

Sheep that Have Gone Astray?: Church Record Keeping and the Canadian Archival System

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In recent years, much has been written and said about the development of a Canadian archival "system": a network which will facilitate the sharing of information and resources, and expedite the rationalization of collection responsibilities. The 1980 *Canadian Archives* report, for instance, envisioned a future system that would link the archives of government, business, and private institutions.¹ The 1985 *Report of the Advisory Committee on Archives* delineated the responsibilities of private institutions within this system, stating that each archives would be responsible "for providing archival service for the administrative records of its parent body," and "for defining its acquisition interests and programs having professional regard to the legitimate interests of other archives."² While the 1985 report acknowledges that not every private institution will be able to support a full-fledged archives, it does not resolve the dilemmas created by the division of collection responsibility between private institutions and public repositories.³

The records of religious bodies in particular have been the subject of debate as they have been housed in various repositories, not always with satisfactory results. The following study sets the theoretical debate concerning who should collect what against the reality of the record keeping practices of the Anglican, Baptist, and United churches in British Columbia.⁴

Some religious denominations exhibit much more commitment to caring for their records than others. This is readily apparent when one studies the results of a survey of archival practices in the Anglican, Baptist, and United churches conducted in the spring of 1983.⁵ The survey was sent to the ministers of a sample of local congregations of the Anglican Church, the Baptist General Conference (formerly Swedish-speaking), the

* This article is based upon my thesis, "A Comparative Study of the Record Keeping Practices of the Anglican, Baptist and United Churches in British Columbia" (Master of Archival Science diss., University of British Columbia, 1985).

1 Ian Wilson, *Canadian Archives. Report to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada by the Consultative Group on Canadian Archives* (Ottawa, 1980).

2 Ian Wilson, *Report of the Advisory Committee on Archives* (Ottawa, 1985), p. 5.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 40.

4 This study was limited to protestant denominations in order to narrow the parameters for the purposes of comparison.

5 See Sweeney, "Comparative Study of Record Keeping," pp. 58-59, for results.

Baptist Union of Western Canada, the Convention of Regular Baptist Churches of British Columbia, the North American Baptist Conference (mixed German- and English-speaking), the Southern Baptist Convention, and the United Church. The survey asked the types of records created, whether there was an official in charge of the records, whether the church transferred its records to any type of archival repository, and if so, which one. While the survey applies directly to patterns of involvement and attitude only amongst local churches, it indicates the general response of the various denominations.

Over 80 per cent of both the Anglican and United churches surveyed make some conscious effort to preserve their archives. All the Baptist denominations, in contrast, showed a relatively poor response. For example, 82 per cent of the Anglican churches and 69 per cent of the United churches responding transfer their records to an official archives, as compared to 60 per cent of the Baptist Union churches and 40 per cent of the Baptist General churches. None of the remaining Baptist denominations claimed to transfer their records. Six per cent of Anglican churches make alternate arrangements for their records, compared with 20 per cent of Regular, 20 per cent of Southern, and 13 per cent of United churches. An interesting inverse relationship exists between responses to the questions regarding the existence of a designated official in charge of records and the transfer of records to an archival repository. The Anglican Church has the lowest percentage of churches that claim an official in charge of records at the parish level, yet it has the highest percentage of churches that send their records to an official repository. All of the German, North American, and Southern Baptist churches claim that someone looks after their records within the church, but with the exception of one Southern Baptist church which sends its historical material to the two official Southern Baptist repositories in the United States, none transfer their records to an archives. Whether those officials in charge of records retain archival material or not, these responses indicate a healthy awareness of records that is encouraging. It would seem that where there is no transfer of records to an outside agency, the individual church assumes the responsibility.

With denominations showing such striking differences in response to the exigencies of record keeping, it is difficult to apply to general archival principles for neat answers to the question of collection jurisdiction. The Canadian archival community itself has been torn. An awareness of the general situation of church record keeping in Canada led James Lambert, a former employee of the Public Archives of Canada with responsibilities for religious records, to write an article in *Archivaria* in 1975 on the subject.⁶ In it, Lambert claims that the churches have discouraged public repositories from taking an interest in their records by their "suspicious and even hostile reception," yet their archives have failed to meet the demands placed upon them. The interest and desire of historians to chronicle religious history, sparked by the rise of social history, has created a need for sophisticated research services that church archives are ill-equipped to provide. Lambert further notes a number of shortcomings in the churches' care of their records that interfere with service: inexperience and lack of archival knowledge of church members in charge of archives, inaccessibility of records due to the churches' attitudes towards "outsiders," the poor funding allocated to archives by churches, the low priority given to records, and the increasing shortage of personnel to handle the records. Finally, Lambert points to the assertion of Canadian historian H.H. Walsh, that the decentralization of records among local and regional church repositories actually impedes successful research.

