

*But What is Caesar's
and What is God's?*

Toward a Religious Archives Programme for the Public Archives of Canada

by JAMES LAMBERT¹

The story is well known of the Pharisees who, wishing to trap Jesus, demanded of him whether Jewish law permitted payment of taxes to the Roman Emperor. Asked whose head appeared on the coins with which the taxes were paid, they answered, "Caesar's." "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's," Jesus replied to their original question, "and unto God the things which are God's."² Since then Popes and Emperors have been vigorously stamping their effigies on whatever their power would permit and demanding their due be rendered unto them. Ever since then, too, politicians, philosophers and theologians have scratched their white or balding heads and argued interminably over what in fact belonged to Caesar and what to God. The liberal movement for the separation of Church and State, largely a nineteenth-century phenomenon, seemed to have the answer to the problem in consigning to Caesar the control of temporal matters and to God the spiritual world. If only the separation of Church and State had occurred before the Europeans bumped into America on their way to the Orient, and if only human existence could be so neatly divided between the temporal and the spiritual, the Public Archives of Canada (PAC) might not today be forced to re-examine its role in the realm of religious archives.

1 This article is, in a sense, a corollary to the author's former thesis "Public Archives and Religious Records: Marriage Proposals," published in volume 1, number 1 (Winter 1975/6) of *Archivaria* in which it was argued that the present organization of religious archives in denominational repositories no longer faithfully reflected religious practice, theological tendencies or religious historiographical trends. It was also suggested that there would have to be a *rapprochement* of secular and religious records and that this could best be achieved through a more active involvement of public archives in the acquisition of religious records. From the theoretical perspective given in that piece, this second article considers the concrete example of the Public Archives of Canada. The article represents the personal view of the author, not necessarily that of the Public Archives of Canada.

2 Matt.22:15-22.

The Public Archives, believing that the Church's archives ought to be rendered to the Church and not to the State, has rarely displayed a missionary zeal for the conservation and diffusion of religious records. Yet, noting the lack of interest in Canadian religious history shown formerly by historians, one of the Church's own archivists places part of the blame for this squarely on the shoulders of the PAC:

Un reflet de cette négligence et, dans une mesure considérable, une cause de cet état de choses sont très visibles dans la rareté relative des archives religieuses aux Archives publiques du Canada, l'habitat normal de l'ancienne et de la nouvelle documentation politique où les historiens ont puisé. L'inventaire provisoire, Fonds des manuscrits no 17 . . . présente une modeste collection plutôt amassée au petit bonheur. Par exemple, les documents sur l'Eglise catholique sont pratiquement nuls (en langue anglaise). Je ne signale pas ce détail dans le but de critiquer les Archives. Evidemment, elles répondent aux demandes des historiens et peu nombreux sont ceux qui s'intéressent à ce genre de documents. Si blame il y a, je crois que c'est à nous de nous interroger d'abord. Mais le fait est que, dans notre principale collection nationale de documents historiques, ceux qui ont rapport à l'histoire religieuse sont la minorité. Ces documents sont trop peu nombreux pour piquer la curiosité d'un historien.³

Rarely indeed in the annals of history has the Church chided the State for minding its own business, but Father James Hanrahan is correct. Ironically, in an age of intense secularism, the Public Archives of Canada must take a hard look at the poverty of its religious archives. The long and perhaps endless struggle between Church and State over what is respectively theirs is a most eloquent testimony to man's inability to distinguish satisfactorily his spiritual from his secular life. Whether or not he should try so to distinguish his records is therefore debatable.

To the accusation that the Public Archives of Canada has neglected a vital aspect of Canadian society—the religious side—it can only plead *mea culpa*. However, to be fair, religious institutions and archives must bear at least an equal burden of guilt. In 1872, the very year he assumed the new position of Dominion Archivist, Douglas Brymner, no doubt enthusiastic and acquisitive, visited one of the treasure houses of the new country's history, the Seminary of Quebec. Encouragement was signally lacking. As he reported,

There was a very large number of most interesting documents, only a very partial catalogue of which was made. Although I had access to the vaults, permission to visit these being very seldom granted, the Rev. H. Minguy, who is in charge of the records, informed me that the authorities regard the documents there as private property, the greater part of which could not be made public.⁴

3 James Hanrahan, "Archives religieuses et histoire du Canada," in *Rapport du colloque sur les archives religieuses* (Ottawa: Conférence religieuse canadienne, 1972), pp. 22-23.

4 Public Archives of Canada, *Report, 1872*. Sessional Papers, 1873, No. 26, p. 174.

No doubt Brymner was interested primarily in the Seminary's secular archival holdings, but it is evident that religious archives and institutions in general lost an excellent opportunity to impress upon the receptive new Dominion Archivist the importance of religious archives and history.

