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Fundamentalism, Modernism and the Maritime Baptists in the 1920s and 1930s

MANY ENGLISH-CANADIAN HISTORIANS FIND IT embarrassingly difficult to take religion seriously. As they comb the past for relevance they are keen to avoid any confrontation with spiritual and religious realities. Perhaps they are uncomfortable thinking about such issues. Perhaps, because of the older Whig political bias of so much Canadian historical writing and the newer bias of secular social history, they are determined to float in the mainstream of historiography and not be lost in some shallow cul-de-sac. This somewhat unfair caricature of the Canadian historical profession underscores some of the basic problems confronting the writing of religious history in English Canada in the 1980s. When compared with American historians, English-Canadian historians have significantly downplayed the importance of religion as a formative force in national life. Canadian historical writing, especially that of post World War II period, reflects the devastating impact of what has been referred to as "that process of separation and individualism that modernity seems to entail".¹ A sensitive reading of Canadians' collective religious past should bring what Stephen Toulmin has called a degree of "cosmic interrelatedness" back to scholarly investigation.² Of course, a revived and Americanized Canadian religious history is not the only way to accomplish this end. But if Canadians could begin to discuss critically and openly issues about religion, values, community, individualism, space and time "in ways that did not disaggregate them into fragments", it might still be possible "to find connections and analogies with the older ways in which human life was made meaningful".³

Ironically, within the larger context of the recent historiography of the Maritime Provinces, religious history has not been pushed off into some dark corner of irrelevance, inconsequence, and scholarly oblivion. Since at least the early 1970s the writing of religious history has become "probably the most active and exciting field of historical scholarship in the Maritimes today".⁴ Post Revolutionary Maritime history, with its emphasis on the significant influence of the Allinite-New Light legacy, has now found itself on what is to some historians

1 See R.N. Bellah *et al.*, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley, 1985), p. 275.

2 S. Toulmin, *The Return to Cosmology: Postmodern Science and the Theology of Nature* (Berkeley, 1982), pp. 228-9.

3 Bellah, *Habits of the Heart*, p. 283.

4 David Bell, "All Things New: The Transformation of Maritime Baptist Historiography", *Nova Scotia Historical Review*, 4, 2 (Spring 1984), p. 70.

4 *Acadiensis*

the leading edge of the discipline in Canada.⁵ A caustic critic might simply comment that taking into account the sad state of contemporary Canadian religious writing, such a claim is indeed a modest one. Another might respond that the peripheral nature of so much Maritime historical writing is merely underscored by the fact that what is seen as a scholarly *cul de sac* by the Central Canadian opinion-makers is viewed as the mainstream and cutting edge by scholars in or of the region. There is a ring of truth, moreover, in the argument of Professor Terrence Murphy that religious developments in the Maritime region in the immediate post-Revolutionary period have already received adequate scholarly attention. He correctly urges historians to abandon an obsession with the Revolution and Henry Alline and to examine 19th and 20th century religious leaders, movements, and ideology.⁶ In fact, although there are a number of very good studies dealing with Roman Catholicism, especially the Antigonish Movement, little of real significance has been published about Protestantism in the Maritimes in the 20th century apart from Professor Ernie Forbes' fine article dealing with "Prohibition and the Social Gospel in Nova Scotia".⁷ Thus the 20th century beckons the historian interested in virtually any aspect of Protestant religious development in the Maritimes. There is no fear of being criticized as a nasty revisionist. There is almost nothing to revise.

One group of Protestants that merit immediate study would be the Maritime Baptists. In no other part of Canada do Baptists form such a large proportion of the population nor have they had such a profound influence on the existing popular culture. Although the Baptist Church was never an important force, on Prince Edward Island, in 1901, taking Nova Scotia and New Brunswick as a single entity, the Baptists were the largest Protestant denomination in this area. Twenty years later the Baptists in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia were still the largest Protestant denomination. But in 1931 they were pushed to second place by the United Church and in 1961 to third by the Anglicans.⁸

By the 1920s almost every Baptist in the Maritimes belonged to the United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces, which had been created in 1906 when the Regular or Calvinist Baptists of the region had joined with the Free Baptists or Arminians. Acadia University in Wolfville was the Convention's institution of higher learning and the administrative arm of the Convention was

5 See, for example, D.G. Bell, ed., *New Light Baptist Journals of James Manning and James Innis* (Hantsport, 1984); G.A. Rawlyk, ed., *The New Light Letters and Spiritual Songs* (Hantsport, 1983) and G.A. Rawlyk, *Ravished by the Spirit: Religious Revivals, Baptists and Henry Alline* (Montreal, 1984); J.M. Bumsted, *Henry Alline, 1748-1784* (Toronto, 1971); M.W. Armstrong, *The Great Awakening in Nova Scotia, 1776-1809* (Hartford, 1948); Gordon Stewart and George Rawlyk, *A People Highly Favoured of God: The Nova Scotia Yankees and the American Revolution* (Toronto, 1972).

6 Terrence Murphy, "The Religious History of Atlantic Canada: The State of the Art", *Acadiensis*, XV, 1 (Autumn 1985), p. 173.

7 *Acadiensis*, I, 1 (Autumn 1971), pp. 11-36.

8 See Rawlyk, *Ravished by the Spirit*, pp. 170-2.

located in Saint John. During the late 1920s, however, the unity of the Convention was increasingly threatened by the rising tide of Fundamentalism which began to spread into the region from Central Canada and the United States.

In Central Canada and the West the division between Fundamentalists and Modernists split the Baptist conventions.⁹ A principal actor in the so-called Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy in both regions was the Reverend Thomas Todhunter Shields — the influential and controversial Baptist Fundamentalist leader who was minister of the Jarvis Street Baptist Church in Toronto from 1910 to 1955.¹⁰ There was no Maritime Fundamentalist leader whose influence was comparable to that of Shields but the United Baptist Maritime Convention did experience a less serious challenge to its authority from the Reverend John James Sidey.¹¹ Sidey became the most outspoken critic of the leadership of the Convention, but he was not able to attract to his Separatist, Baptist, and Fundamentalist movement an appreciable number of Convention Baptists. The interesting question is why Sidey was not more successful in his sectarian offensive in the Baptist heartland of Canada. Why did Sidey's schismatic movement remain relatively weak during a period when the Baptist leadership in the Convention was moving off in what to many rank and file Baptists was a liberal direction?¹²

John James Sidey was born in Portsmouth, England on 28 December 1891. His father, the Reverend Charles J. Sidey, was a Wesleyan Methodist missionary-minister in Newfoundland, where the young John spent some of his early years.¹³ After this sojourn in Newfoundland, Sidey and his mother returned to England. Sidey's mother, Sarah, was a pious Methodist but her marriage was not a happy one and she separated permanently from her husband when she set sail from Newfoundland for Portsmouth. Consequently, it would be his mother,

9 See W. Ellis, "Social and Religious Factors in the Fundamentalist-Modernist Schisms Among Baptists in North America, 1895-1930", Ph.D. thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1974; M.B.R. Hill, "From Sect to Denomination in the Baptist Church in Canada", Ph.D. thesis, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1971; G.H. Poucett, "A History of the Convention of Baptist Churches of British Columbia", M.Th. thesis, Vancouver School of Theology, 1982; J.B. Richards, *Baptists in British Columbia* (Vancouver, 1976).

10 L.K. Tarr, *Shields of Canada* (Grand Rapids, 1967); C.A. Russell, "Thomas Todhunter Shields, Canadian Fundamentalist", *Foundations*, XXIV, 1 (Winter 1981), pp. 15-31.

11 A somewhat uncritical and superficial biography of Sidey has been written by one of his followers, Gertrude A. Palmer, *The Combatant* (Middleton, 1976).

12 See, for example, *Maritime Baptist*, published in Kentville, and *The United Baptist Year Book*, printed in Truro, for this period.

13 The biographical material is based upon Sidey's letter of 5 September 1934 to the editor of the *Middleton Outlook* and upon Sidey's testimony in the famous 1935 Kingston Baptist Parsonage case. The *Outlook* letter is in the possession of Mrs. George Moody, Wolfville, Nova Scotia. A copy of the official transcript of the trial is to be found in the Acadia University Archives. Hereafter, the transcript shall be referred to as "Court Records". I have not yet been able to find the original transcript of the trial.

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not his father, who would significantly influence, at its formative stage, Sidey's spiritual and emotional life.

At the age of 14, John Sidey was converted and he soon became an active member of the Pembroke Road Methodist Church, serving as a lay preacher. Encouraged by his mother, Sidey became a dentist's apprentice in Portsmouth. Because of financial problems, and the fact that he had injured his right hand and therefore felt his future as a moulder of false teeth was very limited, he decided to emulate his father and become a Methodist missionary to the New World. But when he left Portsmouth for Nova Scotia in the early summer of 1911, the 19-year old Sidey was still uncertain about his future. He was not ordained; he was not an official recruit of a Methodist Missionary Society; and he was not responding to a specific call from a Nova Scotia Methodist Church. Soon after arriving in Halifax, Sidey made his way to his uncle, the Reverend James Heil, a Methodist minister then living in Windsor. In the summer of 1911, despite what he would write in the 1930s and 1940s, Sidey was disoriented and, as one of his most ardent followers has put it, "Uncertain of many things".¹⁴ Assisting his uncle obviously did not satisfy the young Sidey who resolved in 1916 to move to the United States to enroll in two Methodist Episcopal institutions in the Chicago area — Northwestern University and Garrett Biblical Institute.

It has been argued that Sidey went to the United States because he had discovered that "the Nova Scotia institutions were becoming infiltrated" with "a humanistic higher criticism".¹⁵ There may, however, have been other reasons for Sidey's decision in 1916 to emigrate to Illinois. He may have been looking for new worlds to conquer — for a greater challenge than that provided by the relative backwater of Windsor. Or it may have been that the young Methodist did not want to fight for the British cause in Europe. Conscription would not come to Canada until 1917 but Sidey must have felt intense community pressure, especially in 1915 and 1916, to join in the Christian crusade to eradicate the Germanic anti-Christ. Sidey, who was always more positively inclined to maternal influence than fatherly-like pressure, may also have wanted to be independent of his uncle. He therefore saw in his move to Chicago a heaven-sent opportunity to resolve a number of difficult personal and career problems.

