Aspects of Canadian Nationalism Among Conservative Evangelicals in British Columbia

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Observers of the western Canadian phenomenon – particularly evident since the 1930s – of relatively strong conservative Protestant groups and weakened mainline Protestant denominations frequently have alluded to the lack of Canadian identity or nationalism among the evangelicals. In the absence of strong ties to more established Protestant bodies in other parts of Canada, American influences are often cited as the source of much of their strength in the west. W.E. Mann, for example, described conservative Protestantism in Alberta as, "in many respects, an extension of that great upsurge of fundamentalism which first began around 1877 in the United States."[1] In a popular work roughly coinciding with the nation's centennial, Forrest, Kilbourn and Watson depict the evangelical groups flourishing in the 1940s as "tiny evangelical sects supported by American fund and manned by American Bible-school graduates."[2] Using selected membership data on both sides of the border, Harry Hiller concludes that "The proportionately greater activity in the United States leads Canadian third force participants into strong continentalist relationships, dependencies, and alliances."[3]

Such a portrayal is not totally inaccurate, especially in areas such as southern Alberta where a substantial proportion of settlers were American. Throughout western Canada, ties to the centre were often weak or non-existent and American ties did abound. However, as is often the case, the situation in reality is much more complex.

This paper will explore two very different responses among conser-

vative evangelicals in British Columbia to the question of the importance of Canadian identity as evidenced by responses to opportunities to affiliate with American bodies in the two decades following World War II. It is difficult, of course, to gauge accurately the nature and strength of nationalist sentiments but the assumption here is that the creation or rejection of denominational ties with American versus Canadian bodies provides a very useful measurement. As the evidence presented indicates, however, even that rather straight forward assumption must be qualified in light of the many other factors which often come into play in such situations.

Three evangelical denominations have been chosen for study here: the Convention of Regular Baptist Churches in British Columbia (CRBC), a provincial body representing the fundamentalist side of the 1927 division of the Baptist Convention of British Columbia, and two American-based groups in the province, the Baptist General Conference (BGC) and the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA). All three groups shared a similar conservative evangelical doctrinal stance, a strong commitment to evangelism at home and on the mission field and a "believers' church" ecclesiology. All three contained large dispensationalist elements but none required explicit adherence to that position. The three were similar enough to begin very close co-operation in the late 1980s in jointly operating a seminary consortium known as the Associated Canadian Theological Schools (ACTS) on the campus of Trinity Western University in Langley.

During the three decades after World War II, the CRBC successfully consolidated and grew to become the largest Baptist denomination in BC. Most of the initiative for the developments came from within the province and did not depend in any direct way on the upsurge of conservative Protestantism in the United States. In fact, these Baptists quite clearly displayed their Canadian nationalism by rejecting affiliation with a large, dynamic American denomination in the period and instead focused on developing their own theological college and pursuing a church-planting program throughout the province. In 1965 they affiliated with a Canadian body, the Fellowship of Canadian Baptists in Canada (FCB).

The CRBC entered the post-World War II period in a weakened state, both in numbers and in morale. The denomination had grown rapidly immediately after the 1927 schism but suffered ongoing schisms in the late 1920s and during the 1930s. A number of churches opted for independence in those years due to a range of conflicting opinions, most of which centred around issues of leadership styles, denominational centralization and

foreign missions policy. Considerable overall growth among fundamentalist Baptists as a whole did take place during the 1930s but the CRBC gains were more than offset by the loss of churches departing for independent status.

After the war, however, the denomination successfully consolidated and reversed the downward trend. From their well-established base in Vancouver and the surrounding areas of the Lower Mainland, the CRBC successfully began a number of new churches in the interior and northern regions. The number of churches and missions doubled from twenty-five in 1944 to fifty-one in 1960, surpassing the number of churches of the previously much larger mainline Baptist Convention. Membership growth kept pace, increasing from nearly 1,400 to 2,700, and Sunday School enrolment nearly tripled from just over 2,000 to about 5,600.[4]

The consolidation and growth occurred despite a dramatic challenge to the CRBC which came in the form of an opportunity to affiliate with the massive Southern Baptist denomination in the early 1950s. For some time, many CRBC had felt the need for the wider fellowship, unified programming, published materials and increased Baptist overseas mission fields which only membership in a larger denomination could provide. Fellowship and co-operation with the older, theologically heterogenous Baptist Convention was out of the question to most and the fundamentalist Baptist Bible Union of North America had passed out of existence in the 1930s. T.T. Shields' Regular Baptist Union of Ontario and Quebec was too distant, and the Regular Baptist group in Alberta was too small to contribute much beyond some co-operation in operating Northwest Baptist Bible College and in an infrequently published joint newsletter. Informal fellowship meetings with General Association of Regular Baptist (GARB) pastors in nearby parts of Washington State were attempted for a time during and after World War II but these became increasingly unsatisfactory and soon were abandoned. The GARB pastors' independent, nondenominational outlook and unanimous dispensationalist stand contributed to the demise of these meetings.[5]

The Southern Baptists came to the attention of British Columbian Baptists as they gained millions of members across the United States after World War II and vigorously organized churches in Washington and Oregon. Many within the CRBC were attracted by the Southern Baptist denomination's vibrant Sunday School and evangelism programs and its strong denominational identity. They longed to be part of a dynamic,

growing organization and felt that the only way Baptists could hope to evangelize Canada was by joining forces with their southern counterparts.[6] The leadership of the Southern Baptists in Washington and Oregon made several visits to BC as guests of the CRBC and, while being careful not to offend their hosts, they certainly did not discourage such sentiments.[7]

