

Public Archives and Religious Records: Marriage Proposals

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Introduction

This paper will look briefly at today's changing religious styles and the new directions which theology and religious and secular historiography seem to be taking, in order to determine whether or not the current organization of religious archives will permit them to perform their proper functions. It will not survey Canadian religious archival repositories nor will it focus on any one institution. Several surveys of Roman Catholic archives already exist,¹ and a comprehensive survey of Protestant archives is virtually impossible given the scattered and largely scanty nature of the information available.² Hopefully, this paper will provoke reflection on the present state

1 For a description of Roman Catholic archives in and relating to Canada see Gaston Carrière, "Les Archives religieuses," (course paper for the 1974 archives course given at the Public Archives of Canada) 21 pp; François Beaudin, "Les Archives ecclésiastiques au Québec," In: François Beaudin, ed., *Archivistique québécoise*, Montréal, La Librairie de l'Université de Montréal, 1975, pag. div.; and In: Canadian Religious Conference, *Abridged guide to the archives of religious communities in Canada*, Ottawa, 1974, 220 pp.

2 No useful survey of Protestant archives exists. Only the United Church of Canada Archives in Toronto has been the subject of published descriptions, largely in the *Bulletin*, its own publication. See also Glenn Lucas, "The United Church of Canada archives," (course paper for the 1974 archives course given at the Public Archives of Canada), 10 pp. Even the United Church archives, however, has produced no general inventory.

Some Anglican Diocesan archives have been the subject of general inventories: A.R. Kelley, "Historical records of the Church of England in the province of Québec," In: Québec (Province) Archives, *Rapport de l'archiviste de la province de Québec, 1946-1947*, Québec, Imprimeur de la Roi, 1947, pp. 178-298; Alberta. Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation, *Catalogue of records of the Anglican Diocese of Mackenzie River deposited in the Provincial Archives of Alberta*, 1973, 39 pp.

The Canadian Friends Historical Association have deposited the Quaker records in the University of Western Ontario. See Edward Phelps, *Inventory of the Archives of the*

of religious archives, not as a roadmap to archival heaven, but rather a signpost indicating that the route ahead is fraught with curves. If this paper has a message, it is that archives are not static warehouses of documents but dynamic institutions changing with the society they reflect and the public they serve.

The Present State of Religious Archives in Canada

Archives generally perform two important functions: they preserve a record of the nature of a society at any given time and they make that record available to researchers. Consequently, a good archives should mirror social changes and be sensitive to trends in the research areas they are most required to serve. Religious archives must, therefore, reflect new religious practices, theological tendencies and historiographical trends.

The following survey of religious practices and studies and of historiographical trends ought to be seen in the light of the current organization of religious archives in Canada. These are very largely private and denominational in nature. They are also, generally speaking, relatively unknown both to researchers and to other archivists. Notable exceptions are the United Church Archives which advertises its collections in its own periodical, *The Bulletin*; a general inventory of the Archdiocesan Archives of Montreal has been published;³ and A.R. Kelley's survey provides easy access to the Archives of the Anglican Diocese of Quebec.⁴ The recently published *Abridged Guide to the Archives of Religious Communities in Canada* is another extremely useful research tool relative to Roman Catholic religious communities.

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Canada, Toronto, Canadian Friends Historical Association, 1973, 30 pp.

For other inventories and descriptions of archival holdings, see James Hanrahan, "A Current bibliography of Canadian church history," *Canadian Catholic Historical Association Report*, 1970- ; "Bibliographie d'histoire de l'Amérique française," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, 1967- ; and "Recent publications relating to Canada," *Canadian Historical Review*, 1920- .

- 3 François Beaudin, "Inventaire général des dossiers des archives de la Chancellerie de l'Archevêché de Montréal de l'année 1600 à l'année 1876," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, Vol. 19, no. 4 (mars 1966), pp. 652-664; Vol. 20, no. 1 (juin 1966), pp. 146-166; "Archives de la Chancellerie de l'Archevêché de Montréal — Inventaire analytique des documents de la période 1600-1760," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, Vol. 20, no. 2 (septembre 1966), pp. 322-41; "Inventaire général des registres des archives de la Chancellerie de l'Archevêché de Montréal — 1643-1876," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, Vol. 20, no. 4 (mars 1967), pp. 669-700.
- 4 A.R. Kelley, "Historical records of the Church of England in the province of Québec."

Religious archives have long been neglected in Canada despite the marked interest in religious history manifested in the past. They acquired a reputation for keeping inaccessible the documents they gathered and for being directed by "retired" clergy or by active administrators both of whom were untrained and too busy to pay them much attention. In 1955 Thomas Millman remarked on the "amazing labours" of the Americans in the field of religious archives and looked forward to the day when Canadians would become as interested.⁵

The situation has improved considerably since then. The United, Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches have all been at least fairly careful in conserving their records if not in organizing and rendering them accessible. The United Church has established an integrated system of central and regional archives. The Anglican Church has a central depository at Toronto but its diocesan structure results in considerable decentralization as does the comparable Roman Catholic pattern of archives. Improvement in the organization and accessibility of religious archives will be the fruit of better training for their archivists. In the last few years a training course for religious archivists has been given at Toronto. In Quebec religious archivists are an important element in the membership of the Association des archivistes du Québec and have formed a Comité des archivistes religieuses. Consequently, prospects in denominational archives seem promising, at least superficially.

