattered Believers, 47. Balik does note that Methodists, Universalists, and Freewill Baptists used their organizational structures far more coercively than Regular Baptists. Historian Walter B. Shurden addresses cases of Baptist associations overstepping their authority. Acknowledging the possibility, he confirms the
Though it might be possible to read the associational minutes through this lens, a closer look at the data proves otherwise. First, associations were not clergy led. As already indicated, most messengers were laymen selected by each congregation. The association had no authority over the selection process as this was entirely in the hands of each local church. It would be hard to imagine a lay majority freely giving away their local church liberty.

Second, the selection of supplies for destitute churches was a matter of vote; each church had a voice in the process at the association meeting. Third, while the associations were important for the furtherance of the kingdom in many ways, they met only once a year for two or three days. It would be hard to envision much ecclesiastical control being exercised by such an infrequent assembly. Furthermore, associational gatherings were attended by many more than those who were seated as messengers. The minutes regularly record sermons preached at these meetings and large congregations sitting under the ministry of the word. It is hard to imagine the association encroaching on local church autonomy right under the noses of so many autonomously minded Baptists members and lay messengers.

A closer look at the function of associations suggests a far more bottom-up character to supply preaching for destitute churches. For instance, the Bowdoinham Association in 1792 had fifteen member churches represented by thirty messengers. Of the thirty messengers only five were ordained clergy. Furthermore, nine churches were without benefit of settled pastors. Even had they wanted to, and there is no indication they did. The number of un-ordained messengers and the number of churches who were pastor-less made it impossible for the clergy to impose

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actual instances were few. “The fact must be underscored that this idea of associational authority constituted an anomaly within the usual Baptist position. It appeared only in scattered instances and in every case for only a brief period. Baptists were not always careful in defining associational authority; but when they discovered that language had been used which tended to magnify associational powers, they promptly made amendments,” Shurden, *Associationalism among Baptists in America, 1707-1814*, 154.
their collective will on the association or its churches. A more convincing view of this situation is that lay messengers from destitute churches came to the association with requests for supply. If they made no request, then the association left well enough alone. This is confirmed by the data, though nine Bowdoinham Association churches were without ministers, the association only voted to supply six in the coming year. If the association was gaining some form of ascendancy over the churches, one wonders how this could happen.375

Furthermore, when one reads the diaries of itinerant ministers like Isaac Case, one does not get the sense that the churches viewed ministerial supplies as an imposition from without. To be sure, one must make allowances for the potential bias of the author, but some entries are written in such a way as to preclude dissatisfaction on the part of congregations. Case seems to have worked hard to attend the local congregation’s needs rather than the contrary.

Some examples will suffice. In January 1784 following Case’s first evangelistic meeting in Thomaston he recorded, “They Received me gladly. They said they had Ben Looking for me sumtime. They told one that they had had afast that Day amongst their small sosiety that haith kept up ameating as they are Destitute of preaching.” Case’s arrival was earnestly sought. In November 1808 Case supplied the Baptist Church in Wayne, where he noted, “Heare is a small Destitute poor and Neadey Church. They Informed me that they had not ben suplied but one Lords Day for six Months past.” While Case may have overplayed his welcome in such instances, this seems unlikely. Stronger evidence would need to be provided that suggests

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375 See Bowdoinham Association, *Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association; Held at Bowdoin, October 3d 4th, M,Dcc,Xcii* (Boston: Edes & Son, 1792). The 1800 Minutes reveal similar statistics. At the 1800 Bowdoinham Association annual meeting there were thirty-seven churches represented by 97 messengers, of which sixteen were ordained clergy. Eighteen of the thirty-seven churches were without the benefit of settled ministers and yet supplies were only voted for ten of the destitute churches. Association Bowdoinham, *Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association... August 27 and 28, 1800.*
imposition on churches by outside ministers and associations for the charge of “concentrated authority” to stick. Rather, local church autonomy and cooperation via associations seems more pervasive.\textsuperscript{376}

A second way that associations assisted churches to further the kingdom was in cooperative mission efforts. Although ministers could make regular short itinerant trips to preach, extended trips for longer periods of time were often not possible. Two reasons contributed to the limitation: finances and home church needs. For ministers to leave their pulpits for weeks, or even months, on end was unacceptable to local congregations. Their specific needs for regular preaching and pastoral ministry were to be the major focus of the settled pastor. Correspondingly, to spend extended periods of time traveling and preaching required financial resources that most Baptist pastors and churches did not have. Frontier churches were rarely well endowed, and many ministers struggled just to make ends meet even without the added expense of extensive travel.

Refusing to rely on tax supported ministries, many associational minutes and circular letters addressed to the churches reiterated the need for the churches to supply adequately the financial needs of their pastors. The 1794 Circular Letter of the Bowdoinham Association concentrated on the need for benevolence. The letter first addressed the ministers of the Gospel. It exhorted them not to be motivated by money, or to be held back by the lack thereof, but to be willing to “undergo many straits and difficulties in dispensing” the preached word, and to “spend and be spent in the cause of God.” But the Association was not satisfied to exhort the ministers alone, they also addressed the laity: “Will those that are governed by a benevolent spirit, study every semi-want of their own; consulting the best measures to secure their own prosperity,

\textsuperscript{376} Case, “Diary.”
before doing any thing towards encouraging and supporting the gospel ministry?” Clearly the Association sought to encourage its churches to supply adequately their ministers. Sadly, not all heeded the gentle exhortation.

The Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Association urged its churches in a similar vein to obey scriptural imperatives to “afford their Ministers liberal support, according to their ability” desirous that their “Families may live free from want, and . . . the Ministers as much as possible may live in a state disencumbered from the cares and concerns of the World.” The frequency of such appeals suggests ministerial support was an ever-present need and that paltry financial support was a potential hindrance to the work of the kingdom. Adequate finances were a perennial challenge for local churches.

Be that as it may, the Regular Baptists were certain that the spread of the kingdom required more than occasional preaching tours across large regions. As Daniel Merrill noted in his ordination sermon for Henry Hale, the field of labor was “through every part and place under heaven.” How were single churches to accomplish this end? To attempt the task as individual churches was impossible due to limited resources, but through the cooperation of churches aided by regional associations much more could be accomplished. Thus, associations were the means whereby Regular Baptists united to engage in missions.

Primarily, associations coordinated as a central focal point for collecting funds and assisted in selecting suitable ordained men to serve as missionaries. As the new century dawned, the Regular Baptist churches of Maine tasked the associations to be the central point for

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377 Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association, Held at Ballstown (Portland, 1794), 6-7.
378 Minutes of the Nova Scotia and New-Brunswick Baptist Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting-House in Onslow, June 24th & 25th, 1811; Together with Their Circular and Corresponding Letters (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Printed by Howe & Son, 1811), 11.
collecting mission funds. The churches gathered in associations ensured the work would be larger than any single individual or church could accomplish; the burden was to be shared.

In 1798 the Bowdoinham Association agreed that Rev. Isaac Case, then pastor in Readfield, and Rev. Thomas Green from North Yarmouth would be their representatives at the next New Hampshire Association annual meeting. As appointed, the two pastors traveled to Wells, Maine, to meet with the New Hampshire Association in June 1799. A third elder, Elisha Williams from Livermore, attended as well. This meeting “voted to send a missionary, to preach and administer the ordinances of the gospel in the eastern country.” A collection was taken yielding twenty dollars which was put in the hands of Elder Henry Smith, the treasurer of the association. Smith, Elder William Hooper, and elder William Batchelder were subsequently assigned “to employ and agree with a suitable person to travel into the eastern country.” Formal plans were coming together at the association level to enlarge “the boundaries of the Redeemer’s kingdom.”

Six weeks later Case, Green, and Williams attended the Bowdoinham Association meeting in Williams’ home church in Livermore. The Bowdoinham Association would have had a report from these three messengers as well as receiving the minutes from the June meeting of the New Hampshire Association. They would have been apprised of their Baptist neighbors’ endeavors to reach the “eastern country” by funding a missionary. Consequently, the 1799

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380 Rev. Elisha Williams (1757-1845) was a graduate of Yale who in the 1790s gave up his paedobaptist theology and embraced Baptist principles while teaching in Livermore, Maine, the hometown of his wife. He was ordained by the Livermore Baptist Church and in 1799 and took the pastorate of the Brunswick Baptist Church. In 1803 he took the pastoral charge of the Baptist Church in Beverly, Massachusetts, where he remained the rest of his life. He also participated in the ordination of Daniel Merrill of Sedgwick, Maine. See his short funeral biography, “Rev. Elisha S. Williams,” Christian Watchman 26, No. 7 (1845): 26.

381 Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting-House in Brunswick, August 22 and 23, 1798; Minutes of the New-Hampshire Association, Held at the Meeting-House, North Part of Wells. Wednesday & Thursday, June 12th and 13th. 1799 (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Charles Peirce, 1799), 6, 8.
Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association “voted to recommend to the Churches in the Association to raise money by contribution for the support of a Gospel Mission, and bring the same to our next annual meeting. Contributed fifteen dollars at the association for this use.” They further “voted that Elders Green, Williams and Woodward be a committee to superintend the business relating to the Gospel Mission.” The missionary concept envisioned at the meeting in Wells with the assistance of the two associations now had an organizational structure.382

The 1799 Minutes do not state who the missionary would be. Case had been serving as pastor of the Readfield church for approximately seven years, but his greatest desire was to be an evangelist rather than a settled pastor. By the time the Bowdoinham Association met in August 1799, Case had already resigned his pastoral charge and now offered himself for missionary service. His credentials were ideal. He was a mature man in his late thirties, and his preaching ability was well known. He had extensive experience as an itinerant evangelist, who had proven he was able to handle the rigors of frontier travel, and he was familiar with the challenges of preaching in remote regions in the northeast. Furthermore, by 1799 Case had been instrumental in founding in whole, or in part, no less than sixteen Baptist churches since his arrival in the District of Maine in fall 1783.383

When Case reported back to the Bowdoinham Association at their annual meeting the following August, they recorded:

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382 Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting-House in Livermore, August 28 and 29, 1799, 6.
383 Case’s resignation is determined by the Bowdoinham minutes that the church was destitute of a settled minister by August 1799. Case lived the remainder of his life in Readfield, when not itinerating, and frequently attended the Association’s annual meeting as a messenger, but never again as the settled pastor. See Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting-House in Brunswick, August 22 and 23, 1798; Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting-House in Livermore, August 28 and 29, 1799. The number of churches Case helped found is derived from his manuscript diary at Colby College along with notices in Millet’s History, where gaps in the diary exist.
Agreeable to a Vote of the association the last year, Elder Case visited the New settlements in the Eastern parts of the Province of Maine as a Missionary to Preach the Gospel in places destitute of settled Ministers . . . and that there appeared to be a door opened for great usefulness in preaching the Gospel in those parts.384

The Association again made a collection for the Gospel Mission for the ensuing year, asking the same three ministers to handle its affairs on behalf of the associated churches.

Case made a careful account of his 1799 missionary labors in his diary.385 He left Readfield on September 6 and visited the coastal and island communities of Penobscot Bay traveling at least as far eastward as Machias and Moose Island (Eastport), Maine, by mid-October. Apparently, he was kept so busy preaching and traveling that on September 21, 1799 he confessed, “the people are so Eager after the word they spaire no pains. They throng me whare I go and are so ingaugue [engaged] that I scarce have time for retirement of or to [wr]ight my journal.”386

A few days after the August 1800 meeting with the Bowdoinham Association, Case and Rev. Elisha Williams headed to Providence, Rhode Island to attend the Warren Association. Case and Williams served as appointed messengers for the Bowdoinham brethren. Though there is no specific record of the report Case and Williams provided the group, the establishment of the Gospel Mission and positive reports of Case’s journey must certainly have been discussed. Consequently, the Warren Association’s Corresponding Letter to their several sister associations reflected optimism at the expanding kingdom: “The news we have received, during our present session, of the outpouring of the blessed Spirit in many places, has afforded us much satisfaction

384 Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting-House in Green, August 27 and 28, 1800, 6.
385 It appears that the following account from Case’s “Diary” was not available to Henry Burrage when he wrote, “No record of that missionary journey, so far as I am aware, has been preserved.” Burrage, History of the Baptists in Maine, 108.
386 Case, “Diary.”
and encouragement.” The associations provided Regular Baptists with intelligence beyond their own area and enabled them to consider how they might cooperate to further the kingdom.

By the 1801 Bowdoinham Association meeting, the Gospel Mission was gaining greater interest and was given greater prominence in the Minutes, as sixteen churches and several unspecified individuals sent funds for its support by their messengers. The Circular Letter exhorted the member churches, “let us glorify God . . . and spread the knowledge of the Christian religion to the earth’s remotes bounds.” As further encouragement, the Minutes noted the growth of Baptists in the United States over the previous century from just 12 to 1,200 congregations. Finally, Boston Baptist minister Thomas Baldwin, who published an account of Massachusetts, Maine, and Nova Scotia revivals in 1799, was present with the Bowdoinham Baptists as a messenger from the Warren Association. Baldwin’s attendance ensured further connections to southern New England would link the larger Baptist interest in the northeast together. Mission work through Baptist associational cooperation was about to get a major boost.

**The Rise of Mission Societies**

The dawn of the new century clearly brought an awakened interest in missions at home and abroad. Whether the Bowdoinham Association’s Gospel Mission influenced leaders in Massachusetts like Rev. Baldwin is difficult to say with certainty but seems likely. At the same time, a new passion for missions was growing on both sides of the Atlantic. Soon after

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388 *Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting-House in Northyarmouth [North Yarmouth]* (Portland, Maine: Eleazer Alley Jenks, 1801), 8; Baldwin, *A Brief Account of the Late Revivals*.
389 The Baptist Mission Society was formed in England in 1792 and the London Missionary Society in 1795. Both attracted strong interest from mission-minded evangelicals in North America. Mission Societies were being formed in several places in America in the late 1790s. The Massachusetts Baptists acknowledged being “impressed and animated” by these trans-Atlantic mission efforts. On the Baptist Missionary Society in England, see Cox, *History of the English Baptist Missionary Society*. The trans-Atlantic interest is highlighted by the recounting of the founding...
Baldwin returned to Boston from the Bowdoinham Association meeting he joined with several others to found the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society. In April 1802 Baldwin, Rev. Samuel Stillman, and several other Boston Baptists called for subscriptions to form a mission society, and on May 26, 1802, they held their first meeting. Though already serving as a missionary for the Gospel Mission of the Bowdoinham Association, Case was appointed as a missionary for the newly formed society at its inaugural meeting with direction to serve in Maine and the British Provinces. As historian William Brackney affirms, this gave Case the distinction of being “the first appointed American missionary to Canada.”

Two missionary goals joined in the formation of the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society. The core aim was to reach remote regions with the gospel. Because this desire translated across denominational boundaries, evangelically minded ministers of different denominations could cooperate in these endeavors. Case, for example, preached with Congregational minister Daniel Merrill of Sedgwick, Maine in October 1802. He recorded, “heard Mr. Mearel [Merrill] Preach after which I gave the people a word of Exertation. The people were attentive and sollom.” Case shared the pulpit with non-Baptist ministers when they had complimentary interests.
Case’s account of this mission trip was subsequently published in the inaugural edition of the *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine*. In the version forwarded to Thomas Baldwin for publication, Case further discussed preaching alongside Merrill.

Here I met with my dear friend, the Rev. Mr. Merrit [Merrill] of Sedgwick who was also upon a mission. We mutually joined together as two brothers engaged in the same general cause . . . There were Christians of three different denominations united in the service, and a stranger would not have known by anything which took place in the meeting, but that we were all of one way of thinking. The more that Christians drink into the spirit of the gospel, the less of bigotry will be seen.  

Cooperation in the spread of the Gospel across denominational lines was necessary work for Case, more so since Merrill and most of his congregation would soon become Regular Baptists, at least in part because of their exposure to it as part of this mission.

The secondary aim of the Missionary Societies was church planting by supporting properly ordained men who could gather converts into churches. This is where denominational interests came to cross purposes in early American missionary endeavors. The most prevalent example surfaced in the New York Missionary Society. The Society, again drawing from the example of the mission work abroad, especially the British example, was formed along interdenominational lines with the “noble design to produce, if possible, ‘a general movement of the church upon earth.’” This “noble design” proved unworkable in practice. The Society was supported by Baptists and paedobaptists alike, but when the time came to form new converts into a church, the ecclesiastical tensions that lay dormant during evangelistic gospel preaching came forcefully to the surface. The first church formed by the Society was apparently paedobaptist in

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394 Baldwin, *The Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine*, 10. In his Diary account Case reveals that Merrill’s mission was on behalf of an “association” that Merrill and a few other Congregational ministers in the Penobscot Bay region of Maine had formed, known as the Hancock Association. It ceased to exist in the early 1800s, see Clark, *History of the Congregational Churches in Maine*, II, 381.
denominational perspective, and the dissatisfied Baptists soon withdrew from the society to pursue their own work. Cooperation in church planting may have been a “noble design” but it was impractical.395

Ecclesiology may not have been a hindrance to preaching the gospel for Case and Merrill as individuals, but church organization was no secondary matter and missionary support and oversight quickly took a decidedly denominational track. The Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society brought together the twin aims of evangelism and church planting in a way that New England Baptists could fully support.396 As a result, the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society advanced greater cooperation among Baptists. As is evident from the New Hampshire Association and the Bowdoinham Association, early mission work was handled cooperatively but in a somewhat limited fashion. The associations could enable congregations to cooperate but as missions looked farther afield, the limitations of single associations became more obvious. The Bowdoinham Association and the New Hampshire Association provide fitting examples of this limitation.

When the New Hampshire Association met in 1798, the previous year’s request of the churches in the southern portion of the District of Maine to separate into their own association came up for consideration. The Association “voted to post-pone the request of said churches till our next Association.” The following year the Association “voted to dismiss the request of the churches in the District of Maine, respecting dividing the association.” Isaac Case was present at both meetings, and though the division did not occur its implications for the future were clear.

The division of the association would mean that the New Hampshire Association would have diminished resources for supporting missions. If all the churches were to continue their interest, it also meant that the work would now have to be accomplished by the two associations formed from the one, thus necessitating the duplication of collection, selection, and oversight efforts.\footnote{Minutes of the New-Hampshire Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting-House at the Great-Hill, Berwick (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Charles Peirce, 1798), 6; Minutes of the New-Hampshire Association, Held at the Meeting-House, North Part of Wells. Wednesday & Thursday, June 12th and 13th. 1799, (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Charles Peirce, 1799), 5.}

Similar circumstances soon arose for the Bowdoinham Association. In 1800 there were thirty-seven churches in the association that covered a large geographical area. Distance was becoming a barrier for some messengers and ministers to attend annual meetings. By 1803 the matter of division came before the Association, and it was approved. In 1804, now numbering forty-eight churches, it was “voted that those Churches which wish to withdraw from the Association meet at Ballstown” the following October. Though dividing into two associations was amiable and “expedient,” it had to be obvious that broad coordinated efforts like missions would be somewhat encumbered by the division. Associations were multiplying and Case’s service with the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society likely suggested to him that a larger structure that connected Baptist churches throughout Maine would enhance missionary endeavors.\footnote{Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting House in Vassalborough, September 28th and 29th. 1803 (Portland, Maine: T. B. Wait, 1803), 8; Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting-House in Readfield (Portland, Maine: Argus Press, 1804), 6.}

With the need for support of missions in the northeast rising, and the cumbersome duplication of oversight efforts by each association growing as well, Case became the driving force in following the Massachusetts Baptists in the formation of a District-wide mission society. The division of the Bowdoinham Association provided an opportune moment. The 1804
Bowdoinham Association meeting was held in Case’s home church, and it would be the last time the entire group of churches would meet in association. The Association seized the opportunity and established a Missionary Society on Thursday, September 27, 1804.399

Case was elected as a trustee of the Society and was selected as a missionary. Case now served both the Massachusetts and Maine Missionary Societies. Edwin Whittemore, a fellow missionary of the latter organization, remarked that Case continued in the service for nearly eighteen years. He regularly pursued missionary activity until at least the fall of 1830, an overall missionary career spanning some thirty-one years. Many others would follow in Case’s pioneering missionary footsteps.400

Case’s missionary journeys brought him into the British Provinces of North America in the early nineteenth century. Here he would develop lifelong relations with Regular Baptists in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. In the words of Baptist historian William Brackney, “Case’s missionary endeavors did much to launch American Baptist influence into the Maritime Provinces of Canada.”401

Were it not for the cooperative efforts of the Baptist associations collecting and distributing funds and overseeing missionary administrative tasks, the churches would have been far less effective in reaching remote regions and in expanding the kingdom. Itinerant preachers, missionaries, churches, and associations were developing patterns of ministerial labor and cooperative linkages that fueled their growth and success.

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399 Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting-House in Readfield, September 26th and 27th, 1804, 6.
400 Edwin Carey Whittemore, An Historical Address at the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Maine Baptist Missionary Convention (Portland, Maine: Thurston Press, 1899), 104. Case’s appointment as a trustee of the Maine Baptist Missionary Society is recorded in its minute book held in Maine Baptist Church Records, 1804-1863, Maine Historical Society. Also see, Irving B. Mower, Historical Sketch of the Maine Baptist Missionary Society (Maine Baptist Missionary Convention, 1914).
401 Brackney, Historical Dictionary of the Baptists, 128.
Churches associating together provided the means of establishing formal linkages between those of like faith and practice within reasonable geographical proximity to one another. As the reach of the itinerants and missionaries effectively established new churches, the associations would often split, usually as distances became excessive. Thus, the Bowdoinham Association birthed the Lincoln Association in 1805, and then the Lincoln Association birthed the Eastern Maine Association in 1818. As new churches sprang up to the north and east, new associations soon followed.402

As the number of associations multiplied, connections were established among them by mutually agreeing to enter corresponding relations in regional networks that reinforced Regular Baptist identity and Two Kingdoms theology. It was also a means of communicating the blessings and challenges faced by each congregation throughout the previous year. Each church forwarded a letter to the association detailing events, membership changes, and seeking advice regarding questions of doctrine or practice that needed better understanding. At each annual meeting one of the messengers, usually voted on the year before, would provide a circular letter to all the churches in the association detailing matters of importance or outlining theological points that the messengers wished to rehearse. By this means there was regular two-way communication between the churches and the associations.

The associations also would vote to have a messenger or messengers write corresponding letters to bring to sister associations. This kept them up to date on the state of the churches and the work of the kingdom to which they were committed. When formal relations were entered into between associations, messengers would be selected to attend sister associational meetings to deliver the corresponding letter and usually delivered copies of their published minutes as well.

In the northeast, a large voluntary network of churches and associations developed to advance their identity and cooperation. As Isaac Backus noted, the place of associations among the Regular Baptists was of fundamental importance:

By these means, mutual acquaintance and communion has been begotten and promoted; the weak and oppressed have been relieved; errors in doctrine and practice have been exposed and guarded against; false teachers have been exposed, and warnings against them have been published; destitute flocks have been occasionally supplied; many have been animated and encouraged in preaching the gospel through the land, and in our new plantations in the wilderness. And it is hoped that these duties will yet be more attended to, and that greater blessings will hereafter be granted.403

The network of churches and associations was steadily growing.

Conclusion

By the 1805 Warren Association meeting, Isaac Backus’ last year in attendance, the association comprised fifty-one churches and had corresponding relations with associations from Charleston (27 churches), Philadelphia (36), New York (17), Stonington (22), Woodstock (33), New Hampshire (24), Shaftsbury (48), Bowdoinham (32), Groton Union Conference (18), and Sturbridge (17). Isaac Case attended this meeting representing the Bowdoinham Association and would have returned with the Warren Association’s Corresponding Letter. These ten corresponding associations each had additional corresponding relations with other regional associations. Finally, the Lincoln Association, founded in 1805 with eighteen churches, immediately sought to initiate corresponding relations with the Bowdoinham Association.

403 Backus and Weston, A History of New England with Particular Reference to the Denomination of Christians Called Baptists, II, 413. Backus especially noted the influence of the Warren Association on the formation of other Regular Baptist associations in New England and how such work brought churches together.
Looking at these statistics through the lens of Isaac Case’s home church in Readfield illustrates the interconnectedness of Baptists in the District of Maine. The Readfield Baptists directly cooperated with thirty other churches in the Bowdoinham Association. Via those corresponding relations they were also connected with Regular Baptists from South Carolina to Vermont and as far west as New York. The fruit of these relationships meant that Readfield Baptists were incorporated into a network of over 300 congregations. Regular Baptists comprised a substantial body of churches by the first decade of the nineteenth century across a large area.