Several younger pastors in BC kept the issue uppermost on the churches' agenda by urgently pressing for direct affiliation with the Southern Baptists in 1953. Emmanuel Baptist church of Vancouver, which was led by one such young pastor, precipitated a crisis by associating itself with the Southern Baptists later that year. Several smaller churches followed its lead and divisions occurred in still other churches over the issue. These actions and fears of widespread defections to the Southern Baptists caused genuine alarm among CRBC leaders and led to a resolution to ". . . continue in undivided fellowship."[8] At the 1955 annual convention delegates overwhelmingly reaffirmed their "loyalty to the convention and its interests."[9] With the lines thus drawn, the inroads stopped. In 1955 Southern Baptist strength in BC stood at four churches in the Vancouver area and one in Kamloops. The CRBC lost approximately 250 members to the Southern Baptist Convention.[10]

The major cause of the inability of the Southern Baptists to attract a greater number from the CRBC proved to be the strength of Canadian national feeling. Although many in BC truly were attracted by the successful programs of the Southern Baptists, the majority could not allow their organization to be swallowed up by a vast American denomination. Some regarded the Southern Baptist problem as a "foreign intrusion."[11] The editor of the *Western Regular Baptist* wrote in 1954:

> We believe the hour has come for a united testimony across Canada. We are Canadians. Let us stay Canadian. Canada needs the testimony of Canadian Baptists. If we can profit by the methods of our American Baptist brethren, well and good. But let us preserve and promote the distinctive work of our Canadian Baptist organization. This editor feels that it is time to turn our eyes towards the East. We appeal for a strong comradeship between ourselves . . . which will one day develop into the uniting of our forces in one great Canada-wide evangelical Baptist convention.[12]

These sentiments represented the editorial position of the *Western Regular*

Baptist throughout the crisis period and most of the troops rallied to the patriotic flag.[13] Of particular importance was the need for a Canadian, as opposed to American, Sunday School curriculum.[14] Those who did join the Southern Baptists later confirmed that such nationalistic sentiments prevented more CRBC from following them.[15] For a group with still quite recent British roots, the Southern Baptists were simply too "American."

As an alternative to an American affiliation, the CRBC heeded their editor's advice and quickly began discussions with the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptists in Canada (FEBC). The FEBC had been created in 1953 by the merger of the Union of Regular Baptists in Ontario and Quebec (formerly led by T.T. Shields) and the Fellowship of Independent Baptist Churches in Ontario (many of which had earlier broken from Shields' rigid control). The FEBC leadership was eager to develop a Canada-wide organization of conservative evangelical Baptists and readily engaged in discussions with western Baptists. These resulted initially in increased co-operation between the CRBC and other Regular Baptists in the prairie provinces, Ontario and Quebec, and culminated in 1965 with the FEBC becoming a national organization of over three hundred churches.[16] The nationalist vision of this body was reflected in the title of its first history, *This Dominion: His Dominion*.[17]

At almost the same time that the CRBC was rejecting affiliation with an American body, a total of thirteen independent evangelical congregations in the province as well as its oldest Bible school, the Vancouver Bible Institute, took virtually the opposite route. They maintained a doctrinal and ecclesiastical stance almost identical to that of the CRBC but affiliated with American bodies, the Baptist General Conference (BGC) and the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA).

Both American denominations had only several congregations in BC before the mid-1950s but the influx of independent congregations and prodigious church planting efforts, partially subsidized from the United States, resulted in remarkable growth from that point. By 1960, the EFCA and the BGC, though still small, had become relatively significant bodies, with a combined Sunday School enrolment rivalling that of the rapidly growing CRBC. Between the two groups, they claimed thirty-five congregations with 1,700 adult, baptised members (plus many adherents) and a Sunday School enrolment of approximately 4,700. Their educational efforts enlarged their significance. In 1962 the EFCA began Trinity Junior College, a liberal arts college in Langley. The college developed over the

decades into a university and became the largest evangelical educational enterprise in the nation. In addition, enrolment at the ACTS seminary consortium, operated by both the EFC and BGC as well as the CRBC, quickly grew to approximately 200 by the early 1990s making it one of the larger seminaries in the country.

Both the BGC and the EFCA originated among Scandinavian immigrants to North America but both had assimilated into North American culture and became closely identified with the wider evangelical movement after 1920. Neither were militantly fundamentalist but both were definitely conservative and highly concerned with a strong evangelistic and church-planting thrust. Both had existed for decades in the Canadian prairies but had largely failed in their attempts to establish themselves in BC before World War II. After the war, their renewed efforts were assisted by two significant developments: the affiliation of formerly independent congregations and the greater availability of money from the United States and the Canadian prairies for church-planting.