While attending Northwestern and Garrett, Sidey supported himself financially by accepting a student pastorate associated with the Rock River Methodist Episcopal Conference and he served three Methodist congregations in South Chicago, Calumet Heights and Langley Avenue. But a year at Northwestern and Garrett with their "modernistic teaching" was more than enough for Sidey who transferred to Union Theological College — also located in Chicago — in 1917.¹⁶ Union was basically controlled by the Congregational-

14 See Palmer, *The Combatant*, p. 25.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 26.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 27. I have a copy of Sidey's Garrett academic record in my possession.

ists and here Sidey found that his Methodist Arminian views were challenged by a tough-minded Calvinism. While studying at Union, and serving as a student pastor in southern Chicago, Sidey also found time “to take up Y.M.C.A. work” and near the end of the war he assisted the senior chaplain at Fort Sheridan as part of his Methodist pastoral work.¹⁷ While serving the Rock River Methodist Episcopal Conference and the American Army and while still studying at Union Theological College, Sidey decided to work for a Doctor of Divinity degree at the Oriental University, located in Washington, D.C. After a “seven or eight months” association with Oriental University — only via correspondence — Sidey was awarded the M.A. and D.D. degrees for a short thesis entitled “Immortality, the Inevitable Result of a Progressive Universe”.¹⁸ A short time after Sidey received his D.D. in 1921, Oriental University was declared a fraudulent degree-mill and by court order its doors were permanently closed, or more accurately its mail-box permanently sealed. In 1921, at the same time as Sidey became a Doctor of Divinity (Oriental University), he received the Bachelor of Theology degree from Union and was ordained a Methodist Episcopal minister.¹⁹

Three years earlier Sidey had travelled to Nova Scotia to marry Edna Card, a teacher then residing in Hants County. The young couple returned to Chicago where both of them had a great deal of difficulty dealing with urban life and the new ideas that seemed to be bombarding the Methodist Church in the immediate post war period. Though apparently successful at Fort Sheridan, Sidey experienced the deep despair of doubt, and morbid introspection seemed to immobilize him. Finally, after much spiritual turmoil, and greatly influenced by two female Salvation Army officers, Sidey found peace of mind as he jettisoned what he was learning in the class room and replaced it with a renewed personal relationship with Christ. “It was a terrific battle”, he once observed, “to rid myself of the new ideas that had been, by study and by teaching, superimposed upon the experience of my youth”.²⁰

While still associated with Fort Sheridan, and spurred by a new sense of evangelical zeal, Sidey and his wife became active in the Soul Winner’s Gospel Association which had its headquarters in the St. Paul Methodist Episcopal Church in Chicago. Using his considerable musical skills, Sidey conducted his first evangelistic crusade for the Soul Winner’s Association in June 1920, at Diamond Lake, Illinois. The publicity for the crusade, which he probably prepared, described Sidey as “a man, who, while college trained, has evidently learned to think for himself. Although he has not yet acquired a reputation as a flowery orator, he has the faculty of forcefully presenting ideas that start and keep you thinking. His addresses are sure to be of uncommon interest to all those

17 “Court Records”, Acadia University Archives.

18 Quoted in Palmer, *The Combatant*, p. 32.

19 “Court Records”, Acadia University Archives.

20 Quoted in Palmer, *The Combatant*, p. 31.

8 *Acadiensis*

who enjoy the exercise of thought". Yet, the crusade was something of a disaster for Sidey who, because of his lack of success, felt a desperate need for "the baptism of power of the Holy Spirit".²¹ Disheartened and disillusioned, Sidey decided to revitalize his faith by attending a Prophetic Bible Conference at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. While staying at Moody, Sidey discovered the influential premillennial tract, *The Second Coming of Christ*. Almost immediately Sidey and his wife saw their Christian faith in a radically new light.²² The imminent return of Christ, the rapture, the emphasis upon the Dispensational view of the past, the present and future, all now made marvellous sense. According to the premillennial view, the world was becoming increasingly corrupt and the return of Christ was imminent in order to bring the New Testament Dispensation or age to its glorious end. Just before His return, however, all true Christians on earth were to be "raptured" — that is removed temporarily from earth — so that they would not have to endure the bloody and cataclysmic final battle of Armageddon. They would return with their Christ to rule the earth, from Jerusalem, for a thousand year period. Premillennialism obviously provided Sidey with a new sense of purpose and direction in his life. His favourite verse from the Bible — and this tiny portion of the Scriptures would eventually be chistled on his gravestone — came from I Thessalonians 4.16 "Waiting until the trumpet of the Lord shall sound". Sidey, however, was not satisfied with merely waiting passively for the Lord to return. His premillennialism did not immobilize him. He was determined to help prepare the way for Christ's return by preaching the gospel with zeal and conviction; moreover, he desperately wanted to ensure that as many people as possible were, in fact, raptured before the terrible bloody battle of Armageddon.

In late 1920 and early 1921, a revitalized Sidey continued his work with the Soul Winner's Association of Illinois. His publicity brochure now had a somewhat different emphasis:

Impressed by the vital need of spiritual life in the individuals who compose our civilization in this age, he with others, has decided to spend his life at the call of the Holy Spirit, in this tremendous field of evangelization. Mr. Sidey brings to the work a modern point of appeal of the Bible. The challenge "Back to the Bible" is the clarion call of his message. He believes in conversion, real regeneration, not hand-shaking or card-signing; but definite inquiry work followed by the witness of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, the approach to all this is modern, not fanatical or highly emotional; simply an emphasis upon the Biblical spiritual realities as they have been shown to identify themselves with human nature.²³

21 Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 39.

22 For a fuller discussion of this phenomenon see D.W. Frank, *Less Than Conquerors: How Evangelicals Entered the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, 1986), pp. 66-75.

23 Quoted in Palmer, *The Combatant*, pp. 40-1.

In a period of a few months, Sidey's essential message for the Soul Winner's Association had undergone a fundamental change. There was now a concern about "conversion" and not about "ideas"; there was a new emphasis upon "Back to the Bible" and the "witness of the Holy Spirit" rather than "the exercise of thought". Sidey had, in a sense, become a Conservative Evangelical; he was not yet, the evidence suggests, a Fundamentalist. What seemed to separate these two positions was a certain degree of "violence in thought and language" which characterized the Fundamentalist mind but not the Conservative Evangelical.²⁴ In other words, the former viewed God as a close-minded judge while the latter saw the Almighty as a loving parent. Moreover, for the Fundamentalist, confrontation was to be preferred to any form of Evangelical accommodation with modernity. By late 1920, however, Sidey was certainly quickly moving in the Fundamentalist direction — towards and beyond Moody Bible Institute and light years away from the University of Chicago Divinity School. The latter institution, for Sidey and his Chicago friends, had become the bastion of all the insidious and evil forces of Modernism and Liberalism then spreading across North America.

Despite the fact that she had two small children to be concerned about, Edna Sidey played a key role in her husband's two Soul Winner's evangelistic campaigns. A vigorous and dynamic woman, intelligent, shrewd and persuasive, she did not enjoy living in the United States and was keen to go back to her beloved Nova Scotia. When her husband's academic work had finally been completed at Union in 1921, and after his ordination, she persuaded him to return to her home in Burlington on the Avon River in Hants County. Soon after their return, Sidey was baptized by immersion by the Reverend Neil Herman, minister of the Emmanuel Baptist Church in Truro, a leading Nova Scotia Fundamentalist, whom Sidey had met in 1916 while spending a summer at Brunswick Street Methodist Church in Truro.

In 1921 Sidey showed little interest in finding a pastorate in a Methodist Church. Instead he resolved to introduce into his adopted province the evangelistic approach he had learned with the Illinois Soul Winner's. His mission was to bring the gospel of Christ to the isolated backwaters of Nova Scotia. His Soul Winner's Association of Nova Scotia became an official branch of the Soul Winner's Association of Chicago.²⁵ At its first convention held at Cambridge, Hants County, on 1 July 1922, a programme was adopted which stressed that the central thrust of the organization was "soul winning" in the rural, largely unchurched areas of the province. It was explicitly stated that the new group was interdenominational and a faith mission — that is, all financial

24 N. Furniss, *The Fundamentalist Controversy, 1918-1931* (New Haven, 1954), p. 36. This theme is superbly developed in C. Johnston, *McMaster University: The Toronto Years*, vol. I (Toronto, 1976), pp. 170-203.

25 For information about the Soul Winner's Association, see its Nova Scotia publication, *The Challenge*, to be found in the Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

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support would come from concerned supporters — and that all of Sidey's followers were to be completely dependent upon the “outpouring of the Holy Spirit” and they were not to forsake the “kindred fellowship with other Christians”.²⁶ Sidey organized a small team of dedicated workers and by the spring and summer of 1922 he saw scores of people, especially in Hants County, converted to his brand of Evangelical Christianity. In late 1922 and 1923, Sidey's “Evangelistic Band” travelled to Hammonds Plains, near Halifax and then to the Eastern Shore and Guysborough County.²⁷ In the Jeddore area, Sidey's team worked very closely with local Baptists. One of the Eastern Shore residents wrote to Sidey on 22 January 1923 that “The work is still growing. Most every person you meet now has something to say about the goodness of God. The men who have gone away to the woods send us beautiful letters telling us how God stands by them in their temptations”. On 6 June 1923, it was reported from Jeddore that the revival fires were still burning: “I was down for a month from Lunenburg and it was to me the happiest month I have ever spent in my life. I really felt sorry when I had to leave them.... I said to Mother when I went home that it seemed everybody was better looking. Mother said, ‘That's happiness’, and I thank God that through Mr. Sidey and his workers that this change has come”.²⁸

The 1922-23 Eastern Shore Revival, which eventually spread into Guysborough County, was the means whereby hundreds of residents of a string of isolated settlements stretching from East Jeddore to Canso experienced the intensely satisfying and intensely pleasurable feeling of Christian fellowship as the “ecstasy of spontaneous communities” almost overwhelmed them.²⁹ In Guysborough County in 1923 and 1924, Sidey received enthusiastic support from the Reverend E. W. Forbes, an influential Methodist minister, who would remain close to Sidey throughout the 1920s and 1930s. During the 1923-4 Guysborough County campaign Sidey “preached 105 sermons (one every night) without a break and never preached the same sermon twice”.³⁰ Yet despite the spiritual revivals he and his team had helped coax into existence, Sidey by late 1924 and early 1925 had become rather disillusioned with the work of the Nova Scotia Soul Winner's Association. Even the publishing of his own monthly newsletter *The Challenge*, which began in 1923, did not dispel Sidey's gnawing doubts about his evangelistic work. Sidey and his team realized that it was one thing to help people experience the “New Birth”. Hundreds of Nova Scotians

26 “Daily Programme of the Soul Winner's Festival, 1 July - 10 July, 1922”, to be found in the Public Archives of Nova Scotia. The P.A.N.S. has on microfilm some of the printed material used by Palmer in her study of Sidey.