The history of the Public Archives' efforts to improve its religious archival holdings is probably littered with files on similar unsuccessful efforts to persuade religious institutions to lower the fences around their archives. The degree of seriousness and persistence in the Public Archives' earlier efforts to acquire religious records is not ascertainable at present⁵ but, faced with the responsibility for acquisitions in every conceivable area of human endeavour in Canada, it may be assumed that Brymner and his colleagues wasted little time wooing reluctant religious institutions, especially when pressures for acquisitions in other areas were strong. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries professional historical interests in Canada were political, constitutional and, a little later, economic. Men such as Lawrence J. Burpee, George M. Wrong and Adam Shortt were able to engage the attention of the early archivists and influence acquisitions programmes very significantly. Early religious history was produced in Quebec, and from the pens of priests and amateur historians. The priests felt little need of the Public Archives' records and the amateurs had little interest in truly documentary history. Conversely, the Public Archives, very much concerned with and affected by the renewal and professionalization of history in English Canada, had little interest in the priests and the amateurs.⁶

These speculative generalizations notwithstanding, the Public Archives did manifest an early interest in religious archives, as Brymner's visit to Quebec indicates, and, to be fair, he did not return empty-handed for he acquired a collection of *L'Abeille* in which a number of documents of early Canadian history had been published.⁷ In 1884, arrangements were made with Mgr Taschereau, Archbishop of Quebec, through the Abbé Casgrain, for the transcription in Rome of documents from the archives of the Gésu and the Congregation of the Propaganda.⁸ Brymner reported in 1887 that with the assistance of Abbé Rhéaume of the Petit Séminaire de Québec, "valuable additions have been made to the documents relating to the early ecclesiastical history of Quebec."⁹ However, the poverty of the PAC in

5 The Public Archives' own records (RG 37) are reputed to be among the most difficult to use.

6 See Ian E. Wilson, "Shortt and Doughty: The Cultural Role of the Public Archives of Canada, 1904-1935" (Master's thesis, Queen's University), 1973, p. 228.

7 Public Archives of Canada, *Report, 1872*, p. 174.

8 *Report on Canadian Archives, 1884*, p. v.

9 *Report on Canadian Archives, 1887*, p. vi.

religious archives was still evident in its 1904 catalogue of manuscripts.¹⁰ The following year, within the framework of “an investigation or critical examination of the archives of the Dominion,” the archives of Quebec were examined by the Reverend P.M. O’Leary with the collaboration of the Archbishop.¹¹ In 1906 a large number of transcripts were received from the Hôtel-Dieu, Quebec, and in 1907 from the Hôpital-Général of Quebec.¹²

Carl Russel Fish’s *Guide to Materials for American History in Roman and Other Italian Archives* (1911) did not escape the vigilance of Arthur Doughty who made a list of documents concerning Canada, of which he intended to obtain copies.¹³ This intention was never realized, but transcripts of material were received from the Séminaire du St-Esprit, Paris.¹⁴ Meanwhile, thanks to the courtesy of the Gentlemen of St-Sulpice, the PAC acquired copies of documents in the Montreal Sulpician archives that same year (1911).¹⁵ This transcribing continued sporadically until 1933. To these Montreal records were added copies of documents from the Hôpital-Général de Montréal (1913) and the Collège Saint-Laurent (1916).¹⁶

During the 1920s the Archives began systematic copying in England. In 1920 or 1921 it obtained transcripts of Moravian mission journals,¹⁷ and in 1924 received the first of what was to become an immense collection of copies, in transcript and microfilm, of the records of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (S.P.G.).¹⁸ In the same year, however, Doughty’s book, *The Canadian Archives and its Activities*, indicated that the PAC was overwhelmingly pre-occupied with political archives.¹⁹

While the copying of documents continued in Quebec, notably at the Collège Ste-Marie and the Archevêché de Montréal, the PAC extended its transcription programme in the 1920s to France. Before the end of the

10 *Report Concerning Canadian Archives for the Year 1904*, pp. 3-63.

11 *Report Concerning Canadian Archives for the Year 1905*, p. vii.

12 Public Archives of Canada, Manuscript Division, *General Inventory Manuscripts. Vol. 3, MG 17-MG 21* (Ottawa, 1974), pp. 12 and 13.

13 *Report of the Work of the Archives Branch, 1910*, pp. 107-116.

14 PAC, *General Inventory*, vol. 3, p. 12.

15 *Report of the Work of the Archives Branch for the Year 1912*, p. 3.

16 PAC, *General Inventory*, vol. 3, p. 18.

17 *Report of the Public Archives for 1921*, p. 7.

18 PAC, *General Inventory*, vol. 3, p. 18.

19 Arthur G. Doughty, *The Canadian Archives and Its Activities* (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1924), pp. 83-88.

decade, transcripts were received from St-Sulpice and from the Séminaire des Missions étrangères.²⁰ Copying was even resumed at the Vatican in the Secret Archives and the Archives of the Propaganda.²¹ By 1933, Doughty could write that the sources for the history of the Roman Catholic Church in the Public Archives were “so voluminous that no complete survey has been attempted.”²² It would not, however, have taken long to enumerate the sources concerning the English Catholics or Protestants.

