

Revivalism, Gender and Community in 19th-Century Ontario Congregationalism: a Case Study.¹

by Marguerite Van Die

To speak of Congregationalism is to speak about "the gathered Church."² Alan Sell, in a recent article, "The Witness and Legacy of Congregationalism" has captured this essence of Congregationalism well by pointing out, "...one cannot be a 'Christian in general.' To be a Christian is to be of the people of God in a particular place; it is to be an earthed saint."³ This paper is about "earthed saints." More specifically, it is about one particular group of saints and their families, the First Congregational Church of Brantford Ontario, men, women, and children, living, working and worshipping in a particular place and time, from approximately 1835 to 1885. Before I elaborate, I should from the outset, confess that I am not an expert on Congregationalism, Canadian or otherwise. My interest in this denomination has been piqued, however, through my current research into a topic which I call, "The Christian family: evangelicalism and community in Victorian Canada, 1835-1885." This study focuses on a wider group of "earthed saints", Canada's nineteenth-century mainline evangelical denominations: Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists, as well as large numbers of Presbyterians and some Anglicans. Its goal has been to analyse the role of evangelical Protestantism in creating and maintaining ties of kinship, family and community in Canada at a time when throughout the western world these were being undermined by the capitalist and industrial revolutions of the nineteenth century.

¹ Research for this paper was conducted as part of a larger project, "The Christian family: evangelicalism and community in Victorian Canada," for which research time was generously made available by the Pew Charitable Trust during 1993-4. Grateful acknowledgment is also made to the Advisory Research Council of Queen's University for funding of travel costs. To present a paper where numbers form a central part of the evidence seems an especially appropriate way to pay tribute to the work of Douglas Walkington, in whose memory these lectures are held today. Walkington's painstaking gathering of numerical information in his 1979 publication, *The Congregational Churches of Canada: A Statistical and Historical Survey* undertaken in the tradition of his predecessor George Cornish is invaluable for historians who wish to place congregational life within the wider context of religious and socioeconomic change.

² E.B. Eddy, "The Congregational Tradition," in J.W. Grant ed., *The Churches and the Canadian Experience* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1963), 26.

³ Alberta & Northwest Conference Historical Society, *Journal* 6:1 (May 1993): 16

Historians of religion in English Canada, such as John Grant, Michael Gauvreau and William Westfall, have for some time now pointed to the years 1835 to 1885 as the formative period of a pervasive evangelical culture enduring well into the twentieth century.⁴ Their analyses of its origins as well as of its demise, however, have been based primarily on the work and the writings of ministers, theologians and academics. Little effort has as yet been made to examine evangelicalism on the popular level or to explore to what extent it functioned as part of a generalized community -building in nineteenth-century Canada.⁵

This paper represents a small portion of a wider study into these questions, and it is drawn from the research into one specific case study of a single community, the town of Brantford. It is a portion of this research, namely an analysis of the collective membership and adherents of the First Congregational Church in Brantford, and their relationship to the wider community that I will be presenting today. In 1861 a thriving urban centre, with a population of 6251. Brantford was also the centre of an active evangelicalism, which by 1885, the end of my period of investigation, encompassed one Congregationalist, two Anglican, four Methodist, two Presbyterian, three Baptist, and a large Roman Catholic church, as well as a few smaller sectarian groups such as the Seventh-Day Adventists, and an evangelical Inghamite church, known as Farringdon Independent. Brantford's First Congregational Church has left excellent records, membership lists taken from congregational business meetings have been carefully compiled by Angela Files for the Brant County Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society, and memoirs by John Wood, minister from 1852 to 1874, and a congregational history written by John Robertson further offer

⁴ J.W. Grant, *The Church in the Canadian Era* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972), 74-85, 208-9; Michael Gauvreau, *The Evangelical Century* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's, 1991); the term "Protestant" rather than "Evangelical" is used by William Westfall, *Two Worlds: The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's, 1989)

⁵ Two exemplary studies which have begun to open the field are Doris O'Dell, "The Class Character of Church Participation in Late Nineteenth-Century Belleville." Ph. D. diss., Queen's University, 1990; "Ladies, Loafers, Knights and 'Lasses': The Social Dimensions of Religion and Leisure in Late Nineteenth Century Small Town Ontario." Ph.D. diss., York University, 1992.

informative narrative information.⁶ Thanks to the generosity of two colleagues working in Ontario educational history, Robert Gidney and Winnifred Millar, research has also been greatly facilitated by my being given access to data collected from the census returns for Brantford from 1851 to 1881, and to the assessment rolls for 1861, compiled for their earlier research into the history of Ontario's secondary schools.⁷ This I have correlated with the information in church records, personal papers, local histories and newspapers in order to reconstruct a profile of Congregationalism, and to plot its interaction with the town's other evangelical denominations as they sought to shape community life during the half century 1835 to 1885.

Though small in relationship to the town's other mainline denominations, Brantford's Congregationalists did, nevertheless, play a leading role in extending the distinct influence of evangelical Protestantism upon the town. A number of reasons for this development are readily apparent: their early origins, dating back to 1828, as a union church and Sunday School founded by lay members, and their concern that church membership include not just individual 'saints', but also the families of believers.⁸ Historians such as Gerald Moran, analysing the membership of New England Congregationalist churches in the colonial period have begun to document the strong influence exercised by a number of core families throughout several generations.⁹ Referred to often as tribalism, this important factor in church development also provides a key to the shape of Congregationalism in nineteenth-century Brantford, thanks to the congregation's founding by a single family, that of John Aston Wilkes. Wilkes and his wife Susan Phillips had been prominent members of Birmingham's Steelhouse Lane Independent Chapel, and shortly after the cessation of the Napoleonic Wars had immigrated with their seven children to Canada via New York. After a

⁶ William A. Wood ed., *Something from Our Hands: The 19th-Century Memoirs of Rev. John Wood, 1828-1905* (Hudson Heights, P.Q., Wood Family Archives, 1988); John Robertson, *History of the Brantford Congregational Church 1820 to 1920* (n.d. n.p.).

⁷ R.D. Gidney and W.P.J. Millar, *Inventing Secondary Education: The Rise of the High School in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's, 1990), chpt.6.

⁸ Robertson, *Congregational Church*, 23-27, 30-31.