It is especially important to note that almost 250 of the 300 churches in the Readfield Baptist network were within New England. A strong regional character was developing that would be further expressed in Maine Baptists’ closer ties to brethren in Nova Scotia than to those on the western frontier or the U.S. south. For example, the Warren Association corresponded with only one association representing southern Regular Baptists. The linkages to associations and churches of the U.S. west and south were mostly tertiary.

Associations provided valuable cooperative connections for Regular Baptists across the northeast. Voluntary church unions furthered the interests of churches of like faith and practice. Mission societies provided further support to the association as a trans-associational body that collected funds, oversaw the sending of duly qualified itinerants and evangelists, and published domestic and international missionary intelligence. By 1805, Maine Baptists were looking further northward and eastward, especially to the British provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. As their efforts bore fruit, Regular Baptist links moved across national boundaries and were initiated by Baptists in both countries. At the same time, hints of regionalism made U.S. Baptists increasingly distinctive from one another. The formal links between Regular Baptists in
New England and the British provinces to the north and east would soon be tested by the War of 1812, which we turn to in the final chapter. First, however, we consider the prolific role of Maine minister Daniel Merrill in a pamphlet war that gained attention across much of the U.S. after he published a justification for the mode and subjects of baptism, key doctrines and practices that made Baptists such a distinctive group in the Christian tradition.
CHAPTER 6
THE KINGDOM DEFENDED: DANIEL MERRILL AND THE WATERY WAR

*Scripture forbids us in no place,*
*To sprinkle infants on the face;*
*(Nor yet to give them bread and wine,)*
*Ergo, this rite must be divine;*
*And, Ergo, we may, quite as well,*
*Religiously baptize a bell.*

John the Dipper

1805 marked several milestones for the Regular Baptists in New England. Isaac Backus, one of the most influential Baptist ministers in the region, attended his last Warren Association meeting in September, likely the last time that Isaac Case would see his friend and co-laborer. Backus would die in November 1806 at age 82. Other leading Baptist ministers in the region would also die around the same time, including Rev. Hezekiah Smith of Haverhill, Massachusetts, who passed away on January 22, 1805, at age 68, and Rev. Samuel Stillman of Boston, who in March 1807, one day after his seventieth birthday.

The denomination that had struggled for religious liberty as these men entered the Baptist ministry in New England decades earlier was now flourishing notwithstanding the opposition of the Standing Order. It would take some years yet, but success in the battle to end religious establishment in New England must surely have been visible to Backus, Smith, Stillman, and others of their generation. It must also have been evident to the Standing Order that some of their own ministers were giving up their One Kingdom theology of church and state, and many,

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404 This verse satirizing infant baptism was first published in London in 1778 against the work of Rev. DeCourcy (1743-1803), an Irish-born Anglican. It appears in David Benedict, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America and Other Parts of the World,* 55-58. Also see, David Benedict, *The Watery War: Or, a Poetical Description of the Existing Controversy between the Pedobaptists and Baptists, on the Subjects and Mode of Baptism* (Boston: Manning & Loring, 1808).
irrespective of their theological leanings, were becoming more amenable to giving up the practice of forced taxation. Though many Congregationalists in New England continued to fight for the establishment in some fashion in the civil courts, they steadily lost ground in the popular arena and would find themselves on equal civil footing with Baptists and other dissenting groups by the early 1830s.

Facing diminished support in civil legislatures, particularly with the growth of the Democratic-Republican party in New England, who championed religious liberty against their Federalist-Congregationalist rivals, northeastern paedobaptists took to the presses to challenge the Baptists as the new century dawned. The losses suffered by Congregationalists in New England left them scrambling to counter the groundswell of popular religion that eroded their congregations. As local civil authorities increasingly cooperated with dissenters by either abandoning the collection of ministerial rates or by allowing congregants’ taxes to be paid to their own pastors, the livelihood of Congregational ministers was negatively affected.

When Isaac Case came to Maine in 1783, the Standing Order still seemed sound and likely to remain dominant. Congregations initially declined slowly and incrementally. In many cases it seems that settled ministers did not always understand the theological differences between Congregationalists and the Baptists, partly due to relatively recent distinctions within Old Light and New Light Congregationalism. For instance, as noted above, in the First Church of

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405 A prime example of a Standing Order minister who entirely gave up One Kingdom theology is Elisha Williams of Connecticut. This cost him the favor of the Standing Order for a time, but eventually he was welcomed back by his fellow Congregationalists. For his published support of religious liberty, see Williams, *The Essential Rights and Liberties of Protestants*. Also see, Miller, *The Religious Roots of the First Amendment*, 91-101.

406 The standard work on disestablishment in New England is McLoughlin, *New England Dissent*. Legal disestablishment in all New England states would not be complete until 1833, but the wave had begun to take shape. Vermont abolished establishment in 1786 in the state constitution, although a loophole in the law left it before the courts until 1807. Connecticut was slightly more than a decade away from formally disestablishing the Congregational Church. Maine would use statehood in 1820 to constitutionally embrace disestablishment. Massachusetts lagged, not making the final move until 1833.
Harpswell, the Congregational minister Samuel Eaton let Baptist Isaac Case preach in the
meeting house despite some reservations. As Case recorded in his diary, Rev. Eaton “seam
do[a]th[e] that I should preach. But the people were very urgent that I should so he gave away.” Eaton, evidencing Old Light leanings, was caught between the desire to maintain status quo control of religion in the civil arena, and yet not deny the people’s desire to hear evangelistic preaching.407

On May 24, 1784, Bowdoinham residents who had embraced Baptist views formed the First Baptist Church of Bowdoinham. The following Sunday Eaton led the Harpswell Congregational Church to adopt a policy allowing for those who wished to be baptized by immersion to undergo the ordinance as believers. The Church Records note, “voted yt the Pastor has Liberty, provided he sees his way clear, to baptize by Immersion, those who conscientiously desire it, provided they give Satisfaction to ye Ch[urc]h of their Faith in X [Christ], & live holy Lives.” It was no coincidence that Regular Baptists like Case, Potter, Macomber, and several others, as well as a few Freewill Baptists, had been preaching in the area for months. Eaton obviously attempted to stem the tide of losses to the Baptists by bringing this vote forward.408

It was a common misconception among the Congregational clergy of the day, as it also has been for some later scholars, that the mode of baptism itself was the major issue dividing paedobaptists and Baptists. Eaton’s actions suggest he simply believed that allowing Baptists to co-exist in the Standing Order Church in Harpswell would remove the motivation to depart. If this was his assumption, he was in for disappointment as the Baptists organized the First Baptist Church of Harpswell with Isaac Case’s aide on January 19, 1785. Eaton discovered, as would

408 Harpswell Congregational Church, Records 1764-1821, Miscellaneous Manuscript Collection, Special Collections, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Maine.
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many Congregational ministers, that the issues motivating the Baptists to separate and start their own churches were more theologically substantial than simply the mode and age of those baptized.\textsuperscript{409}

While initially the Standing Order losses were minimal, over time they drew more focused attention. In some instances, the losses were massive. In Sedgwick, New Light Congregational minister Daniel Merrill, a graduate of Dartmouth, was dealing with congregants who raised questions respecting believer’s only baptism. Although Merrill pastored what was one of the largest Congregational churches in the entire District, it would soon embrace Baptist principles.\textsuperscript{410} It did not go unnoticed. In May 1805, Merrill was baptized by immersion by Boston Baptist minister Thomas Baldwin along with most of his Sedgwick congregation. The same weekend Merrill was re-ordained as a Baptist by Baldwin and several other attending ministers. The newly baptized converts subsequently formed the closed-communion First Baptist Church of Sedgwick with Merrill as their minister. The shift was so thorough that the remaining Congregational brethren failed to secure a new minister. The further attempt to maintain control of the meeting house in Sedgwick by the few remaining Congregationalists also failed. The Baptists were now the town church, a rare privilege in New England. The Sedgwick paedobaptists who could not abide attendance at the newly established Baptist church were henceforth required to travel for worship. Many went to Brooksville, a community adjacent to Sedgwick, others to more distant Blue Hill, further up the peninsula.\textsuperscript{411}

\textsuperscript{409} Ibid. Also see, Millet, \textit{A History of the Baptists in Maine}, 100.

\textsuperscript{410} The Congregational historian Calvin Clark indicates that Sedgwick was the largest Congregational church in the county, the Baptist historian Joshua Millet claimed it was the largest church in the state, this can only be the case because there were multiple churches in Portland/Falmouth, long the largest town in the District.

\textsuperscript{411} Baldwin’s ordination sermon was subsequently published, and the weekend’s events were recorded in the pages of the \textit{Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine}, guaranteeing their wide dissemination. For the ordination and Baldwin’s sermon, see \textit{A Sermon, Delivered at Sedgwick}. For a recounting of the events, see “Account of the Baptist Church Lately Constituted at Sedgwick (District of Maine),” \textit{Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine} 1, No. 4
A similar rift soon challenged the Congregational minister in Blue Hill, Jonathan Fisher, a Harvard graduate, was had been installed as the town’s settled minister in July 1796. By 1803 Baptist inroads arose in Fisher’s congregation. With the new Sedgewick Baptist church close at hand, Rev. Fisher saw that rising dissent lead eventually to departure. Greater and greater numbers of Baptist-minded congregants began to travel to Sedgwick for worship. On February 9, 1806, Fisher recorded his personal turmoil in his diary:

> During the twelve months past I have had a season of trial. The Rev. Daniel Merrill of Sedgwick, having been led with a number of his church to renounce the mode of Baptism by any other way than immersion as a nullity, and having withdrawn from the fellowship of the churches and received Baptism and ordination anew, and a number of his church also being withdrawn from the fellowship of the rest, and about 30 of the church under my care having followed their example, it has been a time of serious inquiry with me whether immersion be essential to the ordinance of Baptism.\(^\text{412}\)

When one considers that Fisher’s church boasted only 98 communicants at the time, the weight of his trial becomes clearer; he had lost a full third of his congregation.\(^\text{413}\)

Fisher’s trials were not over, nor were other Congregational ministers unphased by the defections. Only days before Fisher confessed his “trial” in his diary, Isaac Case was present for the meeting of the Hancock Association of Congregational ministers in Blue Hill. The number of Association ministers was now reduced to only three. Case’s presence appears to have been less than warmly received. He noted, “Wendsday [January 22, 1806] went to the congregation

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\(^{412}\) As quoted in Mary Ellen Chase, *Jonathan Fisher, Maine Parson, 1768-1847* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1948), 97. Fisher’s confession is instructive and likely illustrative of many other Congregational ministers. By February 1806 Merrill’s *Seven Sermons* (see below) had been published, yet Fisher only notes the mode of baptism was at issue. If this is the case, like Rev. Eaton of Harpswell, this may have meant Fisher was ill equipped to respond to the more substantive Baptist challenge. Although not attentive to theological matters, the best recent work on Fisher is Kevin D. Murphy, *Jonathan Fisher of Blue Hill, Maine: Commerce, Culture, and Community on the Eastern Frontier* (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010).
\(^{413}\) Chase, *Fisher*, 97.
meating house where three pedoBaptist met for an association. I thought sum heardness was
discoved against the Baptist[s]. Especially in Mr [Jonathan] Powers prayers when he told the lord
that we was Deluded. 414

Even in the face of opposition by Congregational ministers like Fisher and Powers,
Baptists continued to gain footing. A Baptist church was formally organized in Blue Hill on
February 13, 1806, less than a week after Fisher’s forlorn diary entry. Rev. Case, joined by
Baptist Rev. Daniel Merrill, officiated at the constitution of the Blue Hill Baptist Church with
nineteen founding members. 415 Between the members lost to Merrill’s Sedgwick Baptist Church
and those now lost to the Blue Hill one, Fisher’s congregation was so seriously diminished that
he questioned whether he could continue his “settlement” among them. Though Fisher remained
the rest of his life as the settled minister there, it would no longer be the sole, much less the
largest, church in the community. 416

illustrate Maine Congregationalists’ attempts at accommodating Baptists in non-legal ways.
Eaton and Fisher understandably at first made allowances for those with Baptist “scruples,” at
least as far as the subject and mode of Baptism was concerned. They appear to have assumed that
the issues between the two ecclesiastical groups could be reduced to these two points. If they
were correct, and they were not, they might stop the losses to their congregations (and ultimately

414 The Hancock Association was formed in 1797, see Clark, History of the Congregational Churches in Maine, II,
381. Case refers to Jonathan Powers of Penobscot, whose father was also a minister and part of the Association at its
founding in 1797, see George A. Wheeler, History of Castine, Penobscot, and Brooksville, Maine: Including the
Ancient Settlement of Pentagoet (Bangor, Maine: Burr & Robinson, 1875), 212.
415 Chase gives the initial membership of the Blue Hill Baptist Church as eighteen, but does not give a direct source,
though likely from Fisher’s diary. Case numbers thirteen males and six females, so I have followed his count. It is
important to remember that Baptist churches often had attendance far in excess of its members. Fisher would have
seen many more of his congregants regularly attend the new local Baptist church.
416 Chase, Fisher, 97.
to their salaries) by simple accommodation. When baptismal accommodation no longer worked and the defections became excessive, the Standing Order took a different tack. They took to the press to counter Baptists by engaging them in theological debate.417

A major challenge facing Standing Order ministers, however, was how ill equipped they were to engage Baptists in theological debate, especially over the subject and mode of baptism. The practice of infant baptism and baptism by sprinkling were so customary among the paedobaptists that many had never seriously considered the matter. As Fisher noted in his diary, he was several years into his ministerial settlement before he gave serious thought to “whether immersion be essential to the ordinance of Baptism.” Fisher would eventually enter the large-scale pamphlet war in New England, but he would be very much a latecomer, waiting until 1817 to offer his *Short Essay on Baptism* to the public.418

If the Standing Order ministers generally were ill equipped to enter a published debate over Baptist theology, the rising generation of Baptists in New England, on the other hand, had long prepared for the task. The “Watery War,” as contemporary Baptist historian David Benedict poetically dubbed it, was initiated by Baptist newcomer Daniel Merrill. His conversion to Baptist principles not only drew substantial notice among Baptists and paedobaptists, it brought him to the fore as the principle apologist for Baptists in the northeast in his generation.419

Merrill and Fisher illustrate the far-reaching complications facing the Maine Congregationalists at the turn of the century. Whether the Maine Congregational ministers were

417 Ibid.
419 Benedict, *The Watery War*. Merrill’s grandson, also a Baptist minister, discusses him as a Baptist apologist, see A.W. Smith and S.P. Merrill, *Centennial of the First Baptist Church, Sedgwick, Maine, June 11-18, 1905* (1905), 47.
equipped to address the issues of Baptism, the problem had to be faced. Migration from southern New England into the frontier regions of Maine were known to include Baptists, especially from southeastern Massachusetts, the home area of Isaac Case. Sedgwick was no exception. From the start, there were members of the Standing Order Church of Sedgwick who had scruples over baptism. Like Eaton in Harpswell, the Sedgwick church had initially attempted a program of accommodation.\textsuperscript{420}

On July 8, 1793, just weeks before Merrill was ordained as pastor over the Sedgwick Congregational Church, the church adopted a \textit{Confession of Faith and Covenant}. In the \textit{Confession}, “Article 14, \textit{Of Baptism},” affirmed classic paedobaptist theology, yet seemingly rejected the innovation of their Standing Order’s Half-Way Covenant,

\begin{quotation}
We believe and confess, that baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible Church, and so strangers from the covenant of promise, till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him; but infants descending from parents, either both or but one of them professing faith in Christ, and obedience to him, are in that respect within the covenant, and to be baptized.\textsuperscript{421}
\end{quotation}

Whether the Church adopted this \textit{Confession} at the behest of Merrill we do not know, although he saw it through the publication process some years later. As the Church action was only weeks before his installation, he must certainly have been responsible for its adoption and could not have strongly objected its contents.

This article uncharacteristically included a footnote of importance that moderated their position on baptism as paedobaptists, suggesting the presence, or at least anticipation, of Baptists in the community and church.

\textsuperscript{420} On the emigration of Baptists to Maine, see Goen, \textit{Revivalism and Separatism}. 
\textsuperscript{421} Merrill, \textit{Mr. Merrill’s Answer to the Christians}, 12.
With respect, or in reference, to this Article, and to its corresponding one in the covenant, the Church have passed the following vote. It has long been our opinion, and is still, that it becomes the disciples of Christ, to condescend to each other, in all things, which are not dishonorable to Christ, or prejudicial to his kingdom amongst men. We therefore agree, that the Article respecting Baptism, which is inserted in our confession of faith, and in our covenant, is not considered by us to be so essentially binding upon any, who do not see it duty to practice infant baptism, as to render it a term of communion.\textsuperscript{422}

When most Maine Congregational Churches were making allowances along the lines of the Half-Way Covenant, the Sedgwick brethren were swinging in the other theological direction by making allowances for convinced Baptists. Merrill’s confrontation with the subjects and mode of baptism seems to have been present from the start of his pastorate. This is further confirmed by Baptist historian Joshua Millett, who mentions a Mr. R. Allen, one of Merrill’s first converts in Sedgwick, who claimed that he “never felt satisfied with infant sprinkling.”\textsuperscript{423}

In a further attempt to support the Congregational ministry on the Maine frontier, Merrill helped to form the Society for Promoting the Education of Religious Young Men. The desire was to support promising young men who were not able to attend one of New England’s colleges to further their education as gospel preachers. Founded in 1803, Merrill took on several young candidates and began working with them in preparation for licensure and ordination. This educational enterprise surely would have had oversight from the Congregational Hancock Association.\textsuperscript{424}

Not surprisingly, Merrill’s ministerial training endeavors were rife with Baptist influence as three of the ministerial candidates he oversaw became Baptists, while under his tutelage. The first was Phinehas Pilsbury, a resident of Blue Hill and longstanding member in the Sedgwick

\textsuperscript{422} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{423} Millet, \textit{A History of the Baptists in Maine}, 264.
\textsuperscript{424} Daniel Merrill, \textit{The Constitution of a Society for Promoting the Education of Religious Young Men for the Ministry}. 
Church. His interaction and preaching with Baptist itinerant Case brought him to rethink the issue of baptism. In the summer of 1804, he was preaching on Long Island in Penobscot Bay and again crossed paths with Case. Having become convinced of believer’s only baptism by immersion, Case baptized him on the island. Reflecting on this he noted, “so now I had become a Baptist preacher.” He recorded his next task “was to get my dismission from Br. Merrill’s church and unite myself to some Baptist church.” His narrative continues, “Accordingly I called on Br. Merrill . . . and told him what I wanted, and he, after he had tried to convince me of my error to no purpose said he would lay my request before the church, which he did.” The Sedgwick Church agreed, and Pillsbury joined the Baptist Church on Fox Island.

Two other of Merrill’s ministerial students also became Baptists: itinerant preachers Henry Hale and Thomas Perkins. Case also crossed paths with them while preaching on Fox Island, in the heart of Penobscot Bay, in fall 1804. Case recorded Hale’s baptism in his diary. “[I] crossed to Fox Island where I preached in the evening. On the Lords day preached and then baptized Brother Henry Hale of Sedgwick then administered the Lords Supper.” Case also recorded the baptism of Hale for the *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine*, where he connected it directly to Merrill.

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425 Phinehas Pillsbury, Diaries, 1803-1858, 1, Maine Historical Society. Baptists were present on Fox Island since Case’s pastorate in Thomaston in the 1780s, see Millet, *A History of the Baptists in Maine*, 97. The Baptist Church was organized on North Haven in 1804, see Beacom, *Silent Fingers of Faith*, 16. Pillsbury was ordained as a Baptist at Fayette in 1805 and settled over the Nobleborough Baptist Church in 1808. Burrage, *History of the Baptists in Maine*, 113.

I have administered the ordinance of baptism to twenty-five. Two of them are young men by the names of Henry Hale and Thomas Perkins. They are at present studying with the Rev. Mr. Merrill of Sedgwick, with a view to ministry. It will be natural for you to inquire, what effect it has on Mr. Merrill, his students becoming Baptist. I will just say, I have made him a short visit, and find him fully convinced of believer’s baptism by immersion.427

Conversions among members and even defection among ministers left the Standing Order off balance. The Standing Order needed to respond.

Ecclesiological differences became more public as disputants turned to the printed page to carry the debate forward. This “Watery War” was initiated by the Baptist convert Rev. Daniel Merrill, whose transition to Baptist principles was notable and brought a college-educated minister to the ranks of the Baptists. His paedobaptist antagonists could not dismiss him as unlearned. As Case and other Baptists were actively promoting Baptist theology at the grass roots level, Merrill would prove an able apologist in print for Baptists in the northeast.428

As the culmination of the process of leading his church through the issue of baptism in 1803-1804, Merrill preached a series of sermons that were the fruit of his study on the subject.429 In December 1804 he published a sermon series entitled, *The Mode and Subjects of Baptism Examined, in Seven Sermons*. This influential work went through at least ten editions by 1812. It also had the distinction of being the first volley in an extended pamphlet war as many

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428 Merrill was not the only college-educated minister among the Baptists. Hezekiah Smith had been educated at the New College in New Jersey before coming to the northeast. Others had college degrees as well. But in the frontier region, they were few and far between. Some years after Merrill’s death his friend and fellow pastor Adam Wilson noted, “Baptists have sometimes been thought to undervalue education; but I do not know that anyone ever thought it of Daniel Merrill. His own collegiate education gave him advantages which he could not easily overlook,” Sprague, *Annals of the American Baptist Pulpit*, 509-10.
429 Merrill recounted his move from paedobaptist to Baptist views in his *Autobiography*. He also spent considerable time recounting the history of his conversion in the first two of *Twelve Letters, Addressed to Rev. Samuel Austin, A.M. In Which His Vindication of Partial Washing for Christian Baptism, Contained in Ten Letters* (Boston: Manning & Loring, 1806), 8-18.
paedobaptists stepped forward to counter his anti-paedobaptist defense. Merrill followed his book of sermons with several published volumes of letters defending the Baptists in New England on matters such as closed-communion, covenants, the kingdom of God, and the doctrine of the church. Several were subsequently bound together as a single larger volume by the leading Baptist press in Boston of Manning and Loring. Over half a century later Joseph Williams still considered Daniel Merrill’s “Letters to Baptists” to be one of the four most important books originating from (or published in) Maine between 1810 and 1820.

This chapter dives deep into the “watery war,” especially as articulated by Daniel Merrill, its most influential Baptist spokesman. The defense of Baptist views went beyond a simple reassessment of the mode and subjects of Baptism to provide a view of the kingdom of God that countered the One Kingdom view of the Standing Order. That challenge was founded on the Baptist theological insistence on religious liberty. This theology advocated a separation of the church and state, but the Baptists also demanded separating from the state church and establishing closed communion Baptist churches for reasons that paedobaptists often failed to understand. A closer look at Merrill’s writings reveals the breadth of the issues at hand.430

430 Merrill, Seven Sermons. There were four additional printings in 1805 in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Jersey. On at least ten editions by 1812, see Edward Caryl Starr, A Baptist Bibliography, Being a Register of Printed Material by and About Baptists; Including Works Written against the Baptists (Philadelphia: Judson Press for the Samuel Colgate Baptist Historical Collection, Colgate University, 1947-76), XV, 262-65. Merrill regularly forwarded copies of the Seven Sermons to Edward Manning for distribution in Nova Scotia. See, Merrill correspondence with Manning, November 17, 1810, June 2, 1812, and April 17, 1816 in Edward Manning Collection, Esther Clark Wright Archives, Acadia University, Wolfville, Nova Scotia. On the importance of Merrill’s Baptist writings, see Joseph Williams, “Review of Literature in Maine,” Collections and Proceedings of the Maine Historical Society (Portland, Maine: The Maine Historical Society, 1891), 121. The volume Williams refers to appears to have been the result of Manning and Loring simply binding the several volumes of Merrill’s published pamphlets into a single book. See, Daniel Merrill, Merrill’s Letters (Boston: Manning & Loring, 1805-1807).
The Watery War Begins: Merrill on The Mode and Subjects of Baptism

*The Mode and Subjects of Baptism Examined, in Seven Sermons* was Merrill’s first theological work and his first publication as a Baptist. As the title suggests, it served two ends. The first was to justify Merrill’s conversion to Baptist principles respecting the mode and subjects of Baptism. As discussed above, the *Confession* of Merrill’s church noted that the subjects of baptism were limited to believers and their infant children. Children of at least one believing parent were viewed as covenant members by virtue of the faith of their believing parent or parents. Of course, Baptists rejected infants as proper subjects of baptism. Furthermore, the mode of baptism for most paedobaptists was generally known as sprinkling (also known as *rantizing* from the Greek), although some had reduced it further to the application of water in some indistinct fashion to the face or neck. Baptists considered immersion to be the only proper mode of baptism. The religious stir in Merrill’s congregation and among his frontier ministerial students led Merrill to give renewed attention to both the mode and subjects of baptism. The result of his study was the adoption of Baptist beliefs on these key points.