In 1949 the Public Archives entered the microfilm era. Although it was still using transcription for the S.P.G. copying programme which had begun a quarter of a century before,²³ cameras were installed in both London and Paris. So far as religious archives were concerned, however, they clicked almost exclusively in London. It was undoubtedly felt that the great copying programme of the 1920s and 1930s in France had taken care of everything of interest there. With certain important exceptions the 1950s and 1960s were devoted to the filming of the archives of British missionary societies such as the S.P.G., the Colonial and Continental Church Society, the Church Missionary Society, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (from Victoria College, Toronto), the New England Company, the Church of Scotland Colonial Committee, and the Moravian Brethren (London and Pennsylvania). The exceptions were the Jesuit archives in Rome and Paris, those of the Oblates, again largely of a missionary nature, and a large part of those belonging to the Seminary of St-Sulpice, Montreal.

As impressive and as extensive as this collection of copies may appear to be, the fact remains that the Public Archives’ religious collection is extremely unbalanced, being composed largely of missionary records. These collections remain greatly under-exploited because they cannot be used readily in conjunction with records in Canadian religious archival depositories. While of tremendous potential value, the PAC’s missionary records are archival *erratics*²⁴ which find themselves, as if by accident, completely isolated from the mass of Canadian religious records of which

20 See the annual reports of the Public Archives of Canada for the years mentioned and the *General Inventory*, vol. 3, p. 4.

21 PAC, *General Inventory*, vol. 3, p. 3, and *Report of the Public Archives for the Year 1929*, p. 13, and *1930*, p. x.

22 Arthur G. Doughty, “Sources for the History of the Catholic Church in the Public Archives of Canada,” *Catholic Historical Review*, XIX, 2 (July, 1933), pp. 148-166.

23 *Report of the Public Archives for 1950*, pp. 14-15.

24 In geology an *erratic* is a boulder, usually of considerable size, picked up by a glacier in one part of the country in the dim past, and dropped, unceremoniously, because of its size, in another part of the country to which its origin is completely alien. Thus one finds flat, green, fertile fields almost completely without stones with the exception of one huge, lonely-looking boulder.

they are really an integral part. Furthermore, while there is every reason to believe that much remains to be done in the filming of Canadian religious records in Europe, the Public Archives' activities in the realm of religious archives have, apart from the Rome microfilm project, been at a standstill for half a decade. According to the Public Archives' brief to the Symons Commission on Canadian Studies, the goal is still to assemble and place at the disposal of the public "as complete a collection as possible of original documents, or copies of such original documents, of every kind and description, which will be useful sources for research into the development of the country." Its enumeration of the types of documents in which it is interested, however, suggests that the Public Archives places little emphasis on the documenting of Canadian religious activity. Private collections, the brief continues, "may be of interest in several fields of activity: finance, business, education, literature or the arts. Their records are the fabric of the cultural heritage of Canada, not of a region or a province."²⁵ Religious activity does not, apparently, rate separate mention as a significant strand in the web of the fabric.

The Public Archives of Canada has generally limited its acquisitions, especially since the appearance of provincial archives, to collections it considers to be of "national interest." In light of the recent historiographical tendency to consider regionalism, pluralism and multiethnicism as the principal bases of Canadianism, the Public Archives will have to re-evaluate its "national" criterion. This historiographical trend is best summarized in J.M.S. Careless's seminal article, "'Limited Identities' in Canada."

According to Careless, Canadian historians have dealt too wishfully with nationalism and unification, and inadequately with regionalism. In reality the Canadian experience has not focused on Ottawa, federal politicians or symbols of an all-Canadian way of life. On the contrary, it must rather be defined in terms of "limited identities" of region, culture and class. The Canadian federation resulted from a fusion of regions, held together by a central regime, but not necessarily united thereby. The whole, however, through its internal relationships is greater than the sum of its parts.

What has been sought, and to some degree achieved, is not really unification or consolidation, but the articulation of regional patterns in one transcontinental state. In this process it may be said, the implicit aim of every regional community

25 Wilfred I. Smith and Bernard Weilbrenner, "Brief to the Commission on Canadian Studies," (Ottawa, 1972) pp. 2-3. The report of the Commission was published in 1975: T. H. B. Symons, *To Know Ourselves*. The Report of the Commission on Canadian Studies. Two volumes (Ottawa: The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 1975).

has been maximum autonomy for itself consonant with the maximum advantage to be gained from an overriding central régime.²⁶

On the Canadian archival scene, regionalism has its counterpart in the principle of territoriality. "Le principe de la territorialité des archives qui est généralement reconnu," wrote Bernard Weilbrenner, "previent 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 créées."²⁷ The principle has given rise to a certain decentralization assisted by microfilming, with the regions each collecting copies of documents of interest to them, though outside their respective geographical limits. Numerous researchers feel that the necessity of hopping from region to region adds interest to the search. They also argue that since history is as much an art as a science, it is absolutely necessary for the researcher to go to the region where the documents were produced in order to get a "feel" for it.