⁹ Gerald F. Moran and Maris A. Vinovskis, *Religion, Family, and the Life Course* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 59-83.

few years in Toronto, in 1825 they had transferred their general store and set up a grain mill in Brantford, then only a small village at the forks of the Grand River. An active lay preacher in Birmingham, Wilkes with the help of his oldest son Henry, in 1828 had formed a Union Church and Sunday School, both meeting initially at the Wilkes' warehouse or at the wagon shop of another member, and later at the village schoolhouse.¹⁰

The 1830s were a time of rapid growth in Brantford, fuelled by the construction of canals, which favoured entrepreneurs such as John Aston Wilkes and his sons, who by that date had extended their commercial ties to Buffalo. In two years, 1834-6, the village's size tripled, and in this period of expansion and heightened expectation, the town's four oldest Protestant denominations erected their first church buildings: Anglicans (1832); Wesleyans and United Presbyterians (1834); Congregationalists (1836); followed by the Baptists (1841). Expectations outstripped reality, however, and the boom of the 1830s ended in economic downturn in 1837, a decline in the overinflated real estate market, and little permanence in population, as many hastily sold their land and moved elsewhere.¹¹ Because of the transient nature of the population, coupled with the financial difficulties of attracting ministers for any extended period, families who had struck stable roots exercised considerable influence in church life. From the beginning the Wilkes family formed the nucleus of Brantford's Congregational Church, and were followed by other relatives all with strong roots in Birmingham Congregationalism: two of Susan Phillips' sisters, one of whom, Mary Ann was married to Benjamin Day, who had been active in the Sunday School of the Steelhouse Lane Chapel. The eldest of the Wilkes' sons, Henry after being educated for the ministry in Glasgow, would help extend Congregationalism in central Canada through his

¹⁰ Robertson, *Congregational Church*, 24.

¹¹ David G. Burley, "The Businessmen of Brantford, Ontario: Self-Employment in a Mid-Nineteenth-Century Town" (Ph.D. diss., McMaster University 1983). This revised work has since appeared in published form as *A Particular Condition in Life: Self-Employment and Social Mobility in Mid-Victorian Brantford, Ontario* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's, 1994).

work as Secretary of the Colonial Missionary Society and as minister of Zion Congregationalist Church in Montreal.¹²

By the 1840s, this large family was already moving into the second generation, as several of the older children with their spouses joined in active church and Sunday School involvement. The first extant church register, dated 1841, lists 24 members, 9 of whom belonged to the Wilkes extended family.¹³ Tribalism, exemplified by this founding family, would remain a dominant factor in Brantford's Congregational life as other families joined them and began to share in positions of leadership. With most of the agricultural land taken up by 1840, Brantford was becoming a commercial centre which offered attractive opportunities to British and American immigrants with limited financial assets, desirous to set up business of their own. David Burley, in a finely crafted study on the town's businessmen during the years 1830-1880, has demonstrated how during these early decades business was disproportionately an activity of immigrants, for small scale production for local needs was favoured, credit regulations were loose, speculative ventures offered quick returns. Accordingly, "in a culture which wholeheartedly approved of and encouraged a man to be independent, the businessman could command credit on the strength of his personal character and sense of responsibility."¹⁴

The values of such an economic system were easily congruent with the communitarian ethos of Congregationalists and other evangelical churches. Shared values stimulated the formation of business partnerships, and Burley has noted an unusually high degree of partnerships formed among Congregationalists during the period 1842 to 1881. Clannishness among co-religionists was further favoured by ethnicity, for census returns from 1851 to 1881 show Congregationalists

¹² For information on Henry Wilkes' career see John Wood, *Memoir of Rev. Henry Wikes, D.D.; His Life and Times* (Montreal: F.E. Grafton, 1887).

¹³ Robertson, *Congregational Church*, 42. Also given in "Members' Names December 15, 1841-July 14, 1847" Brantford First Congregational Church (microfilm), United Church Archives.

¹⁴ Burley, "The Businessmen of Brantford," 378.

aged 18 and over consistently registering the largest number of American-born members and adherents.¹⁵

It was during the 1840s and early 50s that Brantford's Congregationalist church attracted the bulk of its core families as prominent businessmen drawn by its favourable economic climate settled in the town and together with the Wilkes would form the backbone of congregational leadership throughout the period under investigation.¹⁶ Such clannishness and tribalism within congregational life have the potential of strengthening lay power as Marilyn Westerkamp has effectively documented in her work on eighteenth-century Irish Presbyterians.¹⁷ Brantford's small Congregationalist membership too on occasion sought to control, and if necessary, dismiss unco-operative ministers. As early as 1848 a church schism had resulted when the minister, the Reverend Thomas Baker, supported by one deacon, tried to bar from membership Frederick Wilkes Esq., son of John Aston for unacceptable, but (in the extant records unspecified) behaviour. The solidly resistant congregation, among whom family members formed a significant core, considered the charges to be without substance and voted instead to dismiss the minister, who departed in the company the deacon, a prominent businessman, and several other members.¹⁸ For the next four years, Brantford's Congregationalists found themselves without a minister, until in 1852, the Reverend John Wood, a recent graduate of the denominational seminary accepted the call to begin a lengthy pastorate extending until 1874. Recommended by

¹⁵ Ibid., 215. With 57.1% of the partnerships made with fellow-Congregationalists, this denomination ranked next to the Anglicans (58%) and above the next highest, the Methodists (47.7%)

¹⁶ F.P. Goold, for example, who joined in 1844, had married a daughter of one of the early settlers, and began the manufacturing of stoves in partnership with P.C. Van Brocklin, a universalist, but whose wife and daughter would join the Congregationalist church as members in the revivals of the 1850s. C.H. Waterous, also a universalist whose wife joined at that same time, came to Brantford in 1844 at the time of the opening of the Grand River Navigation Works, to commence building steam engines, thereafter entering into business partnership in agricultural implements with Congregationalists Goold, Ganson and Bennett in 1857, and ten years later forming the firm of C.H. Waterous & Co., with among others, George H. Wilkes, son of James Wilkes. Robertson, *Congregational Church*, 54-59; Burley, *A Particular Condition*, 26-27.

¹⁷ Marilyn Westerkamp, "Enthusiastic Piety- From Scots-Irish Revivals to the Great Awakening," in *Belief and Behavior: Essays in the New Religious History*, ed. P. Vandermeer and R. Swierenga (New Brunswick, N.Y.: Rutgers, 1991), 63-87.