Problems, however, remain both on and under the surface. The Toronto archives course was cancelled in 1974 for lack of students. The numbers of members in Roman Catholic religious communities are decreasing with a resulting general aging and over-working of the remainder.⁶ This situation in the Roman Catholic communities is a microcosm of that in the Churches as a whole, which are generally fighting a decline in lay membership and trying to cope with increased secularism by expanding their social functions. The current inflationary context does not help matters. "The financial resources of Canadian Churches are limited", wrote Glenn Lucas of the United Church Archives, "and declining memberships and revenues coupled with rising costs, offer increasingly bleak prospects for the future. It is very difficult to obtain outside assistance of any kind for religious Archives, and Churches have given them the lowest priority on their list of commitments."⁷

5 Thomas R. Millman, "The Study of Canadian church history," *Canadian Journal of Theology*, Vol. 1, no. 1 (April 1955), p. 31.

6 René Côté, "Evolution des communautés religieuses et organisation des archives," *Rapport du colloque sur les archives religieuses*, Ottawa, Conférence religieuse canadienne, 1972, p. 47.

7 Glenn Lucas, "The United Church of Canada archives," p. 10.

Public archival institutions on both the federal and provincial levels have been relatively inactive in the acquisition of religious records. It must be added that any interest they might have expressed in the past would almost certainly have been withered by a suspicious and even hostile reception on the part of the Churches. And yet the great importance of social action in modern religious practice and theology has made social institutions of religious organizations. Public archives in Canada, with their tradition of collecting private as well as public records, can no longer ignore them. While the Churches have always been important social institutions, recent trends re-emphasize this aspect of their witness.

Recent Developments in Theology and Religious Practice

“New theology” is an expression one hears less in the 1970’s than in the previous decade not because its tenets are less influential, but because they are less controversial. The new theology is a practical theology which attempts to adapt the Church to the reality of modern life. In general, whether Roman Catholic as expressed at the Second Vatican Council and in the works of Karl Rahner and Hans Kung, or Protestant as propounded in Bishop Robinson’s *Honest to God* or Paul van Buren’s *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel*, it tries to bring Christian faith into the lives of people by revamping their image of God, re-emphasizing the humanity of Christ, translating the faith into terms meaningful in a scientific age, and forcing the Church out of a preoccupation with its own life and structures into a new engagement with the work.⁸ It is concerned with relevance. John Macquarrie, a critical but sympathetic observer, wrote:

The new theologies try to speak to the here and now. Theology cannot afford to insulate itself, and dwell upon eternal truths or cherish ideals that lie far beyond this world. If the notion of incarnation is taken seriously, then theology too has got to incarnate itself in the actual world of our time. Intellectually this means coming to grips with the thought of modern science and philosophy. Ethically it means joining in the search for solutions to the grave moral problems that confront man on both the individual and social levels.⁹

Christian social concern, which is at the heart of the new theology, actually is a tradition as old as the Church itself, but like rationalism, mysticism and other aspects of Christianity, it has been emphasized or neglected in various eras of the Church’s past. In Canada it has a tradition, mainly through Methodism and Roman Catholicism, going back to the nineteenth century. Its most recent rise to general favour can be placed

8 John Macquarrie, *A Look at the new theology*, n.p., Forward Movement Publications, 1967, pp. 6-7 and 10-11.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

within the last decade although it was bubbling below the crust for many years before it surfaced. It has touched virtually all the major denominations in both French and English Canada.¹⁰ Despite the Churches' efforts in this direction they continue to lose their young people who, while still religious at heart, reject the institutional Church as ossified. They join the ranks of Christians who are unaffiliated with any denomination, but are trying to live their faith in every-day life. Arnold Edinborough has suggested that religious renewal will not come through denominationalism or the existing ecclesiastical structures, but through small groups working in existing secular institutions.¹¹

While Christian social concern is breaking through denominational bounds, a somewhat older but still recently re-emphasized phenomenon, ecumenism, seems to be waning. Ecumenism in Canada is certainly not new — one need only recall the Presbyterian union of 1875 and the union of 1925 which brought the United Church into existence. Nonetheless, ecumenism appears to have received renewed impetus in the 1950's and 1960's. Today it seems to be facing a crisis on the institutional level. On the other hand, clergy and laymen of different denominations join forces locally on numerous occasions for specific tasks, most notably in the social domain. Noting a drop in enthusiasm for the ecumenical movement, Philip Leblanc wrote in 1968 that this could partly be attributed to the denominations' increasing participation in joint social and welfare projects, which was proving to them that cooperation was possible without organic union.¹² If religious renewal, as Edinborough suggests, may come on a non-denominational basis, the renewal of the Churches may be expressed through interdenominationalism.

In reaction to the secularism of the "new theology", and indeed of Western civilization in general, a multi-faceted movement has arisen which re-emphasizes the spiritual aspect of the Christian faith or, in the case of non-Christians, of life. The Pentecostal Churches are the fastest growing "third force" within the Christian tradition, and cults such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Mormons, the Spiritualist Churches, and so on, also enjoy increasing popularity. These groups are paralleled by charismatic movements in the older sacramentalist and evangelical denominations, where they manifest theological conservatism and opposition to the "new morality" combined with their characteristic evangelical emphasis. As might be expected, given their re-emphasis of the significance of Pentecost and of the direct power of the Holy Spirit, the pentecostal and charismatic groups are

10 For an example of parish social action in the Anglican Church — a traditionally conservative denomination — see Norman Ellis, *My parish is revolting*, Don Mills, Paper-jacks, 1974, 158 pp.

11 Arnold Edinborough, "Introduction," In: Philip LeBlanc and Arnold Edinborough, eds., *One church, two nations?* Toronto, Longmans, 1958, p. xx.