27 See *The Challenge* for 1923.

28 Quoted in Palmer, *The Combatant*, p. 54.

29 See Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca, 1979), pp. 139-40.

30 Quoted in Palmer, *The Combatant*, p. 56.

and other Maritimers had been converted in the 1922-4 period through the ministry of the Nova Scotia Soul Winner's Association. Yet once the team left the community and the revival ended, the new converts often found themselves without adequate spiritual nurturing or bitterly divided over which church in the community was the true instrument of the Almighty. A disheartened and disillusioned Sidey observed that "My experience has taught me that, while God has given some pastors a greater gift as evangelists than others, yet, this office would be exercised as among brethren within the framework of the church or denomination to which such men adhere".³¹

After sacrificing four years of his life for the Nova Scotia Soul Winner's Association, Sidey had come to the conclusion that his itinerating evangelistic work may have created more problems than it had resolved and he felt that the time was propitious for him to pastor a single church. He and his wife desired the stability, the regular income, and the peace of mind that they hoped might come from a settled ministry. Preaching 105 different sermons on 105 consecutive days was not something a normal father with a wife and two young children would want to do for the rest of his life. As he entered his mid 30's, J.J. Sidey obviously needed a major change of pace; he needed a church to pastor. But as he looked at his ministerial options in Nova Scotia, he saw few doors open to him. He could not return to the church of his father or to the church in which he had been ordained since both had become part of the United Church of Canada in 1925 and Sidey was opposed to that Church because its theology was too Modern and its leadership too Liberal. Presbyterians opposed to Union had no desire to have him nor did the Anglicans. But some of Sidey's most ardent supporters in the Soul Winner's Association were Maritime Baptists and the Reverend Neil Herman, who had baptized him, urged him to join the Maritime Baptist Convention. The Reverend T.T. Shields, whom Sidey had first met in Halifax in 1924, supported the pro-Baptist argument put forward by Herman. Since Sidey had conducted evangelistic campaigns in Prince Edward Island in 1923 and 1924 and had been particularly successful in the Bedeque area, it should not be surprising that in 1925 the Central Bedeque United Baptist Church asked him to be their temporary supply minister. No other Baptist church in the Maritimes indicated any interest in issuing a call to Sidey, an ordained Episcopal Methodist minister who had had no previous official contact with the Maritime United Baptist Convention. He therefore became a temporary supply minister in a tiny, peripheral Convention church.

Sidey's less than five-year Bedeque sojourn helped to transform him into a committed Fundamentalist. Fundamentalism's militant and extreme "opposition to modernism, both as a theology and a cultural secularity, distinguished it from earlier evangelical traditions".³² As Ernest R. Sandeen and George S.

31 Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 58.

32 J. Carpenter, "The Revival of American Fundamentalism", Ph.D. thesis, Johns Hopkins University, 1984, p. 5.

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Marsden have argued, Fundamentalism in the early 20th century in North America stressed the importance of certain distinctive beliefs — notably premillennialism and the verbal inerrancy of the Bible as well as the revivalistic tradition of Dwight L. Moody, the great 19th century American evangelist.³³ In addition, its belief core included a largely traditional Calvinist theology, and an emphasis on the substitutionary atonement theory — that Christ had died in the place of all truly redeemed sinners. Fundamentalists also stressed that the true church consisted only of those who had been genuinely converted. For Sidey, the inerrancy of the scriptures, substitutionary atonement, and premillennialism as well as Calvinism would be the most important Fundamentalist tenets.

While at Bedeque, Sidey became very closely associated with the controversial Reverend John Bolton Daggett, minister at the nearby Tryon United Baptist Church, who would be Sidey's confidant, aide and intimate friend until Daggett's death in 1939. A native of Grand Manan Island, Daggett was educated at Colby College, Maine and was ordained in 1894 as a Free Baptist minister. He played a key role in pushing the somewhat reluctant Free Baptists into union in 1906 with the much larger Regular or Calvinist Maritime Baptist Association. In 1911 he left the United Baptist ministry to become a deputy minister in the New Brunswick Department of Agriculture and served in this capacity until 1917 when he was implicated in the notorious Valley Railroad and Patriotic Potato Scandal. It was charged that Daggett had not only been the conduit for transferring large sums of money into and out of the hands of Conservative Party supporters but also had lied during the McQueen Commission hearings held in 1918.³⁴ Driven from the Department of Agriculture, Daggett served as pastor of the Marysville, New Brunswick United Baptist Church, until being called to the Tryon, P.E.I. United Baptist Church, where he ministered until 1926 when he moved to the Kingston, Nova Scotia United Baptist pastorate.

Sidey and Daggett were a remarkable team. In many respects very different, their respective strengths complemented one another. Sidey was a tall and robust man, full of vigour and seldom sick. His penetrating grey-blue eyes were often full of fun and he loved to laugh. Daggett, on the other hand, was sickly, small in stature, and very serious. Unlike Sidey, who carefully hid his emotions from public view, Daggett was a feisty, peppery individual whose quick temper often manifested itself in cutting remarks. He was a battler by nature and, like many others who have also suffered from tuberculosis, he was very mercurial, almost a kind of manic-depressive. When Daggett lived near him, Sidey was far more aggressive and closed-minded and Daggett helped greatly in making Sidey "The Combatant".³⁵

33 E.R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago, 1970); G.M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism 1870-1925* (New York, 1980).

34 A.T. Doyle, *Front Benches and Back Rooms* (Toronto, 1976), pp. 85-97.

35 See Palmer, *The Combatant*, pp. 78-88.

Even before Sidey had had time to settle into his new Bedeque charge, he found himself a principal actor in the creation of the Maritime Christian Fundamentalist Association. All Maritimers — and not just Baptists — interested in battling against Modernism were invited to a special Conference held in Truro, in August 1925. The Truro Fundamentalist Conference was hosted by the Immanuel United Baptist Church and the guest speaker was T.T. Shields, the so-called “Spurgeon of Canada” and in the 1920s Canada’s leading Fundamentalist. He had already helped to split the Ontario and Quebec Baptist Convention into two warring factions — a split that would be formalized a few years later. At the Conference the earlier friendship between Shields and Sidey “was further strengthened” as the former “was used to groom God’s man for His job in the Maritimes”.³⁶ Moreover, much to the satisfaction of Shields, a key resolution was adopted that “this meeting having a clear understanding of the issues involved, and realizing that the fundamentals of the gospel are in danger of being obscured in these days, through the widespread acceptance of modern ideas of the Bible, does hereby register its protest, and propose that an organization for the purpose of spreading information as to the real issues involved be formed and shall be known as *The Maritime Christian Fundamentalist Association*”.³⁷ Daggett was elected the Interim President of the new Association and Sidey, the Interim Secretary.

The two Island ministers, spurred on by Shields, organized a special Conference on Christian Fundamentals at Tryon United Baptist Church, from 3-5 November 1925. It was hoped that the Conference would attract interested Fundamentalists from a wide spectrum of Maritime Churches. The main speaker was the Reverend Edward Morris, Rector of St. Matthias Anglican Church, Halifax and a committed premillennialist. A graduate of Wycliff College in the University of Toronto, Morris had become the Maritime spokesman of the premillennial point of view.³⁸ Morris did not, however, breathe much life into the Maritime Christian Fundamentalist Association. By January 1926 the organization was dead after a life of only a few months. It is hard to see how the Fundamentalist Association hoped to expand from its tiny Baptist base in Prince Edward Island. It needed leadership and support from the New Brunswick and Nova Scotia Baptist mainstream, as well as from key sectors of the United Church, the Presbyterian Church and the Anglicans. In 1925 the United Church had serious organizational problems to worry about and those Presbyterians who had refused to become part of the United Church were

36 *Ibid.*, p. 74.

37 Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 74.

38 Some of the manuscript papers of the Reverend Morris are in the possession of Professor Barry Moody, Acadia University. Professor Moody purchased these and other Morris material at an auction. Other Morris material has recently surfaced in the Hamilton Ontario region. Interview with a group of Fellowship Baptist Ministers in Stanley Avenue Baptist Church, Hamilton, 9 April 1987.

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preoccupied with denominational survival. There were only a few Evangelical Anglicans and they were not eager to join an organization dominated by premillennialists and those whom they must have regarded as Bush-league Baptists. Most Maritime United Baptist Convention clergy saw no need for such an organization. Their denomination was already sympathetic to certain key elements of the Fundamentalist cause and some of them must have had serious reservations about the leadership of Sidey and Daggett — one an outsider and the other a person with an unsavoury reputation.