The BGC originated in the mid-nineteenth century among Swedish Lutherans converted to Baptist beliefs while both in Sweden under the influence of the pietist movement and in the United States under the influence of nineteenth-century revivalism. In 1856 the churches formed by the converts in Minnesota and Illinois organized as the Swedish Baptist General Conference. By 1889 the new denomination included churches from New England to Washington State.[18]

In Canada, the first Swedish Baptist church was organized in Winnipeg in 1894. A total of twenty-six other churches, supported where necessary by both the Baptist Union of Western Canada and the Swedish Baptist General Conference, were established on the prairies during the great influx of immigrants between 1896 and 1914.[19]

Firm establishment of the BGC In BC did not come until much later. A Swedish church was organized in Golden, in the East Kootenays, in 1906 but it did not last more than several years. In 1910 the Swedish Baptist Church in Bellingham, WA, assisted eighteen of its members residing forty miles to the north in Matsqui, BC—in the Fraser Valley near Abbotsford—to organize their own church. It survived but never became large because the Swedish community in the area did not grow significantly. The next year a Swedish Baptist church was organized in Vancouver but was disbanded in 1928.[20] During the 1930s, however, Swedish Baptists in Washington and Oregon inaugurated the Scandinavian Baptist Mission

in downtown Vancouver. It continued for twenty years, offering food to the destitute and emotionally stirring revivalistic-style services featuring a Scandinavian string band.[21] In 1948, mission work was begun in the growing newsprint town of Powell River, on the coast 120 kilometres north-west of Vancouver, and a congregation composed largely of non-Swedish members was formed.[22]

The BGC quite unexpectedly became a significant force in the Vancouver area in the mid-1950s. The large, independent Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church, second-oldest Baptist church in Vancouver and the "flagship" church of fundamentalists during the 1920s, affiliated with the BGC in 1954. Two years later the denomination assumed control of Vancouver Bible Institute (VBI), an independent but largely mainline conservative-oriented school. Despite enrolments topping one hundred in the immediate post-war period the school went into sharp decline in the 1950s. The council of the school had offered its assets to three groups in 1956: the Canadian Sunday School Mission, the EFCA and the BGC. The Canadian Sunday School Mission declined the offer; the EFCA was eager to accept but was unable to bring the issue to its convention for a vote before the enthusiastic trustees of the BGC accepted.[23]

The transfer of VBI made good sense in that Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church had affiliated with the BGC two years earlier. Since the founding of the school in 1917, its relationship with Mt. Pleasant Baptist had been close. R.W. Sharpe, the VBI council's first vice-president and primary benefactor until his death in 1925, had been a prominent member of Mt. Pleasant Baptist. The church's facilities were frequently used by the school and many of its young people attended VBI. Thirty years after the death of Sharpe, when discussions regarding the possibility of the transfer began, the chairman of Mt. Pleasant's board of deacons was serving as vice-president of VBI's council and the church's associate pastor was an alumnus of the school.[24]

It appears surprising that the British-oriented Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church would affiliate with the American-based, Swedish-oriented BGC but several factors led to the move. After nearly twenty years of independence, the congregation clearly felt a need for being part of a denomination that could provide help in areas such as ministerial education, church planting work and youth programming. However, lingering memories of the repeated schisms of the 1920s and 1930s and ongoing concerns over the issues of theological liberalism and denominational centralism made

both major Baptist groups in the province, the theologically-mixed Convention Baptists and the CRBC, unattractive.

Further, the BGC was known to the congregation through a Canadian connection by means of a prominent member who had been associated with the denomination's large Grant Memorial Baptist Church in Winnipeg and who initiated the discussions about affiliation. Investigation led to the conclusion that the BGC almost perfectly met the congregation's criteria for denominational affiliation: it had not been tainted by involvement in any of the earlier schisms; it was solidly conservative in theology and evangelistic in practice; and it made considerable allowance for the autonomy of local congregations in areas of emphasis and practice. In view of the fact that it had left the CRBC in 1935 due to a centralization of the denomination's foreign missions efforts, Mt. Pleasant Baptist was specially interested in the BGC's missions support system which allowed congregations great flexibility to continue their significant support of interdenominational "faith" missions.[25]

The potential problem of the British-oriented Mt. Pleasant Baptist congregation experiencing difficulty in fitting into the Swedish-originated BGC was significantly alleviated by changes which had occurred within the BGC. It was rapidly losing its ethnic character and distinctiveness. Enough of its members saw their identity in terms of their evangelical beliefs and practices rather than in their ethnicity; this removed most cultural barriers that might have stood in the way of Mt. Pleasant Baptist's full participation within the BGC. The BGC membership increasingly viewed itself as part of North American conservative evangelicalism rather than as part of a minority ethnic group. Its revivalistic and pietistic heritage, combined with its opposition to theological liberalism, had created strong sympathy within the denomination for the conservatives during the fundamentalist/modernist controversy. In the 1930s and 1940s most of the BGC members read books and periodicals by fundamentalists and evangelicals and many supported interdenominational, evangelical missions. They did differ a little amongst themselves regarding their degree of acceptance of all doctrines commonly held by fundamentalists, such as dispensationalism, but almost all came to view American evangelicalism as a safe haven, well fortified against the threat of modernism, within which to assimilate themselves into North American culture.[26]

The affiliation of Mt. Pleasant Baptist with the BGC set in motion a significant chain reaction. In the early 1950s the church was sponsoring

two mission churches in south Vancouver and these went into the denomination at the same time as did their mother church.[27] Also in 1954, a mission in North Vancouver, begun in part by members of Mt. Pleasant, officially affiliated itself with the church and, thus, with the BGC. It grew rapidly to become one of the larger evangelical churches in the prestigious North Shore suburbs.[28]