12 Philip LeBlanc, "Preface," *Ibid.*, p. ix.

extremely active in the missionary field. They also reinforce non-institutionalized ecumenism, by their tendency to form non-denominational charismatic communities which meet for fellowship in the Spirit through prayer and praise. This anti-secularist trend is also clearly manifested outside the Christian tradition in the recent popularity of Oriental religions, Satanist groups, witchcraft and the occult in general, and mind science movements of all sorts.¹³

The current organization of religious archives along denominational and private lines, carefully segregated from government and other secular records, seems poorly prepared to reflect the religious developments of secularism, pentecostalism, non-denominationalism and inter-denominationalism. It is difficult, for example, to see how today's religious archives will preserve a record of the existence of esoteric, often ephemeral, religious groups with no ecclesiastical structure of denominational affiliation or to decide which denominational archives could claim the right to preserve the records of inter-denominational bodies. A large area, and certainly a growing one, of religious experience in Canada may be lost to posterity because the present state of religious archives is unsuited to the preservation of such new types of records. This does not mean that denominational religious archives are out-dated, for clearly the existing denominations (with the possible exception of the Anglican and United Churches and the Disciples of Christ whose union is under consideration) will continue to exist for many years to come. Their records at least will be safely preserved by the existing archival institutions.

On the one hand, the intensified social concern of religious bodies makes them of ever-increasing importance to social development. Thus, they are important to public archives which, by their acquisitions, must reflect that development. On the other hand, a somewhat parallel increase in interest by the historians in the social significance of religion and religious bodies makes the acquisition of religious records by public archives ever more pressing.

Developments in Canadian Religious Historiography

In 1954 H.H. Walsh lamented the fact that "the last forty years have been rather barren of research in the field of Canadian church history."¹⁴ In

13 On the pentecostal or charismatic movement see *The Charismatic movement: a testimony and a guide*, Cincinnati, Forward Movement Publications, n.d. I am indebted to Patricia Birkett of the Public Archives of Canada for most of the ideas that have gone into this section.

14 H.H. Walsh, "Research in Canadian church history," *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 35, no. 3 (September 1954), pp. 208-216. Scientific research in religious history in

Quebec, where study of the Church's historical role had been much more frequent than in English Canada, Jean-Charles Falardeau admitted, nevertheless, that the literature was unsatisfactory because it was largely unscientific.¹⁵ Thomas Millman partially blamed the poor state of religious archives for the lack of development in religious history,¹⁶ while L.G. Thomas pointed an accusing finger at English Canadian historians. He felt their indifference to religious history stemmed from two causes: the first was the use made of religious records in the past by religious historians for the writing of "narrow ecclesiastical history" in which little attempt was made to place the Church in its social context; the second was the English Canadian historians' acceptance of the nineteenth century European attitude that clerical activity ought to be rigorously confined to a strictly circumscribed religious field.¹⁷ In short they underestimated — as many historians still do today — the social role of the Churches, and hence the importance of religious archives.

Contrary to this limited conception, from the earliest colonial beginnings until the twentieth century the Church might fairly be regarded as the primary social institution in Canada generally, while in the case of Quebec its traditional primacy may be seen as persisting even well into the twentieth century. It baptized the new-born and made them socially acceptable; it educated the young, married them and underpinned the family structure of society; it provided a meeting-ground and social pivot for all ages and classes; it ministered to them when they were sick and buried them when they died. Its missionaries established relations with the Indians and Eskimos, even in the remotest parts of the country. Few institutions have touched such a broad spectrum of the Canadian population throughout its history, and few institutions have had such prolonged direct contact with the common man, that most recent subject of historical scrutiny. Through its social influence the Church was often also a political force. For French Canada Falardeau stated flatly: "Il y a indissolubilité historique de la culture canadienne-française et de la religion catholique."¹⁸

The Church not only influenced but also observed society. Its observations are especially valuable because of the significant difference

Canada is so recent that few useful historiographical studies of it exist. I am, therefore, obliged to elaborate on this aspect more than I would otherwise have done.

- 15 Jean-Charles Falardeau, "Les Recherches religieuses au Canada français," In: F. Dumont and Yves Martin, eds., *Situation de la recherche au Canada français*, Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 1962, p. 209. For a more recent survey see Nive Voisine, "La Production des vingt dernières années en histoire de l'Eglise du Québec," *Recherches Sociographiques*, Vol. 15, no. 1 (janvier-avril 1974), pp. 97-112.
- 16 Thomas R. Millman, "The Study of Canadian church history," p. 34.
- 17 Lewis G. Thomas, "Churches and church records in the history of the Canadian West," *Bulletin*, No. 13 (1960), pp. 22-27.
- 18 Jean-Charles Falardeau, "Les Recherches religieuses au Canada français," p. 219.

between its perspective and those of the government, the businessman, the farmer or any other institution or class.

The Churches' actions and observations have not disappeared without a trace. They have left their mark on society and their records in archives. In his impressive pioneer study of Canadian archival institutions John Archer affirmed that:

Church records in Canada, in one form or another, and in one church or another, are as continuous and as comprehensive, though not as voluminous, as the records of government. In Quebec, Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Ontario, the records of the Roman Catholic Church reveal more of the life of the people than do the formal government records. The records of the Presbyterian Church are a prime source of information on missionary work in the Canadian North West prior to 1905. The records of the Lutheran Churches and the Churches of the Eastern Orthodox faith are an essential source for any study of immigrant groups, in Western Canada in particular.¹⁹

The neglect of religious history and archives is now coming to an end. Thomas' prophecy that a re-examination of church activities would be a necessary part of the re-writing of Canadian history is now being fulfilled.²⁰ John Webster Grant remarked on the growth of interest in the 1950's and 1960's but more particularly as the Canadian centennial approached.²¹ On the Catholic side Michael Sheehan noted an increase between 1953 and 1963 in the number of trained historians giving papers at the meetings of the Canadian Catholic Church Historical Association/Société canadienne d'histoire de l'Eglise catholique.²² In Quebec the 1960's witnessed the growth in influence of the "Ecole des Annales" and "l'histoire globale" which sought an integrated historical analysis of all aspects of social life, including the religious. By the end of the 1960's and early 1970's the *Register of Post-Graduate Dissertations in Progress in History and Related Subjects* indicated that religious history was one of the fastest growing fields of historical research in Canada. Since 1970 the number of theses started on subjects in this area has increased 44% while the over-all increase in theses is only 27%.²³ Moreover, this increase does not take into consideration those

19 John Archer, "A Study of archival institutions in Canada," Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Queen's University, 1969, pp. 501-502; For Québec see François Beaudin, "Importance des archives religieuses pour l'histoire profane," *Rapport du colloque sur les archives religieuses*, Ottawa, Conférence religieuse canadienne, 1972, pp. 29-31; For the West see L.G. Thomas, "Churches and church records in the history of the Canadian West," pp. 18-27.