The sudden collapse of the Maritime Christian Fundamentalist Association meant that Sidey had more time and energy to devote to his Bedeque Church and to the Maritime United Baptist Convention. In 1926 Sidey officially became a Baptist by becoming a member of the Central Bedeque United Baptist Church. The following year his church asked the Maritime United Baptist Convention Examining Council for Ordination that “their Pastor Rev. J.J. Sidey, formerly a regularly ordained minister of the Methodist Episcopal body, but now a member of the Bedeque Church, be registered as a regularly ordained Baptist Minister”. Together with a former Seventh Day Adventist minister, Sidey was examined by the Council for Ordination. After hearing “a frank statement” of his “doctrinal views”, the Council resolved that Sidey’s name “be added to our official list”. He was listed “Sidey, J.J., M.A. D.D. Central Bedeque, 1927”.³⁹

Sidey loved to write, direct and produce ambitious religious pageants and he tried to use these pageants to consolidate his position in the Convention. His first production, written in 1926, *The Victory of the Gospel*, was based upon the “Wandering Jew” theme. In his foreword Sidey described cogently the essential story. The “Wandering Jew”, in

roaming through the earth in course of time reaches America, and finally Prince Edward Island. He finds the Island simply virgin forest, inhabited by a few savages. While musing one day in a sheltered glade, he is visited by an Angel, who rebukes him for his pessimistic outlook upon the future of the island, and promises to return at the end of each hundred years, to compare with him the results of the preaching of the Gospel of Calvary, in its effect upon the development of the Island.

In 1927 Sidey’s *Supplanter*, based on the life of Jacob, was performed at Bedeque and in the following year *The Pilgrim or the Torch of Truth*. This latter pageant tried to describe the history of the “Maritimes Home Missions” from its beginnings in 1814. In the “Final Tableau”, all the cast joined “in ascribing praise to the King of Kings, the World’s Redeemer”, while the Congregation joined “in the singing of ‘Crown Him with Many Crowns’”.⁴⁰ Sidey evidently hoped that

³⁹ *United Baptist Year Book 1927* (Truro, 1927), p. 14.

⁴⁰ The material about these pageants are to be found in the Sidey Papers, in the Acadia University Archives.

this production would travel the United Baptist Convention circuit and thrust him a little closer to the centre of Convention power and influence. The Reverend E.S. Mason, Superintendent of Home Missions for the Convention, was enthusiastic about the production, but he could not, because of the costs involved, put it on the road.⁴¹

Although his productions could not be easily transported to the mainland, Sidey and his family could — merely by moving there. In July 1930 he followed his dear friend J.B. Daggett to Kingston, Nova Scotia. Daggett's ill health had forced him to resign as pastor of the Kingston-Melvorn Square-Lower Aylesford United Baptist Churches. He persuaded his church to issue a call to Sidey who was eager to leave the Island, having — as Daggett delicately expressed it — “been unfortunate in his investments”.⁴² Certain persistent Island creditors were pressuring Sidey hard and he was keen to escape the embarrassment and ill will produced by his unsuccessful business ventures in silver fox farming, especially as the dark gloom of the Great Depression engulfed the Island. Moreover, he and his wife Edna were a little bored with their Island ministry.

Less than a month after being inducted as pastor of the Kingston-Melvorn Square-Lower Aylesford United Baptist Churches in the summer of 1930, Sidey organized the second annual “Baptist Evangelical Bible Conference”, which was held in his Kingston Church. The stated purpose of the Conference was “an outpouring of the Holy Ghost for power in soul winning upon the churches of the United Baptist Convention in the Maritime Provinces and upon every individual attending the Conference”.⁴³ Among the Baptist ministers attending the Conference were R.W. Lindsay, Upper Canard, Allan Tedford, of Woodstock, William B. Bezanson, Glace Bay, Henry T. Wright, Truro, and Horace L. Kinsman of Port Lorne. None of these ministers, it is important to note, had graduated from Acadia University and only Bezanson had a B.D. degree.⁴⁴ At the 1931 Conference, the third one held at Kingston, Sidey, as principal organizer, was responsible for shifting the emphasis away from the “Baptism of the Holy Spirit” toward premillennialism. As Sidey put it in his official “Greetings” to the delegates, he was “daily looking forward to that Blessed Hope, the Rapture of the Church”.⁴⁵ As had been the case in 1930, the Reverend Edward Morris, the Anglican Evangelical from Halifax, was the key-note speaker and among the Convention Baptist Ministers who had attended the

41 Mason would play a key role in orchestrating the anti-Sidey movement in the Convention in the 1930s.

42 *Gospel Light*, Kingston, October 1934.

43 Information about these Conferences are to be found in the Sidey Papers, Acadia University Archives.

44 None of these men is mentioned in *The Acadia Record 1838-1953* (Wolfville, 1953). I have discovered some relevant material in *The United Baptist Year Book 1929* and *The United Baptist Year Book 1930*.

45 See the programme for the 1931 Conference to be found in the Sidey Papers in the Acadia University Archives.

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1930 conference, only Reverend Wright from Truro, who had left the region, was not there in 1931. The four other ministers, Lindsay, Tedford, Bezanson and Kinsman, were joined by the Reverends F.C. Haysmere of Clementsvale, Alexander G. Crowe of Bedeque, J.H. Copeland of Nictaux and T.A. Meister of Westchester. Most of these men would join Sidey and Daggett soon after they had left the Convention in 1934.

Because of the “smouldering concern” of the Conference delegates “for their denomination’s veracity in the handling of the Scriptures” and their conviction that Acadia University, like McMaster University in Ontario, was a Liberal-Modernist stronghold, it was decided to establish the Kingston Bible College.⁴⁶ The College, like scores of other Fundamentalist schools built throughout North America during the interwar years, was designed to protect what was regarded as the true “Biblical faith”.⁴⁷ Sidey was named the first President of Kingston Bible College and he was to be assisted by Kinsman, Haysmere, and Daggett. The College was defined as an interdenominational rather than as a Baptist institution, probably in order to appeal to a wider cross section of potential students, but there were only three full-time students during the first year of the College’s existence.⁴⁸

Thus by the autumn of 1931 Sidey, with Daggett’s assistance, had created a parallel Baptist Convention. They had their own publication *The Gospel Light* — established in 1931 — to compete with the *Maritime Baptist*. They had the Kingston Bible College to train their men and women for their special evangelistic work in the region. Sidey and Daggett had their annual “Baptist Evangelistic and Bible Conference”, although Sidey was supported by fewer than a half-dozen Baptist congregations while the Convention could count on well over 500. Nonetheless, by 1932 all that Sidey needed was a little push to persuade him to leave the Convention. The push may have been provided by T.T. Shields and his former supporters in Ontario, who made it very clear that their continued financial support to Sidey was dependent on his quitting the Convention. Furthermore, Sidey’s Maritime followers were pushing him toward secession. They had had enough of what they regarded as the Modernist Convention and they were disgusted with what they heard was going on at Acadia. According to them, Divinity students were being taught that the Bible was not inerrant; it was like any other book. Their professors openly scoffed at the “divinity of the Lord”, and at the Genesis view of creation. Evolution was taught as the inspired gospel of the new scientific elite. And, to make matters even worse, dancing took place “regularly within Acadia’s walls”.⁴⁹ According to

46 Court Records, Acadia University Archives.

47 This is a very important theme in Carpenter, “The Renewal of American Fundamentalism”. See also V.L. Brereton, “Protestant Fundamentalist Bible Schools, 1882-1946”, Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, 1981.

48 Palmer, *The Combatant*, p. 95.

49 *Gospel Light*, October 1934. See also the *Maritime Baptist*, 13 June 1934.

Daggett, his and Sidey's complaints about Acadia had fallen upon deaf ears. "We are looked upon as cranks and fanatics", he observed, rather than as committed disciples of the Lord. To underscore further the Modernistic and even "Unitarian influences" which controlled the Convention and Acadia, Professor Shirley Case, a graduate of Acadia in 1893, the scourge of Fundamentalism in the United States, Professor of Divinity at the University of Chicago, and eloquent advocate of theological Liberalism had been awarded the honorary D.C.L. by Acadia University in 1928. According to Daggett, who knew Case personally, the native of New Brunswick was "on the staff of the greatest infidel factory in America". By awarding Case the honorary D.C.L. degree, Acadia and the Convention had "stamped approval upon the most rampant Modernistic Institution on the Continent of America".⁵⁰

By the summer of 1933 it was obvious that the Convention leaders had had enough of Sidey, Daggett, Kingston Bible College, and the intensifying attacks on their so-called "unadulterated Modernism".⁵¹ The 1933 Convention therefore decided to investigate various charges brought against Sidey. On 10 or 11 November 1933, Sidey obviously decided to jump ship before being thrown off and he wrote "a letter of resignation" to the Convention.⁵² By the middle of March 1934 his resignation was accepted by the Kingston and Lower Aylesford United Baptist Churches but not by Melvern Square. A majority of members of the latter church and significant minorities from the two former ones left their Churches with Sidey to form the Independent Baptist Church. At their 1934 Convention the United Maritime Baptists accused Sidey of using "a bogus D.D. degree" and of permitting "checks issues by him to be dishonoured by the bank on which they were drawn" and misapplying "denominational funds collected on the circuit at Kingston". In the judgment of the Examining Council, Sidey was felt "no longer worthy to have his name retained on the list of ordained ministers". The Convention also authorized its Executive Committee "to conserve the United Baptist interests at Malvern Square, Lewis Head Shelburne County and whenever necessary throughout the Convention". Daggett's name was stricken from the "list of ministers for cause" as was that of the Reverend F.S. Haysmere, the Baptist minister at Lewis Head, who was one of Sidey's Nova Scotia lieutenants.⁵³ In 1934 the Convention formally accepted that Sidey, Daggett, Haysmere and many of their followers had already quit the Convention. Thus secession became expulsion and the Maritime United Baptist Convention indicated that it was prepared to fight the Sidey group in order to keep the schism in check.

Although the Kingston Bible College was forced to leave the Kingston United Baptist Church building, Sidey stubbornly held on to the parsonage. After a

⁵⁰ *Gospel Light*, October 1934.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Court Records, Acadia University Archives.

⁵³ *Maritime Baptist*, 12 September 1934.