6 James Lambert, "Public Archives and Religious Records: Marriage Proposals," *Archivaria* 1 (Winter 1975-76).

Lambert's solution is a combination of increased networking between secular and extant religious repositories and the encouragement of public archives to collect the records of denominations unwilling or unable to maintain their own archives, as well as those records of inter-denominational and non-denominational organizations.

In an article written in 1976, Lambert goes further.⁷ He asserts that given that the mandate of the Public Archives of Canada is the collection of records of "national significance," and that "religion in Canada constitutes an activity of national importance and geographical extent," the national archives should consider religious records as included in its mandate.⁸ All religious records, he suggests, could be regrouped according to their local or national nature in provincial or federal archival institutions.

Not surprisingly, Lambert's proposals brought forth a rebuttal in 1977 from former Anglican General Synod Archivist, Marion Beyea.⁹ Citing the archival programmes of the United and Anglican churches, as well as those of smaller groups such as the Mennonites, Lutherans, Grey Nuns, Ursulines, and Oblates, as examples of creditable results achieved by religious denominations, Beyea also notes that institutionality is an archival principle based on the teachings of Muller, Feith and Fruin, and Jenkinson. She maintains that churches need their records for administrative, fiscal, legal, and historical reasons, and that in addition, the records are a church's heritage and responsibility. Churches have a moral right and a moral obligation to keep their own records.

Lambert then argues for service to the historians, Beyea for service to the church.

Let us return to the churches. We have noted significant differences in attitude and action towards record keeping. What is the basis for these differences? To answer this question one must examine the nature of the church as institution and the particular histories of development for each of the denominations examined.

Individual differences among denominations in their attitudes towards record keeping stem from the differing conception each denomination has of the "church" as institution. For early Christians the "church" meant the unity of the whole people of God; at this time they "did not regard the Church as an institution."¹⁰ The establishment of the apostolic succession early in the second century AD, however, altered the perception of the church. The establishment of a precise leadership institutionalized the church, and gave definition to its character.

The Catholic Church as an institution was the first to display significant record keeping tendencies. The Church formulated an elaborate and intricate administration to support its increasing spiritual and temporal power. The Pontificate of Pope Innocent III (died 1216) was the first to see to the collection and preservation of the Church's records. By 1612, under Pope Paul V, the archives and the library were officially divided, and henceforth, all important administrative records were centralized in the archives.¹¹

In opposition to the Catholic Church, Luther created, in Germany, a new doctrine of faith, one that was in effect a denial of the institutionality of the church. Luther said that

7 James Lambert, "Towards a Religious Archives Programme for the Public Archives of Canada," *Archivaria* 3 (Winter 1976-77).

8 *Ibid.*, p. 47.

9 Marion Beyea, "Archives and Religious Records," *Archivaria* 4 (Summer 1977).

10 Cyril Charles Richardson, *The Church Through the Centuries* (New York, 1938), p. 21.

11 Owen Chadwick, *Catholicism and History: The Opening of the Vatican Archives* (Cambridge, 1978).

Man is not saved by good works but by faith alone. Religious authority does not lie with the visible institution known as the Roman Church, but in the Word of God as contained in the Scriptures.¹²

Thus, on the one hand, we have the increasing institutionality of the Roman Catholic Church, and on the other, the anti-institutional bias of Luther's church. The Anglican, Baptist and United denominations represent variations of the one or the other.

The Anglican Church was established in England by Henry VIII when the Pope denied him his divorce from Catherine of Aragon. Although Henry's own religious inclination was to Catholic orthodoxy, the confusion and disturbances that followed the establishment of the church allowed the rise of a small Protestant party which influenced the growth of the Anglican church. From this point on, it was a completely new church which balanced both Catholic and Protestant characteristics.

Five distinct characteristics that influenced record keeping in the Anglican Church in British Columbia can be traced to the Church of England. The first was the church's notion of the catholic, or universal, church and its relationship to the state. To the Anglicans there was only one true church and that church was all things to all people. They did not feel that their position was in any sense compromised by having a close relationship with the state. Because of this, and because of the often fine line between the record responsibilities of the church and the state in England (particularly at the local level), the church felt obligated to retain records for both the people and the government. There was an added sense of accountability and responsibility that inhibited records destruction.

The second factor was the church's attitude towards church government. The presence of bishops in the church hierarchy meant that regional levels of control were ensured. Besides creating a certain amount of uniformity, the regional level of control, translated to British Columbia, would mean smaller units of administrative and archival jurisdiction, and therefore more efficient control of records.

The third and possibly most important characteristic of the Church of England was its observance of tradition in its history. Although it did not hold tradition as authoritative, it still played a very strong role in the life of the church. Records which captured these traditions were therefore considered important.