20 L.G. Thomas, "Churches and church records," p. 27.

21 John Webster Grant, "1967 and all that," *Bulletin*, No. 15 (1962), pp. 1-2.

22 Michael Sheehan, "Considerations on the end of the Canadian Catholic Historical Association," *Canadian Catholic Historical Association Report*, 1963, p. 27.

23 Calculations based on theses reported in Nos. 4-8 of the *Register*. See also a statistical study of the *Register* In: James Hanrahan, "Archives religieuses et histoire du Canada," *Rapport du colloque sur les archives religieuses*, Ottawa, Conférence religieuse canadienne, 1972, pp. 19-28.

theses on social questions, such as nineteenth century education which, while not themselves strictly religious topics, must yet rely heavily on religious archives. This trend has been associated with an expansion in related academic institutions. Three research centres in religious history — the Research Centre in Religious History of Canada (St. Paul University, Ottawa); Le Centre de recherche en histoire religieuse populaire (Université de Montréal); and Le Laboratoire d'histoire religieuse du Québec (Université Laval) — have been founded in the last few years. Victoria College, University of Toronto, in collaboration with the United Church Archives, has, since about 1950, constituted another centre in all but name. With theses on the increase and the recent foundation of so many research centres, the future growth in religious history seems not only assured but likely to be unprecedented.

While interest in religious history has grown in Canada in the last decade there has, over a longer period of time, been a significant change in form. Church historians in Canada have insisted on a distinction between "church" and "religious" history. If nothing else it helps to distinguish that part of religious history in general which is growing from that part which is in difficulty and thus to correct the impression that religious history is outdated. H.H. Walsh described two assumptions characteristic of the church historian. The first

is the conception of the Church as a people related to God through the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. As a member of the redeemed community, the church historian is called upon to record what God has wrought through the witness of the church . . .

The second assumption of the church historian is that church history is universal in its outlook. In short, "only he who is excited by his participation in the church is able to understand church history," and the role of the Canadian church historian is to "make relevant to his readers the part that the Canadian church has contributed to the redemption history of Jesus Christ." In this way he contributes to a universal history of the Church.²⁴

"Church history", much like the Churches themselves, has often been charged with irrelevance in this secular age. It has, again much like the Churches, tried to accommodate itself to modern trends of secularization, ecumenism, and so forth. John Moir noted that in previous generations church history was largely the preserve of seminarians whose emphasis was on institutional history or religious history," Moir wrote in 1970, "and all such appurtenances as archival programmes, research funds and publications, rank low in the priorities of church expenditure." He felt as well that recruits were not sufficiently numerous or qualified and that secular

²⁴ H.H. Walsh, "The Challenge of Canadian church history to its historians," *Canadian Journal of Theology*, Vol. 5, no. 3 (July 1959), pp. 162-169.

historians interested in church history lacked the necessary theological background, while the clergy lacked historical training. He concluded with an urgent warning: "If church history is to survive in Canada, and if it is to survive as something more than an aberrant scion of sociology and anthropology, it must assume a new militancy and acquire vocal acolytes."²⁵

While church history is anaemic,²⁶ religious history is very healthy. In conformity with religious practice and theology Canadian religious history in both French and English Canada has been marked by secularization, ecumenization and socialization. Through secularization religious history was brought down to earth; through ecumenization it was brought to study relations among denominations; through socialization it was brought to study relations between Church and Society.

Secularization in Canadian religious history parallels secularization as a religious phenomenon. "Providential history" has now virtually disappeared. Providence as a tool of historical analysis has given way to the view of the Church as a human institution, run by men holding certain religious convictions, affected by the society in which it exists and attempting to influence and act on that society. The view of the Providential direction of historical evolution (and of the Church as a divine institution) is now considered a matter for theological or philosophical investigation. Whether under the influence of the pentecostal or charismatic movement, with its emphasis on the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit in the daily lives of people, providential history will make a reappearance remains to be seen. In fact the pentecostal movement has, as yet, had no discernible influence on the academic community.

25 J.S. Moir, "Church history: has it a future in Canada?" *Canadian Journal of Theology*, Vol. 16, no. 1-2 (January-April 1970), pp. 1-2.

26 Two publications, Frank H. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, 1786-1920: the history of a separate people*, Toronto, Macmillan, 1974, and John S. Moir, *Enduring witness: a history of the Presbyterian Church in Canada*, Toronto, Presbyterian Publications, 1974, would apparently indicate a renewal in "church" and denominational history. Appearances, however, can be deceiving. Perhaps the best indicators of new historiographical trends are the theses in progress. Books published by established historians are quite often in the conclusions of years of meticulous research and historical reflections on a subject rather than the preliminary exploration of a future historiographical trend. While one will readily admit that both Epp and Moir fill vital gaps in our picture of Canadian religious development, nonetheless, judging from the titles of theses in progress, and from articles resulting from theses, the future still appears to be away from, rather than back towards, church history.