The second goal of the *Seven Sermons* shared the fruits of his study with his congregation in seven formal sermons and then to a larger audience via print. These sermons were preached to the Congregational Church in Sedgwick in the fall 1804. Rev. Case visited Sedgwick during these sermons and provided direct commentary of them as delivered by Merrill.

Tuesday I went to Segwick preach a lecture in the afternoon and again in the Evening. The Next Evening we had a confarance. I and several more told what God hath Dun for our souls. Mr. Mearil is convinst of Bible Baptism and hath preached five sermons upon the Mode and hath so clearly proved by scripture that immershion is the Mode that all of his

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431 Merrill published two items before *Seven Sermons*. The first was his concession to settle in Sedgwick. Although he was settled as the town minister in 1793, he only published his response in 1801: *Mr. Merrill’s Answer to the Christians*. His only other publication prior to becoming a Baptist was as president of a ministerial education society: *The Constitution of a Society for Promoting the Education of Religious Young Men for the Ministry*.  

432 See Merrill, *Autobiography* as well as Baines, “Daniel Merrill.”
Deacons are convinst and agreate part of the Church. He hath taken very prudent measures to remove pregiduses and to seerch candedly for them selves to see whether these things be so or no - there is but avery little disputing but Each searching his Bible to know Duty for him selfe. Brother Mearil Expects that he with [the] chief [part] of his church will be Baptised Next spring.433

Case certainly approved of the scriptural soundness of Merrill’s assessment and praised the clear and even-handed manner in which the Sedgewick pastor brought his congregation to share his new understanding of the proper Christian path.

A careful review of the sermons will help put the Watery War in its theological and social context. Merrill structured the Seven Sermons around the Biblical text of Matthew 28:19-20, from which he drew four main points: three “general and particular orders” and a final “encouragement and comfort.” He began out of sequence with his second major point sharply focused on defining “a few words which appertain to the ordinance, and then collect the scripture account of baptism, with some other texts, which may throw light upon the subject.”434

Prior to dealing with his subject Merrill, confessed the difficult position it put him in as the Standing Order minister in Sedgwick, who was supported by civil taxation. In this Merrill was unlike almost all Baptists, who, of course, had no tax-based income as provision for their gospel work. Most Baptist ministers were dependent on the voluntary offerings of their congregations and the labors of their own hands. As settled town minister Merrill knew he had embarked on a potentially costly theological venture. His changed views could terminate his pastoral settlement and livelihood. He candidly acknowledged that “worldly inducements” would suggest he not convert to Baptist principles. He also recognized that “relations” with his family
members might be strained, as he came from a long line of New England Congregationalists. He plainly did not have financial or familial motives to adopt Baptist views.\footnote{Ibid., 8.}

He proceeded to two other items before beginning to deal directly with his text. The first reiterated the need to submit the “opinions and confessions” of men to the sole authority of scripture. The import of this for Merrill’s immediate audience was the admission that many good men held to infant baptism; to follow such men necessitated no new practice. For him and his Sedgwick auditors, nonetheless, scripture, not tradition, must hold sway. Where men agreed with scripture one could embrace their sentiments, where they could not be found to accord with scripture, they must be left behind.\footnote{Ibid., 9.}

The second item he addressed laid before them six “plain truths” that formed his starting point. They included the need to allow no man to modify or annul what Christ, the apostles, and John the Baptist laid down in scripture, for these were the law of Christ. The first of the six truths carefully defined baptism as part of the law of Christ. Merrill noted, “Baptism is a positive institution, about which we can know nothing, as to its being a Christian ordinance, but from what Christ, and those inspired by his Spirit, have taught us.”\footnote{Ibid.}

In grounding his discourse with these six “plain truths,” Merrill followed in the footsteps of previous Baptist apologists.\footnote{Merrill did not quote any specific Baptists, but his line of argumentation, especially regarding baptism as a positive institution, built on a common and long-standing argument. A positive institution is a command based in divine revelation, and in force during a certain covenantal era. From the seventeenth century onward, Baptists argued that baptism was revealed only during the New Covenant era inaugurated at the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For this reason, it did not replace the Old Covenant positive institution of infant circumcision and could not involve infants since there was no positive revelation commanding their inclusion.} First, by acknowledging baptism as a “positive institution,” Merrill drew upon a well-established and careful distinction in post-Reformation theology.
articulating two different types of law: Moral and Positive. The phrase “Moral law” described unchanging eternal law, considered to be a transcript of divine righteousness, and available to all people through the *Imago Dei*. Positive law differed in that it required a direct and special revelation to be known, and generally remained in force only during a particular historical covenant. Merrill’s English contemporary, Andrew Fuller, nicely expressed the difference: “the one [moral] is commanded because it is right, the other [positive] is right because it is commanded.” The difference between positive laws or institutions and other forms of law was a distinction held by Baptists and paedobaptists alike. Merrill expected both his auditors and his opponents in the debate to understand fully this distinction. While this is not the place for a detailed analysis of the nature of law in Calvinist thought, the difference between moral law and positive law was crucial and a vital distinction that tended to be ignored by Baptist opponents.

For Merrill, and Baptist apologists as a whole, baptism, unlike the Ten Commandments that are Moral law, required a positive command of Christ for its institution. Therefore, when paedobaptists attempted to use the Old Testament positive law of circumcision as a ground for baptism, in the eyes of the Baptists they violated the nature of positive law. Circumcision was commanded for Israel, yet Israel was not the New Testament Church, except in type. Therefore, Merrill insisted, the fact that children in Israel were circumcized had no bearing on the New Testament Church. There must be a positive command of Christ in the New Testament to baptize infants for the church to justify this practice. This is why Merrill, speaking of the paedobaptist churches of New England, could say, “indeed, what is now, generally, called the gospel church,

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439 *Imago Dei* or the “Image of God” is a phrase many argue is taken from Genesis 1:27 in which “God created man in his own image.”

440 Baptists and Paedobaptists agreed on several places where the distinction between positive law and moral law was maintained, such as the regulative principle of worship and the nature of the Sabbath. Andrew Fuller, *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Sprinkle Publications, 1988), III, 352.
is hardly to be distinguished by its members from the Jewish church.” This is not an ethnic slur, but a distinction between the Jewish church in the Old Testament and that of the gospel church in the New Testament. As far as Merrill was concerned, paedobaptists built the New Testament Church on the foundation of the Jewish church of the Old Testament.\footnote{Merrill, \textit{Seven Sermons}, 66.}

With his “plain truths”, Merrill unfolded the doctrine of Baptism in a careful sequence. His first goal was to “define a few words which appertain to the ordinance of baptism.” These included the various forms of the Greek words for baptism and washing in the New Testament and their Latin forms as often encountered in the baptismal literature. Merrill’s audience may have been frontier folk, but they were not so uneducated as to be unable to listen to a college-educated minister discourse about technical vocabulary derived from more than one ancient language.\footnote{Ibid., 10-11.}

Merrill turned to his second goal, which was to list every passage of the New Testament where the words “baptism” and “washing” occur. Citing nearly one hundred New Testament verses, Merrill concluded the first sermon with seven “remarks” on the texts he reviewed with his congregation, suggesting “everything looks as though \textit{immersion} might be the mode, and as for \textit{sprinkling}, there is, to say the least, nothing which \textit{looks} like it.”\footnote{Ibid., 21.}

In his second of seven sermons, Merrill addressed the detailed lexical definitions for the Greek word for baptism, concluding that baptism and washing are synonyms. Expanding his original definition slightly, he remarked to his congregation, “the definition which I gave of baptism was, a \textit{washing}, a \textit{sacred}, a \textit{ceremonial} washing. I will now add to this definition that it is immersion, or dipping one all over in water.” Merrill concluded the sermon with the
affirmation of the Baptists maintaining the “most unequivocal” understanding of the relevant terms as immersion. In his thinking, this left the Paedobaptists with a “dilemma, either to commence Baptists, as to the mode, or do as our fathers have done, confess the truth in theory, and neglect it in practice.”  

In the third sermon Merrill addressed the primitive Christian church’s practice of baptism. Acknowledging the lesser weight of history over scripture, he remarked, “the evidence, which we have with respect to the practice of the apostles in the manner of baptizing, differs in degree, and, in some measure, in kind, from the evidence which we have respecting the practice of the church in later ages as to the same matter.” Nevertheless, he brought forward several sources and authors who suggested sprinkling came into the practice of the church sometime after the apostolic period. This evidence forced him to ask a concluding question. “If immersion be from heaven, and sprinkling from men, by what authority do we continue the practice?” The third sermon ended with Merrill suggesting several inferences based on the conclusion that immersion is the only scriptural mode of baptism. The third inference is more of a closing statement:

we may sprinkle a person in the name of the Father, &c. and we may wash the face, or any part of a person, in the same sacred name; but it is not possible to baptize a person in this way; for sprinkling, or any small partial washing never was, is not now, nor ever will be, what the scriptures mean by Christian baptism.  

Merrill’s assertions became stronger as the sermons advanced. In his fourth sermon, he had two aims. The first was to reiterate “the purport, end and design of the Baptismal Institution.” In this he listed eight items to satisfy his intent. The first of them revealed how Merrill understood the theology of baptism in relation to the theology of the Two Kingdoms.  

444 Ibid., 23, 32.
445 Ibid., 36, 46-47.
“The purport, end or design of this Christian ordinance, or institution, appears to be- For a dividing line between the kingdom of our Lord, and the kingdoms of this world.”

This “end” struck at the heart of the One Kingdom theology of many Standing Order ministers. Merrill clarified two topics in this end. First, he addressed the visible versus the invisible aspects of the church and kingdom. There was an invisible church of God and an invisible kingdom of God to which all true believers were members irrespective of the ordinance of baptism. What had changed for him as he embraced Baptist theology and practice was that the visible church and the visible kingdom of God were intended to approximate this invisible church and the invisible kingdom of God as nearly humanly possible. Thus, the local church, for Merrill, was the visible expression of the kingdom of God, and it must be kept as pure as possible from contamination; it was a pure church ideal. This was to be done by guarding the doors of the church such that only professed believers (i.e., professed members of the invisible church and invisible kingdom) could enter the visible church and so become members of the visible kingdom of God. This also meant that there was no place for the civil magistrate, the kingdoms of this world, to have any standing in the kingdom of God on earth.

Merrill was not opposed to the paedobaptists solely because there were unbelievers (especially infants) in the visible expression of the kingdom of God on earth, the church. He readily acknowledged this might also be the case for Baptists as well, infants excepted. There were examples enough of Baptists making a false step at this juncture and inadvertently admitting someone into the communion of the church who ultimately proved to be an unbeliever. The Baptist practice of examining someone’s experience of faith was not infallible. He also

446 Ibid., 50.
447 Ibid.
knew there were a few paedobaptists who were equally in agreement with the Baptists over the separation of church and state. Nor was Merrill implying that those who had not been baptized as professed believers were not saved; a point often missed by paedobaptists. He quickly acknowledged one might be in the invisible kingdom by genuine faith, and yet be separate from the visible kingdom of God due to improper attention to the doctrine of baptism as the door to the visible church, the visible expression of the kingdom.

The issue was the nature of the visible church as the expression of the visible kingdom of God. Infant baptism was inconsistent with Merrill’s theology of the Two Kingdoms as he now understood it. The visible kingdom of God was to approximate his invisible kingdom as nearly as possible by allowing only professed believers into its communion. The kingdoms of this world, populated by believers and unbelievers alike, were under different God-ordained authority and were entirely different kingdoms; the two kingdoms had to be visibly separate. For Merrill, this separation demanded evident expression in the visible church. “This kingdom Christ calls the kingdom of heaven and is not of this world.”

In affirming this “end,” and the fact that there might be unbelievers in the visible church, Merrill asked his hearers to consider a significant difference between the paedobaptist and Baptist position, even where they agreed on the separation of church and state. “Which [of the two] draws the line of separation between this kingdom and all other kingdoms on earth; to enter it by being sprinkled; or by being visibly and actually buried in water, and rising as it were from the dead, to join this kingdom?” Drawing on the imagery of Romans 6 respecting baptism as a

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448 Ibid., 51.
sign of the believer’s union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection, he saw the mode of baptism to directly separate the two earthly kingdoms in ways that sprinkling could not.449

However, the subjects of baptism were equally important to his point as its mode. To reinforce this Merrill asked a follow-up question. “Which hath the most direct and natural tendency to cause Christ’s kingdom to appear to be as it really is, not of this world?” In his estimation, baptized infants many times grew up never making a profession of faith. In addition, they were generally allowed to remain in paedobaptist churches unless they repudiated their baptism or scandalized their lives. They thus obscured the visible expression of Christ’s kingdom by mixing it with the kingdoms of this world. As a result, paedobaptist churches looked little different from the world. Merrill suggested that the Baptist principle to admit to the church only “professed believers,” who were each expected to make a public declaration of their faith, followed by believer’s baptism, produced a far more visible expression of the kingdom of Christ.

Both the subjects and mode of baptism were integral to his theology of the Two Kingdoms and their necessary separation.450 He echoed this point in the next sermon as a major point:

We have another consequence worthy of consideration, and it is this: The Christian ordinance of baptism is a most solemn and significant ordinance, and of very high importance. I speak not of the visible, or actual administration of it, in particular; for I never saw it administered, as Christ hath delivered it to his people: But I refer to the purport, end and design of it. It is, among many other things, the great dividing line, which Heaven hath appointed to be drawn between the visible kingdom of Immanuel, and the men of this world. Doubtless there are a large number who belong to Christ’s invisible kingdom, who are not, strictly speaking, or regularly, in his kingdom visibly, having not submitted to this ordinance, which is the great and important line of distinction.451

Distinguishing between the visible and invisible kingdom was key.

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449 Ibid., 52.
450 Ibid.
451 Ibid., 78.
His second emphasis in addressing the One Kingdom theology of the paedobaptists reiterated the mixed membership of the Standing churches, which he believed blurred almost any distinction between the kingdoms of this world and the kingdom of Christ. Examining further the importance of Christ’s kingdom being “not of this world,” he asked the Sedgwick Church to consider the One Kingdom theology of the paedobaptists on both sides of the Atlantic.

If my information be correct, every natural born subject of the crown of England is, according to the laws of their national church, to be baptized, and immediately considered as a member of the church. This is, indeed, consistent, if all the parents have, in any past period, been proselyted to the Christian religion, and if baptism have come into the place of circumcision, and to be administered to children and infants, as that was. Not only so, but probably nine-tenths of the inhabitants of New England, if not of our nation, belong to the church, according the professed beliefs of the Pedobaptists. Upon the same principle, I presume that more than three-fourths of all the adults in this and the neighboring towns, belong to the church, and have, if the principle be according to the gospel, a right to require admittance to the Lord’s Supper, and baptism for their children. Then, upon the same principle, would their children be members of the church, and entitled to all the privileges of God’s house, as they come to years, and nothing short of gross immorality could justify their exclusion. Does this look as though Christ’s kingdom were not of this world?452

It was clear that Merrill saw the mode and subjects of baptism to have a direct connection to his Two Kingdoms theology and to inform his doctrine on the separation of the church and state.

Believer’s baptism by immersion, in his estimation, gave the best visible expression to Christ’s kingdom being “not of this world.” To this admission Merrill added a concluding confession.

Is the purport, end and design of baptism as hath been now stated? then the mode is immersion; and those who change the ordinance from dipping to sprinkling, and apply it to unbelievers, pervert the ordinance, lose its import, and make it quite another thing. This we have, for years, ignorantly, done.453

Merrill followed this confession with a short assessment of the defense of paedobaptism by Rev. John Cleaveland (1722-1799). Merrill had known Cleaveland and spoke of him as “one

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452 Ibid., 54.
453 Ibid., 56.
of the most pious and faithful servants of Christ.” Cleveland was expelled from Yale during the upheaval brought on by the Great Awakening in the 1740s for attending a Separate New Light Congregational church. As a Separate Congregational minister, he served for two years in Boston before taking the pastorate of the Separate Congregational Church at Chebacco, Ipswich (now Essex), Massachusetts, where he remained the rest of his life. Though a Separate Congregationalist when he came to Ipswich, Cleaveland and his church later reunited with the regular Congregationalists of New England.\textsuperscript{454}

Several Separate Congregationalists, such as Isaac Backus and Benjamin Foster, had become Baptists in the mid-eighteenth century and published defenses of their views. Cleaveland issued his \textit{Infant-baptism “from heaven,” and immersion, as the only mode of baptism and a term of Christian communion} in 1784, spurred especially by Benjamin Foster’s 1779 defense of immersion aimed at Connecticut Congregationalist Rev. Joseph Fish. Foster countered Fish’s reply with a second volume that was apparently the last volley in their published debate.\textsuperscript{455}

Merrill’s handling of Cleaveland’s paedobaptist work with his Sedgwick congregation some twenty years after its publication gives evidence that he considered it a weighty argument. “I might let his work and arguments in support of sprinkling, sleep,” he professed, “were it not, that some of you, my people, and perhaps others, may by them, in one particular, be kept from beholding Christ in a glass.” While Merrill does not elaborate further, it was likely that he felt the need to address Cleaveland because he specifically challenged several Baptists including

\textsuperscript{454} Ibid. On Cleaveland’s expulsion from Yale, see, especially, Goen, \textit{Revivalism and Separatism}, 99-100. For Cleaveland’s defense of paedobaptism, see John Cleaveland, \textit{Infant-Baptism “from Heaven,” and Immersion, as the Only Mode of Baptism and a Term of Christian Communion, “of Men:” Or, a Short Dissertation on Baptism} (Salem, Massachusetts: Samuel Hall, 1784).

\textsuperscript{455} Foster became a Baptist while a student at Yale. For his two works on believer’s only baptism, see Benjamin Foster, \textit{The Washing of Regeneration, or, the Divine Rite of Immersion} (Boston: Draper and Folsom, 1779) and \textit{Primitive Baptism Defended, in a Letter to the Reverend Mr. Cleaveland} (Salem, Massachusetts: Samuel Hall, 1784).
English Particular Baptist John Gill, New Jersey Regular Baptist Abel Morgan, and New England Separate Baptist Benjamin Foster.\textsuperscript{456}

Merrill responded to five of Cleaveland’s challenges, two of which we notice here. The first was Cleaveland’s equating water baptism with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Attempting to draw on the biblical analogy between the two, Cleaveland began with the baptism of the Holy Spirit and argued from there to the ordinance of baptism. His conclusion was that sprinkling better fit the analogy between the two than did immersion. Merrill countered that the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 was the point at which the baptism of the Holy Spirit was evident and “all the house was filled.” As far as Merrill was concerned, it was better suited analogically to immersion.\textsuperscript{457}

Merrill next tackled Cleaveland’s definition of the key biblical terms for “to wash.” As a Baptist, Merrill concluded, “I noticed but one more distinct argument, and it is this: ‘Nipto, baptizo, louo, brecho, pluno, or apopluno, all signify to wash.’” Merrill went on, “The conclusion which he [Cleaveland] draws from this is, in short, the following: ‘To baptize is not to immerse, but to sprinkle.’” Merrill considered Cleaveland’s argument to be a non-sequitur, and retorted, “I see no connection between his premise and his conclusion.”\textsuperscript{458}

Before completing the sermon, Merrill considered an argument from the Congregational minister in West Springfield, Massachusetts, Dr. Joseph Lathrop. The year before Merrill’s adoption of Baptist principles, Lathrop re-published a 1793 work titled \textit{Sermons on the Mode and Subjects of Christian Baptism}, where he acknowledged that the “ancients practiced

\textsuperscript{456} Merrill, \textit{Seven Sermons}, 56. A “glass” for Merrill, and his audience, was a mirror, likely a reference to 1st Corinthians 13:12.

\textsuperscript{457} Ibid., 62.

\textsuperscript{458} Ibid., 63.
Merrill’s reference to Lathrop was obviously because this admission supported Merrill’s defense of Baptists and made for an authoritative conclusion to the sermon. If the “ancients” practiced immersion, the present day paedobaptist church had no grounds for sprinkling.

In his fifth sermon Merrill recapped the previous ones and offered twelve consequences for his congregants to consider. He then spent the remaining portion of his time addressing eight questions for paedobaptists to answer. The most important being – “Are Old Testament rites to explain New Testament ordinances? Is Moses left to complete what Christ hath left incomplete? Is it so? . . . . Will Christ approve of that practice of men, which so changes his positive institution, as to lose, greatly to lose, the purport, end and design of it?” All these questions led to a negative response from Merrill.

In sermon six Merrill returned to his major text, Matthew 28:19-20, and reminded his church members of the four propositions that he derived from these verses. In the final two sermons he drew their attention to the three propositions not yet expounded. His propositions “opened up” the “laws of Christ’s kingdom amongst men.” His stated intent was to “say” more “respecting the rules and regulations of this kingdom.” Baptism of believer’s alone by immersion was the first law “opened up,” and Merrill’s former practice of infant sprinkling was “weighed in the balances and found wanting.”

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460 Merrill, *Seven Sermons*, 79.

461 Ibid., 82-83.
He turned to a second ministerial labor to which his changed sentiments on the subjects and mode of baptism forced his attention. He focused on Jesus’ command to disciple the nations as stated in Matthew 28, and the implications this command might bear toward discipling entire households. The order of the words in the text suggested that making disciples preceded baptizing them, and thus precluded the implication that to disciple the head of the household encompassed discipling the rest of the household. He resolved, “discipling of a father of a family does not disciple his household; it does not even make them visible disciples, or give them appearance of being so.” He then turned to show more fully the importance: “persons must be made disciples before they are baptized.”

This was another argument against the paedobaptist claim that the principle of infant inclusion continued from Old Covenant to New Covenant. In their theology, circumcision led to the incorporation of family units into the covenant community. Merrill argued that this principle did not continue under the New Covenant. He noted, “the ceremonial law, and the covenant of circumcision which was annexed to it; appear to be disannulled and past away.” The apologetic value of this “positive law” argument for Merrill was the connection that paedobaptists made between the practice of circumcision and baptism. They inferred that because male infants were circumcised in the Old Covenant, New Covenant children should be baptized. But, Merrill argued, circumcision had not been changed to baptism, rather it was annulled when the Old Covenant ended. Paedobaptists could not use circumcision as a ground of baptism because the Mosaic covenant was not “the new covenant.” Merrill struck at the heart of the major challenge respecting paedobaptism and the makeup of the Standing Order churches. He opined, “I would

462 Ibid., 86.
that all good men would consent to take New Testament directions and examples by which to constitute and guide New Testament churches.”  

As proof of his proposition, he considered whether there were any examples of infant baptism in the New Testament among the New Covenant churches. Merrill used this to address one of the more forceful challenges of the paedobaptists; the household baptisms of the New Testament. Merrill considered three New Testament examples: the household of Lydia, the Philippian jailor, and his house (both recorded in the Book of Acts), and the baptism of the household of Stephanas, mentioned by the Apostle Paul in 1st Corinthians. In his estimation, none confirmed the baptism of infants. His conclusion was that the covenant determined the subjects of the covenant. As the Old Testament “covenant of circumcision determined who were to be circumcised,” so the New Testament “ordinance or institution of Baptism determine who were to be baptized.”