¹⁸ Robertson, *Congregational Church*, 62-70.

their own native son, Henry Wilkes, and impressed by the recent revivalism of James Caughey in Toronto, John Wood was enthusiastic, energetic, idealistic, and not to be overlooked, single.¹⁹

While census records for 1851 listed 125 adults aged 18 and over as Congregationalist, the church roll listed a more modest 70 members. Thanks to the recent turmoil and lack of ministerial leadership, however, John Wood was able to count no more than thirty active members.²⁰ Both census figures and the church roll also reveal that the feminization of religion which American historians have uncovered as prevalent in Congregationalism and other Protestant denominations since at least the revolutionary period, had also made strong inroads in Brantford, with the female/male ratio being 70: 55 in the census, and 42:28 on the church roll. Women not only significantly outnumbered men, but it was also quickly clear to Wood that the congregation's spiritual core rested in the hands, or more accurately, on the prayers, of a number of female leaders, such as Mrs. Stephen Wickens at whose home he boarded, and Mrs. Mary Ann Day, recently widowed, who ran a dame's day school with strong religious emphases.²¹ As active members and valued fundraisers, Brantford's Congregational women had already played a central role in the upbuilding of the congregation, and shown their priorities at the 1836 dedication of the first building by presenting a pulpit Bible, inscribed with the names of eleven female members. Though all eleven were married, only a portion could claim their husbands as members.²² By the early 1850s when Wood arrived to begin his pastorate the conversion of husbands and children had taken on a new urgency.

The period was one of economic boom, fuelled by high wheat prices and an influx of British capital attracted by the lucrative prospect of railway building which was just beginning to get underway. In this volatile climate the spiritual welfare of some of the congregation's male members and adherents, as well as its young people had become a matter of concern to a number

¹⁹ Mrs. Ann Tolwell to John Wood, 7 February, 1851, John Wood Papers, file 2, United Church Archives.

²⁰ Wood, *Memoirs*, 51.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Robertson, *Congregational Church*, 41-2.

of devout women. As was frequently the case elsewhere, in this shared concern, women and minister looked to one another for help. One of Wood's first efforts, therefore, was to lend his support to the recently organized youthful temperance socitey, "Brant Section No.47 of the Cadets of Temperance," which with its pledges, and "clearance cards" to "worthy brothers of good standing" appealed especially to the instincts of adolescents to fraternize along quasi-military lines.²³ The congregation's men, young and old, soon found themselves faced as well by a tightening of discipline, and minutes of the congregational business meetings after Wood's arrival show that moral infractions such as billiard and card playing, intoxication and pre-marital sex quickly became matters of regular group censure.²⁴

It was within this context of consistent discipline, work among the young, and godly women's prayers for the conversion of male family members, that revival broke out in 1853. Wood's own commentary on the means of revival is worth quoting, for it foreshadows the nature of the subsequent revivals of the 1850s which affected all the town's evangelical denominations:

We had no Evangelist or neighbouring pastor to help us, no 'anxious seat', no cards to be signed, no modern methods of any sort; but like the Jerusalem Church we were 'of one accord' and prayerfully waited on God, and 'many believed and were added unto the Lord.'²⁵

In a congregation which had been shaped by familial and communal ties, and which had been experiencing the tensions and the instability brought about by volatile economic growth, it is not surprising that a reassertion of congregational unity and discipline and earnest piety were the distinguishing features of revivalism. Twenty-six members joined as a result, and according to the minister, another twenty "were brought to Christ," and presumably joined other evangelical denominations. For a significant number who joined the Congregationalist church, the revival

²³ Temperance Pledge, George H. Wilkes, 17 May, 1852, James Wilkes Papers, Archives of Ontario. Wood in his *Memoirs*, 66 takes credit for organizing a Band of Hope early in his ministry, noting there were no youthful temperance organizations in the town.

²⁴ See for example Minutes of Business Meeting, First Congregational Church, 3 April 1857, 27 April, 1857, UCA.

²⁵ Wood, *Memoirs*, 54. Reference to the revival occurs in Minutes of Business Meeting, First Congregational Church 29 March, 1853. In conjunction, the 1st of April was set apart "as a day of special private prayer and fasting".

marked the transition from being an adherent to full membership for ten of the converts were already members of Congregationalist families. Since only fifteen converts were caught in the 1851 and 1861 census, and eleven of these were single, and women outnumbered men more than three to one, it is clear that youth, gender, and transiency were powerful factors in explaining the success of revival. Such a pattern follows studies of earlier periods of revival, as detailed most notably by Mary P. Ryan in the 1820s and 30s in her ground-breaking study of Oneida County, New York.²⁶

Concrete evidence of this for Brantford lies in one of the more idiosyncratic causes of revival: twenty-one of the youthful converts, most of whom joined other denominations, came from a single source, the Farringdon School for Young Ladies, located just outside the town. Their new teacher, Miss Sarah Livingston, a Congregationalist, had been instrumental in bringing them to the services and in inviting Wood (against the wishes of the school's lady proprietress) to visit the school to assist young inquirers. While this invitation did result in conversions, it also left Miss Livingston without a contract for the coming school year, though not without employment. On October 4, 1853 she became the bride of John Wood, and a month thereafter, "by simple vote," Mrs. (Rev.) J. Wood was placed on the roll of First Congregational Church, Brantford.²⁷

In analysing the causes of revival, such random influences as the arrival of a young, eligible minister should not be overlooked, but it should be noted that the more general correlation of gender, youth, and transiency also reflected the town's demographic pattern, for in 1851, over 50% of the population was under the age of 18. Accordingly, the need to integrate the town's younger members into church life was a concern for all the evangelical churches. To do so, Congregationalist family arrangements were the most favoured, for 1851 census returns show that although a large proportion of the town's single people ages 15 to 30 years were living outside their families of birth (60.1% males, 57.7% females), Congregationalists diverged markedly, with

²⁶ Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 80.

²⁷ Wood, *Memoirs*, 55-8, and Minutes of Business Meeting First Congregational Church, 4 November, 1854.

70.8% of their young men and 66.7% of the women living with their own families. It may then not have been a co-incidence that revival first broken out in this denomination where a significant number of the converts had already been preceded into the church by family members.

Closely connected to demography was the impact in the early 1850s of a booming economy which had been fuelled by railway building (with the completion in January 1854 of a line from Buffalo to Brantford), expansion of banking and commercial outlets, and an ambitious public building programme which included a town hall, a registry office and the establishment of a grammar school. A flurry of church building programmes in the mid-1850s gave further expression to this optimism, as the Wesleyans and Baptists erected new larger edifices, the Free Presbyterians embarked on their first building, and the Congregationalists expanded their existing facilities after the influx of improved finances brought about by the 1853 revival. During this period, as church and town began to give visible evidence of moving into a new phase of development, local businessmen and entrepreneurs were eager to provide direction. Though not all were members, as adherents of the various evangelical churches, by being appointed members of church building committees they were now drawn into closer involvement with church life..