The chain reaction spread still further. As previously noted, the BGC's acquisition of VBI was significantly related to the Mt. Pleasant Baptist's transfer of allegiance two years earlier. The new orientation of VBI, in turn, influenced the long-established, independent Broadway West Baptist Church, Vancouver, into joining the BGC in 1957.[29]

At about the same time, a non-denominational home missions church-planting organization, the British Columbia Evangelical Mission (BCEM) was bringing its operations to an end. Between the early 1920s and the 1950s the BCEM operated at any one time up to fifteen Sunday Schools and congregations in outlying areas of Greater Vancouver and the Fraser Valley. It maintained very close ties with VBI and the school supplied a significant proportion of its workers. Although much of the support for the BCEM had come from conservatives in the mainline denominations, it was encouraging the congregations of its mission stations to affiliate with their choice of an evangelical denomination. Three of the missions in the greater Vancouver area voted to organize as churches and join the BGC. They were influenced to do so by their close ties with VBI through workers trained there and by one of the BCEM's board members who was a member of Mt. Pleasant Baptist.[30] A fourth mission, in Aldergrove in the central Fraser Valley, begun by the BCEM but turned over to the Mennonite Brethren West Coast Children's Mission in 1957, voted two years later to organize as a church and join the BGC.[31] Finally, also in 1959, an independent church in the suburb of Coquitlam, begun in the 1940s, also decided to affiliate with the BGC.[32]

At the same time that the BGC was growing in BC from the affiliation of existing churches and missions, it was also aggressively seeking to begin other new churches. With strong financial and personnel support from Vancouver's Mt. Pleasant Baptist and with new grant money from churches in Washington and Oregon, significant churches were begun in Vancouver's eastern suburbs of Coquitlam and Surrey and a second mission was launched in North Vancouver.[33]

Thus in the space of the six years, 1954-60, one Bible Institute and

a total of twelve congregations and missions were added to the two small existing BGC churches in the province. The fourteen congregations and missions totalled just over 800 adult baptized members, plus many additional adherents, and drew nearly 1,700 children to their Sunday Schools in 1960.[34]

The churches and their members were a diverse lot in terms of ethnicity and church background. Only the oldest BGC church, the small Matsqui congregation, and the new church in south Vancouver contained substantial Swedish elements and were thus linked ethnically to the majority of BGC churches in North America. A strong British-oriented, separatist Baptist heritage entered the BGC with Mt. Pleasant and Broadway West Baptist churches. A great ethnic diversity was represented in the affiliating missions started by the efforts of mainline Protestants and other evangelicals working through the BCEM and VBI. Even a Mennonite Brethren influence entered the denomination with the affiliation of the Aldergrove church. Thus little held them in common in terms of their origins and ethnic background. Only their conservative evangelical commitment, fostered in many cases by strong links to VBI, a pragmatic desire for denominational fellowship free of both centralized polity and a legacy of distrust of the existing Baptist denominations in the province stemming from earlier schisms, brought them together into the BGC.

The experience of the second American denomination under consideration, the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA) in BC shares many similarities with that of the BGC, but its establishment in the province involved other, different, dynamics. The EFCA, like the BGC, originated among Scandinavian immigrants to North America. Evangelical awakenings in Sweden and Norway in the latter part of the nineteenth century resulted in converts who, upon immigration to the United States, organized congregations which emphasized pietism, missions and congregational autonomy from hierarchical and state control (thus the name "Free"). Further revivals and evangelistic efforts produced many new converts among the largely Lutheran immigrants. The Swedish Evangelical Free Church was formed in 1884 and the Norwegian-Danish Evangelical Free Church Association in 1891. The two bodies developed separately but the fading of linguistic and nationalistic barriers paved the way for their merger in 1950 as the Evangelical Free Church of America.[35]

In Canada Norwegian roots predominated in the early years. The first continuing EFCA church in Canada formed in 1917 in Enchant,

Alberta, following revival meetings among Norwegian settlers recently arrived from the American mid-west. Active evangelism continued in Alberta and Saskatchewan throughout the 1920s but no other churches were established until 1932, when three were established in eastern Saskatchewan. Up to that point, the identity of the Evangelical Free churches in Canada was strongly Norwegian and all church members and new converts claimed Norwegian origins.[36]

Very quickly, however, a process began which later would be of immense significance in BC. The EFCA experience in Canada parallelled that of the American body which, in the words of George Marsden, is one of several denominations which "have been so shaped by twentieth-century contacts with organized transdenominational evangelicalism as to be virtual products of that movement."[37] The Norwegian identity faded and the denomination in Canada became known more instead as a theologically conservative body intensely concerned with the evangelization of people from a wide variety of ethnic groups.

The natural process of assimilation accelerated rapidly because of a close relationship between the EFCA in the prairie provinces and the Prairie Bible Institute (PBI). From the late 1920s onward, relatively large numbers of Evangelical Free youth had been drawn to study at the non-denominational, ethnically diverse Bible school.[38] That association increased and the ethnic orientation of the denomination decreased rapidly as a result of radio evangelistic campaigns which brought an unprecedented evangelical revival to Alberta and parts of Saskatchewan.