One must also take care not to confuse "denominational" with "church" history. The former may in fact be written as "religious" history as well as "church" history — that is, it may analyse the history of a denomination primarily in its social role. "Church" history, it will be recalled, is "Godward" looking and theologically guided, while "religious" history is earthbound, studying its subject in the light of social theory.

In 1955 Thomas Millman called for Canadian church history to be written in the ecumenical spirit of the time.²⁷ The works of H.H. Walsh, John Moir and John Webster Grant, which constitute a significant proportion of English Canadian church history, are written in an ecumenical vein.²⁸

The socialization of religious history is the result of a number of factors. Historians close to or within the Churches have been affected by the Churches' new style of social conscience. Canadian Roman Catholic historiography, for example, reflects the attitudes of Vatican II which urged greater participation in the political, economic and social life of the community. The result is that social and political action became essential and no longer peripheral subjects for the Church's own history. Socialization, however, is mainly a result of the realization that church and nation are inseparable, "that history is all of a piece."²⁹ Consequently, numerous economic, social and political historians, sociologists, demographers, and geographers as well as lay and clerical religious and church historians now study the various social aspects of church activities in both French and English Canada. In 1954 Walsh noted the appearance of sociological studies of religious movements and sectarian development,³⁰ and five years later Lorne Pierce remarked that "So-called secular historians have recently discovered that Church archives are a proper source of fundamental research materials."³¹ The social roles of the Churches,³² their relations with the Indians,³³ their importance in intellectual history,³⁴ their

27 Thomas R. Millman, "The Study of Canadian church history," pp. 32-33.

28 For example see John Webster Grant, ed., *The Churches and the Canadian experience: a Faith and Order study of the Christian tradition*, Toronto, Ryerson, 1963, 161 pp.; H.H. Walsh, *The Christian church in Canada*, Toronto, Ryerson, 1956, 355 pp.; John Moir, *The Cross in Canada*, Toronto, Ryerson, 1966, 247 pp.; H.H. Walsh, *The Church in the French era; from colonization to the British conquest*, Vol. 1 of *A History of the Christian Church in Canada*, ed. by John Webster Grant, 3 Vols., Toronto Ryerson Press, 1966, p. 221 pp.; J.S. Moir, *The Church in the British era; from the British conquest to Confederation*, Vol. 2 of *A History of the Christian Church in Canada*, ed. by John Webster Grant, 3 Vols., Toronto, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972, 230 pp.; and John Webster Grant, *The Church in the Canadian era; the first century of Confederation*, Vol. 3 of *A History of the Christian church in Canada*, ed. by John Webster Grant, 3 Vols., Toronto, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972, 241 pp.

29 Lorne Pierce, "Forward," *Bulletin*, No. 12 (1959), p. 1.

30 H.H. Walsh, "Research in Canadian church history," pp. 209, 211.

31 Pierce, "Forward," p. 1.

32 For example, see Jean Hulliger, *L'Enseignement social des évêques canadiens de 1891 à 1950*, Montreal, Fides, 1958, 373 pp.; H.H. Elgee, *The Social teachings of the Canadian churches. Protestant: the early period before 1850*, Toronto, Ryerson Press, 1964, 236 pp.; Richard Allen, *The Social passion: religion and social reform in Canada, 1914-1918*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1971, 385 pp.; Gabriel Clément, *Histoire de l'Action catholique au Canada français*, Montreal, Fides, 1972, 331 pp.

33 For example, see Jean Usher, "Apostles and aborigines: the social theory of the Church Missionary Society," *Social History*, No. 7 (April, 1971), pp. 28-52; Fritz Pannekoek,

relations with the laity,³⁵ and any number of other aspects of the Churches' social existence have only begun to be studied in the last ten to fifteen years. An indication that these are the themes of the future is to be found in a perusal of the *Register of Post-Graduate Dissertations* where their prominence is even more marked than in the published literature.

The effect of these trends on religious archives will be considerable. Glenn Lucas, archivist-historian of the United Church Archives, recently wrote that "Most of the research students who work in our Archives are not working on specifically religious subjects, but rather on some aspect of the social history of Canada."³⁶ A rapid increase in religious historical research on the part of religious and secular historians, sociologists, and others, and themes of secularization, ecumenism and socialization: these are the developments Canadian religious archives must face. Despite undisputed improvements in recent years, the existing archives seem unlikely to be able to meet the needs of historians in the future. The historiographical trends outlined above, which require the comparison of the records of all denominations and of religious and secular institutions, seem hardly compatible with the present organization of religious archives in small denominational repositories, isolated from each other and from secular archives.

"Institutionality," (if one may use the expression) while not an accepted principle of archival theory is nonetheless a real phenomenon. Institutions which produce archives often want to manage their own records. Religious bodies are long established and often tenacious practitioners of institutional-ity. Each diocese and often each congregation or parish maintains its own historical records. Walsh wrote in 1954 that the greatest obstacle to writing a history of Canadian Christianity "is the scattered condition of source material and the expense involved in travelling to the various archival centres."³⁷ This situation has not significantly altered in twenty years, except that now considerably more researchers undertake the pilgrimages.

"Protestant Agricultural Zions for the Western Indians," *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society*, Vol. XIV, no. 3 (Sept. 1972), pp. 55-66.

34 Fernand Dumont, "Structure d'une idéologie religieuse," *Recherches Sociographiques*, Vol. 1, no. 2 (avril-juin 1960), pp. 161-187; S.F. Wise, "Sermon literature and Canadian intellectual history," *Bulletin*, No. 18 (1965), pp. 3-18.