It was within this socioeconomic environment of heightened expectations and a large youthful population that three years later revival broke out again. Where the 1853 revival had been confined to the Congregationalists, the revivals of 1856 to 1859 extended to all the evangelical denominations, including even the Church of England. Accounts of their origin vary, but all agree that for five uninterrupted months in 1856, religious life in Brantford was rocked by revival, and church membership rolls show that in some denominations such as First Baptist, and the recently formed Zion Free Presbyterian Church, the tremors would continue until 1859 as significant numbers continued to seek entry as members. The year 1856 saw an increase of 78 members for the Congregationalists, 243, for the Wesleyan Methodists in 1856-7, 124 for the Free Presbyterians

in 1857-9, 34 for the United Presbyterians in 1857-9, and 193 for the Baptists in 1856-9.²⁸ Thus, in the space of three years, Brantford's committed evangelical membership had received an influx of 472 men and women, representing a quarter of the town's adult population.

In all the denominations, with the exception this time of the Congregationalist, the revivals brought into the evangelical fold a larger number of female than male converts. The preponderance of women as church members had been a reality in all the pre-revival churches, and their large influx at this time drew no special comment in accounts. What did arouse attention, however, were the young people, and the men, designated as "prominent heads of households" who underwent conversion. Less noticed, but equally significant, were the number of men and women who entered into full membership as married couples, 33% of the Congregationalist, 37% of the Methodist, 34% of the Presbyterian and 26% of the Baptist converts. At a time, therefore, when 21% of the town's population was in the 20-29 age bracket, a time in life when marriage and family commitments were being undertaken, the revivals of 1856-9 represented a strong expression of religious and family commitment. For Congregationalists, who it may be recalled, already counted a high proportion of their young people living at home, the revivals brought in the largest relative percentage of the children of believers. In 1853 38% of the converts were already preceded into the church by family members; in 1856 this held true for 35%, contrasting with the other evangelical denominations, where figures ranged from a high of 25% for the Baptists, to a low of 6 % for the Free Presbyterians.²⁹ Thus already at this point in time, part of the influx of

²⁸ Statistics were compiled from the Membership Roll 1850-1884, Zion Presbyterian; Communicants Roll, United Presbyterian Church [Wellington Street Presbyterian], 1843- 1870; Circuit Register 1855-1857, Brantford [Wellington Methodist], Membership Roll, 1841-1911 First Baptist Church, and printed in T.S. Shenston, *Jubilee Review of the First Baptist Church Brantford* (Toronto: Bingham & Webber, 1890), Church Roll 1853-1896, First Congregational Church, typescript but checked against original, microfilm, UCA.

²⁹ 1) Converts Entering as Married Couples 2) Converts Preceded by Family

Denomination	Year	Couples		Prec. by Family	
Congregational	1853-- 26	2	[15%]	10	[38%]
	1856-- 78	13	[33%]	27	[35%]
Methodist	1856-7-- 243	45	[37%]	46	[19%]
Free Presbyterian	1857-9 -- 124	20	[32%]	8	[6%]
United Presb.	1857-9-- 34	6	[35%]		
Baptist	1856-9-- 193	25	[26%]	49	[25%]

new members consisted of conversions within families with a prior commitment to the church. In later years this pattern would be extended also to other denominations, who at the moment were still looking outside their existing membership for converts, and thus their net gain outstripped that of the Congregationalists.

In addition to young people, the converts also included a significant group of men, described in accounts simply as "prominent heads of households." A number of these converts were listed in the 1861 assessment in the 80-100 per centile, and as men of wealth some of these quickly assumed positions of leadership within the evangelical churches. Significantly, Congregationalists counted the highest percentage of committed among this group. Thus of the 9 men listed as Congregationalist in this top economic category in the 1861 assessment, three were office holders prior to the revivals of the 1850s, the revivals added another three, resulting in a high percentage of 67% commitment, significantly higher than in the other evangelical denominations.³⁰

The reasons for this large ingathering of men of substance can be directly related to the town's development at this time and to the aspirations of its male citizens. The account of James Woodyatt, a thirty-seven year old tailor and prominent Congregationalist convert may be instructive. Emigrating to Brantford from England with his parents in 1835, Woodyatt had attended church regularly and after his marriage had his children baptized by a Congregationalist minister.³¹ Although his wife, the daughter of one of the church's early families became a full member, he remained an adherent though actively involved in church life. Prominent in civic

³⁰ Wealth of Pre- 1850s Revivals Office Holders and Converts [80-100 percentile-1861 Assessment]

Denomination	Total listed in Assessment	Office-holders pre-revivals	Office-holders entered revivals
Congregational	9	3	3
Methodist	41	9	9
Free Presbyter.	7	0	0
United Presb.	5	1	0
Baptist	16	3	4

³¹ First Congregational Church, Brantford, U.C., Baptismal Register 1841-1860 (microfilm) UCA.

affairs, he was elected town reeve in 1853, and three years later, during the revival which brought so many of the town's other leading male citizens into the evangelical churches, Woodyatt finally took the step of becoming a full member. At that time he also helped trigger further revival among the congregation's young people by publically sharing his spiritual struggle and urging the young, as recounted later by John Wood, "not to delay their acceptance of Christ until their hearts had become hard as his."³² Such a confession acted not only as a powerful warning against delay, but also implicitly affirmed that Woodyatt was assuming a position of spiritual leadership commensurate with his recently acquired civic status. Until his death in 1894, he continued to remain in the forefront of church and civic life: as deacon after 1857 and church trustee, and as town clerk from 1859 until his death, as secretary and president of the local Mechanics' Institute and Library, as a charter member of the local Gore Lodge, and later as Grandmaster of the Oddfellows of Canada.³³

This correlation of leadership in church and society was not new in Brantford, for founding fathers like John Aston Wilke had already provided an impressive model. By the 1850s this pattern was into its second generation, with sons George S. Wilkes elected town mayor in 1856, and James (who lived until 1904), combining at various times the civic positions of alderman, reeve, and city treasurer with his duties as church deacon, trustee, and for over half a century, Sunday School secretary, teacher, and librarian. The revivals of the 1850s now added an influx of more recent businessmen and professionals into positions of active leadership into all the Protestant churches, thereby enhancing the evangelical goal of integrating religious and secular life.