If, as Careless suggests, regionalism is the essence of Canadianism and people see Canada through regional glasses, then some regional records are a necessary complement to the PAC's records of "national" interest, and a certain centralization, again through the medium of microfilm copies, is necessary to provide a composite picture. Whereas in some cases it may be necessary for the historian to get a feel for a certain region by visiting it, in most cases this is not so, and his trip is merely a necessary evil. While forced research travels may add variety, they also, in a country the size of Canada, add substantially to the cost in money, time and research opportunity. Travel grants are not available to everyone, nor would they be an efficient means of subsidizing research if they were. In the case of religious archives, the suitcase researcher's lot is even more unenviable and frustrating than the secular historian's because of the great number of depositories. In 1954, H.H. Walsh wrote that the greatest obstacle to writing a history of Canadian Christianity was "the scattered condition of source material and the expense involved in travelling to the various archival centres."²⁸ Twenty years later, with the notable exceptions of the United Church Archives and some depositories in Quebec, the situation is little improved and the unknown graduate student has even more difficulty than an established historian such as Walsh.

26 J. M. S. Careless, " 'Limited Identities' in Canada," *Canadian Historical Review*, L, 1 (March, 1969), p. 9.

27 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.

28 H. H. Walsh, "Research in Canadian Church History," *Canadian Historical Review*, XXXV, 3 (September, 1954), pp. 208-216.

While the Public Archives of Canada limits its acquisitions, in theory, to material of national significance, there are three acknowledged exceptions to the rule: one, it acts as the local depository for the Ottawa region; two, it acquires documents (perhaps of a local nature) which, in the absence of suitable depositories, might otherwise be destroyed; and, three, it has an interest in material illustrative of the early development of the country even though it may be limited in scope and to a small local region.²⁹ The Public Archives has not escaped the tendency to see the Canadian nation in terms of "central Canada", that is, Ontario and Quebec. These two *regions*, and particularly the former, are well represented in the Public Archives, but the same cannot be said of the Atlantic Provinces and the West.

Without fully realizing it, moreover, the Public Archives does acquire collections of the "limited identities" of which Careless wrote. Its concept of "national" has simplistically included only the geographical or political elements, leaving aside the complex sociological aspect. Thus, the PAC collects labour archives relating largely to the working class (a limited identity); archives of specific ethnic groups (other limited identities); and ecclesiastical archives of specific denominations (further limited identities).

The archives of the various unions, business and ethnic groups, when taken together, even though the individual organizations often are geographically limited, constitute the national labour, business and ethnic archives of Canada. Given the relativity of the PAC's "national" concept, religious archives must not be eliminated automatically on the grounds that their diocesan or congregational structure means that their records are of only local or regional interest. Taken altogether, the archives of the dioceses (or other major units of denominational administration) constitute their national archives, and those of all the denominations together constitute Canada's national religious archives. As is often the case with unions, ethnic groups, businesses, and so forth, religion in Canada constitutes an activity of national importance and geographical extent, which is nevertheless organized regionally. As Careless noted for the regions, through the Churches' internal relationships the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

The notion that in consequence of this, the Public Archives should declare an open season on local and regional records and its intention to rival provincial and regional depositories in the acquisition of original manuscripts would be absurd. Nevertheless, since "regional" archives have a significant relation to Canada as a whole, the Public Archives ought

29 "Acquisitions Policy: Competition or Cooperation?" *The Canadian Archivist*, II, 1 (1970) p. 23. (Report of a panel discussion involving W. Kaye Lamb, B. Weillbrenner, D. McOuat, A. R. Turner, H. A. Dempsey, J. H. Archer, and J. C. L. Andreassen.)

seriously to consider collecting copies of them on microfilm while leaving the originals in their regions, thereby respecting the principle of territoriality. The diocesan archives of the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches (or rather, certain series within them) are perfect examples of material demanding such treatment.

A parallel concept to territoriality is *institutionality*. While not accepted as a principle of archival theory it is nevertheless a real phenomenon. Some types of institutions more than others often prefer to keep their own archives. The recent establishment of university and of business archives seems to reinforce this tendency. Religious bodies are long-standing and often tenacious practitioners of institutionality. Each diocese, each religious community, each parish, maintains its own historical records. The deposit of religious archives in secular depositories is more or less uncommon.