These radio campaigns began when Oscar Lowry of the Moody Bible Institute conducted a six-week series on Calgary's powerful CFCN station in the fall of 1938. He had been invited to Calgary by Lee Fosmark, a PBI graduate and pastor of the Enchant Evangelical Free Church, and was backed financially by PBI. The results were phenomenal: Lowry received 5,700 letters from listeners, mostly in Alberta, and over 1,000 conversions were reported. Pastor Fosmark felt the radio campaigns ". . . just set the province of Alberta aflame." Daily evangelistic broadcasts conducted by other radio preachers kept the revival fires burning at least until 1947.[39] Sociologist W.E. Mann cites claims of J.D. Carlson, the most successful radio evangelist, that his audience totalled 500,000 listeners who sent him 300 to 400 letters per day in the winter months.[40]

The radio-induced revival powerfully influenced both PBI and the EFCA. PBI's enrolment nearly doubled from its 280-295 range in the

mid-1930s to 475-544 during the early 1940s, despite war-time conditions which caused enrolments in other similar schools to decline.[41] The EFCA had stagnated by 1938, the Enchant church was at a very low ebb, almost closed, and no new churches had been opened in six years. However, the denomination capitalized on the great receptivity to the evangelical message created by the radio broadcasts and opened eleven new churches in Alberta and western Saskatchewan between 1940 and 1947, nearly quadrupling its roster of congregations in those provinces. In addition, the EFCA was conducting preaching at thirty-five other prairie mission stations by 1945. Significantly, PBI supplied the pastors for the churches and workers for the mission stations, summer camps and vacation Bible schools. Thus, even though no great change in doctrine had occurred, the EFCA quickly became far more identified with PBI's brand of Christianity with its very pronounced emphases on evangelism, world missions and the pietistic focus on the believer's separation from the "world" than with ethnic distinctions.[42]

This relationship between the EFCA and PBI and the resultant weakening of the ethnic identity of the denomination were further encouraged by the merger of a group of independent churches in Saskatchewan and Alberta with the EFCA in 1957. The Fellowship of Gospel Churches was composed of approximately twenty independent congregations, most of which had been begun by, and were pastored by, graduates of PBI. After several years of discussion, eighteen churches of the Fellowship formally merged with the EFCA in 1957, bringing the total number of EFCA congregations in the prairies at the time to forty-three.[43] The PBI influence continued to be strong in the denomination for some time thereafter. As late as 1966, thirty PBI graduates were serving as pastors of EFCA churches in Canada[44] and in the 1968-69 school year, the first in which such figures are available, the EFCA sent more students to PBI than did any other denomination except the Baptists.[45]

The EFCA first attempted expansion into BC when it was still an ethnically-oriented body in 1930. That attempt, in the form of a downtown Vancouver mission to the Norwegian-speaking population, failed and was discontinued after several months. Greater success came six years later when the pastor of the Enchant, Alberta, church moved west to start an English-speaking EFCA church on the east side of Vancouver. With financial assistance from the United States, the new Vancouver congregation, Bethel Evangelical Free Church, survived and was formally organized

in 1938. The following year the congregation began a branch Sunday School in New Westminster which developed into a full-fledged congregation by 1945.[46] At about the same time a new, independent congregation in White Rock, twenty miles south of Vancouver affiliated with the EFC. Over the next five years, these first three churches successfully launched an additional three, bringing the total to six by 1950.[47]

Much greater success came in BC during the 1950s as fifteen new churches were added in that decade bringing the total to twenty-one by 1960. Combined adult, baptized membership in the province totalled just under 900 but the Sunday Schools were quite large and enrolled over 3,000 children.[48] Included among the twenty-one churches were four which had existed prior to affiliation as either independent congregations or as mission stations of the BCEM. These were located in Surrey, White Rock, Delta and Victoria.[49] One of these, Johnston Heights Evangelical Free Church, quickly grew to become one of the largest of all the churches in the rapidly growing suburb of Surrey and the largest EFCA church in Canada.

The decision of these churches and missions to affiliate with the EFCA were strongly influenced by the connections between the EFCA and PBI. Graduates of the school had either served at the various locations or were well-known by the people involved.[50] The Green Timbers church in Surrey, which later merged with another mission church to form the large Johnston Heights church, exemplified this. It had actually been started by students of VBI but the mission later developed links with PBI through several of the school's graduates who had served as workers in Surrey. Some of the members were recent arrivals from Alberta and Saskatchewan and were familiar with the EFCA there. As a consequence of these various links, enough was known of the Evangelical Free Church for it to be considered an option by the group seeking some kind of wider affiliation.[51]

The character of the EFCA was also an important factor in the affiliations. It was theologically conservative enough to satisfy all but the most extreme fundamentalists yet was flexible enough on denominational and theological issues that often separated evangelicals to satisfy those comfortable in the interdenominational approach of BCEM and VBI. Of importance to some with mainline connections was the flexibility of the EFC on the issue of baptism. Adult baptism of believers was generally practised but it was not always insisted upon. In addition, each congregation had at least as much autonomy as that which had attracted other

churches to the BGC.[52]

The very different patterns of denominational affiliation between the CRBC, the EFCA and the BGC in BC certainly indicate different views on Canadian nationalism. A clear sense of identity as Canadians and a belief in their calling to evangelize Canada motivated the CRBC to reject the overtures of the Southern Baptists and link up with the FEBC. The churches affiliating with the EFCA and BGC, on the other hand, evidenced no such nationalistic views but instead quite readily made common cause with American evangelicals.