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bitter court case in May 1935, the Convention forced him out of the parsonage. The Kingston Baptist Parsonage Case, conducted in the Nova Scotia Supreme Court, Kentville, from 21 May to 25 May 1935, captured the attention of the entire province. It was not really a case about the ownership of a parsonage; rather it was a remarkable confrontation between two groups of Baptists, two ideologies, and two ways of life. It was essentially a battle between Fundamentalism and a more accommodating spirit — what has been referred to as “a new hermeneutic” based on “a double commitment: to the Biblical faith on the one hand and to the modern outlook on the other”.⁵⁴ This is not to suggest that the entire United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces was Modernist; it obviously was not. Yet some of its leadership was certainly affected by the so-called “Modernist impulse” and so were a surprising number of its members.⁵⁵ And throughout the 1930s the Convention’s major mouthpiece *The Maritime Baptist* was far more Liberal than it was Conservative, far more sympathetic to “Modernism” than “Fundamentalism”.⁵⁶ There appeared to be a serious problem in the Convention; Sidey was determined to do something about it — even if it meant destroying the Maritime United Baptist Convention.

The “Kingston Baptist Parsonage Case” was heard by Mr. Justice Humphry Mellish in the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia during the May 1935 term in Kentville. Over a four day period, from 21 May to 23 May and on 25 May, “No less than 50,000 words of evidence including testimony from as far back as 300 B.C.” was heard. For the *Halifax Herald* reporter the packed courtroom, “crowded with members of the clergy, church officials, and prominent laymen, resembled more the place of an important church meeting than a Supreme Court trial”. Not to be outdone, the *Halifax Chronicle* special correspondent maintained that the “intense interest” generated by the trial was “reminiscent of” that “at a murder trial”.⁵⁷

Sidey, from the beginning, realized that, as he put it, the “real issue fought out in the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia was the issue between Modernism and Fundamentalism”.⁵⁸ The question of the ownership of the Kingston parsonage was only the excuse for Sidey and his supporters to confront all Convention Baptists with the awful truth that “the Convention” was “no longer Baptist but Unitarian, and in some cases, infidel”.⁵⁹ Like Fundamentalist leaders such as J. Gresham Machen — the Princeton Presbyterian theologian — and T.T. Shields,

54 See C.H. Pinnock, “The Modernist Impulse at McMaster University, 1887-1927”, in J. Zeman, ed., *Baptists in Canada* (Burlington, 1980), p. 195.

55 *Ibid.*, pp. 204-5.

56 This conclusion is based on a careful reading of the *Maritime Baptist* during the 1918 to 1939 period. See also *The United Baptist Year Book* for the same period.

57 *Halifax Herald*, 22, 27 May 1935; *Halifax Chronicle*, 18 September 1935.

58 *The Question*, June 1935.

59 *Ibid.*, October 1935.

Sidey was determined never to “bow the knee to the Baal of Modernism”.⁶⁰ Scores of his supporters pushed themselves into the courtroom carrying with them their Bibles and their conviction that they were indeed supporting the Lord’s anointed against the despised Convention anti-Christ. The trial was their trial as well and they desperately wanted the world to know where they stood. There were also the Convention officials and supporters, not as intense and not as alienated as their opponents, and not carrying proudly in their hands the badge of their Fundamentalism — the Scofield Bible — the influential textbook of premillennialism.⁶¹

When Mr. Justice Humphry Mellish entered the crowded courtroom he was met by what the *Halifax Chronicle* called “Batteries of leading legal talent”.⁶² Representing the Convention plaintiffs were B. W. Roscoe, K.C. of Kentville and George C. Nowlan, the former Tory M.L.A. and former Convention, Baptist Young People’s Union (B.Y.P.U.) President. Opposing them and representing the trustees of the Kingston and Melvern Square Independent Baptist Churches were T.R. Robertson, K.C. and J.E. Rutledge, K.C., both of Halifax, and R.E. Boylan of Berwick. Roscoe and Nowlan argued that the trustees of the Kingston and Melvern Square United Baptist Churches, which had originally and jointly built the parsonage, still owned the building, thought to be worth \$3,800 in 1935. Robertson, Rutledge and Boylan, on the other hand, contended that the Independent Baptists were the true Baptists — the ones who still preached and practised what they called “Baptistic principles” — and they therefore had the right to the parsonage. Their clients, however, had to admit that they had seceded from the United Baptist Church and created a new Church — the Independent Baptist Church. This admission, in the final analysis, would completely destroy their case.

With the parsonage detail out of the way, Sidey and Daggett were now ready to strike hard at the Convention — their principal objective. They naively thought that if they could prove, to their own satisfaction, that the Convention, and especially Acadia University, was not orthodox that thousands of Maritime Baptists would rally to the Fundamentalist cause. There was a peculiar sense of hubris and self importance permeating the testimonies of Sidey and Daggett. They were absolutely convinced of the rightness and righteousness of their cause; moreover, they felt that they were special instruments of the Almighty divinely chosen to return Maritime Protestantism to true Christianity. Feeling a tremendous sense of alienation from society because of the way in which the forces of modernity were altering their world, and experiencing both an acute

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, June 1936.

⁶¹ C.I. Scofield (1843-1921), an American lawyer and Congregational minister, whose *Scofield Reference Bible* was published in 1909. The extensive notes in the *Reference Bible* developed at great length and great detail Scofield’s premillennial views. The *Scofield Reference Bible* profoundly affected the 20th century Fundamentalist movement.

⁶² *Halifax Chronicle*, 18 September 1935.

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collective paranoia and garrison mentality, they saw in the pure church ideal the organizational means to deal with what they perceived to be the grim realities of 20th century life. J.B. Daggett declared in 1935 that “We are rushing with lightning speed toward the crisis, vividly foretold in the Book of Books. It behooves the Church of God to separate herself completely from the world, and the things of the world, and to be busy without holidays”.⁶³ For Sidey, if Maritime Baptists did not abandon the “New Paganism” for “Fundamentalist separation and purity”, they would be “the human cycle for the religion of Anti-Christ”.⁶⁴

Sidey was first questioned on Wednesday, 22 May by his lawyer T.R. Robertson — about his education, his preaching call, and what had transpired in the Kingston and Melvern Square United Baptist Churches in the 1931 to 1934 period.⁶⁵ Sidey argued that his Independent Baptist Church alone espoused “the historic Baptist position” concerning Church polity and that by leaving the Convention, his church had become the true Baptist church, while the Convention had, by betraying Baptist independence, become non-Baptist. Sidey’s cross examination by George Nowlan did not go as smoothly as had his questioning by T.R. Robertson. Nowlan was a peculiar mixture of sophistication and almost bucolic opaqueness. Sometimes he could cut quickly and deftly to the heart of an issue; at other times he ponderously circled further and further away from the point being considered until the thrust of his questioning appeared to be totally irrelevant. Nowlan obviously disliked Sidey and Daggett and his questioning and his comments made outside the courtroom underscore this point.⁶⁶ He wanted to paint Sidey in a bad light and his questioning had little to do with the actual merits of the case involving the Kingston parsonage. Nowlan asked Sidey about Oriental University — “What was that?” “It purported to be a correspondence school, a University” Sidey replied. “You got in touch with them for what purpose?” “To see if I could do further work. I wanted to continue my work. I did seven or eight months work there. I got my M.A. degree for the thesis I submitted; I received my D.D.” The courtroom was deathly quiet as Nowlan pressed the alumnus from Oriental University even further. “It was under charter? Why was it restrained?” he asked. “It was under charter and certain work being done but I understood the restraining order was issued because it was not living up to its printed obligations” was the embarrassed reply. “It was fraudulent and the court stopped it!” Nowlan snapped at Sidey. “Did you ever see the institution?” “No, it was a correspondence course”, Sidey answered.

Nowlan also questioned Sidey about his obtaining his “ordination certificate”

63 *The Question*, July 1935.

64 *Ibid.*, August 1935.

65 Unless otherwise noted all of the quotations used in this section about the Kentville trial are from the Court Records, Acadia University Archives.

66 See, for example, *Halifax Herald*, 24 May 1935.

from the United Baptist Convention after enduring a 15-minute period of questioning by an Examining Council chaired by Professor Dr. Simeon Spidle, Dean of Theology at Acadia University. Sidey now contended that his 1927 decision to go before the Convention's Examining Council was, in fact, "unBaptistic". He also stressed that the Convention had abandoned the key Baptist belief that the scriptures, in their original form, were divinely inspired and inerrant. The questioning continued:

Q. Where are the original writings? A. In the various copies of the New Testament.

Q. Where are the original writings? A. Some in the British Museum and other libraries throughout the world.

Q. The original writings? A. The earliest copies we have.

Q. I am asking where the original writings are. A. I don't know.

Q. Do you know of any record of them ever being found? A. I don't know. There are translations.

Q. From what date? A. 325, 350 A.D.

Q. That would be some three hundred years after some of the events they detailed? A. Certainly.

Q. And these manuscripts are in what? A. Greek and other oriental writings.

Q. They in turn have been translated into ours? A. Yes.

Q. How old are the oldest documents in the Old Testament? A. 200 years B.C., I could not say; 300 B.C. translated into Hebrew; I think the Latin is the oldest and that is 380 B.C.

Q. And that records historical events that happened long ago? A. It contains writings inspired by God.

Q. ...You say it is necessary to accept that? A. I say the Holy Spirit of God gave these writings to the world, inspired men to write them, and the same Holy Spirit that gave has guarded and kept that word so we can follow it as God intended.

Q. You say it is necessary to accept this? A. Absolutely.

Q. You make that an absolute precedent to entering the church? A. ...That is the condition of membership. I say that would be a condition of membership in any church of which I was pastor.

In this toe-to-toe confrontation, Sidey probably got the better of Nowlan, since Sidey was able to present a moderate Fundamentalist position, and Nowlan did not ask the most important question: what is the so-called traditional Baptist position vis-à-vis the inspiration of the Scriptures and Church membership?

Nowlan then turned to the Kingston Bible College and forced Sidey to admit that there might have been a connection between his leaving the Convention and the promise of financial assistance for the College from anti-Convention

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Baptists in Toronto. This was an important admission and one that must have delighted Convention officials. Nowlan then immediately pressed his advantage by asking Sidey "You did make the suggestion that you would like to teach evangelism at Acadia at one time?" "I deny it", answered Sidey:

I was talking to Dr. Spidle about the advisability of an evangelistic Bible school. As for my going on the faculty of Acadia I was not expecting it; my work is in the field. If it was mentioned the wrong construction was put on it. I remember talking it over purely from that standpoint; I had no thought of what you suggest. I did suggest a good Bible school in connection with the Convention would be a good thing.