The keeping of religious records in religious archives has been defended by John Purvis in England and August Suelflow in the United States on the grounds that the Church is a special institution and its records equally special.³⁰ They contend that a public archival staff may be composed of qualified archivists, and yet not have the knowledge or experience to deal with ecclesiastical archives. It is the principle of territoriality (keeping archives close to their sources) applied to an institution, the Church. It is the Church's defence against secular encroachment, the assertion that religious archives do not bear Caesar's imprint, and should not be rendered unto him.

In fact, religious archives have been handled in various ways in different countries. Scandinavian countries such as Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland have all established state religions claiming the adherence of a majority of the population. Three of the four even have ministries of ecclesiastical affairs, and in all four countries ecclesiastical records, like all other government records, are deposited in public archival institutions. In Denmark and Sweden, pre-Reform Roman Catholic records are also in government depositories. The archives of the non-established denominations, except in Finland, are considered private and are held by the denominations.³¹

30 John S. Purvis, "Ecclesiastical Records," *Society of Archivists Journal*, I, 1 (April 1955), pp. 2-6, and August Suelflow, "Maximum and Minimum Standards for Religious Archives," *American Archivist*, XXXII, 3 (July 1969), pp. 225-233.

31 Harold Jorgensen, "Danish Ecclesiastical Archives," *Archivum*, 4 (1954), pp. 67-70; Arnold Sandberg, "The Archives of the Church and the religious movements in Sweden," *Ibid.* p. 123; Markku Jarvinen, "Finlands (La législation archivistique)," *Archivum*, 17 (1967), p. 121; Thorsten Eken, "Norvege (La législation archivistique)," *Archivum*, 19 (1969), pp. 39-48.

In the Netherlands, ecclesiastical archives pre-dating the Reform movement were taken over by the State in the sixteenth century. Today, however, the archives of the Roman Catholic Church as reconstituted after the Reformation, and of the Dutch Reformed church and other Protestant denominations, are all private property held by the Churches.³² By a 1955 law regulating Belgian archives, the Royal General Archivist has the right to inspect religious archives. This right is not exercised, nor are religious archives deposited in public institutions. Instead, it was planned in 1964 to place State archivists in religious depositories as the positions of archivist became vacant, so that, "Les archives de l'évêché restent sur place, mais un archiviste de l'Etat en assurera la conservation, le classement et aussi la consultabilité."³³ One Belgian archivist noted that, "les autorités ecclésiastiques, ici en Belgique, ne s'intéressent pas du tout à la situation de leurs archives et que les instances de l'Etat profitent de cet état de choses."³⁴

In France, as a result of the suppression of religious institutions in 1790, Roman Catholic archives prior to that date were taken over by the State. The post-1790 records, however, are private.³⁵ In 1961 a commission on conservation and classification favoured the transfer of these records to Departmental Archives. Protestant and Jewish religious archives are also considered private. Here and there, however, for historical reasons, or because the Churches were unable or unwilling to establish archival depositories, ecclesiastical records have found their way into state depositories.³⁶ French ecclesiastical archives in the 1960s left much to be desired, although a tendency to improvement seemed evident.³⁷ The Churches, however, were fighting an up-hill battle because of a numerically declining and increasingly over-burdened clergy. Under the circumstances Guy Duboscq defined the attitude of the National Archives as follows: "Nous sommes à la disposition des collègues ecclésiastiques pour les aider, s'ils en expriment le désir, à conserver leurs

32 A. J. Van de Ven, "Les archives religieuses aux Pays-Bas," *Archivum*, 4 (1954), pp. 115-122.

33 "Procès-verbal de la séance de la section des archives religieuses," *Archivum*, 14 (1964), p. 107.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 112.

35 Bernard Mahieu, "Les archives de l'Eglise catholique en France," *Archivum*, 4 (1954), pp. 94-96.

36 Guy Duboscq, "Les archives de l'Eglise catholique en France depuis la Révolution française. I: Archives diocésaines et paroissiales," *La Gazette des Archives*, No. 39, 4ième trimestre, 1962, pp. 141-150.

37 *Ibid.*, pp. 139-42; Bernard Mahieu, "Les archives de l'Eglise catholique en France depuis la Révolution française. II: Archives des communautés," *Ibid.*, pp. 151-162.

archives, dans l'intérêt de l'histoire générale, dans l'intérêt, comme l'a dit S.S. Jean XXIII, de l'histoire de l'Eglise universelle."³⁸

In England, despite the existence of the established Church of England, no law obliges the deposit of religious archives in public depositories. Nevertheless, to the dismay of John Purvis, the Church of England often establishes its Diocesan Record Office in the government's Local Record Office or in a university or public library.³⁹