Merrill weighed the consequences of inferring the subjects of baptism from the subjects of circumcision. By baptizing children and bringing them into the church, the distinctive nature of the kingdom of Christ is subverted by making the church to be “of this world, and that abundantly so.” Finally, Merrill looked to history to see where the practice of infant baptism developed, and his conclusion was that it was brought into the church after the days of the apostles and therefore rested solely on the tradition of the Roman church. Thus, it was of “man’s invention.”

In his seventh and final sermon in the series, Merrill more carefully defined the two sides in the debate over infant baptism. Lest someone should assume the dispute was between

463 Ibid., 87, 89.
464 Ibid., 96.
465 Ibid., 97, 102.
Calvinists and Arminians, he put that possibility to rest with the assurance that “both sides are Calvinists, that is, they are agreed in what are styled the doctrines of grace.” He further clarified the issues by recognizing that the Congregationalists and Regular Baptists “are both of the congregational order, as it respects the government of the churches,” unlike Methodists, Anglicans, and Presbyterians. Neither the independence of the local congregation nor the adherence to Calvinism had been modified by Merrill. Merrill believed, rather, that these two theological principles were more properly subscribed within the context of believer’s only baptism by immersion. In his valuation, the Baptists were more consistent in their ecclesiastical theology and practices than the Congregationalists.466

However, one might ask the question; why not simply become a Congregationalist who practiced Baptist principles? The larger theological context of the visible church as a visible expression of the kingdom of God answered this valid question. Merrill directed his Sedgwick church to circle back, and consider the analogy between the visible and invisible kingdom, or, put another way, between the church militant and the church triumphant.

From a review of the whole subject, the following inference appears natural, and at the same time worthy of much consideration. The divinely constituted method by which any of the fallen race are to enter the kingdom of heaven below, remarkably sets to our view the way by which we are to commence perfect members of the kingdom of heaven above. Our obedience to the former is a practical declaration of our faith in the latter. In joining Christ’s kingdom on earth, we professedly die unto sin, go down to the grave, are buried, and rise, as from the dead. To join the kingdom of glory, we must actually experience what is but shadowed forth in baptism. We must die, be buried, or return to the dust, and rise from the dead. How exactly doth our entrance into the church militant shadow forth our hoped for entrance into the church triumphant! It also appears that Christ hath directed, that the subjects of the one should be professedly, what the subjects of the other shall be actually, all saints.467

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466 Ibid., 114.
467 Ibid., 121.
The mode and subjects of baptism, Merrill insisted, were to be discerned by close study of the New Testament, but he had come to see they were also to be balanced in connection to the larger theological themes to which they were a part; the new covenant, the visible church, and the visible kingdom of God.

The Local Meaning of Merrill’s Seven Sermons

Merrill’s *Seven Sermons* provided his congregation with an informed defense of believer’s only baptism by immersion. They reflected his conversion to Baptist theology and practice, a process that had been challenging for him and his congregation. However, they also reflect this change outside of a dispute with others in New England or beyond. Merrill did not alter his views during the Watery War, or as a result of it. Indeed, because the “war” had not yet begun, there appear to have been limited external ecclesiastical influences motivating Merrill. There were Baptists in the area as well as in his own congregation. But it was the frontier context and its internal tensions more than external stimuli which directed his attention to the issues. His congregants were not spectators to the issues being addressed by their pastor with other parts of New England, especially southern New England. Whatever was happening elsewhere, at least at this juncture, baptism was a local issue and involved both the pastor and the congregation directly. They all had this issue to deal with and had subsequent decisions to make and the *Seven Sermons* reflect this local flavor.468

Merrill’s *Seven Sermons* also provide insight into how the interchange between this frontier New England pastor and his congregation unfolded. Merrill knew he was potentially sacrificing his livelihood; the church might vote to terminate his pastorate. Even should the church not remove him, the larger community could dismiss him as the town’s settled minister,

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468 For further details on the local situations, see Merrill, *Autobiography* and Baines, “Daniel Merrill.”
for he made it clear he would no longer be a Congregationalist. Merrill understood the cost, as he later underscored:

I have frequently heard persons speaking as though it were a small thing to become a Baptist, as though they would as readily become a Baptist as continue what they were, provided the Baptist sentiments were correct. Such person possess a very superficial knowledge of what it takes to remove the strong and deep-rooted educational prejudices which those possess who have always believed, and have undertaken to teach and defend the long established traditions of their fathers… It is indeed a great thing to become an honest and understanding Baptist from the ranks of the world. It is still a greater thing to become one from the ranks of the Paedobaptist church. But the greatest sacrifice is made by those who are leaders in the erroneous church, when they renounce their work of error, and unite with the kingdom which the God of heaven hath set up.469

Merrill’s *Seven Sermons* and the pamphlet war they initiated reflect how much theology was part of the interchange of ideas, not just at the ministerial level, but for church members. Closer analysis of Merrill’s approach with his congregation reflects several points along these lines.

The *Seven Sermons* show the degree to which Merrill addressed complex theological matters with a group of frontier settlers. He did not wield dictatorial authority but used ideas to persuade. The series asked the congregation to consider several involved arguments about biblical and classical languages, church history and historians, and theological propositions, such as the nature of positive law and the important distinctions in the covenant theology of Baptists vs. paedobaptists. These may have been frontier folk, husbands and wives, farmers, and fisherman, but they were not ignorant men and women: at least Merrill did not address them as such. Moreover, Sedgwick was not unique in this respect. In response to Merrill’s *Seven Sermons*, Samuel Worcester (1770-1821), the pastor of the Congregational Tabernacle Church in Salem, Massachusetts, complained,

It has been a common thing with the antipaedobaptists, to speak very disrespectfully of learning and learned men. But of late, one can hardly meet with an antipaedobaptist, who is not prepared to talk so fluently, and so learnedly, of the meaning of Greek and Latin words, as almost to amaze. Even the author of Seven Sermons, on the Mode and Subjects of Baptism, desires to thank God that he knows Greek as well as any man; and has two or three Sermons almost wholly upon the meaning of a few Greek and Latin words.\footnote{Samuel Worcester, \textit{Two Discourses, on the Perpetuity and Provision of God's Gracious Covenant with Abraham and His Seed.} (Salem, Massachusetts: Haven Pool, 1805), 69.}

The willingness and ability of Merrill’s hearers and then later readers of the \textit{Seven Sermons} to appreciate the detail and complexity of Baptists’ line of reasoning was further underscored by the popularity of the published \textit{Sermons}. As they passed through more than twelve editions in under ten years from Georgia to Nova Scotia, the \textit{Seven Sermons} highlight popular interest in the argument of this frontier pastor.\footnote{Merrill’s technical approach to the subject of baptism ran counter to the thinking of nearby Rev. Jonathan Fisher of Blue Hill, whose later work on baptism self-servingly suggested that “much of what has been written is not within the reach of the poorer classes of people; either it is in volumes too large to be purchased by them . . . or it is above the reach of their understanding. If in what follows I may be able to offer something upon the subject, which shall be plain, cheap, and useful.” See Fisher, \textit{A Short Essay on Baptism, Designed for the Benefit of Common Readers}, v.} These were not narrow and technical matters, rather, Merrill addressed widespread concerns of his day.

The breadth of ideas embodied in the \textit{Seven Sermons} also contributed to its popularity, particularly its theological advocacy of Two Kingdoms theology. The new nation had by this time begun to test the meaning of religious liberty and the federal Constitution’s First Amendment requirement for the separation of church and state at the federal level. Could it be that Merrill’s defense gave further intellectual capital to the American people respecting the ideas embodied in the First Amendment? Did his careful distinction of the theology of baptism in the context of Two Kingdoms theology have clear political implications? Certainly, the new nation’s federal disestablishment challenged One Kingdom ecclesiastical practice in the eyes of many. At least at the federal level, and for many at the state level, the magistrate’s official
involvement in church affairs was not to be tolerated in the new republic. Nor was the church to enlist the arm of the magistrate for spiritual ends. New England Congregationalism was already wrestling with these intellectual issues as early as Elisha Williams’ *Seasonable Plea* of 1744, as already noted. New England would take the longest in the U.S. to meet the demands of disestablishment and Baptists in the region were at the forefront of the movement.\textsuperscript{472}

The issue of church-state relations in the new republic extended far beyond what it meant for New England Congregationalism. Disestablishment achieved national standing by the time of the Constitutional Convention. In 1787 American Presbyterians authorized a revision to the Westminster Standards addressing the changes in political philosophy now faced by the constitutional establishment of a separate national government from England. Elements of One Kingdom theology discernable in the 1646 Westminster document needed to be revised, at least in part. The disestablishment of Anglicanism in Virginia during the revolutionary period also gave broad evidence to the challenges that the uncoupling of church and state fomented. Interestingly, too, as this dissertation examines elsewhere, the union of church and state was also quite weak (and eroding further) in Nova Scotia, which had offered religious liberty to attract Protestant settlers in the mid-eighteenth century. As historian Judith Fingard notes, Anglicans never held a majority and only enjoyed a “limited establishment” in Nova Scotia, and even that “proved to be unworkable” in this period.\textsuperscript{473}

Attending just to the situation in the new United States in this chapter, we will examine how the attempt to moderate the One Kingdom theology prevalent in paedobaptist communions

\textsuperscript{472} Merrill would later raise these issues in *Balaam Disappointed*.  
brought sweeping issues to the fore for various denominations. In becoming a Regular Baptist, Merrill did not invent a theological middle way between the Presbyterian Westminster Confession or the Congregational Savoy Declaration, grounded in the new nation’s commitment to religious and civil liberty. Rather, he embraced a long-standing advocacy of Two Kingdoms theology developed within Baptist ranks for over a century, which set clear limits between the two legitimate authorities, one ecclesial and the other magisterial. These were embodied in the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1677/68, which is akin to the Westminster and Savoy documents, but in a number of areas departed significantly from them, especially its understanding of the nature and limits of civil and religious liberty. Merrill well reflected his own times, even as he embraced a long-standing viewpoint.

Unlike the Congregational and Anglican colonial established churches, the church-state position of the new federal government did not require Regular Baptists to maintain a One Kingdom perspective. Merrill had come to embrace a very different view of the proper balance between the institutions of religion and the state. And he was not alone, the same was true for Baptists as a whole. An interesting example is found in the records of the Philadelphia Association in 1815. Philadelphia Presbyterians were grappling with the limits of civil authority.

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474 Scholarship on the separation of church and state in the U.S. is vast. For a good entry point, see Philip Hamburger, *Separation of Church and State* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002). On changes to the Westminster Confession and its implications for Two Kingdoms theology, see D. G. Hart, “American Presbyterianism: Exceptional,” *The Journal of Presbyterian History* 84, no. 1 (2006); David VanDrunen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms: A Study in the Development of Reformed Social Thought* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2010). On the rise of religious and civil liberty as a populist movement from below, see Miller, *The Religious Roots of the First Amendment*. Miller also argues that Two Kingdoms theology played a far larger role in the new republic than many scholars have previously accorded, as this dissertation also contends. 475 For a comparison of the Westminster Confession, the Savoy Declaration, and the 1677 Baptist London Confession of Faith, see Renihan, *True Confessions: Baptist Documents in the Reformed Family*. 476 VanDrunen evaluates the way in which several Reformed theologians, including John Cotton, the early minister of the First Church of Boston, were not entirely consistent in their theology and practice respecting the place of the civil magistrate in religious affairs in *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms: A Study in the Development of Reformed Social Thought*. 
in religious matters, especially the subject of mail delivery on the Sabbath. The Philadelphia Association of Baptists had been asked to partner with the Pennsylvania Presbyterians to “procure by legislative interference, a more strict observance” of the Lord’s Day. The Baptist Association responded firmly, albeit sympathetically:

Resolved, that this association, acting upon principles which have guided them and which they hope ever to hold sacred - principles which lead them to regard every exercise of civil power to enforce the institutions of religion, as the assumption of an illegitimate prerogative, cannot as a religious body make any application to the legislature upon that subject.\(^{477}\)

The Presbyterians did not understand the degree to which the Baptists held the two kingdoms to be separate. Merrill’s *Seven Sermons* further disseminated the Baptists’ Two Kingdom ideology among the populace of the new nation.\(^{478}\)

The *Seven Sermons* also reveal the degree to which Merrill could access wide-ranging material about baptism, even while laboring on the frontier. Unfortunately, the composition of Merrill’s personal library remains unknown, nonetheless he clearly had access to many volumes on the subject. He referenced or quoted from both Greek and Latin lexicon’s, concordances, works of theology, and works of history. He also quoted from several recent paedobaptist authors defending the sprinkling of infants as he engaged them on their own ground. Whether people agreed with his use of these sources or not, he had them at his disposal and drew upon them to advance his own understanding and preaching. He was well informed.

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The *Seven Sermons* and their frequent re-publication likewise show how fully Merrill had come to understand and present the Baptist position. The Baptists clearly appreciated his efforts. So consistent were Merrill’s arguments with previous generations of Baptist advocates that Samuel Worcester insisted that Merrill got his theology of baptism from English Baptist John Gill. However, Merrill rebuffed Worcester insisting that “a page whose writings I had never seen upon the subject.” Nor are there any direct references to other Baptists in the *Seven Sermons*. This suggests that the doctrinal dividing lines were so well marked and they so thoroughly permeated the culture that Merrill did not need to read Baptists to be aware of their definition of key terms and how the nature of positive law, the dichotomous nature of the Abrahamic covenant, Two Kingdoms theology, and the mode and subjects of baptism were intricately intertwined. This was true for paedobaptist and Baptist alike.

Finally, Merrill did not exercise dictatorial authority over his congregation. He appealed to their consciences and called for them to be like the “noble Bereans” and “search the scriptures devoutly, and follow me so far as I follow Jesus Christ.” He asked his hearers and readers not to follow him blindly but laid before them his reasons for embracing Baptist principles. That he was largely successful in his endeavor was evidenced by much of the Sedgwick congregation that followed him into the waters of baptism to form the First Baptist Church of Sedgwick.480

**The Watery War Ensues**

Whether it was due to publishing the *Seven Sermons*, or because the Baptists made such a show of Merrill’s conversion to their ranks, paedobaptists of New England did not long remain

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480 *Seven Sermons*, 66, 80. The Berean call invokes Paul’s visit to the ancient city of Berea, recorded in Acts 17.
silent. Merrill’s sermons were published in December 1804, and Thomas Baldwin of Boston, and other New England Baptist ministers, made the long trip to Sedgwick in May 1805 to officiate at Merrill’s baptism, that of most of his congregation, and the subsequent establishment of the Sedgwick Baptist Church. The events were anticipated by New England Baptists due to published reports about developments there by Isaac Case in the *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine*. A full account of the proceedings in May also appeared there after Baldwin’s return to Boston. In short, these events on the Maine frontier were surprisingly widely disseminated.481

Concerned about the popularity of Merrill’s antipaedobaptist apologetic, several paedobaptists lined up to publish responses to the *Seven Sermons*.482 One of the first to enter the fray was Rev. Rufus Anderson (1765-1814). Anderson was a fellow Dartmouth graduate, two years behind Merrill, and a fellow Maine pastor, having settled in North Yarmouth until 1804, after which he removed to Wenham, Massachusetts. Merrill and Anderson were well known to one another: Merrill acknowledged their “a long acquaintance” and called him “an old friend.” Merrill’s conversion to Baptist principles must have been felt keenly by Anderson.483

481 “Account of the Baptist Church Lately Constituted at Sedgwick (District of Maine),” *The Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* 1, No. 4 (1805). The Baptist ministers in attendance also included Rev. Pittman of Providence, Rhode Island, and Rev. Elisha Williams of Beverly, Massachusetts. Baldwin preached the ordination sermon, which was subsequently published, *A Sermon, Delivered at Sedgwick.*

482 Samuel Austin noted that the popularity of Merrill’s work demanded a response. “Every new book which has a popular acceptation, must be answered, or it will be deemed unanswerable.” Samuel Austin, *An Examination of the Representations and Reasonings Contained in Seven Sermons, Lately Published, by the Rev. Daniel Merrill* (Worcester, Massachusetts: Isaiah Thomas, 1805). Also see, Benedict, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America and Other Parts of the World*, 312.

483 On Anderson, see W.B. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit: Trinitarian Congregational* (Robert Carter & Brothers, 1857), 361-63. For Merrill’s reference to his acquaintance with Anderson, see Daniel Merrill, *Open Communion with All Who Keep the Ordinances as Christ Delivered Them to the Saints* (Boston: Manning & Loring, 1805), 70-71, 74. Anderson also noted their “long acquaintance” in his *An Estimate of Immersion the Main Principle of Close Communion* (Salem, Massachusetts: Joshua Cushing, 1806), 34. The close association of Anderson with Worcester and Austin, who all joined the debate against Merrill, suggests that they may have coordinated their work, especially as Anderson limited himself to addressing Baptist’s closed communion in his first work and immersion alone in his further response to Merrill. Closed communion concerned more than Merrill, and so it is also possible
Anderson mostly focused on the practice of closed communion that Baptists understood as a logical and necessary conclusion of believer’s baptism by immersion.\textsuperscript{484} Anderson refers to this practice as the “Baptist scheme.” To avoid confusion, it must be understood that closed communion, as Merrill asserted, referred to “membership in the visible church.” While it also affected admittance to the Lord’s Supper, its primary focus was entry into the communion of the church as a whole. By welcoming into the church only those who were deemed properly baptized as believers by immersion, the Baptists that Anderson addressed practiced closed communion. Anderson, on the other hand, advocated open communion, which allowed access to church membership, and thus to the Lord’s Supper, irrespective of the mode and subject of baptism.\textsuperscript{485}

Anderson formed his objection to the closed communion of the Baptists in the form of seven letters beginning with an overview of covenant theology. From his paedobaptist perspective, the covenant with Abraham in the Old Testament, the covenant of circumcision, was an early administration of God’s one unfolding covenant, which reached its fullest expression in the New Testament. Using an agricultural metaphor, Anderson contended that the single covenant “appeared in the \textit{blade only}” at the start, and ultimately came to fullness with the arrival of Christ and the incorporation of Gentiles into the church. For him, the church in the Old Testament and the church in the New Testament are one. It is unclear whether Anderson understood that Baptists viewed the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants to be typological of the...

\textsuperscript{484} It is important to note that not all Baptists adopted closed communion. The English Particular Baptists of the seventeenth century specifically noted the intentional avoidance of the issue of closed communion in their Confession of Faith. American Regular Baptists (in the northeast especially) appeared more willing to adopt closed communion. Though Anderson and Merrill use the form “close,” “closed” better describes the position.

\textsuperscript{485} Rufus Anderson, \textit{The Close Communion of the Baptists: In Principle and Practice, Proved to Be Unscriptural, and of a Bad Tendency in the Church of God} (Salem Massachusetts: Joshua Cushing, 1805), 39; Merrill, \textit{Open Communion with All Who Keep the Ordinances as Christ Delivered Them to the Saints}, v.
promised new covenant of the New Testament. If he did, he failed to acknowledge the
difference. For Baptists, the Abrahamic Covenant and the New Covenant represented two
different covenants, the latter inaugurated at the time of Jesus’ coming. This was a long-standing
Baptist distinction and foundational to the Baptists closed communion practice, the ground of
what Anderson deemed to be their “separating agent.” Anderson never really challenges the
Baptists’ doctrine of the covenants under Abraham and under Christ to be dichotomous, but
quickly moves on to consider closed communion. A more formal challenge to the Baptist
understanding of the covenants would come from Samuel Worcester.486

Anderson also suggested that the success of the gospel and the evidences of God’s grace
upon paedobaptists in revivals, and other works, provided additional proof that their churches
were valid and should not be dismissed as false churches by the closed communion Baptists. To
infer that God might bless those whose ecclesiology was errant was more than Anderson could
imagine. Suggesting the Baptists’ closed communion practice to be “only by inference,” and a
false inference at that, he concluded that “all the friends of Zion ought to appear against it.” It
was a conclusion drawn from their “peculiar ideas of baptism.” Drawing his short pamphlet to a
close, Anderson claimed his case “proved,” and asserted, “the Paedobaptists appear to have the
truth on their side of the question.” 487

Exactly when Anderson’s work came into Merrill’s hands is uncertain, but it must have
arrived swiftly, since by July 1805 Merrill had completed an eighty-five page response, and by
August it was in press. Following Anderson’s literary technique of framing his work as letters,
Merrill wrote Eight Letters on Open Communion Addressed to Rufus Anderson. Merrill found

486 Anderson, The Close Communion of the Baptists: In Principle and Practice, Proved to Be Unscriptural, 9, 10-16,
19. Anderson likewise ignored covenant theology in his second publication in the debate.
Anderson to largely “assume the great subject of controversy as proved,” and his rhetorical style unconvincing: “from loose arguments proceed loose evidence, loose inferences, and loose conclusions.” Merrill drew heavily on syllogistic logic to counter Anderson’s case.\footnote{Merrill, Open Communion with All Who Keep the Ordinances as Christ Delivered Them to the Saints: Eight Letters, 75.}

Merrill accused Anderson of failing to understand that baptism is both the entrance into the church, and the “way to become the visible and regular members of the kingdom of God.” This reference once again centered upon Merrill’s Two Kingdom theology that viewed the visible church and the visible kingdom as identical. In this Merrill ran counter to the paedobaptists who continually ignored this key point. He further suggested that to permit unbaptized individuals to come to the Lord’s Table, as he accused Anderson of advocating, was contrary to the historic practice of Baptists and paedobaptists alike. In other words, “the Paedobaptists are nearly, if not altogether, as much close communionists as are the Baptists.” For Merrill, the point was to determine who had been scripturally baptized, and so was fit to come into the communion of the church, and to come to the Lord’s Table. If Anderson’s open communion meant that unbaptized individuals could come to the table, then the conclusion he drew was “your denomination have rejected baptism itself.”\footnote{Ibid., 6, 7, 8.}

In order to distinguish the practice of baptism by sprinkling, endorsed by Anderson and New England Congregationalists, from others like the Greek Orthodox Church, whom Merrill deemed the true Paedobaptists because they practiced infant immersion, Merrill suggested a different term.

The definition which belongs to your denomination, and which gives its peculiar definition from all others, and by which you ought willingly to be known, in the close communion controversy, is Paedorantists. The rise of your denomination was among the Clinicks, or sick people, of ancient date. These were judged
unable to receive baptism, and yet the erring administrators, supposing baptism essential to salvation, concluded, to save the souls of sick persons, to change immersion into sprinkling, and still (in violation of Scripture, and of language, if not of common sense) to call it baptism.\textsuperscript{490}

Anderson judged this term to be “contemptuous,” he and responded in kind by calling Merrill an “anabaptist.” Pejorative terms became common on both sides of the debate, and progressively more so as the pamphlet war progressed.\textsuperscript{491}

Merrill closed his \textit{Letters on Open Communion} with a list of “inferences and plain truths.” Turning the rhetorical tables on his opponent, he called Anderson and New England Congregationalists a “religious sect” that “arose in the hurrying, troublesome and warring times of the Reformation.” In summary, Merrill argued that immersion was of ancient, even apostolic, origin and practice, and that Anderson’s theology and practice of infant Baptism was a Reformation and post-Reformation construct developed to account for and defend a practice held over from Roman Catholicism, or “Popery.” He further suggested, due to the “\textit{modern origin}” of Anderson’s denominational practice and theology, that “it might be wisdom, in this day of American peace and liberty of thought, to review the peculiarities of your religious sect.”\textsuperscript{492}

Both Rev. David Morril and Rev. Rufus Anderson issued rejoinders to Merrill’s \textit{Letters on Open Communion}. Morril, a Presbyterian minister from Goffstown, New Hampshire, published a short pamphlet in September 1806 that debated more narrowly whether the baptism of John the Baptist was “gospel baptism.” Morril believed he had Merrill on the horns of a dilemma over Merrill’s assertion that John’s baptism initiated the practice in the first church.

\textsuperscript{490} Ibid., 10. The term “Paedorantist” derives from the combination of the Greek words for child or infant (\textit{paedo-}) prefixed to the Greek word for sprinkling (\textit{rantizo}).

\textsuperscript{491} Anderson, \textit{An Estimate of Immersion the Main Principle of Close Communion}, 34.

\textsuperscript{492} Merrill, \textit{Open Communion with All Who Keep the Ordinances as Christ Delivered Them to the Saints: Eight Letters}, 79, 82, 83.
Morril’s major point is that John could not have baptized in the name of the “sacred Three,” and therefore the first church was formed by those who had not undergone gospel baptism. The conclusion was that “gospel” baptism could not be the entry doors of the church.