There was enough in Sidey's response to suggest that he was something of a sore loser.

Nowlan ended his examination of Sidey with a series of questions concerning the latter's fundamental beliefs and then B. W. Roscoe took over from a flagging Nowlan. He asked Sidey how he had dealt with the "allotment of contributions to the funds of the Convention". Sidey had to confess that his three churches had, in fact, raised \$290.75 for Convention purposes but that he had only sent \$150.00 to the Convention. Roscoe then asked Sidey "Will you tell the court if that is not one of the reasons for your retiring from the United Baptist Convention?" "No sir", was the answer — nothing more nothing less. But another seed of doubt had been planted in Kentville.

Daggett was put on the witness stand on Thursday, 23 May, by J.E. Rutledge, one of his lawyers. The former Free Baptist minister was confident, aggressive and impressive in his performance — far more so than Sidey had been. According to Daggett, even before leaving the Convention, he had often declared that "the students at Acadia were filled up with unBaptistic teaching, especially the hypothesis of evolution". Moreover, Acadia "conferred honorary degrees" on the most "unBaptistic" of men. Daggett again emphasized the importance of the independence of the local church and the evils of any form of interdependence. In addition, he condemned dancing and card playing. As for his "scriptural authority" for such a stance and for his anti-Acadia feelings, Daggett declared, as he thumbed quickly through his Bible:

I would like to close with a word of scripture in this connection. We will turn to First John, second chapter and 22nd verse "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is anti-Christ that denieth the Father and the Son"; then First John 4th Chapter, beginning at the second verse "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God"; and turn to Second John 7th verse, "For many deceivers are come into the world who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an anti-Christ". Our

Convention has received men and honoured them who deny in the most blasphemous manner that Jesus Christ is the son of God. Then I dare not stay in the Convention lest I become a partaker in their evil ways.

In his cross examination Nowlan wondered why Daggett's earlier Free Baptist view of the importance of the "Ordination Councils" had changed and Daggett had to admit that since the creation of the United Maritime Baptist Convention this had been Convention policy and that he had played a key role in pushing the Convention in this direction. Nowlan then asked Daggett to explain "the Fundamentals". Daggett insisted that "verbal inspiration" of the Bible was the key Fundamentalist tenet. "What are the other fundamentals?" he was asked. "Belief in the scriptures as verbally inspired" he stressed,

that all scripture was given by the Holy spirit and is not open to any private interpretation; that it is the word of the living God; we believe that Jesus Christ was God revealed in the flesh; that he was God's special gift as a mediator between himself and man, and upon the cross He bore our sins and that his blood cleansed us of all sins if we confess our sins, cleanses us of unrighteousness; next that he rose from the dead physically that he ascended on high physically; that he is to-day our advocate at the right hand of the Father. We believe his physical body's not moved by blood but by the spirit.

Daggett also described his premillennialist view that before Christ "returns to the world to rule the nations of the earth his voice will be heard and the dead in Christ shall rise first" and proclaimed that "No man can be a Christian who does not accept God manifest in the flesh in Jesus Christ, and a man to be a real member of the church must be born again of the Holy Ghost".

B.W. Roscoe's cross examination stressed Daggett's involvement in the 1917 New Brunswick Potato and Railway Scandal and threw at Daggett the charge that had been reverberating throughout Nova Scotia and New Brunswick for months. "Is it right to deposit monies in a name other than your own to the extent of thirty-five thousand dollars? That is what you did when you were Deputy Minister of Agriculture in New Brunswick?" "Under what name?" Daggett asked. "William Thompson, was it not?" came the reply to which Daggett could only respond "Yes, I did, and it was perfectly legitimate too". The feisty, combative preacher was unrepentant and when given an opportunity later in the day to clarify his involvement in the Scandal, Daggett emphasized that he had been duped by the "chief manipulator of the Conservative party". To protect himself from any possible charges of theft, Daggett had deposited \$35,000 in a bank under an assumed name. He believed the McQueen Commission Report had completely exonerated him and thundered that "no one but a slanderer and a rascal would bring it up".

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On Saturday, 25 May, the Convention decided to put forward its case against the Sidey-Daggett Fundamentalist critique. Two men were selected for this important task, Dr. G.C. Warren, editor of the *Maritime Baptist*, and Dr. Simeon Spidle, perhaps the most powerful and influential person in the Convention. Warren testified first.⁶⁷ Born in 1884 on Prince Edward Island, Warren was educated at Prince of Wales College, Charlottetown, at Acadia University and Newton Theological Seminary, Massachusetts, from which seminary he received his B.D. degree in 1912. He pastored Baptist Churches in Bridgetown and at Brunswick Street, Fredericton. In 1929 he was appointed Editor of the *Maritime Baptist*. In 1936 he became a member of the Faculty of Theology at Acadia and in 1942 its Dean. As editor of the *Maritime Baptist*, Warren was far more sympathetic to the so-called Modernist side than to the Fundamentalist. He regularly reprinted articles written by very Liberal theologians from England and the United States — men like Nathaniel Micklem, L.H. Marshall and Shirley Case — but never printed any material authored by any key North American Fundamentalist.⁶⁸ Under questioning, Warren contended that Baptist congregational independence was always balanced by associational interdependence and he particularly stressed the crucial role played by the Convention in the ordination process. In his concluding testimony Warren maintained that “As soon as the Baptists developed they said: We are not isolated entities, there is fellowship, and they formed the Association in Nova Scotia in 1800”.

Simeon Spidle followed Warren to the witness stand.⁶⁹ Spidle was born in New Cornwall in 1867. After graduating from Acadia with a B.A. degree in 1897, he served two Baptist pastorates, in Cape Breton and at Falmouth. In 1903 he received his B.D. from Newton Theological Seminary and in 1911 his Ph.D. in Philosophy from Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts. In 1911 he was also appointed Professor of Philosophy, Systematic Theology and Church History at Acadia and in 1922 its Dean of Theology until 1936, when he retired. Spidle was the general factotam in the Convention in the 1920s and early 1930s. He was a key member of the Examining Council and almost singlehandedly determined who would and who could not be ordained as ministers in the Convention. An ardent believer in the importance of an educated ministerial elite, he attempted, often without much success, to impose his high academic standards on the Convention. Spidle was neither a Fundamentalist nor a Liberal but rather what might be termed a Liberal Evangelical. He accepted much of the critical Biblical scholarship but without abandoning his belief in the divinity of

67 *Acadia Bulletin*, January 1957.

68 These three men, all of whom had connections with Canada, were widely regarded as leading Liberal theologians.

69 *Acadia Bulletin*, November 1954. See also S. Spidle, *An Outline of Theology*, 2 volumes (privately published, 1953). These lectures were privately printed by Spidle and a copy is available in the Acadia University Archives.

Christ, regeneration, miracles and immortality. As a scholar, he refused to see things solely in black-white terms but rather frequently saw huge grey patches. He did not perform particularly well in Kentville on 25 May 1935, perhaps because of his tendency to avoid meeting certain questions directly and honestly.

George Nowlan asked Spidle to comment on Sidey's contention that "verbal inspiration of the scriptures" was "a pre-requisite to membership in the Baptist church in the Maritime Provinces". "To make it a pre-requisite" or a belief in any form of millennialism, Spidle answered, "is entirely an unbaptistic procedure".

Rutledge's cross-examination was a little more contentious than Nowlan's probing. He zeroed in on Spidle's theology. What did Spidle mean when he stated that the "Old and New Testament Scriptures were written by men divinely inspired — by whom?" "By the spirit of God", Spidle responded. "Is that not, in all fairness, the doctrine of verbal inspiration?" he was asked. "No, not by any means", Spidle replied. "I say verbal inspiration means this, that the very words and ideas were dictated to the minds of the writers; that the writers themselves had nothing to do with creating the ideas or the language". Rutledge then asked Spidle whether he believed there was an actual "dictation to Moses". "Cite the case" Spidle retorted. "What I have reference particularly to is the making of the ten commandments". "There's nothing said there about dictation", was the curt reply. Spidle was urged by Rutledge to clarify his view of inspiration. "Do you accept the scriptures from Genesis to Revelation as being verbally inspired and of God yourself?" "No, certainly not", Spidle answered. "What do you say?" "I hold to the historic theory of the inspiration of the Bible", Spidle replied. "How do you define that?" Acadia's Dean of Theology quickly retorted: "Co-operation of the spirit of God and the mind of man arriving at the religious truth incorporated in the Bible". Rutledge also asked Spidle whether he believed "that Christ was divine". "I certainly do", answered the Acadia Dean of Theology.

Q. Do you believe and teach he was the Deity? A. He was divine in the sense that there was in him the divine quality of life....

Q. The efficacy of the Blood Atonement — what is generally meant by that? A. It is spoken of in the usual way as the substitution of Christ for the sinner; I don't know if that is what they mean by blood atonement.

Q. Do you believe that the death of Christ upon the cross was by way of atonement of sins? A. I surely do, but you must remember there are no fewer than twelve different theories. The substitution is one of them, which is that the sufferings of Christ were a punishment inflicted on Christ the innocent in place of the guilty; that the innocent was punished for the guilty and the guilty were allowed to go free....

Q. The bodily resurrection of our Lord: Do you teach and preach a physical resurrection? A. I think there is no doubt about the New Testament preaching that; I have no quarrel with the teachings of the New Testament.

26 *Acadiensis*

Q. Do you believe in the physical return of Jesus? A. That is a doctrine that is held by Baptists, that there will be a return of Christ to this earth.

It was clear to everyone in the courtroom that Spidle had tried to avoid the question. So Rutledge asked again “Do you preach and teach a physical return?” “I never use that in any of my preaching because I don’t think it is an important matter to emphasize in teaching; our business is to carry on the work and when the time arrives he will come”.