At the same time, entry into active church membership at this particular point in the town's development also offered unique opportunities to male piety. Historians of gender have begun to draw attention to the difficulties which evangelical piety posed to many men, reference has been made to its "feminine" nature, a suggestion corroborated by the growing body of research showing

³² As reported in Wood, *Memoirs*, 68-9. Woodyatt is not mentioned by name, but the details fit his profile as given in 1851 Census Returns, Brantford and Robertson, *Congregational Church*, 55.

³³ Ibid.

the dominance of women in church membership.³⁴ The evangelical emphasis on the moral dimension of religion, combined with the conviction that there could be no distinction between public and private morality, posed special difficulties for men engaged in the complexities of commerce and industry. As full members of the various evangelical churches, their behaviour came under the scrutiny of fellow members, ministers, and a spectrum of class leaders, elders, and deacons, depending on the denomination. Conversion for prominent men like James Woodyatt, offered an opportunity to come forward and confess before the congregation one's shortcomings. Because this public act also drew Woodyatt and his colleagues into the vortex of religious leadership and activity, there may have been as well an accompanying source of relief from the anxiety and private introspection so characteristic of evangelical repentance. Conversion led to a new sense of self, a sense not incommensurate with the pride which accompanied promotion or reaching another rung in the ladder of economic or social preferment, as had been the case with Woodyatt and some of his peers. And, by entering into the church with their wives and fellow businessmen, these prominent converts were further ensuring that evangelical religion was not only an individual private matter, but intimately related to family and corporate life.

The communal nature of these revivals needs to be emphasized, for while this is a paper about Congregationalism, Congregationalists themselves set high value upon the corporate nature of Christianity.³⁵ Although the revivals were conducive to such unity, they also placed severe strains upon community, and Congregationalists felt these more severely than other denominations. Begun as a Union Church, they had over the years attracted a number of families of different evangelical backgrounds, especially Free Presbyterian since this denomination had not established a presence in Brantford until 1852, although there had been a United Presbyterian

³⁴ Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffin eds., *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), especially 67-95. For the feminization of congregational life see, for example, Richard Shiels, "The Feminization of American Congregationalism, 1730-1835," *American Quarterly* 33 (Spring 1981): 48-9.

³⁵ Samuel Jackson, *A Hand-Book of Congregationalism* (Toronto: Congregational Publishing Company, 1894), 111.

Church since 1845. The revivals of 1856 to 1859 were a time of growth for the newly organized Zion Free Presbyterian Church which succeeded in drawing by far the largest proportion of male converts, some of whom such as John Kipp, Charles Crandon and Richard Irwin had been members of First Congregational.³⁶ Accusations of "sheepstealing," however were rare, and business committee minutes show that the exchange of members generally proceeded amicably, and indeed so great was the tolerance that one undecided Congregationalist couple was encouraged to delay their request for withdrawal in order to "have the opportunity of worshipping with other Churches, & so be enabled to decide with which of them they will seek to connect themselves."³⁷ The desire to maintain Christian unity among the town's evangelical denominations was, in fact, sufficiently strong that ministers had decided collectively in 1856 to refrain from introducing any doctrinally controversial subjects in their sermons for the duration of the revival.³⁸

Good intentions proved, however, to be more difficult to maintain, for the revivals by their unsettling nature also tapped longstanding hostilities. On the collective level disunity erupted in Brantford when after five months of intense revivalism, the question of baptism by immersion for adult unbaptised converts became a burning issue, pitting the town's Baptist and Congregationalist ministers against one another. As a result, for six weeks on Monday evenings, the Rev. John Wood, now already into his second revival in the space of four years, delivered a series of public lectures in which he outlined the case for infant baptism. And since his Baptist colleague, the Rev. T.L. Davidson considered it his duty to fight error, on Friday evenings the case for adult baptism was expounded. Thus, as the fires of revivalism began to lose some of their heat, throughout six weeks during the months of September and October of 1856, some 500 townspeople reportedly

³⁶ Membership Roll, Zion Presbyterian Church, 1850-1884, United Church Archives. Previous church membership is frequently stated on the roll.

³⁷ Business Committee Minutes, First Congregational Church, 5 Aug., 1857.

³⁸ *Brantford Expositor*, 30 March, 1857 comments on the publication of the lectures. See, also Wood, *Memoirs*, 70, See also excerpt of First Baptist Minute Book, 17 October, 1856 in T.S. Shenston, *Jubilee Review*, 38.

filled two of their evenings by pondering the merits of two different understandings of Christian baptism.³⁹

Implicit in Wood's efforts to combat error was the question of evangelical family and community unity. His first concern was to prevent seepage to other denominations of his own young people, who regularly formed part of the large crowds attracted to the public immersion in the Grand River of Baptist converts, events which, as George Rawlyk and Dan Goodwin have demonstrated, had a powerful potential for proselytizing among the onlookers.⁴⁰ Secondly, in a period when church ordinances had of necessity often been only imperfectly followed, a number of the new adult converts to Congregationalism were unbaptized, and two of these, Robert Morton, a merchant and his wife, had requested adult immersion. Their application, unfortunately floundered on the refusal of the Baptists to share their baptistry with any minister who had not himself received immersion, and in the end the Mortons decided to join the Baptists instead.⁴¹ Wood was of course careful to make anonymous references to such cases in his public lectures, but in a small town, where everyone's religious life had been on display during the revival, the loss of two such substantial potential members was a matter of common knowledge. On the two groups of converts expressly singled out in revival accounts, namely the young converts, and even more the "prominent heads of households," men such as Robert Morton, rested the hope of evangelical and denominational continuity.

Nothing brought this out more dramatically than the economic depression late in the summer of 1857. Especially devastating upon Brantford with its close ties to Buffalo, it heralded a lengthy period of economic contraction and structural change, brought about by the collapse of the commercial economy and a lingering agricultural crisis. As a result, thanks to a steady exodus of

³⁹ Ibid., See also The Rev. John Wood, *A Manual of Christian Baptism* (Toronto: Maclear, Thomas & Co., 1857).

⁴⁰ Daniel C. Goodwin, "Revivalism and Denominational Polity: Yarmouth Baptists in the 1820s," in *An Abiding Conviction: Maritime Baptists and Their World*, ed. Robert S. Wilson (Hantsport, N.S.: Lancelot Press, 1988), 1-31; George A. Rawlyk, *The Canada Fire: Radical Evangelicalism in British North America 1775-1812* (Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's, 1988), 162-184.