Anderson’s quick counter-response to Merrill’s Open Letters was a forty-one-page pamphlet titled An Estimate of Immersion the Main Principle of Close Communion as Deemed by Rev. Daniel Merrill (1806). Anderson avoided debating Merrill over “the proper subjects of baptism,” and limited his point of dispute to the mode of immersion, as he believed it was Merrill’s “first and fundamental principle.” Merrill does not appear to have responded to Morril or to Anderson’s second work. Anderson pointed his readers to other works in the Watery War, especially those by his allies Samuel Worcester and Samuel Austin, and it was these disputants that drew more of Merrill’s attention.

Rev. Samuel Austin was the first to publish a direct and detailed response to Merrill’s Seven Sermons. Austin deemed the Baptist’s work to be “clogged with insuperable difficulties,” not the least of which was his Two Kingdoms theology and his understanding of the covenants. As far as covenant theology goes, though Morril had completely ignored it and Anderson largely skirted it, Austin took it on directly. He rightly understood Merrill to view the Abrahamic and New Covenants as separate from one another. When Merrill insisted that the Abrahamic Covenant was dichotomous in nature, and that the national covenant with Israel, the covenant of circumcision, had been annulled, Austin accused him of “artfully, I had almost said, dishonestly,

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493 According to Acts 19:4, “Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.”
494 David Lawrence Morril, A Concise Letter Written to Rev. Daniel Merrill, A.M., of Sedgwick Containing Strictures and Remarks on Several Letters by Him (Amherst, New Hampshire: Joseph Cushing, 1806), 12, see, especially, his concluding summary. By “sacred Three” Morril meant that “gospel baptism” must include naming the Trinity- The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
495 Anderson, An Estimate of Immersion the Main Principle of Close Communion, 2.
confounding the covenant of circumcision with the ceremonial law.” Austin acknowledged that the ceremonial law had ended, but as far as he was concerned the covenant of circumcision was “forever.” Thus, Austin denied that the covenant of circumcision was “disannulled.” As far as how the Abrahamic and New Covenants related to each other, he noted, rather than being separate covenants, they “are rather distinct editions of the same covenant.”

Austin insightfully understood that Merrill’s Two Kingdoms theology “is the principle which goes radically into Mr. Merrill’s theory.” Although Austin’s work is not a full exposition of the One Kingdom theology of paedobaptists, he nonetheless challenged Merrill about how one gained entrance into the kingdom. The question between the two was whether visible sainthood, or the church ordinance of baptism, was the means to enter the kingdom. The importance of the question underscored how fundamental kingdom theology was to the distinctions between Baptists and paedobaptists. Austin maintained that the baptismal ordinance had no bearing on entrance into the kingdom, becoming a “visible saint” was enough.

Must he [a visible saint], besides this be actually incorporated by a special covenant into some particular Church, as an acknowledged member of that Church? This surely will not be urged. . . The principle then that baptism is the thing, exclusively which introduces a person into the kingdom of Christ must be given up wholly as untenable.

In fact, Merrill’s insistence that baptism, not visible sainthood, was how one entered the visible kingdom, was deemed by Austin to be the “radical principle of your book” and applied more broadly to all “close communion Baptists in general.”

Merrill documented Austin’s substantial difference over the nature and entrance into the visible kingdom of God as their essential point of departure. They agreed that their theology of

496 Austin, An Examination of the Representations and Reasonings Contained in Seven Sermons, Lately Published, by the Rev. Daniel Merrill, 76, 80, 81.
497 Ibid., 8, 9.
498 Ibid., 18, 9.
the kingdom of heaven was at the heart of the debate. In Merrill’s second published response to Austin’s defense of infant baptism, he made specific reference to their different theologies of the kingdom of heaven, noting that “in different parts of his pamphlet he [Austin] appears to know not any difference between the spiritual kingdom of Christ in this world, which hath continued at least since the conversion of Abel, and his visible kingdom, which was set up during the Roman empire, and was at hand when the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness and baptizing in Jordon.” Kingdom theology was pivotal.499

Conclusion

The ongoing Watery War between Merrill and the paedobaptists continued for over a decade. The multitude of publications on both sides delved deep into the theological differences between the two groups.500 They held to differing views of the nature of the church, differing criteria for admittance to the Lord’s Table, a different understanding of the continuity and discontinuity between the Abrahamic and New Covenants, and, of course, they differed over the subjects and mode of baptism. However, it is important to see that woven into this fabric of theological reflection and distinction was also a significantly opposed view of the nature of the kingdom of heaven. In fact, it is likely this last difference, which surfaced repeatedly in Merrill’s polemical sparing with the paedobaptists, that spurred his important sermon The Kingdom of

499 Daniel Merrill, Second Exposition of Some of the False Arguments, Mistakes, and Errors of the Rev. Samuel Austin (Boston: Manning & Loring, 1807), 56.

500 Several more entered the field of conflict after 1805. On the paedobaptist side, in addition to the works already cited, see Joseph Field, Strictures on Seven Sermons (Northampton, Massachusetts: Thomas M. Pomroy, 1806); John Reed, An Apology for the Rite of Infant Baptism . . . and Also to Refute the Objections and Reasonings Alleged against Them by the Rev. Daniel Merrill (Providence, Rhode Island: Heaton & Williams, 1806); Benjamin Wooster, A Sermon Preached at St. Albans, August 8, 1815, before the Franklin County Bible Society (Middlebury: T. C. Strong, 1815). On the Baptist side of the debate, also see Thomas Baldwin, The Baptism of Believers Only and the Particular Communion of the Baptist Churches, 2d. ed. (Boston: Manning & Loring, 1806); Elisha Andrews, A Vindication of the Distinguishing Sentiments of the Baptists (Boston: Manning & Loring, 1805).
Heaven, Distinguished from Babylon, preached to the Lincoln Baptist Association of Maine in 1808.501

Because the Paedobaptists confused the nature of the visible and invisible kingdom, as Merrill understood it, he referred to the mixed communion paedobaptist churches as Babylon. From his Baptist perspective, their theology compromised the purity of the church via infant baptism. Furthermore, because of his advocacy of civil and religious liberty, the separation of the church from the world was to be carefully guarded, and with it the separation of church and state was a prerequisite. Echoing Roger Williams almost two centuries earlier, Merrill put his paedobaptist opponents on notice: “No, we cannot communicate with you, without breaking down the hedge with which Christ hath inclosed his visible people. Those who do this, remove the land-mark of the King of Israel.”502

Assessment of Merrill’s Apology. Merrill’s defense of Baptist theology and practice resonated with a substantial popular audience as the geographic spread and number of editions of his Seven Sermons demonstrates. This work was republished in several states as far south as Georgia, but of special note for this study it was also popular in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick among the New Lights. The same was true of Merrill’s other pamphlets. Rev. Edward Manning, with whom Merrill had developed a close friendship through several itinerant visits to the province, acted as an agent and distributor for Merrill’s writings. In fall 1810, Merrill sent a shipment of pamphlets to Manning that included over fifty copies of his own publications. A year later, Isaac Case

501 The work was subsequently published, Merrill, The Kingdom of Heaven, Distinguished from Babylon.
502 Merrill, Open Communion with All Who Keep the Ordinances as Christ Delivered Them to the Saints: Eight Letters, 56. “Communicate” here refers to joining together in church membership. The metaphor of the “hedge” is drawn from the Old Testament Book of Isaiah 5 and speaks to God’s protective “wall” around the redeemed community. Though Thomas Jefferson is credited with suggesting that there is a wall of separation between the church and the state, he certainly did not invent the concept. For Roger Williams’ reference to the “hedge” and “wall of separation,” see “Mr. Cotton’s Letter Lately Printed, Examined, and Answered” in Roger Williams, The Complete Writings of Roger Williams, 7 vols. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963), I, 392.
returned from an itinerant tour of Nova Scotia with a request to Merrill from Manning for additional copies of the *Seven Sermons*. Merrill arranged to send forty dollars’ worth of pamphlets to Manning with a thirty percent discount. At the time, the *Seven Sermons* retailed for around forty cents apiece, suggesting that Merrill sent Manning close to a hundred copies.\textsuperscript{503}

They apparently sold quickly for in June 1812, Merrill wrote to Manning with regret that a second shipment was unavailable since “none of them are, for the present to be obtained.” He was hopeful that Deacon Loring, one of his printers in Boston, would reprint the sermons soon. Should that come to pass, he promised to send another thirty copies. Shipments during the War of 1812 were officially prohibited, but after the close of the war, Merrill learned that Ensign Lincoln, a Boston bookseller, was sending a shipment to Manning that contained his pamphlets. In his letter of notification about the coming books, Merrill offered, “should you like to have any more of my pamphlets, please to mention.”\textsuperscript{504}

What made Merrill’s defense of the Baptists so effective in both the British Maritime Provinces and in the United States? Several aspects of his work suggest an answer. First, and possibly foremost, Merrill’s antipaedobaptist defense came from an educated former paedobaptist and must certainly have carried substantial weight for many. It emboldened antipaedobaptist church members to think contrary to Congregational norms and highlighted Baptists’ justification of their practices once outlawed and now often belittled by the New

\textsuperscript{503} Merrill letters to Edward Manning, Eastport, November 17, 1810,” and Sedgwick, October 12, 1811, Edward Manning Collection, Atlantic Baptist Archives, Esther Clark Wright Archives, Acadia University.

England Congregationalists and Nova Scotia Anglicans alike. Given the shared roots of most Maine and Nova Scotia Baptists and New Lights in New England Congregational churches, Merrill had a special standing as a former Congregational minister and pastor.

Merrill referred to his standing in the Watery War exchanges as derived, in part, from his own conversion in an April 1815 *Thanksgiving Sermon* preached in New Hampshire. The day had been established to mark the end of the War of 1812. Merrill’s sermon reviewed the advances made for religious liberty in the United States, and specifically noted the angst of Standing Order clergy about the religious changes in the new republic since the War for Independence. The loss of religious and political influence was keenly felt by the formerly favored Standing Order. Of course, a nationally-sanctioned sermon to a local audience in New England was no place for Merrill to address the situation of Regular Baptists in the Canadian Maritimes. However, surely the way Baptist brethren were divided by war and national politics offered a superlative indication of the righteousness of Two Kingdoms theology. Moreover, the decline of the Standing Order in New England and the lack of popular appeal for the Church of England in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick must have seemed analogous to one another.

Second, the Baptists’ Two Kingdoms theology gave expression to both civil and religious liberty. For Baptists as dissenters in both Maine and the British provinces, it provided a way of looking at the civil magistrate in a positive light apart from religious authority. Merrill accused the Standing Order of “reviling the rulers of their people; in speaking evil against dignities,” largely as a response to the rise of Democratic Republicans in New England and the Standing Order’s related distaste for the presidency of James Madison. Because of their Two Kingdoms theology, Baptists could be robust participants in civil society and proactive Christians of the

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kingdom of heaven. Baptists reveled in civil and religious liberty, something that Baptists in Massachusetts, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia still sought.\textsuperscript{506}

Considering their Two Kingdoms theology, the Baptists were not caught on the horns of a dilemma, as Merrill supposed was the case with favored members of Established churches. More extreme dissenters against sacral society, like Anabaptists, had a considerably more radical Two Kingdoms theology that saw the civil magistrate, or at least human government, as basically evil. In this view, human government was a consequence of the fall, and true believers were to depart from it. Thus, they sought to remain entirely separate from the civil magistrate and from civil responsibilities. This was codified in the Anabaptist Schleitheim Confession of 1527, “the government magistracy is according to the flesh, but the Christians’ is according to the Spirit; their houses and dwelling remain in this world, but the Christians’ are in heaven; their citizenship is in this world, but the Christians’ citizenship is in heaven.” This Anabaptist position reflects a Two Kingdoms theology taken to a radical extreme that Regular Baptists rejected.\textsuperscript{507}

The One Kingdom theology of the Standing Order, as the Westminster Confession codified, considered the magistrate to be a “nursing father” to the church. Merrill even noted, regarding those “first settlers” who fled England due to persecution, “that it was not from religious tyranny they were avers, but from suffering the lash of it.” In his mind, the proof was in how soon they wielded “the civil sword” to deal with religious dissent by men like Roger Williams and Obadiah Holmes. They had moderated the language of the Westminster Confession at the close of the War for Independence, but they had not abandoned their desire for

\textsuperscript{506} Ibid., 6-7, 28.
a state sponsored church nor embraced full religious liberty. They still invited the magistrate to actively promote Christianity.\textsuperscript{508}

Third, Merrill’s theological apologetic resonated, as he frequently noted, with common people and made “common sense.” It was a theology for the “common man.” At times, Baptists felt the paedobaptist defense of infant baptism was so contrary to logic as to be almost comical (note the satirical poem at the head of this chapter). Merrill effectively appealed to plain meanings time and again. In the re-publication of several of his key antipaedoabaptist pamphlets from 1805-1807 under the title of \textit{Merrill’s Letters}, the phrase “common sense” appears over forty times. And Merrill used it to great rhetorical effect, especially in his \textit{Second Exposition} against Rev. Samuel Austin, where it stands at the head of the opening sentence, and in his \textit{Letters Occasioned by Rev. Samuel Worcester’s Two Discourses}, where this line stands at the head of every chapter: “we appeal to the Bible, to stubborn facts, and to common sense.”\textsuperscript{509}

One example of the “common sense” appeal of Merrill might suffice. In Rev. Austin’s \textit{Examination} of Merrill’s \textit{Seven Sermons} he differs with him, and Baptists generally, over the interpretation of Romans 6. Merrill insisted that immersion of believers alone be accorded with the apostle Paul’s affirmation that baptism was figurative of the believer’s union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. Austin denied that the text had anything to do with water baptism but instead addressed the baptism of the Holy Spirit alone. Austin accused Merrill, “to suppose him [the apostle Paul] to mean external water baptism, therefore, is to make him a more incautious advocate for external rites than you would choose.” Merrill responded that Austin was pressed between two options. First, either there was a corresponding “evident likeness” between

\textsuperscript{508} Merrill, \textit{Balaam Disappointed}, 7-8.
water baptism, as an ordinance of the church, and Holy Spirit baptism, as a work of God at regeneration. Second, “the apostle was guilty of a gross impropriety in the figurative use which he made of the words burying and the resurrection.” He then challenged Austin to “take which you please.”

What Austin and other paedobaptists failed to appreciate is the power of the figurative explanation of Merrill, and the experience of believers undergoing the ordinance of baptism as taught by the Baptists. Rev. Case could speak of new believers “following Jesus into [the] watery grave.” The impression these outdoor baptisms had on those who had only ever seen infants sprinkled or have water splashed on their face is hard to miss. It was enough to cause a wife to proceed with her immersive baptism over the strenuous objections of her husband. In one instance, Case spoke of a man so overcome with the fact that his wife was about to be baptized that he threatened to kill himself if she followed through.

Similar effects were felt in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. The apologetic writings of Merrill were matched with the apologetic value of the witness of new converts telling their experiences of conversion, being affirmed by the church, and going into the “watery grave,” as it was so often called. It had powerful effects on witnesses. The New Brunswick Baptist Rev. Joseph Crandall’s moving description of a winter baptism mirrored that of Case’s above. Not only was it affecting for those being baptized, Crandall noted that “over four or five hundred people surrounded the watery grave.” This often proved the moment when others would come forward for baptism, professing their faith and seeking the waters of baptism for themselves.

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510 Austin, *An Examination of the Representations and Reasonings Contained in Seven Sermons, Lately Published, by the Rev. Daniel Merrill, on the Mode and Subjects of Baptism*, 38.
511 Case, “Diary.” See the entries for Sept. 3, 1802, Jan. 16, 1806 and Nov. 24, 1783.
Revival preachers brought with them not only effective gospel preaching, but also a physical practice of believer’s baptism by immersion that spurred converts to action and the formation of new congregations in Maine and the British provinces. Many paedobaptist ministers were unprepared to counter the obvious correlation between the ways the Baptists practiced baptism and the plain reading of scriptures where baptisms were recorded, such as in Romans 6, where it was likened to Christ’s grave. Merrill’s apologetic defense of the Baptists took full advantage of “common sense” to provide an explanation that brought together the reality of conversion, the new convert’s union with Christ, and the entrance of each new convert into the redeemed community, the visible church and the visible kingdom of God.

Among Allinite New Lights in Nova Scotia witnessing such things proved a catalyst for many to no longer relegate baptism to a formalist matter of indifference. The fruit of the preaching and practice of Baptist ministers and evangelists in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, buttressed by Maine brethren as itinerants and in print, soon gave Baptists a majority among churches in the region. The parallel rise of Baptists in the trans-national northeast gave new converts a theologically defensible and powerfully shared identity with those of like mind and practice across the border. Irrespective of nationality, they had become members together of the visible kingdom of God and struggled for civil and religious liberty against traditionalists who harkened back to a One Kingdom view of ecclesiastical order, whether Congregationalist or Anglican.

Rev. Samuel Austin might offhandedly dismiss Merrill and other Baptists saying, “if I shall seem to have said but little on this extensive subject, an apology must be found in the little

513 The best-known work to document the rise of Maritime evangelicalism is George A. Rawlyk, The Canada Fire. On the importance of Regular Baptists, see 19-21 and chapters 8 and 10.
argument I had to reply to.” But at the water’s edge, such condescending dismissal carried no weight.  

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514 Austin, An Examination of the Representations and Reasonings Contained in Seven Sermons, Lately Published, by the Rev. Daniel Merrill, 93.
CHAPTER 7

THE KINGDOM TESTED: NORTHEASTERN BAPTISTS AND THE WAR OF 1812

The Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society was designed at its creation in 1802 to be an apolitical institution. Its founders specifically claimed that “neither party politics nor party religion” drove their formation. To ensure this end, the Society reiterated its goals in a letter addressed to its Missionaries. Positively, they favored men experienced in “missionary engagements,” who reflected a desire for “the enlargements of the Redeemer’s kingdom,” and evidenced a “zeal for divine glory and compassionate affection for the souls of men.” To this end they gave the missionaries two directives. First, they were to labor in areas lacking “the stated exercise of Christian ministry.” The aim was to reach those who were being ignored or who could not hear regular preaching. This was a frontier mission. The second directive was that missionaries “solicitously avoid all interference and allusions to those political topics which divide the opinions and too much irritate the passions of our fellow-citizens.” Though the region was remote, perhaps because it was remote, rancorous political disagreements might lurk there.

Aside from this general call to avoid politics, the Society did not elaborate on why politics warranted such missionary caution, perhaps it was obvious in the wake of the recent contentious presidential election of 1800, where both sides made hyperbolic religious charges against their opponents. It also may have been due to the trustees’ initial nomination of Rev. John Leland (1754-1841) as one of its three original missionaries. The other two were Rev. Isaac

515 “To The Public,” James Murphy, “Letter from the Rev. James Murphy, to the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society,” The Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine 1, No. 3 (1804): 3; “The following Letter was addressed to the Missionaries, by the Committee,” Ibid., 8.
516 Ibid., 8-9.
Case and Rev. John Tripp. Leland was settled in Cheshire, Massachusetts, and surely due to his location near the border of New York was asked to labor to the west.\textsuperscript{517}

Cheshire was a Republican stronghold, and earlier that same year Leland, along with Darius Brown, accompanied the gift of a 1,235-pound cheese from local residents to newly elected President Jefferson in Washington. They presented it to him on New Year’s Day, 1802. The “mammoth cheese” was intended to be an emblem of the affection that Cheshire residents had for Jefferson, but also, as they declared, as “a sacrifice to Republicanism.” Leland’s participation in this partisan expression suggests the degree to which this “Jeffersonian Itinerant,” as Lyman Butterfield labeled him, mixed religion and politics.\textsuperscript{518}

To be sure, religious liberty and civil liberty had closely connected theological roots for Baptists and stood at the very heart of their Two Kingdoms theology. But, as the Society cautioned, it was also possible for them to intertwine in a way that could interfere with the gospel focus of the Christian ministry. This appears to have been true of Leland and may well have been one of the underlying reasons that he refused to serve the Society as a missionary. Though popular as a preacher, Leland rejected political caution. He was an ardent advocate of the separation of church and state and was known to have had difficulty avoiding the topic in the pulpit. Two biographical sketches specifically referenced this characteristic of his ministry. Briggs commented, “many thought he meddled too much in politics.” Similarly, Rev. Welch commented on Leland’s “almost mad devotion to politics.”\textsuperscript{519}

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\textsuperscript{517} Eaton, \textit{Historical Sketch of the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society and Convention, 1802-1902}, 13.


\textsuperscript{519} Sprague, \textit{Annals of the American Pulpit}, I, 185-86. Evidence of Leland’s independent spirit abounds. By at least 1814 his opposition to mission societies was becoming much more public, and by 1818 he was publishing anti-mission society material. Leland and Greene, \textit{The Writings of the Late Elder John Leland}, 471-472; John R. Mathis,
The Society was interested in Leland’s evangelism not his politics. Their apolitical
instructions were especially pertinent as their missionaries would service the British Provinces of
North America as well as destitute regions of the United States. Meddling in politics at home
would exacerbate differences between Federalists and Republicans and meddling in politics in
the British Provinces would exacerbate the political differences between the colonial subjects in
the British Empire and citizens in the new republic. Neither prospect appeared effective to
further the kingdom of God. The Society sought missionaries who would primarily advance Two
Kingdoms theology, and it rightly feared that ministers with Leland’s political fervor would
detract from that goal.520

The Society’s caution, however, may have had another source. Encountering those who
had been raised under One Kingdom perspectives in both the United States and the British
Provinces meant that for many Baptist theology was novel. In other words, they were to practice
political neutrality, because Two Kingdoms theology was potentially controversial by itself.
Both Anglicans in British North America and Congregationalists in most of New England relied
on direct government support. One could not envision forming new Baptist churches in the trans-
national northeast without discussing the nature of church-state authority. The Society
anticipated that missionaries needed to take no stand on what the state might look like: at least
not while they sought to effect “the enlargement of the Redeemer’s kingdom.” They certainly
needed to address the issue, but without advocating for the best form of government. After all,

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520 The Society’s desire to reach the British North America was quickly realized when Leland’s replacement, Elder
Joseph Cornell, formerly of Galway, New York, traveled to Upper Canada on his first missionary tour. Joseph
Cornell, “To the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society,” The Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine 1,
no. 1 (1803). A review of the Magazine reveals that the Canadas were serviced with much greater frequency than the
Maritime provinces in the early days of the Society.
local church independence was fundamental to Baptist ecclesiology. Interference in local church affairs from either religious or political outsiders was contrary to their understanding of the kingdom. Wisdom was needed to teach the principles of the separation of church and state to new converts without dividing the church along political lines or insisting on what form the state should reflect, a constitutional monarchy or a republic. At least in its inaugural assignments, the Society proceeded cautiously.521

Furthermore, the Society probably anticipated that Baptist missionaries would likely be suspect and even unwelcome in many places. Many paedobaptists had longstanding stereotypes about Baptists as uneducated. There was also substantial Standing Order Old Light prejudice against the New Light disruption that had thrived during the Great Awakening and the related New Light Stir in Nova Scotia in the 1770s and 1780s. Old Lights would have classified Baptists among the New Lights in many circumstances and, thus, worked against them. Finally, Maritime Anglicans, and especially its clerics, were actively hostile to dissenters in almost all cases. Not only might there be hostility toward the Society’s missionaries, but there must certainly have been the expectation that the theological question of the proper subjects and mode of baptism would arise. While surely the Society desired that missionaries avoid any unnecessary controversy, core theological matters themselves could be explosive and were, of course, unavoidable.