35 Conférence catholique canadienne. Commission d'étude sur les laïcs et l'Eglise. *L'Eglise du Québec: un héritage, un projet*, Montreal, Fides, 1972, 119 pp.; Pierre Hurtubise, *Le Laïc dans l'Eglise canadienne-française de 1830 à nos jours*, Montreal, Fides, 1972, 223 pp.; Jean-Pierre Wallot, "Religion and French-Canadian mores in the early nineteenth century," *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 52, no. 1 (March 1971), pp. 51-94. This theme seems to be largely limited to Québec where the question is acute. The clergy-laity dichotomy is not as sharp in most Protestant churches.

36 Glenn Lucas, "The United Church of Canada archives," p. 10.

37 H.H. Walsh, "Research in Canadian church history," p. 213.

It seems fairly clear that, given the present organization of religious archives and their limited and precarious financial resources, they will be unable to preserve religious collections that reflect modern religious trends or adequately to make religious records available to the greatly increasing numbers of researchers desiring to use them in conjunction with civil records. What can be done then to meet these problems?

Future Directions for Religious Archives

In the search for solutions it should be realized that the present system is not without good points and that to destroy and rebuild it root and branch would be not only impractical and unrealistic, but undesirable.

There is no doubt that denominational archives, by and large, do a good job of preserving denominational records, and that in this area one should not meddle with success. Denominational archives at least provide clarity in the conservation of religious records. If a researcher were looking for Roman Catholic papers he would look first in Roman Catholic archives and it would not be necessary for him even to consider the United Church or Anglican archives. This clarity will remain, however, only so long as denominational archives restrict themselves to acquiring the records of their own denomination and do not attempt to collect those of others or of inter-denominational or non-denominational bodies.

Again, the present system of decentralized religious archives seems well prepared for an historiographical trend which has not yet been mentioned. Regional and local history, once of interest only to enthusiastic amateur historians, has now become a respectable area of study for the professional historian.³⁸ In archives regionalism has its counterpart in the principle of territoriality. This principle, wrote Bernard Weilbrenner, "prévoit justement que les archives, reflet et émanation d'un territoire donné, appartiendront de droit à la société qui leur a donné naissance, et seront conservées là où elles ont été créés."³⁹ The characteristic decentralized nature of religious archives is in strict conformity with the principle of territoriality and considerably aids the task of local and regional historians. Any attempt, therefore, to plot a course for the development of religious archives must take into account the real advantages as well as the disadvantages of their present organization.

The scattered nature of religious archives, while an advantage to some is also, as Walsh noted, a distinct disadvantage for many other researchers.

38 For example, J.M.S. Careless, "'Limited identities' in Canada," *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 50, no. 1 (March 1969), pp. 1-10.

39 Bernard Weilbrenner, "Les Archives et le régionalisme," In: Mason Wade, ed., *Regionalism in the Canadian community, 1867-1967*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1969, p. 264.

J.M.S. Careless' argument for regional studies also asserts that regionalism is the essence of Canadianism and that people see Canada through regional glasses. This being the case some regional records are a necessary complement to the records of "national" scope, and a certain centralization of information and documentation is necessary. The large religious denominations of Canada are all national in scope. Taken all together the diocesan, or equivalent, archives constitute their national archives. As Careless noted for the regions of Canada, because of the Churches' internal relationships the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. An example of this in an archival series is the bishop's register of letters found in all Roman Catholic diocesan archives. Gaston Carrière noted of them that they are "un reflet de la vie religieuse et civile du diocèse et souvent même des régions situées hors de la juridiction de l'évêque du lieu."⁴⁰

A certain amount of centralization of information and of the records themselves seems to be necessary. The United, Anglican and Presbyterian Churches have central repositories in Toronto and their proximity to each other facilitates research. At the "Colloque sur l'histoire religieuse," François Beaudin noted, however, that in the years prior to the Canadian centennial the Canadian Catholic Conference suggested a national archival repository but that the bishops felt the project to be too enormous and would not support it.⁴¹ Apart from the United Church, even those denominations which have central archives have not incorporated them into an integrated network with their regional depositories, so that it is impossible from any one location, even the central repository, to inform researchers of what exactly they might find in each regional archives. The ability to do this would involve a great effort in the production of inventories and finding aids, the distribution of which should take place not only within denominations but between them in order to facilitate the ecumenical trend in religious historical writing. More useful even than this exchange of information among archives would be the publication of a guide to all religious records in Canada, in both religious and secular archival institutions.

The exchange of information should be complemented over the long term by an exchange of collections through the medium of microfilm. Within a denomination the microfilming of those series of regional records which transcend regional boundaries, and their deposit in the central and other regional archives concerned, would reduce the disadvantages while retaining the advantages of decentralized holdings.

Finally, the integration of all major religious archives on an informational level would be greatly facilitated by the formation of a

⁴⁰ Gaston Carrière, "Les Archives religieuses," p. 8.

⁴¹ "Table ronde sur les archives religieuses," *Rapport du colloque sur les archives religieuses*, Ottawa, Conférence religieuses canadienne, 1972, p. 65.

national association of religious archives or archivists. This association, quite apart from the advantages it would bring through the exchange of information and ideas and through personal contacts, could, perhaps, direct the development of religious archives in the coming years. In Quebec such an association already exists as part of the Association des archivistes du Québec and no one could deny the advantages that have accrued from it.

While these measures would aid the researchers who must use the records of several denominations, they would do little to serve the needs of historians pursuing the themes of secularization and socialization that increasingly characterize religious practice and studies. A rapprochement between secular and religious records is required. To some extent this can be achieved by extending the above measures to include secular archival institutions so that, for example, they would benefit from and contribute to the diffusion of inventories and finding aids and would participate in the exchange of microfilm and in the association of religious archivists. However, more than this is required.