There was also a fundamental lack of militancy in the Church and a cohesive stability that allowed it to weather religious storms intact. Thus quarrels between Evangelicals and Anglicatholics in the church did not translate into dissension and disruption in Canada. Stability allowed the church to concentrate on the refinements of organization, such as record keeping, instead of being continually forced to concentrate on organizing anew.

Finally, the Church of England was characterized by its practical nature. Its practicality meant two things: tradition would never stand in the way of progress, and regular, standard procedures for record keeping would have appeal to the church. Together, the five characteristics of the Anglican church in Britain were bequeathed to the infant church in British Columbia through evangelical societies; besides financial, physical and moral support, the societies provided for a continuity of religious expression and subtly influenced the record keeping habits of the new Anglicans.

12 E. Harris Harbison, *The Age of Reformation* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1955).

The Baptists present a striking contrast to the picture of Anglican heritage in their theology, values and attitudes, organization, and, as a result, in their record keeping. Owen Chadwick refers to them as ones "freed from the restraints of a common and historical tradition."¹³

The Baptists believed that the church only represented the select. It was not and should not try to be all things to all people. The Baptists lacked a common tradition. They inherited years of dissension and separation, which left them with little time or inclination to concentrate on saving their history and meant that their organization could hardly reach the level of stability or sophistication to warrant any record keeping procedures for administrative efficiency. They were insistent that church and state must be completely separate. Thus Baptists would never feel any of the obligation or the sense of responsibility towards anyone outside their local congregation that so influenced the Anglicans in their record keeping.

In terms of organization, the Baptists maintained a loose connectional congregationalism within which each church controlled its affairs but could gain support from other congregations. No machinery for the larger organization of congregations was ever effectively established, however, which only added to the instability of the church. The participatory units tended to be fairly large which made the formulation of any concerted plans rather difficult. Such a loosely connected church, it may be assumed, would have great difficulty planning and implementing programmes for its archives. Finally, Baptist eschatology contributed to the attitude Baptists hold towards record keeping. Baptists feel a compelling and definite belief in the coming of the end of the world. Thus the imperative to keep the collective memory and traditions of the church for future generations is supplanted by evangelism.

These influences were carried to the New World, undergoing some modification before reaching British Columbia. Essentially the dissension continued. In the United States the Southern Baptist Convention, the Swedish Baptist General Conference, and the German North American Baptist Conference all formed in the mid- to late nineteenth century and eventually spread to British Columbia. These three churches have depended quite heavily on their American brethren, and so have never developed a strong and indigenous tradition of government.

In contrast to the continuous tradition of the Anglican Church and the frequent separation/creation of the Baptists, the United Church's evolution from Methodist, Presbyterian, and Congregationalist Churches in Canada created a unique outlook towards record keeping. The Presbyterian Church, which began in Scotland, adopted a Calvinistic confession of faith in 1560. An intricate system of presbyterian government, and systems of national education and relief for the poor were developed early. The heavy emphasis on scholarship of the Presbyterian Church carried over to the United Church. Archives were designated centres of scholarship, most appropriately located in universities, and the reasons for keeping records would be to advance studies of history.

The Methodist Church grew out of the Anglican Church in order to combat spiritual lethargy. The evangelism that was characteristic of the Church was combined with performing practical good works; ministering to the poor, the jobless, and the homeless; and

13 Owen Chadwick, *The Reformation* (Harmondsworth, 1972), p. 189.

getting involved in causes. This outward-looking attitude that the United Church inherited meant that there would be less time to devote to administrative details, including record keeping.

The Congregational Church was not very large when it entered into union with the Methodists and the Presbyterians, but it contributed its strong evangelistic tendencies. In terms of government, the independence of the local congregation promoted by the Congregationalists was offset by the complex, distributed nature of the Presbyterian government and the strongly centralized Methodist polity. The resultant structure tried to find a balance between systems of government that utilized three different levels of organization. Today, the United Church attempts to maintain this careful balance, with the result that, for archives, co-operation with the congregations is sustained at the conference level, but through the lack of a strong central authority there is a somewhat tenuous link between conferences.

These record keeping characteristics identified in the parent churches underwent modification upon reaching the Pacific coast. Tracing the histories of each denomination, we can see how these modifications affected present-day record keeping patterns and habits.

The Anglican Church in British Columbia owed its existence to the interests and efforts of British merchants and government officials and the Church of England.¹⁴ The first bishop to arrive in 1859 was quick to refuse any government favours, recognizing the complications inherent in the move. The old patterns of broad responsibility to both Anglicans and those outside the church remained. When financial and administrative support from England began to be withdrawn, a diocesan synod was created to fill the gap. Dioceses and diocesan synods continued to be set up in the intervening years as necessity dictated. The four dioceses existing in 1915 came together to form the Ecclesiastical Province of British Columbia. A general synod, created in 1893, provided for national administration and the opportunity for an east-west dialogue between Anglican representatives.