In the 1940s, the revival of religious history in the United States produced a considerable improvement in the preservation of religious records.⁴⁰ Yet in 1961, August Suelflow wrote that church archives were still involved in a struggle for respectability, and in 1965 that they were still "a side issue" in Church activities.⁴¹ He acknowledged that this and the fact that "it is difficult to isolate strictly ecclesiastical source material from the secular," explain why many ecclesiastical records have been collected by secular institutions.⁴² It is a fact that American religious archives may be found in the libraries of universities such as North Carolina, Duke, Chicago and Michigan; in historical societies such as those of the states of Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Minnesota and Wisconsin; in state archives and libraries, such as those of Connecticut and Virginia; in the National Archives and, to a lesser extent, in the Library of Congress; but most often in various local and national denominational archives. Suelflow estimated in 1963 that the United States had some five hundred depositories of church historical material.⁴³ "Thus it is obvious," wrote Mabel E. Deutrich, "that a total picture or diorama of the locations of church records is like an elaborate patchwork quilt, but without a systematic design."⁴⁴

The religious archival condition in Canada has obvious similarities to the situations in France, England and the United States: religious archives are widely scattered and while most are in denominational depositories,

38 "Procès-verbal de la séance de la section des archives religieuses," *Archivum*, 14 (1964), p. 109.

39 *Ibid.*, C. E. Welch, "The Preservation of Ecclesiastical Record Offices," *Archives*, vol. 4, 22, pp. 75-80.

40 William Warren Sweet, "Church Archives in the United States," *American Archivist*, XIV, 4 (October, 1951), pp. 323-327.

41 August R. Suelflow. "The Struggle of Church Archives for Respectability," *American Archivist*, XXIV, 4 (October, 1961), p. 403; August R. Suelflow, "Preserving Church Historical Resources," *American Archivist*, XXVIII, 2 (April, 1965), p. 241.

42 Suelflow, "The Struggle of Church Archives for Respectability," p. 403.

43 Suelflow, "Preserving Church Historical Resources," p. 393.

44 Mabel E. Deutrich, "American Church Archives: An Overview," *American Archivist*, XXIV, 4 (October, 1961), pp. 387-402.

others may be found in public archives in cases where the denominations are not able to maintain them. It has been suggested that this situation does not meet the needs of researchers, and is holding back historical research in religious archives.⁴⁵ It has been suggested as well that the optimum solution could only come from renewed discussions between the Emperor and the Pope. This idea seems to have been accepted to some extent at the 1972 "Colloque sur les archives religieuses." Jacques Cloutier wrote, in his introduction to its report that,

Les religieux ne parviendront pas seule, même avec beaucoup de compétences et de lourds déboursés, aux standards de la documentation moderne et aux attentes des chercheurs. C'est plutôt dans la ligne d'une étroite collaboration avec les diocèses, les Centres de recherches universitaires, et surtout avec les archivistes des divers Gouvernements, que les participants du Colloque ont cru discerner les orientations à long terme.⁴⁶

One possibility for regrouping religious archives is deposit according to their local or national nature in the provincial or federal archival institutions. This solution runs entirely contrary to the arguments of Suelflow and Purvis, arguments undoubtedly firmly held by many Canadian religious archivists. If one accepts the principle of territoriality one ought logically, because of the evident parallel, accept that of institutionality. Pushed to its extreme limit, however, that would mean that each organization (and individual for that matter) ought to create its own archival depository. Such a practice would render historical research virtually impossible. While Suelflow and Purvis argue that religious archives are special and different from government or other secular archives, that scarcely constitutes an insuperable obstacle to their association with secular archives. All records have their peculiarities, and the business archivist or the union archivist, for example, could also point out differences between their type of records and those of religious or governmental archives. There is no reason why public depositories should not employ staff specially trained to handle religious archives, as they do for all other specialized records. Suelflow admits that where an organism cannot maintain its own suitable depository it is preferable to place its documents in a public depository than in a manse basement or chancery attic, and few indeed are the religious depositories which have been able to present the "integrated" archives-library-museum research centre which Suelflow indicated is essential for religious archives.

Deposit of religious archives in a public archival institution has the advantage of placing them in their social context and in the context of the

⁴⁵ See J. Lambert, "Public Archives and Religious Records: Marriage Proposals," *Archivaria*, I, 1 (Winter, 1975-76), pp. 48-66.

⁴⁶ Jacques Cloutier, "Introduction," *Rapport du colloque sur les archives religieuses*, pp. 5-6.

archives of other denominations. This would be in perfect accord with current research requirements. At the "Colloque sur les archives religieuses," Assistant Dominion Archivist Bernard Weilbrenner argued that the integration of religious records in public depositories "éviterait la création de barrières artificielles entre le religieux et le profane, et inviterait les chercheurs à ne pas négliger cette source essentielle pour notre histoire, source où l'on n'a pas puisé autant qu'on aurait dû le faire à cause de leur isolement et des difficultés de consultation."⁴⁷ He went on to suggest that each congregation in the Roman Catholic Church should either establish a national archival depository or deposit its records in the Public Archives, and its local records in provincial archives.⁴⁸ Typically, few if any deposits in a public archives have been made.