Federal and provincial archives must become more directly involved in the acquisition and preservation of religious records while still respecting the existence and legitimate claims of denominational archives. The placing of religious collections in public archives would break down the increasingly artificial barrier now separating religious and secular records and would encourage researchers to give more serious consideration to the role of religion and to the importance of religious archives for Canadian history.⁴² This proposal received general approbation at the Colloque sur les archives religieuses where it was concluded that:

. . . Pour que la dimension religieuse figure en bonne place dans l'histoire profane, il est important que la documentation religieuse soit facilement accessible. Les archives civiles (des provinces et du gouvernement fédéral) peuvent plus facilement accueillir les chercheurs et rendent ainsi la consultation facile aux historiens. Il serait tout normal qu'au moins un microfilm soit mis en dépôt, quand il s'agit de documents anciens et importants. Eventuellement des fonds complets d'archives religieuses pourraient être conservés dans les archives publiques, comme cela se fait pour des dossiers de familles d'un intérêt historique certain.⁴³

The kind of religious collections which should primarily be collected by public archives deserves consideration. Public archival institutions seem particularly well-suited to the collection of interdenominational and non-denominational records, because their own non-denominational status obviates a number of the jurisdictional complications which would otherwise arise. Since interdenominational and non-denominational bodies work most easily with social rather than theological problems, their records

42 See Bernard Weilbrenner, "Pour une politique d'ensemble dans l'établissement des archives," *Ibid.*, p. 5-6.

43 "Table ronde sur les archives religieuses," p. 58.

could most usefully be consulted in conjunction with the secular records of all kinds — private as well as government papers — which the federal and provincial archives of Canada all collect. This would meet the demands of the growing number of researchers interested in the social aspect of religion and religious groups and institutions. The collection of these kinds of records is the major contribution which public depositories can make to the renewal of religious archives.

The collection of denominational records should, with the exception of denominations not already having their own archives, continue to be the responsibility of denominational archives. The time has come, and religious archivists have become more aware of this, to end amateurism in the realm of religious archives through the establishment of sufficiently numerous and properly trained personnel and suitable depositories. Where a religious organization, denominational or otherwise, is not capable of doing this it should seriously consider placing its records in a public archives. For denominations to deposit their records, when they cannot maintain them, in the archives of other denominations would only muddy the clear waters of denominational archives. Similarly, the acquisition of denominational archives of the records of non-denominational or inter-denominational groups or institutions would produce the same result. The deposit of religious archives in university repositories or libraries should only occur when they cannot reasonably be put in a public archives. Placing religious archives in universities does little to advance the desired rapprochement of religious records with those of government, business, labour, voluntary institutions, and so forth, which can, and indeed ought, to occur in public archives. Universities holding religious archives often began as, or still are, denominational institutions. Examples are St. Paul University, Ottawa (Roman Catholic); Knox College, Toronto (Presbyterian); Victoria College, Toronto (United); Acadia and McMaster Universities (Baptist). The placing of religious records in such universities results simply in a thinly disguised barrier between religious and secular records, a barrier which it would be advantageous, as has been seen, to break down.

If the collection of denominational records remains, generally speaking, the responsibility of denominational archives, and the acquisition of non-denominational and inter-denominational papers that of public archives, the conservation of the records of “spiritualist”⁴⁴ bodies poses grave problems. Obviously denominational archives should collect the papers of charismatic bodies within their denomination. Theoretically pentecostal churches, which do not have their own archives, as well as ecumenical charismatic groups should place their papers in public archives. However, such groups tend generally to be even more suspicious than the mainline Churches of such a worldly body as a public archives. Satanist and other

44 This term is used, for want of a better one, to refer to those groups, Christian and non-Christian, which emphasize the spiritual, as opposed to the secular, aspect of life.

occult groups, which practice their religions in secrecy, will obviously not donate their records (if they produce any) to either denominational or public archives. Many spiritualist groups are spontaneous and unstructured and, hence, do not produce archival records. It may be that most of the material which archives manage to conserve regarding the spiritualist movement in its many forms will be *about* it rather than *by* it. This is, obviously, not a very satisfactory prospect. Perhaps, however, the recent increased interest in oral archives and history has arrived at precisely the right moment to save it from such treatment. In any case the movement — at least this most recent manifestation of it — is still very young and many speculations about it may prove to be groundless.

The deposit of religious records in public archives generally has been a relatively rare occurrence.⁴⁵ Too often in the past the only records of this sort in which public archives have been interested are parish registers for genealogical purposes. The Churches and other religious organizations have generally displayed considerable suspicion of government intentions and are still extremely hesitant. It has been argued by some religious archivists that religious records are of a very special nature, produced “by persons of a special class, in the course of a special kind of administration, for special purposes, and in a special manner and form.” John Purvis felt that

The interpretation and exploitation of them are dependent perhaps in a greater degree than those of any other class on an understanding of the purposes which called the documents into existence and the administrative machinery by which their form was determined. They need, therefore, a special experience and knowledge and a special technique, both in administration and exploitation, and it is here that we encounter the chief difficulties in associating them with non-ecclesiastical records.⁴⁶

The question of placing religious records in public archives has been a delicate one all over the Western world, and yet it has been done to varying degrees and in different manners in numerous countries.⁴⁷ While Purvis in

45 The *Archives nationales du Québec* house the records of the Anglican Diocese of Québec; the Provincial Archives of Alberta have those of the Anglican diocese of Athabaska and of Mackenzie River. In Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Québec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia the provincial archives have offered depository privileges to all churches (John H. Archer, “A Study of archival institutions in Canada”).

46 John S. Purvis, “Ecclesiastical records,” *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, Vol. 1, no. 1 (April 1955), pp. 2-6; August Suelflow, “Maximum and minimum standards for religious archives,” *American Archivist*, Vol. 32, no. 3 (July 1969), pp. 225-227.