Once the basic administrative units of the church were established, the bishops were at liberty to augment the synodical system with committees. These were formed to oversee provincial outreach programmes, and to disperse the work-load, power, and finances. Thus an Anglican bureaucracy was developed. Any tensions which arose in the development of the church were resolved in a practical manner, so that while the basic organization followed the Church of England, any changes made necessary by circumstance were executed.

The Anglican Church recognized its special relationship with the Church of England, and in its Book of Common Prayer, recognized the importance of inherited traditions:

We are determined ... to hold and maintain the Doctrine, Sacraments, and Discipline of Christ ... as the Church of England hath received ... and to transmit the same unimpaired to our posterity.¹⁵

This sense of historic continuity in their religious observance encouraged the Anglicans generally to preserve their history through records.

¹⁴ The Church of England in Canada changed its name to the Anglican Church of Canada in 1955.

¹⁵ The Anglican Church of Canada, *The Book of Common Prayer 1959 Canada* (Toronto, 1959), p. viii.

All of these characteristics, the broad ministry; the well-defined, cohesive administrative structure; the strength of the diocesan units; the stress on tradition; the ability to mediate between divisive forces within the church; and the practicality that allows adaptation, gave the Anglican Church its attitude to archives. Today the Anglican Church in British Columbia has archives at three levels of government: the diocesan level, the level of the ecclesiastical province, and the national level. The archives of the General Synod was established in 1955 at the national headquarters in Toronto. The archivist at this level coordinates national archival programmes, a full records management programme, and liaises with diocesan archivists. The central archives was able, with the co-operation of diocesan archivists, to begin a vital records microfilming programme. Further, the central archives conducted a training course for new archivists in 1978, and is presently overseeing the publishing of an Anglican manual on accessioning, arrangement and description.

At the level of the ecclesiastical province is an archives which looks after the records of the Provincial Council and coordinates the five diocesan archives, forming a regional network. The diocesan archives collect the records of the diocesan synods and the parishes within the dioceses. The archives respond to reference requests from both within and without the church and have embarked on various programmes of arrangement and description to facilitate access.

In sharp contrast to the stability that characterized the Anglican Church, doctrinal conflict followed the Baptists to British Columbia, in effect paralyzing efforts to develop an acceptable form of church organization and robbing the churches of financial stability. In the resolution of the problems caused by separation, little attention was given to records.

The Baptists began their life in British Columbia as a single band of pioneers looking to capture the majority of Protestant settlers for their cause. The original church disbanded, refounded, separated, lost members and evolved, suffering under financial disabilities, successive relocations, a high turnover of pastors, fluctuating congregations, and differing internal organization and administrations. Such difficulties dogged the footsteps of Baptists throughout the province.

Isolation from the rest of Canada linked Baptists in British Columbia with an American Baptist convention from the start. This convention encouraged the growth of administrative organization in the Canadian church. Despite the extensive administration which developed, however, the Convention of Baptist Churches of British Columbia could not keep up to the demands of its expansion, and so was forced to accept a combined superintendency with the Baptist Convention of Manitoba and the Northwest. At the provincial level, the British Columbia Baptists ended by joining the Baptist Convention (now Union) of Western Canada in 1907. Because the union was quite liberal in its theological outlook, and involved in the social gospel, fundamentalists in British Columbia became alarmed. They eventually split away from the main body in 1927, and formed the Convention of Regular Baptists of British Columbia. This split seriously weakened the parent body for some time, and many years were spent rebuilding the membership and developing harmonious relations with the other members of the union. The Regular Baptists too were forced to build their membership before they could work on developing their organization.

Just as the Regular Baptists split from the mainstream Baptists, so the first Southern Baptist churches were established from Regular churches because of dissatisfaction with

the parent organization. The churches formed the Capilano and Plateau Associations. Despite such signs of growth, they were tied to the Northwest Baptist Convention in the United States.

The small Swedish Baptist General Conference and the German North American Baptist Conference started in British Columbia through the efforts of their American counterparts. Although the first has lost its ethnic affiliation, both have remained relatively small, basically urban, and strongly tied to American organizations.

Reviewing the histories of the Baptist churches in British Columbia, it is apparent that despite their early starts and differing circumstances, all had factors at work interfering with the development of their organizations. Inheriting a long history of separation and a lack of common tradition, the Baptists were vulnerable to disruption. Separations meant reduced numbers for all concerned, making organizational development all the more difficult to accomplish. The two ethnic organizations, isolated from the mainstream of Baptist development, had to struggle with small numbers from the very start. Furthermore, for the Southern Baptists and the Swedish and German Baptists, the strength of the American organizations obviated the need to produce independent, self-sufficient administrations.