It is too simple, however, to leave the story as one of Canadian nationalism versus a more American orientation as too many other factors enter into it. One such factor is the differing ethnic backgrounds and character of the various groups involved. The leadership and membership of the first generation of CRBC reflected the overwhelming British dominance of the pre-World War I wave of immigrants and were strongly British in origins and outlook. Nine of the sixteen ministers who led the separatist movement in the province were British-born and only one was from the United States.[53] They looked to Charles Spurgeon, the British Baptist, as their model in separation from any taint or toleration of theological liberalism.[54] No dominant personality within BC emerged as leader, but the English-oriented T.T. Shields of Toronto played a very significant role. He visited Vancouver frequently and encouraged the local militant conservatives in their resistance. He was much more influential in the British-oriented west coast than he was on the more American and European-oriented prairies. His church provided significant financial support for the separatist Baptist organization in BC and his *Gospel Witness* was read widely in the province.[55] Thus, although no formal Canadian ties emerged until the 1960s, the strong British and Canadian orientation of the CRBC was well-established long before then.

In the case of the BGC and the EFCA, a later wave of immigration played a very significant role. An important BC phenomenon in the post-war period was the influx of huge numbers of former prairie residents to the province. That flow, which had become significant in the 1920s and even more so in the 1930s, swelled to a flood during and after World War II. The number of prairie-born residents in BC nearly tripled from 115,000 in 1941 to 323,000 in 1961. One in every five British Columbians (20.3%) had been born in the prairie provinces by that time. Already by 1941 more people in the province had been born in the prairies than had been born in

central and eastern Canada, and by 1961 the prairie group comprised nearly three-quarters of the BC population which had been born elsewhere in Canada.[56] Significantly, a very large proportion of the prairie migrants had European origins: more Europeans came to BC by way of the prairie provinces than came directly from Europe.[57]

This shift in the make-up of the provincial population bore obvious consequences for groups such as the BGC and EFCA which had been established for several decades on the prairies. The westward flow brought many former members and adherents or others at least familiar with the two bodies, thus aiding their establishment in the province. They were viewed in BC not simply as American denominations but as bodies with strong connections to the Canadian prairies.

In addition, it is difficult to overestimate the role of the Bible school movement in Western Canada in the development of the BGC and the EFCA in BC. In the case of the EFCA, the PBI orientation was especially critical. By the post-war period the huge Bible institute had developed a strong constituency on the west coast and provided a link for many to the EFCA. This was already noted in the case of several of the affiliating BCEM congregations, but its effect went further. For example, in the case of the strong and influential Langley congregation, begun in 1948, the largest part of the founding membership came out of the local Conference Mennonite church. The dissidents were English-speaking younger people dissatisfied with the cultural conservatism of their Mennonite church. Several of the young people had received training at Bible institutes in the prairies, especially PBI, and returned to Langley desiring a church more fervently evangelical and theologically conservative than was their doctrinally more latitudinarian, yet culturally more conservative, Conference Mennonite congregation. Large numbers thus gravitated to the PBI graduate beginning the EFCA church in nearby Langley.[58]

Indeed, the infusion into the province of PBI graduates to pioneer new churches ranks as more important than was the infusion of American funds in the spread of the EFCA into the province. The PBI products came imbued with the missionary fervour for which their school was famous and sought out towns and villages where few or no evangelical churches existed. Despite increased denominational funding, most workers needed to be at least partially self-supporting through other employment. In the majority of communities they found no existing core of committed people with which to work and consequently had to rely on strenuous evangelistic

efforts in order to build a congregation.[59]

It is interesting to note that PBI's network also extended south of the border and became one of the stronger influences on the EFCA in the American Northwest. Over one-quarter of the pastors of the EFCA's Pacific Northwest District churches in Washington, Oregon and Idaho during the 1950s and 1960s had studied at PBI. Six of the twenty-two pastors for which data is available had studied at PBI in contrast to only four who had studied at the denomination's own seminary, Trinity, in Illinois.[60]

On a more limited scale, the smaller, more localized influence of VBI was important to the BGC. That Bible school and Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church were instrumental in founding most of the churches and missions which affiliated with the BGC. Once the church and school became part of the denomination, it was not surprising that a number of the smaller churches would follow. An interesting pattern developed which saw the BGC churches concentrated in the Vancouver urban and suburban area, where the influence of the mainline oriented, urban-based VBI was stronger, while far more of the EFCA churches were located in the Fraser Valley, and by 1960, in the interior of the province where the PBI influence was much more pronounced.