⁴¹ Business Minutes, First Congregational Church, 28 October, 1856.

men and their families in search of work, and the town's lack of attraction to newcomers, by 1868 Brantford's population was no larger than it had been in 1858.⁴²

For Brantford's religious life the effects were farreaching. Although revivalism continued to bring in new members for two years after the economic crash, those who moved away, were dropped because of inactivity, or expelled for failure to live up to the moral standards of full membership totalled almost half of those recently welcomed as converts. The impact was especially devastating upon the Congregationalists, who by 1863 had lost 79.4% of their 1856 converts, a loss which outstripped those of all the other denominations.⁴³ With a higher than average number of Congregationalists employed as artisans and craftsmen according to the 1851 census, the two occupations hardest hit by the depression, the denomination was in a specially vulnerable position, as members left for new economic prospects as far away as the Maritimes and Australia. For their minister as well, these were difficult years. Wood's salary which had received a boost after the 1853 revival now fell frequently in arrears, seeking him to supplement his income by working as the denomination's part-time secretary of home missions, a task whose frequent travelling was frowned upon by members of his congregation.⁴⁴

For more than a decade after the economic crisis of 1857, Brantford's Congregationalists managed to add only 79 new names: 30 men and 49 women to their membership roll. These years were a time of church restructuring, with a greater effort to become integrated into the wider Congregational Union of Ontario and Quebec, formed in 1853. Moreover, following the model of sister churches in Montreal and Brockville, the church meeting approved a covenant to be presented for agreement to the large number of recent converts, with henceforth assent required only of those making profession of faith for the first time.⁴⁵ In addition, as acknowledgment of the large number of female converts brought in by the recent revivals, women visitors were

⁴²Burley, "The Businessmen of Brantford," 85

⁴³ This is in comparison with the Methodists who had lost 36.6%, the Free Presbyterians 37.9%, the United Presbyterians 21.2% and the Baptists 38.3%, all by 1862.

⁴⁴ Business Meeting Minutes, First Congregational Church, 2 February, 1858; Wood, *Memoirs*, 73.

⁴⁵ Business Meeting Minutes, First Congregational Church, May 1, 1860.

appointed to interview these and induct them into church life.⁴⁶ Church discipline too continued to seek to maintain the purity of the saints from the inroads of changing lifestyles, especially among its more prominent and affluent members.⁴⁷ Congregationalist efforts such as these to restructure church life while retaining traditional strong communitarian emphases were, however, part of deeper and more pervasive structural changes affecting Brantford's entire population and its church life. Taken together, the two would lay the groundwork for a new period of revivalism in the 1870s shared by all the evangelical churches, but again, as before, inaugurated by the Congregationalists.

To set the socioeconomic context of these later revivals, it is important to note that as a result of the economic crisis of 1857, the town's occupational structure had begun to change as the economy began to move from its earlier craft base to that of factory production. Comparing, for example, a profile of Brantford's adult male and female Congregationalist workforce of 1851 and 1871 it is readily evident that the denomination during this period was becoming more middle class and less occupationally diversified. Thus where in 1851 28% of the Congregationalist workforce could be classified as semi- and unskilled, by 1871 this had shrunk to 14.6%, a figure at variance with the town average of 26.4%.⁴⁸

For the denomination's young people the impact of these changes was especially farreaching. In the transition from a commercial to an industrial city, self-employment which in the 1840s and 50s had seemed a possibility for the young and enterprising, in the 1870s was becoming more difficult, especially for those without connections and assets. By 1881, David Burley has argued, a business career was no longer an expected "stage of life," and as assets and connections became increasingly necessary for success, class took on greater importance.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Business Meeting Minutes, First Congregational Church, 2 February, 1858

⁴⁷ Discipline in the form of suspension was even meted out to John Wilkes Sr., for his "habit of playing cards in several saloons," Business Meeting Minutes, First Congregational Church, 3 April, 5 June, 30 July 1857. Minutes of 1 December, 1857 record discipline of male members for neglect of ordinances, profane swearing, and keeping a saloon.

⁴⁸ Census Returns, Brantford, 1851 and 1871

⁴⁹ Burley, "The Businessmen of Brantford," 306.

Secondly, as indicated by the census returns for 1871 and 1881, the town's demographic pattern began to shift towards a higher component of older members.⁵⁰ In this double shift, wealth and age became increasingly identified. Churchlife reflected this as well, for here too leadership remained in the hands of those men of substance who had guided the church in its early days, or who had joined during the revivals of the 1850s. Where other denominations might continue to admit new leaders, especially from the growing number of professionals, Congregationalists saw the greatest concentration of leadership in the hands of the small number of core families whose active involvement dated at least to the revivals of the 1850s, and in many cases earlier.

This increased socio-economic homogeneity of the congregation, coupled with the solid presence of Congregationalists and evangelicals in positions of leadership in civil and business life, with their wives acting as auxiliaries in dispensing poor relief and church fundraising also gave a certain predictability to the lives of their children. Raised in devout homes, nurtured further by church and Sunday School, educated in schools whose teachers and principals were officeholders in the town's evangelical churches, young people during the late 1860s and 1870s were surrounded by religious influences in ways hardly imaginable in the pre-revival days of the 1840s, when the town's perceived depravity had been the cause of some lamentation.⁵¹ At the same time, as evangelicals, Congregationalist young people were still expected to undergo conversion before entering the church as full members. Revivalism continued, therefore, to be the primary way of entry. What is important, however, is that this time revival would not arise out of the prayers of female spiritual leaders, and prayer meetings in private homes, but through the efforts of outside revivalists. And while these revivalists took care to target the unconverted adult male segment of the town, as well as its youth, few "prominent heads of households," would be counted among the converts. Instead, women and young adolescent boys and girls flocked forward to make their profession of faith.

⁵⁰ In 1851, 6.5% of the male and 5.2% of the female population were over 50; by 1871 this had risen to 10% and 9.7% respectively. [Census Returns, Brantford, 1851 and 1871]

⁵¹ John Douse [a Methodist minister] to his wife, Brantford, 28 August, 1841. John Douse Papers, Vol.2, UCA

This second wave of revivalism began in April and May of 1869, when there came a sudden influx of 69 new members into Brantford's Congregationalist church as a response to the work a young Scottish revivalist, Douglas Russell, sponsored by Y.M.C.A.'s in smaller centres such as Galt, which he visited on his way to Chicago.⁵² Assisted by several ministers, Russell's impact upon Brantford's Congregational life was remarkable, and as in the 1850s, a pattern was set which would characterize the later union revivals of 1875 and 1879. Significant was the ratio of female to male converts: 46:23, and the high incidence of young people under age 20. Of the 23 males, for example, 16 were designated as "master," with ages as low as 10 and 11. Remarkable also was the extent to which this revival united families in church membership, with 43 of the converts preceded into the church by members, and 46 entering in the company of relatives, the majority of whom were siblings, with only one married couple entering, a pattern notably at variance with the revivals of the 1850s.