521 The Presbyterians confessed a cooperative stance between church and state regarding missions in a letter to the Society in 1804, noting, “The civil government of our country has never presented any obstacle to the missionary efforts of the General Assembly, and, in sending a mission to the Indians, it has afforded some assistance. Some of the officers of government have decidedly countenanced and encouraged the undertaking.” Ashbel Green, “Letter from the Committee of Missions of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church to the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society,” *Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine* Vol. 1, no. 2 (May 1804): 82.
Not surprisingly, controversies over baptism were reported early in the Society’s *Magazine*. In November 1803, Rev. James Murphy was ministering under contract with the Society and came on Mt. Dessert Island among several “professors” who were predominantly, though not exclusively, Presbyterian. Having already baptized dozens in the area, Murphy’s Baptist theology was well known. Though they were hospitable to the missionary, Murphy acknowledged that they announced their anti-Baptist “prejudice” and confessed they “were astonishingly attached to infant sprinkling.” One resident sternly cautioned Murphy that to raise the subject of baptism would cause a division. Murphy responded, “I had not come to make parties; I was willing they should think as they did, until the Lord should convince them.” As the Society admitted to editing and shortening some of the accounts published in their magazine, they must certainly have approved of Murphy’s work, or they would have edited it out of the report as published. They likely were hopeful that others who served the Society would follow his example.522

The Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society’s interest in the northeast in 1802 is unsurprising. Isaac Case had been serving churches and itinerating on the Maine frontier for almost twenty years. The coastal communities and islands of Penobscot Bay received special attention from his time in Thomaston in 1784 onward. The Bowdoinham Association of Baptists, formed with three churches in 1787, now boasted just shy of forty churches. The 1801 meeting took up the consideration of forming a second association in the District due to this considerable growth. As noted earlier, Boston Baptist minister Thomas Baldwin, a key figure in founding the Massachusetts Society, was present at the Bowdoinham Association meeting in North Yarmouth in August 1801. He would have noted with approval their efforts to corporately pursue further

Baldwin was also aware of recent religious revival activity in the British provinces due at least in part to contacts with both Rev. Thomas Handley Chipman and Rev. Joseph Dimock of Nova Scotia. Similarly, Rev. Samuel Stillman, another prominent inaugural trustee of the Society and the pastor of Boston’s First Baptist Church, entertained more than one maritime Baptist minister in his home between 1798 and 1800.523

What is a bit harder to explain is the sluggishness of Maine Baptists to cross the border into New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. In fact, cross-border itinerant activity appears to have been initiated by Maritime Baptists well ahead of their Maine brethren. While still committed Allinites, itinerants such as James Murphy, and James and Edward Manning were active in the area around Passamaquoddy Bay and as far as Machias in the mid-1790s. In fact, Murphy eventually settled on the Maine side of the border, serving Steuben, and then Eastport Baptist churches. Maritime Baptist itinerant success in Maine is confirmed as early as July 1801, when Nova Scotia minister Edward Manning, a recent convert to Baptist principles, “baptized over thirty persons” on Moose Island (now Eastport, Maine). The following year New Brunswick Baptist Rev. Elijah Estabrooks assisted Rev. Murphy in constituting the Baptist Church on Moose Island in August 8. Murphy was subsequently ordained as pastor over the flock of fifty-seven, serving as their pastor until 1805. Nova Scotia and New Brunswick ministers did not consider the international border an obstacle for their itinerant work.524

524 Manning came to Moose Island in what was originally intended to be an exchange of labors with Murphy, who was requested to fill the pulpit in Cornwallis, Nova Scotia, during Manning’s absence. However, in a June 1801 letter to Manning, Murphy declined because, “the Spirit of the Lord has departed from me.” James Murphy, letter to Edward Manning, Eastport, 7 June 1801, in Edward Manning Collection, Esther Clarke Wright Archives, Acadia University. William Henry Kilby, *Eastport and Passamaquoddy; a Collection of Historical and Biographical Sketches* (Eastport, Maine: Edward E. Shead & Company, 1888), 341. Also see Bell, *The Newlight Baptist Journals*
Difficulty in travel and cost may partly explain the sluggishness of the Maine Baptists, who had a long history of itinerant activity in proximity to their settled charges, but extended trips cost more than many of the near impoverished ministers could afford. Even the ministers who were not financially destitute were often dependent on their own labors to meet their personal financial needs, and so were unable to take long trips from home. Also, reading the Journal extracts from the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine reveals that the men frequently traveled in the late fall and winter months. While this would most surely be due to their own farm labors being diminished during these months and the ability of settlers to attend services for the same reasons, distant travel in this season would be arduous due to winter snows and early spring rains.

Rev. Isaac Case reflects some of these issues in his missionary labors. Case moved inland from Thomaston with his family to Readfield in the early 1790s and no longer lived in a coastal community. Travel between Maine and Nova Scotia was best done by sailing. Travel over land was time consuming, usually required the expense of a horse, and was fraught with frontier difficulties that could be physically prohibitive. Furthermore, the Baptist itinerants tended to be men of meager means, so paying for passage to Nova Scotia was simply not an option for men in Case’s circumstances. It is therefore likely that the financial resources provided by the newly formed Gospel Mission of the Bowdoinham Association, and soon after, the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society, made longer excursions economically feasible.

Case resigned his pastoral charge in Readfield in 1799 to devote himself full time to itinerant labors on behalf of the newly formed Gospel Mission. In June, Case attended the New Hampshire Association meeting as a messenger for the Bowdoinham Association. The New Hampshire Baptists collected twenty dollars to help defray the expenses of a missionary journey
“into the eastern country.” In late August, Case next attended the Bowdoinham Association meeting in Livermore, Maine, where fifteen more dollars were raised for his Mission. In the first week of September, he left Readfield on a “mission eastward” that brought him to Moose Island (Eastport), on the border of New Brunswick. This probably was his first time this far east. The trip lasted through at least mid-October, when the fragmentary narrative in Case’s diary breaks off mid-sentence with Case still laboring round Moose Island. At the following yearly Bowdoinham Association meeting, Case gave a “very pleasing account” of his gospel labors. Clearly the financial contributions of the Association’s churches made the trip possible.\(^\text{525}\)

As the new century dawned, numerous factors converged in the Passamaquoddy region that solidified a Baptist presence that moved across the porous border. The Baptist kingdom did not recognize narrow parish boundaries or national borders. The adoption of believer’s only baptism as a gospel ordinance by Edward Manning, and the other ministers who joined the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Association, meant their itinerant labors were now directed to further the kingdom as well. When Manning itinerated in Maine in the mid-1790s, it was as an Allinite New Light preacher. When he baptized over thirty individuals on Moose Island in July 1801, he had become a convinced New Light Baptist.

When Rev. James Murphy became a Baptist is less clear, however, he highlights the way that Baptists on both sides of the border converged to further the kingdom. He arrived on the shores of Maine from Nova Scotia as an Allinite New Light preacher in 1794. Historian David

\(^{525}\) Whether Case served the New Hampshire Association as well as the Bowdoinham Association’s Mission project in 1799 is uncertain, as neither association gave a formal account of funds expended. That he served the Bowdoinham Association is confirmed in their 1800 Minutes and in “A Brief Account of the Maine Baptist Missionary Society, with Motives to Perseverance,” The Maine Baptist Missionary Register, 1, no. 1 (1806): 3-5. Minutes of the New-Hampshire Association, Held at the Meeting-House, North Part of Wells; Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting-House in Green; Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting-House in Livermore; Case, “Diary.”
Bell surmises that by “mid 1801 Murphy was almost certainly a Baptist.” In Steuben, Murphy seems to have been an Allinite preacher since early town historian J. A. Milliken described his pastorate as reflecting “little attempt at formality.” Milliken further recorded that Murphy was instrumental in a revival in Steuben in 1796, when a “Baptist church was organized.” As Bell suggests, however, “probably the religious exercises in Steuben were of a Newlight character.”

There are several reasons to concur with Bell that the Steuben assembly was not yet a Baptist church. First is the early pastoral history of the work. Rev. Murphy was succeeded as pastor of the Steuben church in 1800 by Elder Young, followed by Elder Nathaniel Robinson a few years later. The differences between these last two men are striking. Respecting Young, Milliken confesses, “whence he came or wither he went, what kind of a man he was or how long he remained, I have no means of knowing.” It is instructive that neither Murphy nor Young made any known attempt to unite the church with the Maine Baptists, certainly something one would have expected if Murphy was a committed Baptist, especially after Case itinerated here in 1799. The Steuben church did not join the Lincoln Baptist Association until 1810, under Elder Robinson’s pastorate. In 1811, the Lincoln Association recorded the founding dates of the associated churches, and the minutes recorded the Steuben Baptist church to have been founded in 1805, under Elder Robinson’s pastorate, suggesting that they had not embraced Baptist principles prior to that date.

527 Milliken, The Narraguagus Valley, 26; Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting-House, in Livermore; Minutes of the Lincoln Association, Holden at Woolwich, (Buckstown, Maine: Anthony Henry Holland, 1811). For Elder Young as Joshua Young, who apparently ceased evangelistic and ministerial labors in the area in the early 1800s, see Millet, A History of the Baptists in Maine, 270.
A second reason that Murphy was an unlikely Baptist while at Steuben was the unsuccessful attempt of some people of Eastport to settle him as their pastor in August 1800. It seems unlikely that Murphy would have considered himself a possible candidate as the town’s settled minister if he was a convinced closed communion Baptist. However, as a New Light Allinite, or an open communion Baptist, the ordinances would not have been a fundamental issue for Murphy and taking the pastoral charge would have offered no major theological concern to him. It is therefore likely that the bid to bring Murphy to Eastport failed for New Light reasons, rather than differences respecting baptism.528

If these factors hold, then what possibly precipitated Murphy’s shift to Baptist principles? Two reasons suggest themselves. The first is the itinerant missionary labors of Isaac Case. In the 1799 trip noted above, Case encountered Murphy itinerating along with a Brother Downs on Mt. Dessert Island. For a few days they joined labors, and on September 30, they participated together in a baptismal service with five candidates. One candidate was a man Case referred to as Squire Young, whom, Case records, became “convinst of his duty under asermon that I preacht sense I came upon this Island.” This incident reflects that Case not only preached the gospel, but preached the ordinances, especially baptism, as understood by the closed communion Baptists in the context of their Two Kingdoms theology. Murphy would have witnessed Case’s ministrations and may well have been influenced by his words and example to embrace believer’s only baptism.529

The second factor that may have influenced Murphy was the itinerancy of Edward Manning in Eastport in 1801. By this time Manning had embraced Baptist principles, and

528 Bell, The Newlight Baptist Journals, 155.
between his close association with Murphy, and his changes in sentiments, it is hard to imagine that this would not have had a direct influence on Murphy. Murphy’s move away from Allinitism toward New Light Baptism was likely affected by these two Baptist ministers from opposite sides of the international border. Murphy thus illustrates two important factors for this study.

First, the importance of personal contact. Murphy became a central relational focus for itinerants from both Maine and the Maritimes. Personal relations were important. Second, Murphy illustrates how cross-border itinerant activity was instrumental in forming a shared spiritual identity blind to national differences. Both these factors would develop rapidly in the awakenings of the first decades of the nineteenth century.530

**Cross-Border Ministerial Laborers: Isaac Case, Henry Hale, Daniel Merrill, Edward Manning**

During the first decade of the new century, cross-border activity increased considerably bringing the Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Maine Baptists together in more formal ways. Rev. James Murphy of Eastport, who had probably been born in New Brunswick to loyalist parents, reported a missionary excursion into New Brunswick in 1804. Isaac Case made his first known tour into “the Kings Dominians” in July 1806 in company with the Sedgwick licentiate Henry Hale. Though they had already intended to travel into New Brunswick, a formal invitation was made while they were at “Robbinstown,” a few miles north of Eastport. Believing this to be “the call of providence” they traveled the short distance across the bay to St. Andrews, where a revival had taken place the previous year under the labors of a preacher Case identifies as Mr. Ansley.531

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531 Murphy’s visit is recounted in Murphy, “Letter from the Rev. James Murphy, to the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society,” 88-91. This is Case’s first known visit. He may well have been in the British Provinces on
Case returned to labor for the Society in the communities on the Passamaquoddy Bay in July 1807. Departing from Castine, Maine, he was joined by Nova Scotia Baptist Elder Burton, with whom he labored for two weeks in New Brunswick. Burton’s presence in Castine further underscores that the New Brunswick and Nova Scotia brethren were active in the borderland region during this period. Not only were ministers on both sides of the border now active in cross-border evangelism, but Case’s interaction with Rev. Ansley and now Elder Burton reflect the growing personal relationships among Regular Baptist ministers in the trans-national region.532

A noticeable increase in evangelizing New Brunswick and Nova Scotia among New England’s Baptists commenced in 1807, when newly ordained Rev. Henry Hale, still a member in Daniel Merrill’s Sedgwick Baptist Church, was appointed as a missionary of the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society. After returning in August from a two-week trip with Elder Burton, Case, confessed to the Society the desire to return “soon.” Less than four months later Case and Hale set sail from Eastport for Nova Scotia. Embarking on December 4, they arrived in Parrsboro, Nova Scotia, the next evening, preached there the following night, and then crossed the Minas Basin to Horton, where they were received by Rev. Theodore Harding.533

earlier itinerant missions, but his diary, which breaks off three days before entering New Brunswick, is spotty and no known record survives. What is lacking in his diary, however, is supplemented by “Letter from Rev. Isaac Case to the Secretary of the Society, Dated at Reedfield, Sept. 27, 1807,” The Massachusetts Missionary Magazine 1, no. 9 (1806). Henry Hale’s diary begins in October 1806, and so offers no further information. For background on James Murphy, see Bell, The Newlight Baptist Journals, 154-157 n 77. Numerous references in Bell also make plain that Mr. Ansley was Thomas Ansley.

532 Bell is surely correct that this cross-border activity was first pursued by the Baptists of the Maritimes. The Newlight Baptist Journals, 177. On Burton, see Stephen Davidson, “John Burton,” Dictionary of Canadian Biography (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1988).

During this mission trip Case and Hale made personal acquaintance with many of the prominent New Light and Baptist ministers in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Many of the ministers were members of the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Baptist Association. In addition to Harding at Horton, Case mentions William Delaney at Newport and Edward Manning at Cornwallis. Case also noted that the New Light church over which Manning presided still had a number who were “inclined to what is called the new dispensation,” an extreme Antinomian impulse that had flared in the region around 1800, which Manning had supported for a time but later opposed. By 1807, Case reported that the New Light mixed communion work had “finally dissolved” and that a Regular Baptist church was on good footing there. While many of Manning’s former members appeared to remain somewhat Allinite in their understanding of the inconsequential nature of the ordinances, Manning managed to gather a group of former Allinites, plus a “number” of what Case called newly converted “dear youth,” into a closed communion Baptist church the previous August.534

During his five-week stay in the Cornwallis area, long the heart of the Allinite movement, Case expanded his contacts among the region’s ministers and renewed his acquaintance with Elder Burton of Halifax. Burton came to Cornwallis in January 1808, at least in part to assist in ordaining Edward Manning over the recently formed closed-communion Baptist church. Reverends from the region (John Burton, Thomas Handley Chipman, Theodore Seth Harding, and William Delany), as well as itinerants Henry Hale and Case, were asked to oversee

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534 Case, “To the Pres.,” 73, emphasis in original. Goodwin asserts that the Cornwallis Baptist Church, formed in 1807, consisted of Manning, his wife Rebecca, and “seven other followers.” Case gives the impression of a larger church body, but perhaps he embellished his narrative for the sake of the report that he knew would be published in the Society’s magazine. In general, however, he does not seem to have padded numbers. More likely, the church had grown considerably by the time of Case’s visit. Moody notes that many left the Cornwallis Congregational Church to follow their former pastor into the closed communion Baptist ranks. See Goodwin, Into Deep Waters, 107 and Barry Moody, “Edward Manning.”
Manning’s ordination examination on January 27, and his formal ordination the following day. At the ordination council, Case presided as moderator and Hale as clerk. Case was also selected to preach the traditional ordination sermon the following day. Hale records that Case preached a “well adapted discourse fr 1 Cor. 3:21.”

Case further mentions traveling to “lower Granville,” where he ministered to the church pastored by Edward’s brother, James Manning, whom he described as “a good honest man.” Speaking of being treated with “great friendship and kindness,” Case found his “heart much knit to them in the bonds of the gospel.” Delany indicated that Case and Hale arrived during a time when “the work of God does . . . appear to be going on rapidly.” The two U.S. missionaries continued to minister in Nova Scotia until late March, when Case departed for home, leaving Hale to pursue further itinerant work for another month. During this rather lengthy stay the two Maine ministers formed permanent links to the ministers and churches of Nova Scotia that sustained deep and lasting cross-border bonds for Baptists. This would prove important when personal and denominational relations would be tested by the War of 1812.

The connections between the Maine and Maritime brethren would soon deepen. In September 1809, the Lincoln Association voted to “open a correspondence with the Nova Scotia Association.” Rev. Hale was present as a minister and messenger of the Sedgwick Baptist Church, and the account of his visit the previous year must certainly have stimulated further cross-border connections. This is further underscored by the choice of both Rev. Merrill along

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535 “Ordination Certificate, 1808,” Edward Manning Collection, Esther Clark Wright Archives, Acadia University. For Case’s and Hale’s records of these events see Case, “To the Pres.,” 74 and Hale, Diary, January 27-28, 1808. Case did not mention his leadership roles at Manning’s ordination.
536 Case, “To the Pres.,” 74-75. Case and Hale’s visit to Nova Scotia is recorded in Rev. William Delany’s account of revival in Newport, which he communicated to the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society, “Revival of Relion at Newport, Nova Scotia,” Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine 2, no. 7 (1809): 206-07. The assertion that the cross-border ties began in earnest with this visit is founded, in part, because Manning’s incoming U.S. correspondence prior to this visit was limited to a single letter from James Murphy but increased notably after 1808.
with Rev. Hale as messengers from the Lincoln Association to the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Association.\textsuperscript{537}

Merrill took up correspondence with Edward Manning in October 1808 as a direct result of Hale’s reports of the work in Nova Scotia to his Sedgwick congregation. Merrill apparently had heard of Manning before the latter’s conversion to Baptist principles, but now he was aware that Manning had fully embraced a closed communion. In his first letter Merrill sought to encourage Manning in the work of “Zion’s cause and king.” Perhaps because both ministers had themselves left the paedobaptist and mixed communion traditions, Merrill considered Manning to be of special significance in “the holy war” against that “Babylon.” It is clear from the letter that Merrill viewed Manning as a fellow laborer in both a spiritual and a regional sense. The connection between Maine and the British Provinces was becoming more firmly identifiable, and the personal correspondence initiated by Merrill birthed a long and valued friendship between the two men.\textsuperscript{538}

Following the Lincoln Association’s lead in forming corresponding relations with the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Association, the Bowdoinham Association made the same proposal at their annual assembly in September 1810. Why they waited until this time instead of making the formal overture the previous year is not indicated. Case must certainly have been a catalyst for the motion to open formal relations, as he was a messenger to the Bowdoinham Association that year from the Readfield Baptist Church. Likely because of his familiarity and

\textsuperscript{537} Minutes of the Lincoln Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting-House in Thomaston (Portland, Maine: J. M’Kown, 1809), 6. The Nova Scotia minister Elder Joseph Crandall may have attended the 1809 Lincoln Association meeting and helped to initiate formal relations between the two associations. The Maritime Association agreed to provide ten dollars each to Manning and Ansley for their expenses to travel to the Lincoln Association meeting in 1810. The next entry was an agreement to refund Crandall ten dollars “for his attendance last year.” Minutes of the Nova Scotia and New-Brunswick Baptist Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting-House in Sacville in the County of Westmoreland, 7.

\textsuperscript{538} Daniel Merrill, Letter to Edward Manning, Sedgwick, October 20, 1808, Edward Manning Collection.
newly formed friendships with the ministers across the border, he was voted to be the
Bowdoinham Association’s messenger to the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Association for
1811. This may also have been agreed upon for pragmatic reasons, since Case could serve both
the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society and the Bowdoinham Association at the Nova
Scotia and New Brunswick Association annual gathering. 539

The ties which began as personal ones were now developing along ecclesiastical and
associational lines. This is further underscored by the reception of the Maine messengers in the
Maritimes. When Merrill and Hale made the trip on behalf of the Lincoln Association to
Sackville for the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Association meeting in June 1810, their
welcome included an invitation for Merrill to preach the “Introductory Sermon” and the morning
sermon the next day. The Association reciprocally voted “that the Articles of the Lincoln
Association be recommended to the Churches in connection with us, to be adopted by them.” 540

Formal relations continued to grow between the Baptist associations in Maine and the British
provinces. The following year the Bowdoinham Association divided into two, spawning the
Cumberland Association. At the June 1811 meeting of the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick
Association held in Onslow, Case represented both Maine associations, and the Nova Scotia and
New Brunswick Baptists agreed to enter into formal corresponding relations with them. Case
was also invited to address the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick assembly. 541

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539 Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting-House, in Livermore, 6.
540 Minutes of the Nova Scotia and New-Brunswick Baptist Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting-House in
Sackville in the County of Westmoreland, 7. The text Merrill chose for his sermon is recorded as “Mat. XIX, 19, 20.”
This may be a misprint for Mat. XXIX, 19, 20.
541 Minutes of the Nova Scotia and New-Brunswick Baptist Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting-House in
Onslow.
The importance of the inter-associational fellowship had a double effect. Certainly, it formalized cross-border institutional ties that would last well into the future. But it also enhanced personal ties. For instance, when Merrill first traveled to Nova Scotia to represent the Lincoln Association in 1810, the contacts he made at the associational gathering reads like a Who’s Who of first-generation Maritime closed-communion Baptists. The reverse was true as Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Association brethren attended Maine Association annual gatherings. Thus, inter-associational activity enhanced personal relations rapidly and effectively.\textsuperscript{542}

Over the short few years from Hale’s and Case’s first visit to the British provinces, the personal and formal ties among Baptists had solidified. Cross-border activity often reflected cooperation between ministers from both sides of the national boundary. Case, Merrill, and Hale often traveled and labored with Nova Scotia and New Brunswick itinerants when they were in the provinces. The same became true of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick itinerants when they crossed over into Maine. For instance, Edward Manning visited Case at his home in Readfield in October 1810, and the two traveled together as itinerants in both Maine and New Brunswick.\textsuperscript{543}

The relations among the Baptists were deepened through personal and associational correspondence among brethren on both sides of the border. Having a common interest in the expansion of the kingdom and a deepening affection for one another was far more important than national divisions. Yet, their deep and underlying bond of common spiritual cause and shared identity was about to be tested.

\textsuperscript{542} The minutes of the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Association for 1810 include the names of Edward and James Manning, Theodore S. Harding, Thomas Ansley, George Dimock, Peter and Joseph Crandall, and Elisha Estabrooks, among others.

\textsuperscript{543} Isaac Case, “Extract from Elder Case's Missionary Journal, Dated Readfield, April 16, 1811. Addressed to the President of the Society,” \textit{Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine} 3, no. 6 (1812): 166.
The War of 1812

It was ten o’clock on a Tuesday morning and Henry Hale stood in the Baptist Meetinghouse in Upper Granville, Nova Scotia, with his Bible open to The Gospel of St. John, chapter eight and verse thirty-one: “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.” Hale was no longer a newcomer to Nova Scotia, and historian David Bell surmises that on this trip he preached to some of the largest crowds ever to hear a revival sermon in the Canadian Maritimes. This sermon, however, was different. Hale was not preaching to the masses, but for the first time to the ministers of the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Baptist Association. He came as the Lincoln Baptist Association’s appointed messenger to their Baptist brethren, and he preached to his Maritime colleagues in good Baptist fashion, only at their invitation. It was, in his words, “a glorious time first to last. I believe the Lord was in the midst, of a truth.”