Finally, the characteristics of the American denominations courting the Canadian congregations must be taken into consideration. The Southern Baptists were foreign to most Canadian Baptists in a number of ways. As a long-established denomination in the USA, it was unabashedly American in outlook. In addition, the Southern Baptist piety and church polity was somewhat foreign. On the one hand, the southern brethren seemed too liberal by accommodating a few allegedly modernistic elements within itself and by condoning such "worldly" practices as the use of tobacco.[61] On the other hand, the denomination appeared too narrow and sectarian with its "Landmarker" tendencies. The Oregon-Washington Convention, in particular, revealed its "Landmarker" tendencies by rejecting the validity of any baptism not performed by a Baptist church and by practising "closed communion," the exclusion from a church's communion service of all but members of that particular congregation.[62]

By way of contrast, the EFCA and BGC, while American-based, were much less foreign to many Canadian. With origins among relatively recently-arrived Scandinavian immigrants their sense of American nationalism was much less fully developed. Their character also became

much more North American rather than simply American as thousands of Swedes and Norwegians from the American mid-West moved into the Canadian prairies in the pre-World War I period. A great deal of cross-border contact led to the development of a concern for Canadian sensitivities. In addition, as previously noted, the piety of the denominations and their relatively decentralized structure, so strongly influenced by the Bible institutes, were not at all foreign to the BC congregations seeking a wider affiliation. Motivated by such pragmatic considerations and their response to local historical circumstances, they chose to join the American denominations.

Thus, nationalism, or lack of it, was not the only, or even necessarily the most important, factor in determining a church's choice in affiliation. Of course, once links were established, these influenced the orientation of the churches. The CRBC strengthened their Canadian ties and the EFCA and BGC congregations developed increased ties south of the border. While the CRBC functioned as an autonomous Canadian denomination since its establishment, it took the other two denominations much longer to establish a clear Canadian identity. It was not until the early 1980s that changes in government policy, along with the growth of numbers within Canada and a growing sense of Canadian identity, led both the EFCA and the BGC to develop into nearly autonomous Canadian denominations.[63]

Endnotes

1. W.E. Mann, *Sect, Church and Cult in Alberta* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1948), 28.

2. A.C. Forrest, William Kilbourn and Patrick Watson, *Religion in Canada: The Spiritual Development of a Nation* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968), 64.

3. Harry H. Hiller, "Continentalism and the Third Force in Religion," *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 3 (1978): 183-207. See also John S. Moir, "The Sectarian Tradition in Canada," in *Churches in the Canadian Experience*, ed. J.W. Grant (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1963), 129.

4. Compiled from Gordon Pousett, "The History of the Regular Baptists of British Columbia" (B.D. Thesis, McMaster Divinity College), Table 17; and Convention of Regular Baptist Churches, *Convention Yearbook*, 1961.

5. John B. Richards, *Baptists in British Columbia: A Struggle to Maintain Sectarianism* (Vancouver: Northwest Baptist Theological College, 1977), 100-7, 113-4, 122-3; and John J. Ruhlman, *A History of Northwest Regular Baptists: The General Association of Regular Baptist Churches in Washington, Oregon and Idaho, 1939-1975* (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1976), 279-80.

6. Rev. J. Yoder, interview with author, Vancouver, 19 February 1980. Yoder was a student at the Bible college in Port Coquitlam in the period and was one of the first Regular Baptists to advocate union with the Southern Baptists (see also the *Western Regular Baptist*, February 1952, 10-1; Pousett, "The History of the Regular Baptists of British Columbia," 130-133; and Richards, 114-115).

7. Pousett, "The History of the Regular Baptists of British Columbia," 134.

8. *Western Regular Baptist*, July 1954.

9. *Western Regular Baptist*, July 1955.

10. Computed from Pousett, "The History of the Regular Baptists of British Columbia," Table 26, 177.

11. Rev. D.W. Reed, interview with author, Vancouver, 20 February 1980. Reed was editor of the *Western Regular Baptist* in the period.

12. *Western Regular Baptist*, January 1954.

13. See e.g., *Western Regular Baptist*, July and November 1954.

14. *Western Regular Baptist*, July 1954.

15. Yoder, interview with author, 19 February 1980.

16. Davis, "The Struggle for a United Evangelical Baptist Fellowship, 1953-65," in *Baptists in Canada: Search for Identity Amidst Diversity*, ed. Jarold K. Zeman (Burlington: G.R. Welch, 1980), 237-65, provides an account of the formation of the Canada-wide organization.

17. Leslie K. Tarr, *This Dominion: His Dominion* (Willowdale: The Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches, 1968). For a discussion of the significance of the title see Keith N. Clifford, "His Dominion: A Vision in Crisis," *Studies in Religion/Sciences religeuses* 2 (1973): 315-26.

18. Adolph Olson, *A Centenary History* (Chicago: Baptist General Conference Press, 1952); and Gordon Carlson, *Seventy-five Year History, Columbia Baptist Conference* (Seattle: Columbia Baptist Conference, 1964), 2-3. The Columbia Baptist Conference functions as the north-west district of the Baptist General Conference.

19. Joel E. Harris, *The Baptist Union of Western Canada: A Centennial History* (St. John, NB: Lingley Printing, 1976), 41, 57; and C. C. McLaurin, *Pioneering in Western Canada* (Calgary: By the author, 1939), 357-80.

20. Gordon Pousett, "Baptists in British Columbia," in *Circle of Voices: A History of the Religious Communities of British Columbia*, eds. C.P. Anderson et al (Lantzville, BC: Oolichan books: 1983), 64-5; and Carlson, 140, 262.

21. 1961 Census, 1:3., Table 127; John Norris, *Strangers Entertained: A History of the Ethnic Groups of British Columbia* (Vancouver: British Columbia Centennial '71 Committee, 1971), 124-32; and Carlson, 30-3.