Spidle was also asked on a number of occasions to define Modernism and Fundamentalism, but he stubbornly refused to do so. When asked whether he considered the University of Chicago theologian Dr. Shirley Case a “modernist or a fundamentalist”, he shot back “I am not labelling any man”! Spidle was forced to listen to a statement to be found on page 80 of Case’s *Jesus Through the Centuries*:

The spark that ignited the tinder of a new faith for Peter was the need felt within himself during the crucifixion, for his former leader’s reinstatement in divine favor. The notion of Jesus’ apotheosis, so readily suggested by popular Gentile religions in Peter’s environment, brought to him too valuable a relief from his perplexity and too vivid an assurance of future help to leave any room for questioning the propriety of his procedure. Peter did not actually believe that a deceased man had become a god. No Jew however unschooled, could have assented to any such affirmation. It remained for his Greek successors in the new religion to recognize in Jesus a full fledged Christian deity.... Strictly speaking, this risen Jesus was not an absolute deity; he was only a messianized hero.

“Would you say that was in any way fundamentalistic?” Rutledge asked. “I will let the fundamentalist say whether it is or not”, was the curt reply. When Rutledge wondered how any orthodox Baptist university could confer an honorary degree on a person like Case whose Modernist views were so well known, Spidle stressed that “The degree was not conferred upon him for his theological views but because he was a teacher in the academy whose centenary was being celebrated”. Again, Rutledge endeavoured to pressure Spidle into admitting that Case was a Modernist. “Do you mean seriously to say, as an educationist of this province, you do not care to answer a simple question in regard to extracts I have read as being the work of a fundamentalist or modernist?” “I make no pronouncements on the matter” was Spidle’s response. The final question from Rutledge was: “Does Acadia, as a university, teach organic evolution?” “That belongs to the Department of Biology. I am not a member of that Department”, answered Spidle. This was not Dean Spidle’s finest hour. Perhaps his defensiveness is understandable; but his stubborn refusal to admit the obvious — that Case was a Modernist — is almost incomprehensible.

The final arguments were presented to Mr. Justice Mellish in Halifax on 26 June 1935. Robertson and Rutledge argued that the Melvern Square Independent Baptist Church should receive \$1450 from the sale of the parsonage and \$2350 should go to the Kingston United Baptists. Nowlan and Roscoe contended that the entire sum should go to the two United Baptist congregations, since the Independents had seceded and had no right to the property which still belonged to the Convention Churches. On 16 September Mr. Justice Mellish declared in favour of the Convention Baptists. As far as costs were concerned, which according to Judge Mellish, "have been considerable when considered in relation to the value of the property involved", judgement was reserved.⁷⁰ In late 1935 Mellish awarded the Convention Baptists \$548 for "Court expenses", rubbing more salt in the wounds of the Independents.⁷¹

Even while Judge Mellish was preparing his judgement in the summer of 1935, Sidey was receiving reports from missionaries he had sent out to all corners of the Maritimes and even Newfoundland under the auspices of the International Christian Mission which he established in March 1935. He named himself Chief Commissioner and editor of the I.C.M.'s monthly publication, *The Question*. Daggett continued to edit the *Gospel Light*. Sidey announced in the March 1935 issue of *The Question* that "denominationalism as such through its organizations and ecclesiastical control has had its day and like many other institutions hoary with age, it is now practically a wreck on the shores of time, devoid both of spiritual power and truth". The Mission, he proclaimed, "is not a church but rather a soul saving, Bible teaching, witnessing organization". The College was to train Sidey's missionaries who then would establish congregations of true Christian believers in all parts of the Maritimes and also in "Foreign lands". Expecting an imminent rapture of the Saints, Sidey and Daggett were determined to do all in their power to telescope the last days into a brief apocalyptic moment.

Two young men, William Freeman and Hilbourne Redden, were sent to the Canso area, two others, Eric Monevan and Henry Crocker, to Hants County; four women, Mildred Neily, Ethel Skarling, Ethel Thompson and Kizbro Dulliver, to the Yarmouth region and Margaret Tedford to Carleton County; Julian Green was located in Kings County, Nova Scotia, Nancy Nelson and Winona Beylea, in Moncton and William Norton in Kentville. These young men and women associated themselves with Independent Baptist ministers, such as Maxwell Bolser and Orden Stairs in Shelburne County, Russell Lynds and T.A. Meister in Colchester County and Clifford Barkhouse in Cumberland County, Sadie Reid on Prince Edward Island, and Allen Tedford in Truro. All of these young men and women had close connections with Sidey and his Baptist supporters, especially those in Nova Scotia.

Excluding his Kingston team, Sidey had no fewer than 20 ardent disciples

⁷⁰ *Maritime Baptist*, 25 September 1925.

⁷¹ See *The Question*, December 1935.

working for his cause in the three Maritime provinces in the summer of 1935. Financial support for the work came not only from the region but also from Central Canada and the United States. There was also Velma Crummie preaching the Sidey-Daggett gospel in Conception Bay, Newfoundland. Faced with all these Independent Baptist ministers and I.C.M. missionaries at work in the region, Convention Baptists became increasingly concerned and the Convention leaders began a well-planned counter-offensive at the grass-roots level, against what they spitefully referred to as “tramp preachers”. At the Eastern United Baptist Association meetings held in Sydney in July 1935 these outsiders were condemned for “endeavouring to poison the minds of our people and destroy their faith”. All Convention ministers were urged “to inaugurate a campaign in our churches, which will educate to a greater degree than exists today the rank and file of our members and adherents as regards the origin, principles and polity of Baptist people”.⁷² At the August 1935 United Baptist Convention, the Home Missions Committee of the Convention reported that “Disturbing agencies are busy in an effort to undo the work of the Christian Church”. “Men who have no connection with our body”, it was observed, “are brazenly appearing in our churches and whether locally received or rejected carry on a campaign well calculated to destroy the church life”. Particularly in the Canso area and in Shelburne County, “such a campaign assumes the nature of a house to house canvass in an attempt to have our Baptist people withdraw from our Baptist work and fellowship”.⁷³

The Convention counterattack was particularly successful in New Brunswick and the Yarmouth region. Sometimes with the assistance of the local police, Convention leaders expelled certain Sideytes from Convention churches and pushed back the Sidey forces to key bridge heads in the Canso area and in Shelburne County. These were the areas where the Sideytes had their greatest strength outside the Kingston region in the late 1930s and 1940s. The Reverend Tedford was to be forced out of the Emmanuel Baptist Church Truro to be replaced by the dynamic and Conservative Evangelical supporter of the Convention, Abner Langley. The Herman brothers, Neil and Arthur, were the two other outspoken Sidey supporters in the Convention. In 1936 Neil was eased out of West End, Halifax and in that same year became the Field Secretary for the anti-Acadian “English-speaking League of New Brunswick”. Three years later he emigrated to Florida. His brother, who was the minister at Highfield Street, Moncton, remained in his church until 1938, sullen, critical, yet unwilling to leave the Convention.⁷⁴

The Sidey schism did not result in a significant haemorrhage of members from Convention Churches. In 1934 the New Brunswick resident membership was

72 Minute Book of the Eastern Baptist Association of Nova Scotia, Sydney, 4 July 1935, Acadia University Archives.

73 *United Baptist Year Book, 1935*, p. 145.

74 *The Acadia Record 1838-1952*, p. 54.

21,090, the non-resident 7,357; the Nova Scotia membership, including the Black churches, 20,856 residents and 7,953 non-residents; and Prince Edward Island 1,542 and 479. In 1936, the New Brunswick resident membership had risen to 21,103 and non-resident to 8,025 and in Nova Scotia the resident to 21,179, while the non-resident had dropped to 7,793 non-residents. In Prince Edward Island, there was a slight increase in both categories to 1,620 and 481. In 1936, 1,736 baptisms were reported while in 1934 there had only been 1,368 and in 1935, 1,377. In 1936, 672 members had been dismissed by letter compared to 590 in 1935 and 546 in 1934, but most of the increase was not due to the Sideyite secession movement. In 1933 before the Sidey-Convention confrontation, no fewer than 736 members had been “dismissed by letter” and in 1941, a few years after, 635. The Depression and its immediate result, emigration, as well as World War II would have a far more significant immediate and long-term impact on the Convention than J.J. Sidey.⁷⁵

Why was the Maritime Baptist Convention able to deal so effectively with the Sidey secessionist threat? In other regions of Canada and in the Northern United States the confrontation first disoriented and then immobilized the Baptists. But even though there was probably a “cosmopolitan/local” polarization in the Maritime Convention in the late 1920s and early 1930, this polarization did not lead to a major split as it had in Ontario, British Columbia and the Northern United States. When a split did occur in a specific congregation, there is no evidence to suggest that class tension was at the core of conflict. What was most important was how specific people reacted to Sidey as a person.

The Convention was a heterogenous mix of people and theologies. On the extremes of the theological spectrum were to be found Fundamentalist and Modernist groups and then moving from the former to the latter, there would be important groups of Conservative Evangelicals and Liberal Evangelicals. The Conservative Evangelicals felt as strongly as the Fundamentalists about the so-called fundamentals of the faith but on two key issues they differed and these two issues created the necessary theological space — what Freud called the narcissism of small differences — between the two groups. Most United Baptist Conservative Evangelicals did not accept the central importance of premillennialism nor did they feel particularly at home within the context of the powerful anti-cultural and anti-societal viewpoints of the Fundamentalists. In other words, the Conservative Evangelicals were not as alienated from societal norms as were the Fundamentalists and they saw little psychological and spiritual need to retreat from Maritime and Canadian society to the safety of sectarian purity. Liberal Evangelicals tried to balance Evangelical spirituality and Liberal learning; theirs was a religion of the heart and head. They refused to abandon the revivalist traditions of the Baptist Patriarchs, but they also refused to close their eyes and their ears to modern scholarship. Of course, most Maritime Baptists, whether members of the United Baptist Convention or merely adherents, did not

75 See the *United Baptist Year Book*, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1939, 1940, 1941.

spend much time or energy making fine theological distinctions. They were very much part of the Maritime Baptist mainstream — stretching back to the late 18th century — which had always placed far more emphasis on “promoting a good Work” than upon theological “Principles”.⁷⁶ For these people, continuity was far more appealing than abrupt change as was a certain degree of liberal openness over against an almost paranoid restrictiveness.⁷⁷ As a result, Sidey found it extremely difficult to strike a responsive chord in the Convention.