What made this occasion doubly memorable, however, is that this Tuesday morning was June 23, 1812, five days after Hale’s government had declared war upon the government of the Baptist brethren who had invited him to preach. The War of 1812 caused many disruptions over the next three years. Daniel Merrill, now serving as a representative for the District of Maine in the Massachusetts legislature, was originally appointed to make the trip to Upper Granville as the Association messenger, but Hale went in his stead because of legislative urgencies that kept Merrill in Boston. Only days before the meeting in Nova Scotia, Merrill wrote to Nova Scotia Baptist leader Edward Manning. His somber words to his British Baptist friend are telling:

My Dear Brother, I am for the present, very much occupied. The Legislature, of which I am a member, is now in session, and upon important business. They are about memorializing the general government, relative to the subject of peace or

Bell, The Newlight Baptist Journals, 197. For Hale’s commission as a messenger for the Lincoln Association, see Minutes of the Lincoln Association, Holden at Woolwich, 5; Hale’s account of the visit is recorded in Hale, “Diary.”
war. I wish the differences between your government and ours may be so accommodated, as to promote the good of both, and subserve Zion’s best good. But I fear a contest is before us. However the differences may be between the governments among men, be it our concern to be in obedience to the government of God.545

The governmental “differences” that disrupted “Zion” began almost immediately. For the first time since Hale began itinerant preaching tours in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, he needed governmental permission to remain in the provinces. Interrupting an extremely active ministry, he left Manning in Cornwallis on July 27, 1812, for Halifax, the provincial capital, where he “called on the governor for permission to continue in the Province and obtained it.”546 Hale remained in the Maritime provinces until early September when he “took passage for Eastport.” The disruptions that necessitated a few days detour in July grew in magnitude, and Hale would not return until after the war ended. Associational relations were also suspended during the war. The minutes of the 1813 Nova Scotia and New Brunswick meeting note with pregnant brevity, “voted, That the Correspondence with the Sister Associations in the United States be dropped, on account of the existing difficulties.”547

Henry Hale’s experience exemplifies the complexities faced by Baptists during the War of 1812. The war occurred at a time of political and economic upheaval in the early republic. Jefferson’s inauguration reflected political and religious partisanship that was unmatched in the short life of the nation and would be little diminished in the decade following his 1800 election. Similar partisan concerns continued in President Jefferson’s wake when fellow Virginian

545 Daniel Merrill, Letter to Edward Manning, Boston, June 2, 1812, Edward Manning Collection.
546 Walter Ronald Copp notes that “news arrived that the war had been declared” on June 29 and was confirmed “on July 1st” in “Nova Scotia and the War of 1812” Unpublished MA thesis, (Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia 1935), 86. Hale, “Diary.”
Republican James Madison took office. The war between England and France created economic upheaval on the seas as the infant nation struggled to remain unsuccessfully neutral in the conflict. Impressments and seizures not only created economic turmoil, but national unrest, as many citizens viewed these acts as aggression against the national sovereignty of the United States. Add to this the British occupancy of western forts, supposedly ceded in the Treaty of Paris decades earlier, along with their perceived aide to Native Americans in their fight to stave off the encroachment of US settlers pouring across the Appalachians to occupy their lands. It is clear the issues leading up to the declaration of war in June 1812 left few Americans unaffected. Political and economic factors of the war have been substantively addressed by historians, but one area that warrants further review is how religion textured personal experiences of the conflict. As one looks at denominational variants at the time of “Mr. Madison’s War”, the need becomes even more pronounced. Scholarly and substantive analyses of how Baptists viewed the War of 1812 are very limited, though Baptists are beginning to receive better attention.\textsuperscript{548}

A further piece of the complex picture emerges as one considers Baptists as an international denomination rather than one confined to strict national lines. As the account of Henry Hale above exemplifies, being Baptist and American were not mutually inclusive, and the war exposed conflicted identities and allegiances. Military conflict along the border provides an

\textsuperscript{548}Work specifically dedicated to religion and the War of 1812 includes Gribbin, The Churches Militant: the War of 1812 and American Religion. Gribbin covers Baptists, in summary fashion, 78-89. Gordon Heath’s assertion that “there is very limited research on churches and the War of 1812,” though made with respect to Canadian studies, is also true of the US. He identified four Canadian works, two of which he had recently published. Gordon L. Heath, “Canadian Churches and War: An Introductory Essay and Annotated Bibliography,” McMaster Journal of Theology and Ministry 12 (2011): 62. Work specifically dedicated to Baptists and the War of 1812 has been, until recently, even more limited. The only Baptist denominational piece available in the twentieth century that I have found is Ellis, “Baptists and the War of 1812,” 124-34. Heath has himself furthered our understanding of Baptists and the War of 1812 through two articles in 2011 dedicated to Baptists in Canada that give helpful attention to cross-border relations. See Gordon L. Heath, “‘The Great Association Above’: Maritime Baptists and the War of 1812,” Pacific Journal of Baptist Research 7, no. 2 (2011); “Ontario Baptists and the War of 1812,” Ontario History 103, no. 2 (2011).
ideal environment to consider how regional Baptist alliances in the northeast may have been affected by national allegiances and identities. Considering Maritime and New England Baptists together offers a regionally textured view of the war. To be sure, there were many Baptists whose whole-hearted patriotism comes through in unabashed and robust support of military conflict. But this was far from a universal position, and regional subtleties emerge as one looks more closely at the evidence.

This is not to say that religion has been ignored by historians, it has not. It is common fare that the churchmen of the New England Standing Order were staunchly Federalists and opposed the war, while radical evangelicals were mostly pro-war advocates. It is also commonly affirmed that the Baptists, who had become the largest protestant denomination in America by this time, were strongly in support of the war as ardent Republicans. Broad sweeping statements are frequent; William Gribbin provides a good example, “foremost among the prowar churches were the Baptists, whose martial patriotism transcended regional and economic interests, class conflicts and party loyalties.” Jon Latimer follows a similar course by declaring, “foremost among the war churches were the Baptists.” The problem with such broad and sweeping generalizations is they often fail to reflect the complexity of religious life in early republic. They also underplay regional differences and borderland relationships.549

Another challenge complicating such broad generalizations is that they treat Baptists in the U.S. as monolithic; they were not. At the dawn of the nineteenth century there were several different variations of Baptists including Freewill Baptists, Christ-ians, Seventh Day Baptists, and Separate or Regular Baptists. These groups differed over issues of theology and polity as

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well as the place that politics and war should have in Baptist life; some of these differences are
distinguishable regionally as well. A further complication is that Baptists were ardent supporters
of liberty of conscience, a theological position that left each Baptist free to decide many matters
for him or herself. As we noted at the beginning of this chapter, Baptists need not be in lock step
politically to be in fellowship and harmony theologically. This was largely due to their Two
Kingdoms theology. A failure to account properly for these variations leads Ellis and Gribbin to
treat individual Baptist sermons and statements as though they were speaking for the whole;
Baptists would not have viewed them in such a light.550

The existing secondary literature on Baptists in the War of 1812 is unsatisfactory.
Gribbin mostly uses printed sermons by supposed pro-war Baptist preachers, five references to
pro-war statements from associational minutes, and a number of quotations from pro-war
Baptists in ardently Republican newspapers.551 By choosing sources in this fashion, Gribbin
inadvertently masked important regional variations in Baptist support for the war.552

Many Baptists were unsure of how the just war theory advocated in the Second London Baptist
Confession of Faith and its U.S. replication in the Philadelphia Confession of Faith applied to the
War of 1812. This appears to be the backdrop for the 1813 circular letter for the Philadelphia

550 Elias Smith is a good example of differences among the various groups of Baptists. Theologically he was a
moving target. He was connected with the Regular Baptists for a while but was eventually rejected by them for his
theological aberrations, especially his anti-Calvinism and Unitarianism. He began a group known as the Christian
Movement, or Christian Connection, which married civil republicanism with religious principles of liberty; a
marriage not shared by many Regular Baptist of New England. To Smith, civil republicanism was the highest form
of Christianity and presaged the dawn of the millennium. For more on Smith, see Michael G. Kenny, The Perfect
551 Regrettably, Gribbin makes no reference to private papers, journals or correspondence, and no Baptist church
records, eliminating rich sources of Baptist life.
Association signed by Silas Hough, the moderator of the General Assembly, and Horatio Gates Jones, the clerk of the Assembly, which Gribben references.\textsuperscript{553}

It may be that Gribbin read more into this letter than was fully warranted. The subject which the Philadelphia Association addressed in their 1813 Circular Letter was “non-resistance.” What Gribben fails to note is that the topic was deemed important due to the numbers “with whom” the Philadelphia Baptists desired “to be one in sentiment, as well as affection.” In other words, the letter was deemed necessary because apparently there were many who were not in favor of the war for “Scriptural” reasons. Its purpose, then, was to give grounds for participation in what was deemed a just war, because it was in the estimation of the Philadelphia Association a defensive war. While there were obviously pro-war advocates within the Association, the Circular Letter proves it was not a universal position. In fact, it may be that individual churches had divided sentiments over this issue.\textsuperscript{554}

The Circular Letter specifically addressed the rights of the “civil government” to engage in a defensive war against an aggressor. The importance of the letter was that Baptists undertook to teach the distinction between the rights and responsibilities of the civil magistrate over the civil affairs of the people, while helping their Regular Baptist membership understand their distinct rights and responsibilities as simultaneous citizens of the kingdom of heaven. As citizens in the civil realm the Scriptures spoke to the appropriate defense of their lives, liberty, and property. They were not Biblically required to sit passively by while “their families were slain,

\textsuperscript{553} The advocacy for just war theory by the Philadelphia Association is found in \textit{A Confession of Faith}, 86-87.
\textsuperscript{554} Philadelphia Baptist Association, \textit{Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association} (Philadelphia: Dennis Heartt, Printer, 1813), 7.
their dwellings laid in ruins, their country subjugated,” and their lives “sacrificed.” As citizens of the civil kingdom they could defend themselves and their country.555

Could this be viewed as a pro-war stance? Gribbin clearly thinks so. It might, however, be better treated as a just war stance from a Two Kingdoms perspective. That this may be a better read of the sources is undergirded by the fact that the Philadelphia Circular Letter acknowledges that local churches’ opinions were “diversified” and in some cases “opposite.” The letter surely encouraged Baptists who supported the war and warned against what it saw as unwarranted pacifism. Two Kingdoms theology permitted a defensive war as just.556

A further point that helps to illustrate the Two Kingdom perspective of the Philadelphia Baptists surfaced at the previous year’s annual assembly. Meeting in October 1812, several months after the civil hostilities were underway, they were “rejoicing in the enlargement of the Mediator’s kingdom.” This jubilant expression was in light of the growth of Baptists across the United States as well as intelligence of revivals from Nova Scotia and “acceptable communications on the state and prosperity of the churches of England.” The Philadelphia Baptists distinguished distaste of the British government (in their view the aggressor against the U.S. in the civil realm) from the actions of Christians and churches, who enjoyed the “prosperity” afforded British Baptist churches, as part of the “Mediator’s kingdom.”557

This Two Kingdoms perspective was also evident in the 1813 assembly as the Philadelphia Baptists could “cordially recommend” the U.S. printing of English Particular Baptist Andrew Fuller’s work against the Socinians. This was despite Fuller’s English

555 Ibid., 10, 7.
556 Ibid., 8.
557 Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, Held, by Appointment, in Philadelphia, October 27th, 28th, and 29th, 1812 (Philadelphia: Dennis Heartt, Printer, 1812), 5.
nationality. In fact, in 1803 Fuller had addressed his congregation in Kettering, England, on the same subject as the Philadelphia Baptists: just war theory. At the time, Fuller saw France as the aggressor against English civil sovereignty and suggested that the conflict was in “defense” of English liberty and could justly be engaged by Baptists. Though by 1813 the English and American Baptists viewed the civil unrest from two different perspectives, they agreed theologically on just war theory. Furthermore, while the two civil kingdoms were in conflict, the local expressions of the kingdom of heaven were not. Gribben does not sufficiently appreciate this distinction.\footnote{Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, 6. Fuller’s 1803 sermon may be found in Fuller, The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller, I, 202. For an examination of Fuller’s sermon, see Brewster, “Andrew Fuller and the War against Napoleon”, 32-57.}

Gribbin also appears to overstate the importance of published pro-war sermons. For even the most popular ministers, most of their sermons would not have been printed. Caution needs to be exercised when using such sermons to speak for all Baptists. One example is a sermon by New York City pastor William Parkinson. On August 20, 1812, he preached a sermon that Gribbin marshals as evidence of a pro-war sentiment among U.S. Baptists. Two factors, however, should temper this assessment. The first is that First Baptist Church of New York City, where Parkinson was pastor, was a member of the New York Association. This Association made no such pro-war statements and neither sanctioned nor condemned Parkinson for his published position on the war. Because of these considerations the stance of the New York Association may probably be classified, as consistent with the larger body of associations that spoke in the language of political neutrality.

The second factor is that this was not a Sunday sermon. Parkinson preached this sermon on the third Thursday of August 1812, the day set aside by President Madison for fasting and
humiliation. The sermon reflects a careful distinction between church and state in this endeavor. This is more forcefully underscored as Parkinson addressed his audience as “fellow-citizens” and acknowledged that his sermon contained sentiments that others were free to disagree with. In other words, because this was a sermon preached on a government sanctioned day of prayer and fasting, Parkinson addressed the attendees on a matter of civil importance. By calling them “fellow-citizens,” he was essentially distinguishing between the civil kingdom and the kingdom of God. To be sure, Parkinson advocated American involvement in the War of 1812 based on his understanding of just war theory. But he also suggested that just war theory gave at least some justification for declaring war against France as well as England, though he did not see them as equal offenders of U.S. sovereignty. What Parkinson’s single sermon reflects is a typical Baptist view of a just war theory of military engagement, and a Two Kingdoms paradigm for understanding the interchange of church and state. To suggest, as Gribbin does, that Parkinson was a representative example of the Baptists who “were united in their hatred of Britain” does not hold.\footnote{William Parkinson, \textit{A Sermon, Delivered in the Meeting House of the First Baptist Church, in the City of New York, August 20th, 1812 Being a Day Recommended, by the Constituted Authorities of the Nation, as a Day of Special Humiliation and Prayer, on Account of the Present War} (New York: John Tiebout, 1812); Gribbin, \textit{The Churches Militant: the War of 1812 and American Religion}, 78.}

Gribbin’s second example of a representative of pro-war Baptist is even less convincing. Gribbin proposes John Leland, the Baptist minister in Cheshire, Massachusetts, as representative of Baptist thought. While Leland was a convinced Baptist of a sort, his political and religious convictions were not representative of the Regular Baptists in the northeast. As noted above, Briggs commented on Leland’s apparent inability to balance his political and ecclesiastical views, “politically, he belonged to the old republican party . . . Many thought he meddled too
much in politics.” Rev. Welch echoed this sentiment, commenting on Leland’s “many eccentricities,” and that “which, probably, interfered more than anything else with his usefulness as a minister, was his almost mad devotion to politics.” These were mainstream Baptist assessments of Leland.  

Further proof is not hard to find. Greene records that Leland had ongoing difficulties with the Regular Baptists of the northeast regarding his views on Calvinism and church government. Wright asserted that “the sentiments of Elder Leland . . . are not according to Scripture doctrine, we think no Baptist of this day, has the least doubt.” Leland was an advocate for a form of religious and civil liberty more akin to hyper-individualism than the more traditional and confessional Baptist advocacy of liberty of conscience. Furthermore, he appears to have taught that for one to be a Baptist one also was compelled to be Republican in political sentiment. The Baptists of the northeast, and especially those of the British provinces, were not convinced that the two were necessarily mutually inclusive. The Baptists were more interested in religious liberty than in political uniformity.  

Leland was eventually “dis-fellowshipped” from the Shaftsbury Association for his rather radical views. In their words, “voted, unanimously, that this association hold fellowship with no man or Church, embracing or countenancing such sentiments.” That the vote was unanimous reveals that hyper-individualism, whether ecclesiastical or political, was contrary to good church

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560 The Churches Militant, 63. For the comments of Briggs and Welch, see the biographical sketch of Leland in Sprague, Annals of the American Baptist Pulpit, I, 184-85.

561 Leland and Greene, The Writings of the Late Elder John Leland; S. Wright, History of the Shaftsbury Baptist Association, 154. On the rejection of hyper-individualism among the Baptists, see Wills, Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South, 1785-1900, 33.
order, according to these Baptists, and inconsistent with traditional Regular Baptist theology and practice.\footnote{Minutes of the Shaftsbury Baptist Association...1817, 7.}

Pierce S. Ellis, Jr.’s study of Baptists in the War of 1812 uses a better mix of sources than Gribben, but shortcomings remain, especially an utter lack of references. He is correct in noting the limited number of war related sermons published by Baptist preachers, but there were more than the two he claims to have found (interestingly he chooses a couple of non-Baptist sermons to fill out this section of his work). He presents a more variegated Baptist view of the war from associational minutes, finding a broader array of Baptist sentiment than Gribbin advocates. But Ellis also fails to consider the Baptists’ view of Two Kingdoms theology and the influence of cross-border denominational ties in the northeast.\footnote{Ellis, “Baptists and the War of 1812.” The two Baptist sermons Ellis makes reference to are the one addressed above preached by William Parkinson and a second one preached at the conclusion of the war by Obadiah B. Brown on April 13, 1815. Brown’s sermon, like that of Parkinson, was preached on a Thursday, not a Sunday. The non-Baptist preachers Ellis includes are the Unitarian Rev. William Ellery Channing, the Congregationalist Rev. Brown Emerson, the Presbyterian Rev. John B. Romeyn, and lastly the Methodist Rev. Richard Watson.}

In what follows, Baptists are shown to have held more varied positions toward the War of 1812 than past historical generalizations would lead one to believe. Second, excessively pro-war individuals were not always accurate representatives of the larger body of Regular Baptists in the U.S. Third, as the published association minutes are reviewed, a definite regionalism appears. Contrary to Gribbin, the pro-war patriotism of many Baptists did not “transcend regionalism.” If anything, the war highlighted Baptist regionalism in interesting ways. Finally, Baptist support for the war cannot be fully appreciated without assessing the larger Baptist position of Two Kingdoms theology and religious liberty. Baptists did largely align themselves with Republicans in the U.S., but to simply assume that this political category satisfactorily classifies them is
overly simplistic. The Baptists aligned themselves with Republicans, often for political reasons, but even more substantially for religious ones, especially in the northeast. Republicanism gave support to religious liberty and their Two Kingdoms theology.\textsuperscript{564} What follows counterbalances monolithic generalizations made by some scholars about Baptists and the War of 1812.

**U.S. Baptist Associational References to the War of 1812\textsuperscript{565}**

Both Gribbin and Ellis acknowledge the rich mine of evidence of Baptist war sentiment within associational minutes but limit themselves to a handful of references. Their conclusions are inconsistent. Where Gribbin found a pro-war stance that “transcended regional . . . interests,” Ellis found “only a few instances where the war was a matter of major concern” and ample evidence of “lines of sectionalism.” A more extensive assessment of associational minutes proves Ellis correct regarding sectionalism, but less accurate about the lack of major concern.\textsuperscript{566} The published association meeting minutes in the U.S. during the years from 1812 to 1815 reveal three important features relevant to this study. The first is the evidence of a broad spectrum of

\textsuperscript{564} Hamburger, *Separation of Church and State* and Paul Goodman, *The Democratic-Republicans of Massachusetts: Politics in a Young Republic* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986) show that Baptists and Republicans were not always in agreement on several issues.

\textsuperscript{565} One substantive advantage to associational records over individual expressions is that they provide a collective representation of the Baptists’ war stance. The associations were usually attended by several messengers from each church, both pastors and principle men of the congregation. They also only passed resolutions or made categorical statements supported by a majority view of those present. In this light, their statements reflect majority Baptist opinion and belief.

\textsuperscript{566} Gribbin refers to five associational statements made during the war and three post-war associational references, all of which he views as pro-war. Ellis, on the other hand, found three associational statements that were “definitely” pro-war. But he also claimed a review of fifteen associations, predominantly in New England, where statements were politically “neutral.” See Ellis, “Baptists and the War of 1812,” 129. The Baptist historian David Benedict, alive during this era, catalogued 131 Baptist Associations in the United States in 1815. When a substantial number of associational minutes for the years 1812-1815 are reviewed, the regional character of Baptist responses is clear. Neither of these works acknowledge Baptists in the Maritime provinces at all. Benedict notes at least two Baptist associations in the British Provinces by the start of the war, and, according to Ivison and Rosser, a small number of Baptist churches in Upper Canada maintained their membership in Vermont associations until almost 1819. Like their Baptist brethren in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, they did not cross the border to attend associational meetings during the war. See Benedict, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America and Other Parts of the World.*, II, 497-553; Ivison and Rosser, *The Baptists in Upper and Lower Canada before 1820*. Ellis, 131. It is interesting that Gribbin makes no reference to Ellis’s work.
positions relative to the war, certainly a broader spectrum of positions than Gribbin acknowledges. The second is evident regionalism. The Baptists, like the nation, espoused varying support for the war with clear geographical distinctions. This regionalism is enhanced when U.S.-Canadian Baptist alliances and allegiances are considered. The third feature is the theological perspectives that emerge in assessing the war. 567

Where Gribbin appears to see mostly pro-war Baptists with an insignificant anti-war minority, Ellis postulates a third group that remained “neutral.” Neutrality is most likely true of at least three Baptist associations who made no reference to the war in their formal minutes. When consideration is made for the majority of associations who made some sort of reference to the war, the silence of these three associations is important, especially since they would have received messengers and minutes from other associations that directly commented about the war. The silence can only be interpreted as intentional and best understood as a purposeful unwillingness to take a specific stand. 568

It is important to note that no Baptist association postulated pacifism as an expected or advocated position. One suspects there was a concern for the possibility of some Baptists adopting Quaker or Shaker sentiments of pacifism when the Philadelphia Association dedicated its annual Circular Letter to the topic of “non-resistance” in 1813. But, as noted above, the letter

567 At the time of this writing I have had access mainly to the associational Minutes that are available in the digital collection of Early American Imprints, Series II, Shaw-Shoemaker, 1801-1819. For the years 1812-1815 there are 119 published minutes from 54 different associations (not all associational minutes were available for the full four-year period). This corpus makes up the lion share of the references below. There are some additional associational statements referenced in secondary sources that will be apparent from the notes.

568 The three neutral associations that I identified are the Fairfield Association in Vermont, the Saluda Association in South Carolina, and the Scioto Association of Ohio. Nine other associations made no direct statement respecting the war in the available records; but it would not be entirely accurate to classify them as neutral without reviewing the missing minutes. The nine associations with incomplete minutes are: the Danville Association of Vermont, the Tennessee Association, the Chowan Association of North Carolina, the Broad River, Rensselearville, Ontario, and Madison Associations of New York, and the Licking and Gasper Associations of Kentucky. One question that begs an answer, why these Baptists did not even call their churches to prayer relative to the war, even after President Madison called for a National Day of Prayer in both 1812 and 1813? Their total silence is rather puzzling.
further highlights the fact that the Baptists’ view of the Two Kingdoms left some of their constituents uncertain as to its application during these “troubled times.”

In other words, how did separation of church and state apply to Baptists at the citizen level under a magistrate that advocated religious liberty? How were individual Baptists to live? Were they to avoid or even reject participation in the “civil government,” or could they robustly “support the constituted authorities,” and thus participate in civil affairs as citizens of the common kingdom and in religious affairs as members of the redeemed kingdom? The Philadelphia Association letter seems to have been written to explain that their understanding of Scripture meant that good Baptists could actively participate in both kingdoms, and, in fact, were expected to do so. The Philadelphia Association encouraged Baptists to consider that God called them to “support” the magistrate and freed them to participate in a defensive war. They were under no mandate to “submit to the mobocrisy of terrorists.”