The policies of the Baptist churches towards record keeping and archives reflect the effects of a somewhat turbulent history. The archives of the Union Baptists, for example, are hard to pin down. Formal archival policy centralizes the records of constituent bodies of the Baptist Federation of Canada (of which Union Baptists are members) at the Canadian Baptist Archives at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario.¹⁶ Though founded in 1865, holdings there have only become extensive in the last twenty to thirty years. Given that they are now substantial, one might expect to find that British Columbia provides its share. The Canadian Baptist Archives has reported, however, that "many Baptist records from BC churches do not come here, as the churches elect to deposit their records in various libraries and colleges in BC."¹⁷ At the office of the Union Board, the next level of government, the Executive Minister has stated that no archival material is kept at Calgary.¹⁸ He has indicated that what material exists is kept at Carey Hall, the Baptist theological centre at the University of British Columbia, and a great amount at the Canadian Baptist Archives in Hamilton. In fact, Carey Hall had been sent the head-quarter's entire collection of yearbooks, dating from 1913 on, and some other "historical documentation." Officials at Carey Hall, when taxed, admitted to holding the yearbooks.¹⁹ They also stated that they had sent duplicates of their limited historical material to McMaster "years ago" and that the central office in Calgary had a limited amount of material. Where exactly this "limited historical material" resides and how one gets access to it is not clear. The yearbooks have now been transferred to the Baptist/Anabaptist Library at Regent College in British Columbia.²⁰

16 The official repository for the Maritime churches is located at Acadia University, Wolfville, Nova Scotia.

17 Personal correspondence with Judith Colwell, Librarian, Canadian Baptist Archives, Hamilton, 20 April 1983.

18 Personal correspondence with Douglas Moffat, Executive Minister, the Baptist Union of Western Canada, Calgary, 9 March 1983.

19 Interview with Philip Collins, Associate Professor in Applied Theology and Chairman of Campus Ministries, Carey Hall, Vancouver, 10 February 1983.

20 *Ibid.*

At the next level of government of the Union Baptists is the British Columbia Area Office. A representative there has stated that minutes from each level of the church go to McMaster.²¹ Given McMaster's own reply, this is difficult to support. Reverend Gordon Pousett, who has spent much time on Baptist history in British Columbia, has noted the difficulty in obtaining archival material, adding that in his opinion, the majority of Baptists do not place much value on historical records because they are oriented towards present and practical concerns.²² There is plainly not enough concern to support a systematic collection of records.

The Regular Baptists, in contrast, have provisions in their handbook for church clerks to "keep minutes of all business meetings of the church; take care of all correspondence in the name of the church; [and] maintain an accurate record of all the members of the church." As well, "the clerk shall take charge of all records and valuable documents and shall have custody of the church seal." There is also provision for the church clerk to file the current financial statement, list of elected officers, and "every extraordinary resolution, and every amendment to the constitution when adopted by the church."²³ Records dating from 1959 onwards do exist and are held by the convention office.²⁴ All other extant records reside at the library of the Northwest Baptist College, the convention's educational institution. No regular acquisition of archival material from local congregations takes place, however, and there is no special emphasis for making those records which exist at the convention level available for research use.

The North American Baptist Conference displays similar tendencies towards records and archives. As with the other two Baptist organizations, this church established a central repository for archives at its educational institution: the North American Baptist Seminary in Edmonton. At one time, a librarian at the seminary made himself responsible for the collection of the denomination's records in Canada. Since the individual left the library, however, there has been no one to care for the records, and as no finding aid was created before he left, access to the archives is virtually impossible.²⁵ Records from British Columbia reside there, but currently no policy exists for the acquisition of records by the seminary library. Individuals in the church still direct outsiders to the seminary as the repository for their denomination's archives.²⁶

A further repository exists in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Its policy is to accept archival material from churches within the North American Baptist Conference in the United States and Canada. Due to a shortage of space, however, responsibility for archives storage has devolved upon local officials.²⁷ With regard to records created at the association level (the province-wide administrative unit), the Area Minister for British

21 Interview with Muriel Crump, Administrator, BC Area Office, Baptist Union of Western Canada, Vancouver, 19 January 1983.

22 Gordon Pousett, "A History of the Convention of Baptist Churches of British Columbia," (Master of Theology thesis, Vancouver School of Theology, 1982).

23 The BC Regional Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches, *Handbook of the Convention of Regular Baptist Churches of British Columbia* (1976), pp. 54-55.

24 Interview with representative, Convention of Regular Baptist Churches of British Columbia, Head Office, Vancouver, 22 March 1984.