Religious archives in Canada are private archives, and while examples exist of Churches depositing their documents in public institutions,⁴⁹ these Churches have generally (unlike Esau) resisted ceding their birthright for a mess of (archival) potage. It was remarked at the "Colloque sur les archives religieuses" that the religious superiors feared government wishes to nationalize the archives of the oldest communities.⁵⁰

It would seem, then, that the Public Archives might be dooming itself to frustration and wasted effort should it put any serious effort into the acquisition of original denominational records. One hundred years after Brymner's visit to the Seminary of Quebec the road in this direction seems blocked as firmly as ever.

Having looked at the Public Archives' record and at the obstacles that would be encountered, particularly in the area of denominational records, what programme would avoid the hindrances mentioned, yet give some

47 Bernard Weilbrenner, "Pour une politique d'ensemble dans l'établissement des archives," *Rapport du colloque sur les archives religieuses*, p. 39. See also Gaston Carrière, "Les archives religieuses," pp. 14-15.

48 *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

49 See Public Archives of Canada, *Union List of Manuscripts in Canadian Repositories* (Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada, 1975). University repositories of religious archives often began as, or still are, denominational. Examples are St. Paul University, Ottawa (Roman Catholic); Knox College, Toronto (Presbyterian); Victoria College, Toronto (United Church); Acadia and McMaster Universities (Baptist). The Quaker archives have been deposited in the University of Western Ontario. Provincial archives have also received religious archival deposits: the Archives nationales du Québec houses the Anglican Diocese of Quebec records and the Provincial Archives of Alberta has those of the Anglican Dioceses of Mackenzie River and Athabaska. In Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia the provincial archives have offered depository privileges to all churches. (John Archer, "A Study of Archival Institutions in Canada," Ph.D. diss., Queen's University, 1969, p. 530).

50 "Table-ronde sur les archives religieuses," p. 59.

hope of improving the PAC's holdings and service in the area of religious archives? The following three points might compose a Public Archives programme of religious acquisitions:

Acquisition for information

The Public Archives ought to begin at the beginning by informing itself about what the various religious depositories possess through the systematic collection of inventories and finding aids. These guides should also be made available to researchers, who would then be better able to plan their pilgrimages around the country in search of religious archives of interest to them. It would also be very helpful if the Public Archives could produce a thematic inventory listing all sources in its own possession which are of significant value for religious history.

Acquisition for conservation

While the Public Archives ought not compete too strongly for religious papers of regional importance, it should invite institutions of national significance to place their records in its custody, especially when these institutions do not intend to establish their own archives. First priority should go to the collecting in Canada of the original papers of inter-denominational and non-denominational religious organizations, of denominations not already having archives, and of the numerous more or less unstructured religious groups which risk disappearing from the Canadian religious scene without leaving a tangible trace. The current interest in contemporary history should lead the Public Archives to the acquisition of twentieth-century material. Since, however, religious organizations are generally reluctant to permit consultation of such records, this will undoubtedly be a difficult task. In short, while the acquisition of original denominational records could largely be abandoned to existing denominational archives, any records to which these archives do not have a prescriptive or denominational right ought to be solicited actively. No doubt the solicitation will have to be energetic and persistent at the beginning, but it is still a necessary action from which the Public Archives should not allow itself to be deterred.

Acquisition for protection and diffusion

The backbone of the PAC's religious archives programme will continue to be microfilm copying. The second acquisition priority should be the continuation and extension of the existing foreign copying programme, in an effort to render little known or relatively inaccessible collections more useful to Canadian researchers. Although the Public Archives already has transcripts, it must study the possibility of microfilming the archives of St-Sulpice and of the Séminaire des Missions étrangères in Paris. Other repositories undoubtedly exist. The "Colloque sur les archives religieuses" felt that communities founded in Europe should

obtain copies of all documents which concern them. The Frères de l'Instruction Chrétienne, the Dominicans, the Ursulines, the Pères de Ste-Croix and the St-Viateur seem already to have begun. The Public Archives should attempt to establish a cooperative programme with them. The third acquisition priority should be the filming of collections in Canadian religious archives. To fulfil its mandate as the national archives of Canada, the PAC must attempt to complement its collections of the papers of individuals, government organizations and secular private institutions by plugging the gaping hole in religious archives. It also needs copies from Canadian religious archives to complement and to provide the context for its material from foreign depositories. Prime consideration should be given to the oldest collections to ensure the preservation and to facilitate the diffusion of the most ancient, and consequently, most precious documents, and to develop the PAC's holdings in a manner which more adequately reflects the development of all the denominations in Canada.

Those collections which are best organized and which require the least preparation for microfilming should be copied first, giving other institutions time to organize their holdings and to prepare finding aids. The development of copying priorities should also take into consideration the need to diversify the Public Archives' existing holdings, now composed mostly of Anglican and Roman Catholic material.

Although these objectives are not all simultaneously compatible, the questions of cooperation on the part of the religious institutions and archives, and the degree of preparation required before filming should allow the Public Archives to consider them all in turn and to make wise decisions on which collections should be acquired or copied.