The impact of those earlier revivals continued nevertheless to make itself felt, for 32 of the converts were directly related to those who had entered the church in the mid 1850s. Significant as well was the high number of core families represented in these revivals, families whose husbands and wives had given active leadership as deacons, visitors, or Sunday School teachers. The revival was, therefore, a witness to the influence of Christian nurture and to the way in which religious life and the town's culture had become mutually reinforced. Entry into full membership for these young people was not, unlike the time of James Woodyatt's conversion, the result of a long, anxious striving. These young people, like Woodyatt's twelve year old daughter, Rebecca, who in 1869 entered in the company of their peers, were instead affirming a common experience which had shaped them since infancy, and which now found its communal expression through entry into full membership and active church involvement. Prominent among the converts, for example, was Charlotte Wood, age 14, the minister's daughter, born and raised in Brantford, and accompanied by a large number "of her intimate friends and schoolmates," and followed shortly

⁵² *The Canadian Independent*, May and June 1869; Wood, *Memoirs*, 95.

thereafter by her younger brother, Henry, age eleven. She along with other female converts would soon take up Sunday School teaching, an active enterprise directed by male lay leaders under the superintendency of James Wilkes, which brought together some 90-120 children and young people every Sunday afternoon at 2:30 p.m.⁵³ Charlotte would later be assisted by Clara, James Wilkes' daughter, who at age eleven in the company of two sisters and a brother, had also professed her faith and who would later after her untimely death be remembered with her husband, Walter Currie, as the denomination's first missionaries to Africa.⁵⁴

It is important to note, when analysing this later time of revival that the 1871 census had captured a demographic pattern among the town's young people that in all denominations, namely that the majority of single young people were now living with their families of birth.⁵⁵ Secondly, thanks to the contraction of opportunities in the local economy, the town's female population had begun to outnumber its males. Religious training of young people at home, church, and school had been further reinforced through the adoption in 1871 of the Uniform Series of Sunday School Lessons, a decision vigorously promoted by John Wood.⁵⁶ Well-publicized temperance society work, frequent out-of-town speakers on behalf of the YMCA and the WCTU, as well as the decision by the town's evangelical churches to co-ordinate their various mid-week prayer meetings on a single evening had further extended this increasingly common and pervasive culture and prepared the way for the gathering of the young into the churches through revival.⁵⁷

At the same time, as first the Presbyterians, and then the Methodists entered into national unions, evangelicals were becoming integrated into a wider national network which offered greater scope for their moral activism. All of this must in turn be placed within the context of the

⁵³ First Congregational Church, Register of Sunday School Teachers and Scholars, 1874-1885, UCA.

⁵⁴ Robertson, *Congregational Church*, 80.

⁵⁵ 68.4% of the males, and 71.9% of the females, a trend which would increase by 1881 to 86.5% and 83.7% respectively. (Census, Brantford, 1871 and 1881)

⁵⁶ Wood, *Memoir*, 104. See also his, *Sunday-School Conventions: Their Objects and Importance, and the Best Methods of Conducting Them. Two Prize Essays by Rev. George Bell and Rev. John Wood* (Toronto: Lovell and Gibson, 1867)

⁵⁷ Business Meeting Minutes, First Congregational Church, 1 December 1874 records the request by the ministerial conference to have all prayer meetings on Thursday evening.

centrifugal forces which were drawing the town out of its isolation and fuelling a new self-confidence which found visible expression in the boosterism and self-congratulation which accompanied the town's incorporation in 1877. The availability of disposable funds (which had permitted a speedy rebuilding of the Congregationalist church building when destroyed by fire in 1864) was only one indication of the confluence of evangelical expansion and the town's economic restructuring from a commercial to an industrial base. Other signs of new wealth and moral concern could be seen in Wycliffe Hall, a well-appointed YMCA building (with \$14,000 for its construction raised in the space of a few days in 1873), in the Brantford Ladies' College, a Girls' Orphan and a Widows' Home, as well as in new church expansion by the Presbyterians, Methodists and Baptists, not to mention a lively interest in Sunday School and home and foreign mission outreach. The active participation in Sunday School work during these years by older and younger members of core families was a pattern observed in all of the town's evangelical churches, and provides the key to the subsequent union revivals of 1875, and to the children's revival of 1879.

As in 1869, the revivals of 1875 and 1879 were the work of outside revivalists, who had entered Brantford on their circuits, but once arrived found the evangelical churchbuildings placed at their disposal. For three months early in 1875 the British holiness evangelist, Henry Varley through anecdote, dialogue, and folksy preaching, all recorded in detail in the local newspaper, was able to draw unprecedented audiences which yielded an impressive number 287 converts.⁵⁸ The Congregationalists, who since 1869 had welcomed only thirty new members, now in the space of three months gathered in 34. Twenty-five of these joined on a single Sunday, 18 February, a day when Brantford's evangelical young people throughout the town flocked into full membership.⁵⁹ As had been the case in 1869, and was now the pattern in all the churches, the

⁵⁸ *Brantford Expositor*, January 22, 25, 26, 29, 30, 1875. Total taken from membership rolls First Congregational, First Baptist, Session Minutes of Zion Presbyterian, and annual returns for Wellington and Brant Avenue Methodist.