25 Interview with Mrs. Walters, Librarian, North American Baptist Seminary, Edmonton, 21 March 1984.

26 Interview with the Rev. Edmond Hohn, Area Minister, North American Baptist Conference, Kelowna, 27 March 1984.

27 Interview with Dr. G. Dunger, Archivist, North American Baptist Seminary, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, 21 March 1984.

Columbia indicated that these were located at Ebenezer Church in Vancouver, the central office. Confirmation was indeed received that Ebenezer Church held minutes from 1975 onwards.²⁸

The Baptist General Conference has a central archives located at Bethel Theological Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. This archives, however, serves only the conference (national) level. "Local churches retain their own records," unless the church becomes defunct, in which case the records are accepted by the archives. A few miscellaneous historical items have found their way into the archives as well.²⁹ The Columbia Conference, which includes churches in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and British Columbia, looks after its own records. The head office, located in Seattle, Washington, has records relating to its office from the late nineteenth century to the present. These mainly consist of minutes of the Columbia District and the Trustee Board. Few records of local churches have been kept.³⁰

The Southern Baptist Convention, in contrast to the other four Baptist churches, has developed some distinctive record keeping practices. As can be expected, since there is no official headquarters for the Capilano Association, there is no official repository to handle the collection of archival material. Minutes of the Capilano Association from its inception to 1965 reside with the current Chairman of the Historical Committee for the Northwest Baptist Convention.³¹ Once pastor for the now defunct Kingcrest Church in Vancouver, and being personally interested in history, he took the records with him when he left for the United States in 1965. Thus the association's records are extant, although in private hands.

The state convention, which has its head office in Portland, Oregon, does not sponsor an official archives either, but has had an unofficial policy over the years of collecting and keeping archives that would maintain the historic record of the organization. Thus materials relating to initial contacts made between the convention and British Columbian churches still survive, although they rest in the quiet obscurity that accompanies unorganized records. Annual reports dating back to very early in the convention's history are accessible. They contain both the contributions made by British Columbian messengers (delegates to the annual conferences) and information on British Columbian churches in the form of statistics on giving done by congregations, aggregate membership, and so forth. The state convention is working on the official establishment of an archives to handle this material and to acquire other records.³²

At the national level in the United States, archival responsibilities are split between the Southern Baptist Historical Commission, and the Sunday School Board, which collects all its own records. They are located next to each other in the Dargan/Carver Library in Nashville, Tennessee. The Historical Commission does not collect material on individual congregations, but has microfilmed the records of Kingcrest Church of Vancouver

28 Interview with Jennie Grunert, Recording Secretary, BC Association, North American Baptist Conference, Vancouver, 24 April 1984.

29 Interview with the Rev. Gustin, Archivist, Bethel Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, 21 March 1984.

30 Interview with Grace Anderson, member of the Historical Committee, Columbia Conference, Baptist General Conference, Seattle, Washington, 28 March 1984.

31 Interview with the Rev. Samuel Harvey, Minister, Calvary Baptist Church, and Chairman of the Historical Committee, Southern Baptist Convention, Seattle, Washington, 26 April 1984.

32 Interview with Steven Langston, Business Manager, Northwest Baptist Convention, Southern Baptist Convention, Portland, Oregon, 26 April 1984.

(formerly Emmanuel) covering the period 1911 to 1965, and Williams Lake First Baptist, which sent records from 1967 to 1972. The commission has also microfilmed newspapers of both the Northwest Baptist Convention and the Capilano Association.³³

Unlike the Anglican and Baptist churches, the United Church is essentially a Canadian creation, being the union of three churches which had roots in Britain. The Congregationalists were the first to arrive in what eventually became British Columbia. Despite evangelical inclinations, the Congregationalists never had the financial resources or the organization to support extensive missionary efforts in the West. The independence of the congregation manifested itself in the formation of new churches whenever disagreements occurred, somewhat in the same manner as the Baptists. The independence of the local congregation was handed down to the United Church.

The Methodists also responded to the needs of the settlers in British Columbia, sending four Wesleyan Methodist ministers from eastern Canada in 1859 to begin a vigorous and spirited attack on the rampant secularism that accompanied the gold rush. Organization followed the establishment of churches, with the formation of districts in the 1880s and of the British Columbia Conference in 1887. The Methodists emphasized strong central government, social activism, and reform, all of which they passed on to the United Church.

The first Presbyterian beginnings in British Columbia were provided by missionaries from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, and later Scotland. Growth was slow, with the ministry focussing entirely on Presbyterians, but in 1886 the Presbytery of Columbia was organized. This presbytery was augmented as the need arose until 1892 when the four presbyteries were joined under the mantle of a synod. The Presbyterians equalled the Methodists in social endeavour, although they emphasized education more. The Presbyterians bequeathed their concern for education, their social action, and their dispersed polity to the United Church upon entering union in 1925.