Moreover, Sidey was an outsider to the Convention. He was certainly not the kind of person one might have expected would try so valiantly to return 20th century Maritime Baptists to the purity of their early 19th century Calvinist and Evangelical past. He was not really familiar with the Maritime Baptist historical and religious legacy and the 19th century heroes of the Maritime Baptists — the Patriarchs like Edward and James Manning, Harris Harding, Theodore Seth Harding, and Joseph Dimock, among others — were not part of his religious heritage. Consequently he was neither successful nor effective in his attempt to make his schismatic movement into a 20th century version of an Allinite-Manning Church. Nor was Sidey able to strike a responsive chord with fellow Maritimers at a time when they were experiencing the white heat of the Maritime Rights Movement, for Sidey was not a Maritimer. He was British-born, educated in the United States, and in most respects an outsider. Not only was he an outsider, he was not even an ordained Baptist minister, since he had originally been ordained as an American Methodist Episcopal minister and only became a Baptist minister after permanently settling in the Maritimes and after the creation of the United Church of Canada in 1925. His Methodist ordination was simply accepted in 1925 by his new Prince Edward Island Baptist congregation and Sidey never felt the need to be re-ordained. Not in any significant way an integral part of the Maritime Baptist mainstream in the 1920s and 1930s, Sidey was not an especially brilliant organizer nor was he widely perceived as a charismatic leader, although he was enthusiastic and committed, a very effective preacher, a persuasive polemicist and ardently committed to the Fundamentalist point of view.⁷⁸

Another possible reason for Sidey’s failure to become the Shields of the Maritimes was his inability to harness New Brunswick discontent with the Convention and to direct it against the Nova Scotia Convention leaders. Since the early 19th century, the ethos of the New Brunswick Baptists was quite different from that of the Nova Scotia Baptists and for decades they had

76 See the “Records of the Church of Jebogue in Yarmouth”, in the Public Archives of Nova Scotia.

77 See Marlene Shore, “Carl Dawson and the Research Ideal: The Evolution of a Canadian Sociologist”, *Historical Papers* (1985), p. 73.

78 His wife, Edna, also caused her husband great difficulty and heartache. An independent woman of great ability, Edna Sidey was never intimidated by her husband and on at least one occasion left him — and left him humiliated and angry. This kind of marital discord did little to help the Fundamentalist cause in the Maritime Provinces.

resented the hegemony the Nova Scotians imposed upon the Convention. Yet Sidey had no effective base in New Brunswick; his New Brunswick-born lieutenant, Daggett, was a source of weakness and not of strength, because of his involvement in the notorious 1917 Scandal. Whenever Sidey tried to send his missionaries to New Brunswick they confronted strident opposition. The New Brunswick Baptist leaders had a greater fear and suspicion of Sidey than they did of the Convention leaders in Nova Scotia, especially those at Acadia University. They had considerable freedom within the Convention and even though they might criticize the Liberalism of Acadia they saw no good reason to quit the Convention, in which they still exerted a powerful influence. In New Brunswick, the Sidey forces not only confronted opposition in the Convention — from Fundamentalist, Conservative and Liberal Evangelicals and Modernists — but also from other sectarian Baptist groups like the Reformed Baptists, the Primitive Baptists and some Free Baptists — groups with roots thrust deep into New Brunswick life and society. The Sideyites were no match for these New Brunswick sectarian Baptists. Nor could they compete with the growing Pentecostal movement.

A further reason for Sidey's relative lack of success was the vigorous counter-offensive mounted by Convention leaders such as Spidle, Warren and Dr. E.S. Mason, Superintendent of Home Missions. First, they met the theological challenge posed by the Sidey group by persuading the Convention to accept publically in 1934 "its unshaken loyalty to the historic principles of our Denomination including the Lordship of Christ, the inspiration of the Scriptures, the separation of church and state, the necessity of a regenerative life, and exemplary character and the autonomy and co-operate fellowship of the individual churches".⁷⁹ At the local level, especially at the Association level, the Convention leaders urged their followers to battle against Sidey's "tramp evangelists". The implicit argument made to the Convention ministers was a compelling one during the difficult depression years. If the Sidey evangelists were successful, Convention ministers would no longer have churches to minister to and therefore no salaries. Economic survival as well as community prestige energized them in their determination to push back the sectarian invaders and the Kingston Parsonage Case, when won by the Convention, seriously weakened the Sidey forces. Sidey reluctantly admitted this fact in the fall of 1935 when he witnessed a significant downturn in the number of students at the Kingston Bible College as well as widespread concern, even among his most ardent followers, that the Independent Baptist had been relegated to the status of an "illegal church".⁸⁰ Making very effective use of local newspapers, Spidle and others viciously and personally attacked Sidey and Daggett, describing them as dishonest, selfish and unChristian leaders.⁸¹ Some of these

⁷⁹ Quoted in *The Maritime Baptist*, 12 September 1934.

⁸⁰ *The Question*, December 1935.

⁸¹ *Gospel Light*, October 1934.

charges, however unfair, accomplished the desired end, as did the expulsion from the Convention of unrepentant pro-Sidey ministers. Finally, in order to reassert its position at the evangelical core of the Baptist cause in the region, the Convention in the post 1934 period placed a great deal of stress on "Evangelization". Over and over again, on the pages of the *Maritime Baptist*, local congregations were urged not only to pray for a revival but to work diligently for one. Articles and editorials entitled "Need of Revival", "Revival Needed", and "Evangelism Needed" were printed and reprinted. Attempts were made to link the Maritime Baptists of the late 1930s with Henry Alline and the region's First Great Awakening.⁸² Sidey never even tried to use the Baptist historical heritage to infuse his movement in the 1930s with pride, respectability, and tradition. As an outsider he could never really understand the "Conservative ethos" of the Maritime Provinces.

A final reason for Sidey's failure to split the Convention was the fact that Baptist mainstream theology in the Maritimes had always been basically syncretic, placing particular stress on personal religious experience and not on a specific religious ideology. It was the religion of Henry Alline and Harris Harding and not that of Gresham Machem or T.T. Shields. Most Maritime Baptists in the 1920s and 1930s could not really empathize with the main North American Fundamentalist or Modernist propagandists because they perceived religion in a radically different manner. Unlike many of their Baptist cousins in Central Canada and the West, they had not, as yet, experienced the profound Americanization of their popular culture and were quite successful in the interwar years in resisting the Fundamentalist-Modernist bombardment from the South. Is it surprising that the two Baptist Conventions in Canada, most greatly influenced by the osmosis of Americanization, were the two Conventions most significantly affected by the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy? In the final analysis, Sidey may have not been able to emulate Shields because he was too American for Maritime tastes. He had accommodated, too much, the habits of his mind to the Manichaen theological world of Chicago in the immediate post World War I period.

By late 1935, Sidey realized that his attempt to split the Convention had failed. Yet he refused to be immobilized by the events of 1934 and 1935. He seemed even more enthusiastic about his Kingston area churches, more committed to his Bible College and the International Christian Mission. He became increasingly active in the Nova Scotia Sons of Temperance as well as the Canadian Protestant League. Yet, despite his energy and sense of commitment, he was not able to deal successfully with the forces of sectarianism he had helped to unleash in the Kingston area. His College experienced a number of painful schisms as faculty members left outraged at Sidey's enthusiasm for Pentecostalism, one year, or his obsession with British Israelitism during another.⁸³ They felt that he

82 *The Maritime Baptist*, 22 June 1938.

83 See some of the criticism of Sidey in the Sidey Papers, Acadia University Archives.

was betraying his Fundamentalist principles. Some of his Independent Baptist followers stubbornly refused to toe his line and attacked his College and the I.C.M. because they were not Baptist organizations. These people felt that Sidey had too readily sacrificed his Baptist principles on the altar of interdenominationalism. Although he had played a key role in organizing the Independent Baptist Churches in the Cape Sable area of Shelburne County, in Guysborough County and in Westchester, Cumberland County, as well as in the Bedeque area of Prince Edward Island, by 1939 most of the Nova Scotia Independent Baptist Churches had split away from Sidey. It was ironic that Sidey should have experienced a far worse split in the 1930s than did the United Baptist Convention.

When Sidey formed the Maritime Fellowship of Independent Baptists in 1940, in order to “provide a way whereby the Baptists (Ind) of the Maritime Provinces may find fellowship together”,⁸⁴ he could only attract to the organization his Kingston area Independent Baptist Church and the tiny Coddle Harbour Baptist Church from Guysborough County. In September 1968 the Fellowship was formally disbanded; Sidey had been unable to keep even a tiny fragile Fellowship together. In 1962, his own Melvern Square Independent Church split, with the secessionist group — including his wife Edna — forming a Fellowship Baptist Church. Four years later, Sidey, a largely spent force, died. He had seen his Independent Baptist world collapse around him; his College was still in reasonable shape despite a tragic fire in 1962 but his I.C.M. was little more than a postal address — a paper missionary society.

Soon after Sidey’s death on 23 May 1966, he was described by Pastor Perry F. Rockwood, a former Presbyterian and a Fundamentalist preacher in Nova Scotia, as “probably the pioneer separationist of the Maritimes”.⁸⁵ One of his faithful Deacons and dear friend, E.E. Skaling from Greenwood, praised Sidey as “a man of faith, a man who knew how to get answers to a prayer, a good friend and a Christian gentleman”.⁸⁶ J.J. Sidey, in the 1930s, it may be argued, represented the way the mainstream of the Maritime Baptists could have, but did not follow. Ironically, in the short run Sidey may have been the loser but in the long run, as the Maritime Baptist Convention and the Acadia Divinity College became increasingly Conservative in their orientation, as the 1960s blurred into the 1970s, he may well have been the winner after all.

84 Quoted in Palmer, *The Combatant*, p. 160. I have learned a great deal about Sidey’s latter years from Mrs. George Moody of Wolfville and from Professor Barry Moody of Acadia University.

85 Quoted in Palmer, *The Combatant*, p. 195.

86 *Ibid.*, p. 196.