⁵⁹ Zion Presbyterian for example added 33 young men (average age 20), and 38 young women (average age 17.5) Session Minutes, 18 February, 1875.

majority of the Congregationalist converts were young, with women outnumbering men 22:12, and again a large proportion, 23 out of 34 converts, were accompanied by other family members. Where the pattern diverged from the other churches and from 1869, was that this time core families were minimally represented, and less than half the new converts had been preceded into the church by family members.⁶⁰

This shift to the ingathering of unchurched youth, prefigured already in 1875 by Congregationalist statistics had been prepared by extensive Sunday School work in all denominations, including the Anglicans and Roman Catholics. It would now form a dominant motif four years later in the revivals of 1879. That year, from February to April, the town and its newspaper were held captive by the flamboyant evangelism of the Reverend E.P. Hammond, an American Congregationalist, with a noted record of inducing conversions among the young, and helped by the melodious songs of his boy assistant, blind 'sweet' Charlie Hale.⁶¹ Supported very visibly by the town's prominent businessmen, some of whom were also active in Sunday School work, Hammond tried to extend his efforts to other more intractable groups, unchurched adult males and the labouring class who lived in the town's poorer districts, but with little success.⁶²

Children, and young people, on the other hand, proved to be a more fruitful field of activity, and of the 370 recorded conversions in the four main evangelical denominations, anecdotal evidence, and where possible an analysis of ages, show the majority of converts to have been in their teens, without family church connections.⁶³ At the same time, though to a lesser extent than before, the children of the existing membership continued to experience revival as an opportunity to take on full membership in the company of their peers. Of the 21 male and 26 female converts who joined First Congregational as a result of the revival, 34% had been preceded

⁶⁰ 6 belonged to core families, 15 had been preceded by relatives. Membership roll, First Congregational.

⁶¹ *Brantford Weekly Expositor*, 14 February, 1879. For Hammond's views on childhood conversion, see, E.P. Hammond, *The Conversion of Children* (Chicago: Revell, n.d.)

⁶² *Brantford Weekly Expositor*, 28 February, 1879.

⁶³ Of the 13 male Congregationalist converts located in the 1871 and 1881 census, 7 were under 18 years, of the 18 female converts located, 7 were under 18 years.

into the church by family members, 43% entered in the company of relatives, while 22% claimed a relationship to the converts of the 1850s.

* * * * *

In this account of revivalist activity extending over thirty years a distinct pattern can be discerned. Beginning in 1853, and ending with the Hammond revivals of 1879, revivalism in Brantford had become less a means to draw in those outside church life, as to ensure evangelical continuity from one generation to the next. Its proven success in this endeavour was a testimony in the first place to the nurture provided by church and family, and secondly to the extent whereby evangelical religion had succeeded in becoming a pervasive cultural force in Brantford, capable of influencing public as well as private life.

Where revivalism was less successful among the town's Congregationalists, in particular, was in drawing in new members from outside. Part of this failure may be attributed to Congregationalist polity, and further to the denomination's early roots in Brantford. With their strong communitarian emphases, clannishness, and tradition of lay power exercised through core families, Congregationalists not only presented an image of exclusivism, but they were also more prone to schism. Schism had occurred in 1848, and it recurred in 1875, the year after their minister, John Wood, departed for Toronto to take up the combined post of superintendent of the Home Missionary Society and editor of the weekly denominational paper, the *Independent*. Where Wood had left under ostensibly amicable circumstances (but rankled by arrears in his salary left unpaid), the departure a year later of some 30 members to form a second Congregational church had been decidedly less amicable. The apparent cause of rupture, a refusal to fall in with the majority's choice of a new minister, had been part of a longer brewing controversy over efforts to modernize the congregation's finances and replace a hallowed tradition of "free pews" with the envelope system, which was being adopted in most other evangelical churches.⁶⁴ Led by a former

⁶⁴ Causes and impact of the schism can be found in Minutes of Business Meeting, Congregational Church, especially 2 November 1869, 1 February 1870, 16 June, 27 July, 28 September, 1875.

Methodist and prominent industrialist, the group included such oldtime stalwarts as the widow Phoebe Wickens, Wood's former landlady, and her two sons, who remained in close contact with their former minister.⁶⁵ The breakaway group did not, however, succeed in maintaining itself, and by 1879, thanks in part to the opportunity provided by revival, the majority had returned, but with the two wealthiest, unfortunately, joining the ranks of the Presbyterians and the Anglicans.

Church schisms, Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, have recently argued in *The Churching of America 1776-1990* are a certain sign of a loss of tension in maintaining otherworldliness.⁶⁶ This failure, they argue further, can be found reflected in statistics which show that between 1776 and 1850 Congregationalists in the United States shrank from 20.4% of all adherents to 4.0%. Denominations which succeeded in maintaining otherworldliness, on the other hand (and here they use specifically as examples, Baptists and Methodists) were able during this same period to maximize their growth, from 16.9% to 20.5% for the Baptists, and 2.5% to 34.2% for the Methodists.⁶⁷

Viewed, however, from the perspective of evangelical and Congregational community-building in the town of Brantford, Finke and Starke's updating of the sect-church thesis becomes more complex and less convincing. As we have observed, the evangelical concern to ensure the spiritual and moral safety of the next generation of necessity required the transformation of public as well as of private and life. In Brantford this task fell most fully upon the men and women who entered the town's evangelical churches during the revivals of the 1850s and who because of their early roots were able to weather the economic crisis of 1857. Thanks to a shared experience of socioeconomic and demographic change in the decades which followed, evangelicals were able to shape a common culture which in turn served to decrease the earlier tension with the secular world whose impact had been seen as detrimental to religious faith and practice. Evangelical uniformity

⁶⁵ Diary 1874-1878, John Wood, UCA.

⁶⁶ Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-1990: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers, 1992), 275.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 55.

had been encouraged by revival but also by structural change. It should not come then as a surprise that in the 1870s revivalism would have its greatest impact upon those most affected by this dual change, namely the young, and especially young women.

Though revival on a large scale had been to a great extent narrowed to these two groups in the decades after the 1850s, the opportunities revivalism continued to offer for renewal and expansion should not be underestimated. In 1890 three weeks of evangelistic preaching by Methodists Crossley and Hunter would yet once again allow the town's Protestant denominations and their members to reassert a common faith experience and draw in the uncommitted.⁶⁸ Two years later, Brantford's Congregationalists were able to establish a Sunday School in the town's impoverished East Ward, thereby belatedly adding their efforts to the aggressive church extension which the other evangelical denominations had been carrying on since the 1870s. In so doing, they also implicitly stated, as they had from the time of their founding, that the goal of "earthed saints" was not so much to maintain an otherworldliness as to extend the boundaries of the gathered community to the world around. Such cycles of revival, planned and prayed for by clergy and committed lay leaders served to extend the faith from one generation to the next, and to preserve and increase the pervasive influence of religion upon the community. Thus, when analysing the nature and impact of secularization, we do well to turn our attention beyond the writings and pronouncements of clergy and theologians in order to include the way in which concerns of gender and community acted as powerful forces of evangelical continuity in times of dramatic structural change.

Marguerite Van Die
Queen's University

⁶⁸ *Brantford Weekly Expositor*, 14 March, 1890.