After union, the new United Church devoted much time to responding to society's needs. It was characterized by a particularly strong social motivation, evangelical zeal, concern for education at all levels, and a polity which tried to balance the congregational independence of the Congregationalists, the centralization of the Methodists, and the dispersed control of the Presbyterians. For the United Church today, the emphasis on scholarship and education has engendered a love of history that has encouraged record keeping. This impetus to collect records is offset by an organization which encourages congregational independence, although a strong identity knits the whole church together. Although the United Church *Manual* details every aspect of church work within an intricate bureaucracy, the bureaucracy which does exist falls short of the strict guidelines.³⁴ Evangelism, a heavy work load, and social activism keeps the ministry away from regular administrative duties. Record keeping requires both a certain level and type of administrative activity to support it. The United Church collects a substantial amount of records, but is not as successful in regularizing that collection as one might expect of such a large organization.

With regard to archives, in 1953 the long-standing Committee on Archives set up a system of regional archives based on the conference level (approximately corresponding

33 Interview with Ronald Tonks, Associate Director of the Southern Baptist Historical Commission, Nashville, Tennessee, 11 April 1984.

34 The United Church of Canada, *The Manual* (1978), p. 55.

to provincial regions), with the committee acting as the central advisory and policy-making body. Dr. Lorne Pierce, instrumental in this establishment felt that "the work of the Central Archives will be largely one of correlation of all the regional archives."³⁵ Today, the system envisioned by Pierce exists, although it is perhaps less effective than he had hoped. The regional British Columbia Conference Archives, however, enjoys a fair amount of success. Located in the Vancouver School of Theology, it services an increasing number of reference requests. Its goal is to implement a records management programme in the conference to regularize its acquisitions. Until such time as this occurs, it will be difficult to assess whether the congregations follow the strict rules for record keeping set out in the *Manual*.

From a study of the Anglican, Baptist, and United churches it is clear that the key to regular record keeping within a denomination is an impetus to collect and an organization which is suited for records collection. The organizational structure of the Anglican Church, which divides its areas of jurisdiction into dioceses under the bishop and the diocesan synod, is the most suited for records keeping. The units are small enough to facilitate diocesan-wide collection of records, yet strong and independent enough to support that collection. For the church, these smaller units spread the financial burden and responsibility over a larger area, making it easier to support record keeping activities.

The Baptists labour under the most difficulty, for although the next level of organization beyond the congregation differs among the five Baptist churches, none have intermediary bodies between the local congregations and the national administrations which are sufficiently strong or close enough to make collection easy. Thus the levels of deposit cannot be too far away from the originating source, or the records collection simply cannot be sustained. The McMaster Archives in Hamilton, for instance, collects the records of churches belonging to the Baptist Union of Western Canada, but churches in British Columbia have too little contact or knowledge of the archives to feel comfortable in depositing their records in such a remote location. Likewise, for the churches in British Columbia belonging to the Southern Baptist Convention, the Baptist General Conference, and the North American Baptist Conference, the central archives, if the churches are even aware of their existence, are so remote that it would have to be a very conscientious, determined minister who would send his church's records to such a distant destination. In this case size plays an important role, for small organizations cannot support the administrative machinery needed to coordinate the collection of records from local churches, or to produce the nucleus of general organizational records.

The United Church has developed a system which has worked quite well. The archives have naturally developed at the conference level, where the main authority and administration lie. Thus, once a denomination begins regular collection, there are natural levels at which collection occurs. There are, in fact, vital bonds between church government and archives even though the archives may collect materials beyond the level of government to which it is tied. Record keeping, as a natural outgrowth of administrative efficiency, must be tied administratively to a level of church government; it cannot be sustained otherwise. Given the large number and size of United churches in British Columbia, however, an unfair burden, both financially and administratively, lies on the single archives, and archivist, to provide service.

35 Lorne Pierce, "Foreword," *The Bulletin* 5 (1952), p. 1.

These observations have important implications for the proper custody of religious archives and the role of religious institutions in a Canadian archival network. As we have seen, proponents for the collection of religious archives by secular institutions place their main emphasis on collection by a central body, the Public Archives of Canada. Even in 1982, a group of York University historians submitted a brief to the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee stating:

We all see advantages in having one central depository for the bulk of government and political records, as well as the papers left by associations, businesses and individuals.³⁶

Although it is not explicitly stated, one might conclude that church archives are to be included in this mammoth collection. The practice of centralization, however, has lost much ground, as the responses by professional archivists in Canada show. The response from the Association of Canadian Archivists to the Symons report on Canadian Studies stressed that "sound development of archives should be based whenever possible in an institutional setting where valuable records are created."³⁷ The Association's response to the *Canadian Archives* report was even more pointed: "The total archives mandate does not have to be fulfilled by exercising proprietary rights to records," but rather "governments, private institutions, and other corporate bodies should be encouraged to develop their own archives."³⁸ And finally, in their briefs to the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, archivists from across Canada repeatedly spoke of the importance of decentralization. The Toronto Area Archivists Group noted that more records could be collected if more institutions shared the responsibility for collection.³⁹

The best argument against the centralization of church records in a secular repository, however, is provided by the churches in our study. Those churches which have only remotely located central repositories to collect the records of their denomination do not forward their material. There is neither the incentive or the felt obligation to deposit their records. One may justifiably argue that what the denominations are unable to accomplish is hardly likely to be achieved by any secular central repository; even more barriers would exist.