An important benefit afforded the researcher by the acquisition of microfilm copies is greatly enhanced facility for diffusion since, unlike the originals, the copies may be sent anywhere on interlibrary loan. Moreover, an advantage should also accrue to the religious archives themselves, since different religious repositories could exchange microfilms to supplement their existing collections. The local records of a denomination or community could all be sent to the central archives or community headquarters.

Furthermore, the copying of Canadian religious archives is a protective expedient as well as a means of wider dissemination. A document existing in the original may be lost at any time, whereas a document copied on negative microfilm exists in at least two places and may exist in innumerable places if positive copies were made and distributed. The value of such multiple preservation is exemplified by the case of the original dossier of Samuel Simpson Wood, an early nineteenth-century missionary to Canada. Wood's dossier has disappeared from the archives of the

Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in London, but, fortunately, may still be consulted on the Public Archives of Canada microfilm.

Such concerns were discussed at the 1972 "Colloque sur les archives religieuses" by Bernard Weilbrenner, who stated that:

Pour les Congrégations qui désirent conserver leurs archives les Archives publiques sont intéressées à se procurer une copie microfilmée des documents les plus anciens, ceux qui concernent les débuts de l'histoire du Canada, ou d'autres documents en grand danger d'être perdus. Mais on ne peut envisager cela comme une solution permanente, et surtout pas pour les archives du XX^e siècle.⁵¹

This view was supported by Gaston Carrière and by François Beaudin, who proposed that the Roman Catholic Church must begin, "le plus tôt possible après l'obtention d'une subvention du Conseil des Arts ou de Perspectives-Jeunesse, un programme de microfilmage de sécurité et à but scientifique des archives religieuses au Canada."⁵² The "Colloque" in general seems to have accepted the advantages of having congregational records filmed and a copy deposited in public archives.

A final aspect of the role that the Public Archives ought to play concerns assistance for religious archival depositories. It ought to encourage the centralization and systematization of denominational records wherever they are deposited. It ought also be prepared to offer advice, when requested, on any aspect of archival work. While the Public Archives is not a funding agency and cannot directly subsidize religious depositories, it ought to send personnel into religious archives, when requested and on a short-term basis, to aid in the realization of well-defined objectives. In a brief to the Commission on Canadian Studies, the Public Archives expressed the hope of being able "to share with other institutions its knowledge and experience in the fields of conservation and restoration, microrecording, automation, and archives and records administration." In fact it is planned to add two liaison officers to the Archives' staff. Their responsibilities would include "assistance in the organization and description of holdings of small institutions." Canadian religious archival depositories are among those which could make the best use of such a programme. These activities might considerably reduce existing suspicion or hesitation on the part of religious archivists with regard to public archives in general.

The religious archives programme ought to be situated in the panorama of existing projects, more particularly acquisitions programmes. It is evidently not a project to be completed in a specified number of years, but

51 *Ibid.*

52 Gaston Carrière, "Les archives religieuses," p. 16; François Beaudin, "L'importance des archives religieuses pour l'histoire profane," *Rapport du colloque sur l'histoire religieuse*, p. 31.

is rather a long-term, even a continuing programme. Like any other institution, the Public Archives must establish budgetary priorities. It is at present committed to archival programmes in the areas of labour, business, the arts and ethnic communities. Current historiographical trends, and the very great necessity for conservation measures in these areas, justify this commitment. Nevertheless, the Public Archives ought to be aware that it has neglected religious archives and be prepared to augment its efforts in terms of money and personnel to regain lost ground and to keep abreast of research needs. At present the PAC has only one archivist involved in the area of religious archives, and that one archivist is forced to spend much time attending to other matters. This situation is precisely that found in the smallest, most poorly maintained religious archival depositories.

One final note on the responsibilities of others is in order: the effectiveness of a religious archival programme in the Public Archives must be affected not only by the resources which the Archives gives it, but also by the cooperation which the religious institutions and archives accord to the PAC. Since experience indicates that it is often difficult to distinguish what is Caesar's from what is God's, the best solution so far as archives are concerned is undoubtedly cooperation on the part of the Emperor and the Pope for the benefit of all.

Résumé

Soutenant qu'une centralisation de la documentation est un stimulant essentiel à l'encouragement à la recherche en histoire religieuse au Canada, l'auteur réclame que les Archives publiques du Canada, en vertu de leur mandat les rendant responsables de l'acquisition de tout matériel d'archives d'"intérêt national", jouent un rôle plus actif dans ce domaine. Afin d'éviter les échecs de la politique d'acquisition du passé, il propose un plan en trois points axé sur le maintien d'un catalogue collectif, une politique d'acquisition d'archives inter-confessionnelles et non-confessionnelles d'"intérêt national" et un programme de microfilm du matériel acquis par d'autres dépôts.