Gribbin sees this letter as support for a pro-war Baptist position, but it is more apt to consider it as a counter to pacifism than as a wholehearted justification for the necessity of the war. Where the Philadelphia Baptists differed from their pacifist friends was in seeing the right of defending oneself and one’s country from invasion and encroachment as honorable before God. Being a Baptist and being a robust citizen was not mutually exclusive. They presented what they believed to be a Scriptural case against the unnamed pacifists who believed non-resistance “to be Scriptural . . . In a word they declare to the world, that, according to their views, no

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569 Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, Held, by Appointment, in Philadelphia, October 5th, 6th, and 7th, 1813, 14.
570 Ibid., 10.
provocation, insults, or injuries, whatever, can justify the shedding of human blood in our defense.”571

While not exactly widespread, this issue also received attention beyond the Philadelphia Association. That there were at least some other Baptists who advocated pacifism as a required position is suggested by the question the Second Church in Vassalborough, Maine, proposed to the Lincoln Association in 1814: “is it according to the spirit and temper of the gospel for a member of the Church of Christ to volunteer himself in a carnal war and bloodshed; if not, what ought a church to do with any of its members, when they show such a temper of mind.” In this case it appears that the church had some members who were unwilling to serve in the military. It can hardly have been a hardened rule that Baptists were pro-war, as the question gives the impression that they expected the Association to respond to their question in the negative and to recommend some sort of church action against the pro-war faction. Rather than teach on the subject in their Circular Letter, as the Philadelphia brethren had done, the Lincoln Association simply voted to have “nothing to do in answering the above questions.”572

The Association’s answer to the Vassalborough Baptists was likely motivated by a complex mix of factors. Religious liberty and Two Kingdoms theology may have been key elements. There is also the possibility that the Vassalborough Baptists struggled with how to balance the civil dispute between the U.S. and Great Britain, while still fostering robust spiritual relations with British Baptists, especially those of the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick

571 They do not specifically identify the “numbers, with whom we desire to be one in sentiment, as well as in affection,” Ibid., p. 7. It is doubtful that confessional Baptists would view the Quakers or Shakers in this light; however, as Marini notes, these groups did make substantial inroads into Baptist communities, Marini, Radical Sects of Revolutionary New England.
572 Minutes of the Lincoln Association, Holden at Fairfax, September 21st & 22nd, 1814 (Hallowell, Maine: N. Cheever, 1814), 5.
Association. Interestingly, the Lincoln Association saw no apparent conflict here, as they voted that “Brother Ruggles” be their messenger to the next “Nova Scotia” Association General Assembly. The Lincoln Association never severed corresponding relations with the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Association.573

However, the Vassalborough Baptists may have faced a slightly different issue than the Philadelphia Baptists the year before. Their question suggests the concern was not just over whether one should support the civil government, nor if it was Scriptural to enlist in a just war (i.e., a defensive war). Their question suggests the issue was related directly to the present war. Calling it a “carnal war” gives the impression that some in the church felt that it was unjust, and they looked to the Lincoln Association for confirmation.574

At the other end of the martial spectrum, there are several references by Baptist associations that warrant classifying them as unequivocal pro-war advocates. Tennessee’s Concord Association muddied civil and religious liberty leading them to declare that “we view it all important that every friend to the rights of man, should repair to the unfurled flag of liberty, erected at the expence of the blood of ’76, and give the strongest testimony of their determined zeal to support and preserve uncontaminated, that only republic on earth.” This conviction led them to adopt a formal resolution advocating excommunicating those who were not as ardent in their support.

573 Ibid., 4.
574 Ibid., 5.
Resolved therefore, that this association do earnestly recommend to the churches they represent, to keep a watchful eye over their respective churches, and should they discover any of her members unfriendly to that great gift of heaven, our republican form of government, that they forthwith exclude such from fellowship as unworthy of the society.\(^575\)

The Elkhorn Association of Kentucky not only advocated support for the war and especially for President Madison, it also displayed strong anti-British sentiment. Rejoicing in their “Religious freedom constitutionally secured,” and believing that the British were galled by America’s independence, they surmised that the British posed an aggressive threat to the republic. This concern motivated the Elkhorn Baptist Association to send a Circular Letter to their churches in 1814 that described Britain as,

> descend[ed] from the dignified attitude of an enlightened nation. She is guilty of intrigues and practices which must cover her in its everlasting shame. More than once her unparalled [sic] Butcheries have clothed our state with mo[u]ring. She professes to be the champion of Religion, while she sports with every thing sacred to humanity and perpetrates deeds from which the heart of Pagan would shrink with horror.

This account rallied their members to arms, believing that the war necessitated civil “duties of the most active sort.”\(^576\)

Popularity for the war also surfaced among Baptists in Georgia, considering it “just, necessary, and indispensible,” pledging “ourselves to the government of our choice, that we will by all means in our power aid in its prosecution, until it shall be brought to an honorable termination.” One interesting feature of the Georgia Baptists was their sense that they should

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\(^575\) Concord Baptist Association, *Minutes of the Concord Baptist Association* (Nashville, Tennessee: M. & J. Norvell, 1813), p. 4. Ellis noted that in 1814 the Green River Association of Kentucky espoused similar views. The Green River Association adopted the identical resolution (Ellis quoted it in full.). That there was a borrowing here is undeniable, what is uncertain is whether it originated with the Concord Baptists or was more broadly circulated, further analysis is needed. Ellis, “Baptists and the War of 1812,” 128-29.

offer an apology for addressing the war in such strong language. They viewed it as “unusual” for
them as Baptists “to intermeddle with the political concerns” of the country. Clearly, they
crossed a line that had previously demarcated religious and civil liberties as separate from one
another. Their war sentiments were so strong, however, that they considered silence to be
“criminal indifference.”

Others voiced support for the war mingled with anti-British rhetoric. The Shiloh
Association of Virginia spoke in 1813 of the “war, in all its most horrid forms and destructive
consequences . . . has reached our borders; and many of our citizens of every age and sex, from
the speechless innocent babe to the brave defender of our country, have fallen victims to the
ruthless hand of their savage murderers.” Considering their cause to be just in defending
themselves from the aggressive enemy, they felt certain “that we shall find protection in the
awful conflict under Almighty power.” The Miami Association of Ohio referred to the British
as “despotic enemies, with their savage allies.” Ellis notes that the Mississippi Association in
1813 also espoused pro-war sentiments.

The substantial number of pro-war references above, reflect the mingling of civil and
religious liberties and institutions in ways that were uncharacteristic for Baptists of previous
generations. The Georgia Baptist apology, especially, bears this out. There is a robust patriotism
supported by very positive expectations regarding the outcome of the war. It would not be

577 Jesse H. Campbell, Georgia Baptists: Historical and Biographical (Macon, Georgia: J. W. Burke & Co., 1874), 66.
578 Association Shiloh Baptist, Minutes of the Shiloh Association Held ... September 1, 1813 (1813), 9-10.
579 Association Miami Baptist, Minutes of the Miami Baptist Association, Held at Duck Creek ... (1813), 7.
580 Ellis, “Baptists and the War of 1812,” 129
overstating the case to say that many of these Baptists saw America’s cause as God’s cause. Their optimism is hard to miss.\footnote{Other associations spoke in highly patriotic terms but were not so quick to explicitly marry their cause and God’s. They loved their country and its freedoms and hoped and prayed God that would preserve them from tyranny and provide lasting peace. See, for example, \textit{Minutes of Two Sessions of the Roanoake Baptist Association, Held in the Year 1812} (1813), 5. The Ocmulgee Association in Georgia for 1812, quoted in Campbell, \textit{Georgia Baptists: Historical and Biographical}, 77; and \textit{Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, Held in the Meeting House of the First Baptist Church in Philadelphia} (1815).}

A final salient feature of these references warrants notice. Not a single northeastern association in the U.S. expressed this level of pro-war sentiment; no pro-war sentiment of any kind appears in the minutes of the New England and New York associations. While it would be incorrect to say that the Baptists of the south and west were wholly pro-war; many of them were. This is one of the ways that the regionalism that Gribbin denied is subtly illuminated.\footnote{Of the fifty-four associations reviewed, twenty-eight were from New York and New England.}

Many of the war references, however, desired that it would end without the United States losing its precious liberties and distinguished quite clearly between God’s dealings with nations and his dealing with the Church as his special people. Ellis lists these references as evidence of neutrality but an emphasis on Two Kingdoms theology leads to a different conclusion. U.S. Baptists were not neutral; they ardently desired a peaceful and positive outcome of the war. They were not, however, willing to see God’s hand in dealing with the nation as identical with his hand in dealing with the Church. They advocated keeping these two institutions, human government and the church, distinct in God’s economy; the war affected both church and state, but in different ways requiring different responses. The Shaftsbury Association of Vermont denominated these as civil and moral “causes” of the war.\footnote{\textit{Minutes of the Shaftsbury Baptist Association, Held at Schodack}, 13.}
A few examples show this broadly to be the case. The Danbury Association of Connecticut, famous for receiving the letter from President Jefferson that advocated the separation of church and state, recorded in their 1813 minutes:

while the nations of the earth are involved in cruel wars; and ungodly men leagued with the prince of darkness, are spreading their pernicious doctrines, and striving to overthrow the Gospel of the Redeemer, his humble followers may rejoice that the foundation stands fast, ordered in all things and sure.

The line between church and state was kept distinct by the Danbury Baptists.584

In the District of Maine several associational statements merit close consideration. The Bowdoinham Association distinguished “God’s people” from the “kingdoms and empires of this world.” Maine’s Cumberland Association couched these differences in the distinction between civil and religious liberties,

the present depraved state of mankind will not admit of placing the civil government in the hands of the just, therefore the opposite character bears sway, which, considered as a useful institution must be submitted to, provided the civil authority do not interfere in matters of conscience, which exceeds their bounds, and is an unlawful infringement.

The Lincoln Association reported, “although it is in general a dark and gloomy time as to outward appearances, both with respect to church and state; yet all is in good hands. Jesus reigns; the government is upon Immanuel’s shoulder.”585

Similarly, the Boston Baptist Association called for prayer for both their country and the interest of Zion, “on account of the present afflicted state of our beloved country, and the low state of Zion.” While they did not see the War of 1812 as having nothing to do with the churches,

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584 Minutes of the Danbury Baptist Association ... In Suffield (Connecticut) (1813), 10.
585 Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association, Held in Canaan (Hallowell, Maine: Nathaniel Cheever, 1812); Minutes of the Cumberland Association, Holden in Brunswick, Me (Hallowell, Maine: N. Cheever, 1814); Minutes of the Lincoln Association, Holden at Fairfax.
they held the two institutions as distinct. They believed the effects of the war could further the
cause of both institutions without comingling them. The Warren Association meeting in
Kingston, Massachusetts, viewed the Redeemer’s kingdom as unshakable, something the
kingdoms of this world did not enjoy, “what though the wickedness of man may wake the sword
of vengeance; what though the ruthless hand of war may tear the vitals of the republics and
kingdoms of this world; the kingdom of our Redeemer can never be shaken: it stands upon that
Rock, against which the powers of the earth and hell combined cannot prevail.” This perfectly
exemplifies Baptists’ Two Kingdoms theology.586

The Two Kingdoms distinction between church and state flourished in the caution several
associations issued about engaging in political debate that might divide churches rather than
unite them around the cause of the gospel and missions. The most ardent warnings of this nature
occurred in the 1812 Circular Letter of the Boston Baptist Association. Recognizing that
“political subjects” have been the topic of discussion among “men of all ranks,” and seeking to
guard the “liberties” of all men to hold such opinions as seemed good to them, they yet warned
of the potential for believers to become overzealous in political matters. They believed that
politics and religion did not sit well together, “we will venture to say, you cannot feel ardour of a

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586 Minutes of the Boston Baptist Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting-House in South Reading (Boston: Lincoln & Edmands, 1814); Minutes of the Warren Association, Held At ... The Baptist Meeting-House in Kingston, (Mass.) (Boston: Manning & Loring, 1813). Similar statements abound, see, e.g., Minutes of the Sturbridge Association, Convened At ... Hardwick (1812); Minutes of the Westfield Baptist Association, Held at Westfield, Mass., (1812); Minutes of the Dublin Association, Assembled at New-Ipswich (Keene, New Hampshire: John Prentiss, 1813); Minutes of the New-Hampshire Association, Held at Parsonfield, Maine (1813); Minutes of the New-Jersey Baptist Association, Held ... At Salem, New Jersey (1815); Minutes of the Union Baptist Association (1813); Minutes of the Cape-Fear Baptist Association, Convened at Muddy Creek Meeting House (1814); Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, Held, by Appointment, in Philadelphia, October 27th, 28th, and 29th, 1812; Minutes of the Charleston Baptist Association, Convened at the Welsh Neck, Society Hill, S.C. (1813); Minutes of the Savannah River Baptist Association, Convened at Sunbury, Georgia (1812); Minutes of the Shaftsbury Baptist Association, Held at West-Stockbridge; Minutes of the Vermont Baptist Association, Held at ... Monkton (Rutland, Vermont: W. Fay, 1812); Minutes of the Woodstock Association, Holden at Cavendish, Vermont (1813); Minutes of the Ketocton Baptist Association, Holden at Thumb-Run Meeting House, Fauquier County, Virginia (Winchester, Virginia: Jon. Foster, 1812).
political partisan, and that of a humble, spiritual Christian, at the same time.” Their concern was not only the potential for alienating politically those whom they sought to reach religiously, they believed such mixing could be deleterious to the churches; “we are in danger of losing that harmony among ourselves, on which the comfort and prosperity of our churches so much depend.”

They espoused a different sentiment than that put forward by the associations who would seek to “exclude” a brother, or even a whole church, for contrary political sentiments. Though not universal, the concern that political partisanship would adversely affect church unity was common, especially in the northeast. The Baptists of Boston, and elsewhere, certainly felt a tension between civil and political liberties during the war. To marry them seemed potentially destructive. Interestingly, the cautions predominantly, though not exclusively, came from the northeast. Not only is regionalism evident here, but this further highlights the broad spectrum of issues and concerns regarding the war that belie an overly simplistic designation of Baptists as pro-war.

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587 Minutes of the Boston Baptist Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting-House, in Salem (Boston: Lincoln & Edmands, 1812).
588 For concerns about political partisanship dividing Baptist brethren, see Minutes of the Stonington Baptist Association Held at Mansfield [Connecticut] (Colchester, Connecticut: Thomas M. Skinner & Co., 1814); Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association, Held in Canaan; Minutes of the Cumberland Association, Holden at the Baptist Meeting-House in Paris (Portland, Maine: F. Douglas, 1812); Minutes of the Dublin Association, Assembled at New-Ipswich; Minutes of the New-Hampshire Association Held at the Baptist Meeting-House of the Second Church in Berwick (Kennebunk, Maine: J. K. Remich, 1814); Minutes of the New-Jersey Baptist Association, Held in Evesham, County of Burlington (Burlington, New Jersey: Stephen C. Ustick, 1812); Minutes of the New-York Baptist Association, Held in the City of New-York (New York: John Tiebout, 1813); Minutes of the Savannah River Baptist Association, Convened at the Union Church, Barnwell District, South Carolina (1813); Minutes of the Vermont Baptist Association, Held at the BajTost Meeting-House in Monkton; Minutes of the Woodstock Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting-House in Windsor, Vt (Windsor, Vermont: Jesse Cochran, 1815); Minutes of the Ketockton Baptist Association, Holden at Thumb-Run Meeting House, Fauquier County, Virginia.
Baptists in New England, the Canadian Maritimes, and the War of 1812

Why were Baptists of the northeast equivocal supporters of the war? U.S. Baptists of the northeast were generally supportive of Republicans, but not in lock step with them on all points. If partisanship is the most significant key, then these northeastern Baptists are anachronistic. But a crucial influence that historians with a national frame of reference have missed is the Canadian connection for Baptists in the northeastern borderland. Association with Baptists in British provinces was a meaningful relationship for brethren in the northeast that had no counterpart for southern and western Baptists. Though not the sole reason for moderated war support by northeastern Baptists, their trans-national friendship and fellowship in the gospel encouraged them to see their two governments as distinct from their more profound church connections. They were common believers under different civil economies.589

The Baptists of Maine and the Maritime Provinces had a substantive reciprocal relationship in the first decades of the nineteenth century that far surpassed the place of the nation and empire in their everyday lives and sense of self. Cordial relations of religious fellowship were stunted during the war, but were rapidly rebuilt afterwards. The Bowdoinham Association, in their 1815 corresponding letter, rejoiced at restored cordial relations with the Baptists of the Maritimes. The association’s fulsome statement makes plain the importance of Baptist fellowship in the northeastern borderland:

Through the blessing of returning peace, we once more are at liberty to communicate our friendship, and relate the state of our churches, not only to correspondents within the limits of our own territory, but also to our beloved brethren in the neighboring provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, with whom also, we have walked in company to the house of God, and there taken sweet council together.  

This connection was further exemplified not only by their receiving and seating the Maritime Association’s messenger, David Harris, but by inviting him to preach the assembly’s final sermon. They also appointed Isaac Case to be their messenger to the Maritime brethren at the next assembly of the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Association, an appointment he carried out. In like kind, the Maritime Baptists’ acknowledged Case’s renewed presence among them as “very pleasant to us.”

The war had interrupted denominational ties as well as personal friendships as shown by Edward Manning’s reference to the loss of fellowship with his U.S. Baptist friends and co-laborers. On January 9, 1813, Manning noted in his journal, “this day felt uneasy in the morning and unpleasant sensation. But in reading and meditation found my mind sweetly led after God and a sweet union to American brethren, notwithstanding the dreadful war that exists between the two powers.” Manning’s third person reference to “the two powers” reflects how he distinguished between his personal and immediate associational relations with Baptists in New England versus the conflicted polities divided by a national border. Manning understood his American brethren through the double lens enabled by Two Kingdoms theology. He was not

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590 Minutes of the Bowdoinham Association, Held in Bowdoin (Hallowell, Maine: Nathaniel Cheever, 1815).
591 Minutes of the Nova Scotia and New-Brunswick Baptist Association, Held at the Baptist Meeting-House in Cornwallis (St. John, New Brunswick: Henry Chubb, 1815).
592 Manning, Journal. Coming well after the invasion of Canada by U.S. forces, Manning still expressed deep personal attachment to American Baptists.
alone. Clearly Baptist brethren in the northeastern borderlands had good cause to view one another and their civil governments through Two Kingdom lenses.

James Tyler Robinson’s assertion respecting U.S. Baptists by the time of the war captures an oft missed distinction that Two Kingdoms theology highlights; “‘Baptist American’ was a recognizable identity” and “the term ‘American’ was just as important as the moniker ‘Baptist.’” The same could be said for Baptists in the British Provinces. This point is underscored by statements made by Baptists on both sides of the civil conflict. Manning, who in January 1813 lamented the war’s effect on cross-border associational and personal relations, also recorded assessments respecting their civil distinctions. Commenting on the defeat of Napoleon in May 1814, he hoped that hostilities would soon end: “O that the American People may be induced to come upon Pacific terms.” Manning viewed the U.S. as the aggressor that “precipitated” the war. He was hopeful that Napoleon’s defeat would enable them to overcome their “obstinacy.” A few days later, at a public observance of the victory, Manning was requested to allow the use of the “Meeting House” for a civil celebration. Further, at the request of “the Respectable Inhabitants of the Town” he “Publically acknowledged the good hand of God to our Nation.” Manning made a final heart felt desire in his diary that clearly reflected his Two Kingdoms theology. “O that the Lord hasten the Time when Nations shall have done sinning and then wars shall cease.”

As noted earlier, when it became apparent that war was imminent Rev. Daniel Merrill wrote to Edward Manning, “I wish the differences between your government and ours may be so accommodated, as to promote the good of both, and subserve Zion’s best good. But I fear a

contest is before us.” Like Manning, Merrill distinguished between the two civil governments and the common kingdom of God. He saw himself and Manning as both part of “Zion.” This was not because Merrill was civilly neutral or pro-British in the conflict. His “earnest” American patriotism was clearly on display from the beginning and especially when the conflict ended.

Having relocated to serve the Baptist Church in Nottingham West, New Hampshire, Merrill was called upon to give a Thanksgiving Sermon at the end of the war. In that sermon he endeavored to answer the question, “what hath God wrought?” Drawing a comparison between Israel of old and America, he chose as his text the Old Testament story of Balaam, who had been hired by Balak to curse Israel, but God brought prosperity to Israel rather than destruction. Like Israel of old, Merrill recounted how God brought four blessings to the United States: 1. The blessing of land. 2. The blessing of civil liberty. 3. The blessing of religious liberty. 4. “Peace with those who were our enemies.”

Merrill’s sermon celebrated most highly that religious liberty was preserved. As he saw it, God had blessed Israel nationally in the time of Balaam by preserving it when its enemies wished to destroy her. The same was true, in his eyes, of the U.S. in the War of 1812. God had preserved her from Babylonian captivity, from the tyranny of her enemies, which he believed would most certainly have been the loss of religious liberty. Merrill’s analogy with Old Testament Israel was not to equate America as the new Zion, but as a place preserved by God where Zion, the kingdom of God, was free and might truly flourish. The sermon voiced his patriotism in two key ways. First, “submission to the powers that be, knowing civil authority is

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595 Rev. Adam Wilson, an acquaintance of Merrill’s beginning around 1822, commented that Merrill’s patriotism led to occasional “injudicious” language that led some to misunderstand him. Wilson concludes that Merrill’s “feelings appear to have been those only of an earnest patriot.” Sprague, Annals of the American Pulpit, VI, 509.

596 Merrill, Balaam Disappointed, 6.
ordained of God.” Second, that ordained government had used “justifiable means for the security of religious liberty.” This was because “our religious liberties are in danger, just in proportion to the clergy’s influence upon the civil power.”

America was “Free from Britain . . . and free from the shackles and superstitions of that religion of which she is the bulwark.” As a free nation, its citizens were “free to search for . . . the Church of Christ, the kingdom set up by the God of heaven, and to enter into it.” In other words, he answered the question, “what hath God wrought?” in two ways. He labored to show that God wrought victory over Great Britain to preserve the United States, and in so doing preserved a civil order that protected religious freedom under which Zion could best flourish. Equating the church with Israel, he summed up the answer: “according to this time, it shall be said of America and the true Israel, What hath God wrought!”

Manning and Merrill understood civil and ecclesiastical realms as distinct, according to their shared Two Kingdoms theology. Each saw the civil magistrate as justified in fighting a worldly enemy that threatened its sovereignty. And each saw the civil magistrate as necessary for the extension of Zion’s interest, but neither viewed the civil magistrate, or, by extension, the national or imperial polity, as Zion itself. The distinction between the civil magistrate and the religious institution of the church was foundational for these men and allowed them to maintain warm feelings for one another even while their governments were at arms.

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597 Ibid., 24, 26.
598 Ibid., 27, 29.
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BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

Ronald S. Baines was born on October 17, 1956, just a few minutes before his twin brother Paul. He grew up in a rural setting in western Massachusetts. After graduating high school, he joined the navy where he served for five years, including spending some time aboard the aircraft carrier the USS Nimitz. During his time in the navy Ron became a Christian and the trajectory of his life was drastically altered. He had a growing desire to serve the church, and he began to search out ways to do that. One avenue of service was to spend six months as a missionary in Zambia. During this trip he met his wife Joan. Ron and Joan were married and went on to have four children.

Ron’s desire to serve the church continued to grow. Alongside that commitment was also a growing desire to learn and to study. Theology and history, especially the history of the church, became major areas of focus for him. He gained a bachelor’s degree in engineering in 1989 from Westfield State College in Westfield, Massachusetts, and worked for several years for Hamilton Standard, but his interest in the church grew stronger and stronger. In 1990 he was ordained and became pastor of a small church in Westfield, Massachusetts. He continued as pastor their for about a decade. During that time, he completed an M.Div. degree in 2007 from Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi. The church in Westfield closed, but Ron still desired to serve. He went on to become a pastor at Heritage Baptist Church in Worcester, Massachusetts, for 4 years, and then became pastor of a new church in midcoast Maine. He pastored Grace Reformed Church in Brunswick, Maine, until his death in 2016.

There are some people who are always learning, always interested in understanding more and better. Ron was one of those people. He continued studying theology and history all his life. Regarding theology, he had a strong love for Old Testament studies. Regarding history, he loved
to learn about Baptist history in America. During his time in Maine and with the encouragement of the church where he pastored, Ron began working on a Ph.D. through the University of Maine in Orono. He worked tirelessly to complete his studies while continuing to serve the church in a full-time capacity and caring for his family.

Ron’s focus and interest in this history was always in service of the church. He believed that the church needed to understand where it came from and needed to learn from the wisdom of those who have gone before us. He desired to bring to light names of men who had been largely forgotten by the church even though they had once had a profound impact on it. He was especially convinced that the eighteenth-century Baptist view of the proper relationship between church and state is invaluable to the present day.

At the end of 2015, Ron began to experience unusual personal conditions in which he would feel as though he was getting a rush of adrenaline and it would be difficult for him to focus on what he was doing. As these events increased and intensified, they also included tremors. In April 2016, he was diagnosed with an aggressive and dangerous brain tumor. At that time Ron had completed most of his dissertation with only final edits remaining on the bulk of the work. Sadly, the tumor’s effect prevented him from spending focused time to finalize the work. He passed away that summer. With so much of the work completed, the church where Ron pastored did not want these valuable resources lost. With the blessing of his family, the church sought to bring this dissertation to completion. We hope that this work will have a lasting impact in the field of Baptist studies, and that it may help members of Baptist churches to better understand their historical identity and theological roots. He is a candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in History from the University of Maine in May 2020.