Lambert offers an alternative solution in which churches would lodge their records with different levels of public repositories, so that municipal, provincial, and federal archives would house appropriate levels of records. This study of the Anglican Church has shown that very real and vital bonds exist between its levels of government and its archives; bonds that do not exist between levels of public repositories. Lambert's solution, then, is not very satisfactory.

The fear of certain historians that private collection by churches of their own records will result in restricted access to important research materials is likely groundless. With their superior and intimate understanding of their records, and a one-to-one contact with the researching public, church archivists are more likely to give a better response to requests than the public archivist who is likely less familiar with the material and who

36 Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, *Summary of Briefs and Hearings* (Ottawa, 1982), p. 58.

37 Association of Canadian Archivists, "Canadian Archivists: Reports and Responses," *Archivaria* 11 (Winter 1980-81), p. 11.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

39 Louis Applebaum and Jacques Hébert, *Report of the Federal Policy Review Committee* (Ottawa, 1982).

must continually refer back to the donating party in the instances that restricted material is sought.

The most cogent argument against public collection of religious records, however, is based on the goal of optimum records collection for maximum use. If academic researchers wish to make accurate interpretations of the records they use, they are better served by using the material in the context in which it was created, where the creators, who best understand the records, are available for consultation. If we accept that records are saved for their administrative, fiscal, legal, and historical value, then the creators benefit from keeping their records themselves, because accessibility will be greater. General users, of which there has been an increasing number in the past few years due to the rising popularity of genealogy and local history, will benefit from the fuller record keeping which naturally occurs when an organization keeps records to meet its own needs rather than those of an unknown public.

In any case, whether the church keeps its records or deposits them with a public repository, the onus is on the church to do the initial retention, since transfer cannot occur until a suitable amount of records has been collected. Because patterns of belief dictate the attitudes, priorities, and organizational patterns of churches in a single denomination, which in turn clearly affect their record keeping, one might argue that such fundamental attitudes and practices which exist, formulated as they are over time, and under the influence of historical circumstance, cannot be changed easily. For the most part, it would be a fruitless and frustrating endeavour for any outside agency to try to effect any regular and systematic acquisition of archives of those religious organizations which had not already made the decision to seek an outside repository for their archives on their own account. Thus, while outside agencies can encourage institutions to preserve their records, the original stimulus, whatever it may be, must come from within the church itself, as must the choice of means. Any results otherwise would be hopelessly piecemeal.

One would also have to question whether any public repository could justify placing the records of a private institution above those of its government sponsors. Surely public repositories should see to the records of their level of government and those of private citizens, before pursuing the records of established institutions. Their efforts only undermine these institution's own efforts.

How will Canadian churches fit into the future archival network? The *Canadian Archives* report stated:

We have found that given the basic principle of archival methodology, the diversity of archives already established, and the exponential trend in the establishment of new archives, archival science across Canada is and will be broadly based, involving a complex system of repositories.⁴⁰

The Anglican Church already has its own network in place. Similarly, the United Church demonstrates the potential to build a very strong archival network. Those churches which have not begun collecting their records must be encouraged to do so. Otherwise we must wait until stability and maturity put the process in train, or accept a mixed archival economy in which both the churches and public repositories preserve religious records, and in the meantime concentrate on trying to knit up the different parts,

40 Wilson, *Canadian Archives*, p. 14.

through surveys, exchanges of microfilm, and similar projects. There can be no doubt that churches are a force to be reckoned with in the archival world; already they rival universities as the largest group of archives outside of government archives.

Terry Cook sagely noted in his editorial on networking:

Quite probably, there are many vehicles sufficiently roadworthy to travel along the vista [sic] to archival utopia, and perhaps the idea of loading everybody into one huge bus to make the trip together in perfect harmony is not desirable anyway. There is room on the road for our Cadillacs as well as our Volkswagens, our motorcycles as well as our family campers, even for our joggers, walkers, and the odd hitchhiker.⁴¹

Churches will undoubtedly fashion their own archival destiny.

41 Terry Cook, "Archival Networks and Congresses," *Archivaria* 17 (Winter 1983-84), p. 13.