47 For example, see Harald Jorgensen, “Danish ecclesiastical archives,” *Archivum*, Vol. 4 (1954), pp. 67-70; Arnold Sandberg, “The Archives of the church and the religious movements in Sweden,” *Ibid.*, pp. 123-134; Markku Jarvinsen, “Finlande (La Législation archivistique),” *Archivum*, Vol. 17 (1967), p. 121; Thorsten Eken, “Norvège (La Législation archivistique),” *Archivum*, Vol. 19 (1969), pp. 39-48; A.J. Van de Ven, “Les Archives religieuses aux Pays-Bas,” *Archivum*, Vol. 4 (1964), pp. 115-122; “Procès-verbal de la séance de la section des archives religieuses,”

Britain, August Suelflow in the United States and kindred spirits elsewhere argue that religious archives are "special", business or union archivists could also point out differences between their types of records and those of other organizations. Religious records in fact are very largely composed of the same type of documents as are other archives: correspondence, acts, by-laws, personnel files, reports, minutes, accounting, statistical, property and legal records, memoranda, photographs, subject files, and so on. Perhaps the most distinctive religious records, parish registers, have long been the subject of acquisition by public archives. It is quite possible as well for public repositories to engage highly competent religious archivists. Religious archives themselves now hire archivists whose archival training has not been religious but in some other kind of repository. In any case, even Suelflow admits that where a religious institution cannot maintain its own suitable repository it is preferable to place its documents in a public archives than in a manse basement or chancery attic.

The public archives which receives original religious records must, for its part, recognize the distinctive character of these papers. It will receive completely unique series which must be kept because they distinguish the institution of the Church from all the secular institutions, even though the records may appear to be of little historical significance to the public repository. At least some researchers interested in the records, notably "church historians" and historically-minded theologians, will search them for material not only of historical but also of theological and spiritual interest.

In summary, it has been indicated that recent developments, particularly during the last ten to fifteen years, in religious practices and thought and in religious and secular historiography (i.e., in the production and exploitation of religious archives) threaten to render the present organization of religious repositories incapable of properly preserving or making available to researchers a growing body of religious records. While denominational

Archivum, Vol. 14 (1964), pp. 105-112; Bernard Mahieu, "Les Archives de l'Eglise catholique en France," *Archivum*, Vol. 4 (1954), pp. 89-103; Guy Duboscq, "Les Archives de l'Eglise catholique en France depuis la Révolution française. I: Archives diocésaines et paroissiales," *Gazette des Archives*, n.s. No. 39 (1962), pp. 141-150; Bernard Mahieu, "Les Archives de l'Eglise catholique en France depuis la Révolution française. II: Archives des communautés," *Ibid.*, pp. 151-162; C.E. Welch, "The Preservation of ecclesiastical record offices," *Archives*, Vol. 4, no. 22 (1959), pp. 75-80; William Warren Sweet, "Church archives in the United States," *American Archivist*, Vol. 14, no. 4 (October 1951), pp. 323-331; August R. Suelflow, "The Struggle of church archives for respectability," *American Archivist*, Vol. 24, no. 4 (October 1961), pp. 403-408; August R. Suelflow, "Preserving church historical resources," *American Archivist*, Vol. 28, no. 2 (April 1965), pp. 239-245; August R. Suelflow, "Maximum and minimum standards for religious archives," *American Archivist*, Vol. 32, no. 3 (July 1969), pp. 225-229; Mabel E. Deutrich, "American church archives — an overview," *American Archivist*, Vol. 24, no. 4 (October 1961), pp. 387-402.

repositories should continue to preserve the records of their own denominations, public archives should become far more active in the acquisition of inter-denominational and non-denominational collections as well as of the papers of denominations unable or unwilling to maintain their own archives. This will bring about a rapprochement of secular and religious records at once characteristic of social reality and useful to the researchers. At the same time, in order to promote better communications among religious archives and between religious and public archives, much more effort must be put into the production and diffusion of inventories and finding aids, but more especially into the publication of a guide to all Canadian religious records. To direct this "revival" would be the task of an association of Canadian religious archives and archivists which would include public repositories interested in the field of religious archives.

If it were ever easy to divide up and render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things which are God's, the sun has forever set on that day. Only by a concerted effort on the part of public and religious archives will it be possible to do justice to the role of religion in the development of Canadian society.

Résumé

Cet article traite des moyens de rationaliser la situation des archives religieuses au Canada. Après avoir brossé un tableau des plus récents développements dans le domaine religieux, il conclut à l'incapacité des institutions d'archives religieuses telles qu'organisées présentement sur une base confessionnelle, de servir ces nouvelles tendances sous-tendues par des cadres interconfessionnels. Après un bref aperçu sur un regain d'intérêt contemporain pour l'étude de l'histoire religieuse au Canada, il insiste surtout sur certaines caractéristiques de cette nouvelle génération d'études, différentes de l'ancienne par la formation en sciences sociales de leurs auteurs, leur intérêt pour l'histoire religieuse globale par opposition à une histoire individuelle des diverses Eglises et leur souci d'intégrer leurs travaux à l'histoire sociale en général. L'auteur exprime la crainte que, à cause de la pauvreté des ressources financières, de l'éparpillement de la documentation et de la fragmentation de l'organisation des archives confessionnelles, trop peu de documents d'archives religieuses seront préservés et mis à la disposition des chercheurs. Il propose que les archives publiques, fédérale et provinciales, jouent un plus grand rôle dans ce domaine en rapprochant archives religieuses et archives profanes pour surtout obvier au problème de la conservation des archives d'organismes interconfessionnels. Il s'inscrit en faux contre la tradition de confier ce rôle à des universités même si l'histoire de quelques-unes d'entre elles a été intimement liée à l'évolution de certaines Eglises.