22. Carlson, 39-41, 110.

23. Robert C. Stagg, "A Brief Concerning the Future of the Vancouver Bible Institute in Relation to the Baptist General Conference," (unpublished paper, n.d.); Rev. Robert C. Stagg, interview with author, North Vancouver, 1 June 1987; Baptist General Conference, *1957 Annual*, 50; and Evangelical Free Church of America, *Minutes of General Council*, 22 June 1956, cited in Arnold T. Olson, "A Review of Planning the Proposed School in Canada from June 22, 1956 to January 20, 1961," mss, n.d., Trinity Western University Archives, 8. Ironically, formal approval of the deal by the annual convention of the Baptist General Conference was not actually gained until 1957 but the trustees of the denomination acted on their own in anticipation of convention approval.

24. Stagg, "A Brief Concerning the Future of Vancouver Bible Institute," 1; and Stagg, interview with author, 1 June 1987.

25. Carlson, 48-49, 256; and Stephen Anderson, "The Beginnings of the Baptist General Conference in BC," (Undergraduate thesis, Trinity Western University, Langley, 1986).

26. Virgil A. Olson, "The Influence of History upon the Baptist General Conference," in Carlson, 253-257; and Joel Carpenter, "The Renewal of American Fundamentalism, 1930-1945" (Ph.D. dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1984), 195-196.

27. Carlson, 49, 203.

28. Carlson, 200-201; and Stagg, interview with author, 1 June 1987.

29. Anderson.

30. Carlson, 50-51, 194, 198, 206.

31. Carlson, 116.

32. Carlson, 195; and Stagg, interview with author, 1 June 1983.

33. Carlson, 197, 202, 207.

34. Computed from Carlson, 116, 140, 193-210.

35. Roy A. Thompson, *Towards New Horizons: The Evangelical Free Church of America* (Minneapolis: Free Church Publications, 1969).

36. Calvin B. Hanson, *From Hardship to Harvest: The Development of the Evangelical Free Church of Canada* (Edmonton: The Evangelical Free Church of Canada, 1984), 15-76.

37. George M. Marsden, ed., *Evangelicalism in Modern America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), xv.

38. Marsden, 29, 75-76; and Donald Goertz, "The Development of a Bible Belt: The Socio-Religious Interaction in Alberta between 1925 and 1938" (M.C.S. thesis, Regent College, 1980), 209.

39. Goertz, 216-24.

40. Mann, 125.

41. Goertz, 216-224.

42. Goertz, 223-224; and Hanson, *From Hardship to Harvest*, 97-104.

43. Hanson, *From Hardship to Harvest*, 117-23; and Rev. David Enarson, interviews with author, Langley, 25 and 27 January 1983; 11 June 1987. Enarson was moderator of the Fellowship of Gospel churches at the time of the merger.

44. Muriel Hanson, *Fifty Years and Seventy Places: The Story of the Evangelical Free Church of America* (Minneapolis: Free Church Publications, 1967), 74.

45. John G. Stackhouse, Jr., "Proclaiming the Word: Canadian Evangelicalism Since the First World War" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1987), 91.

46. Hanson, *Hardship to Harvest*, 77-90.

47. Hanson, *Hardship to Harvest*, Appendix.

48. *Yearbook* (1961), Evangelical Free Church of America.

49. *Johnston Heights Evangelical Free Church: A Thanks to God for These 20 Blessed Years* (Surrey: Johnston Heights Evangelical Free Church, 1978), 1-2; Enarson, interviews with author, 25 and 27 January 1983; 11 June 1987; and Mrs. J.A. Stewart, interview with author, Surrey, 6 March 1984. Mrs. Stewart was one of the founding workers of the Green Timbers Mission, Surrey, which merged to form the Johnston Heights church (see *B.C. Evangelical News* 3-7 (1944-1948), and Hanson, *Hardship to Harvest*, 91, but note that Hanson confuses the BCEM with the BC Sunday School Mission).

50. Enarson, interviews with author, 25 and 27 January 1983; 11 June 1987.

51. Enarson, interviews with author, 25 and 27 January 1983; 11 June 1987.

52. Rev. Ted Handy, interview with author, Abbotsford, 12 June 1987. Rev. Handy was the first pastor of the Langley Evangelical Free Church.

53. Compiled from Pousett ("The History of the Regular Baptists of British Columbia," Appendix E) in conjunction with J.B. Richards, interview with author, Vancouver, 7 December 1979; and D. Hills, interview with author, Vancouver, 3 January 1980.

54. *The B.C. Baptist*, 19 November 1925, 2-3.

55. Pousett, "A History of the Convention of Baptist Churches of British Columbia" (M.Th. Thesis, Vancouver School of Theology, 1982), 176. Issues of the *Gospel Witness* from the first half of 1926 give extensive coverage to two such trips in the first six months of that year.

56. Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 365, Table 8.

57. Jean Barman, "The West Beyond the West: The Demography of Settlement in British Columbia," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 25, No. 3 (Fall 1990): 6, Table I.

58. Enarson, interviews with author, 25 and 27 January 1983; 11 June 1987; and Handy, interview with author, 12 June 1987. See also, *Bethel Mennonite Church* (n.p., 1980), 9-13 for evidence of the cultural conservatism of the Coghlan church.

59. Enarson, interviews with author, 25 and 27 January 1983; 11 June 1987. Enarson was district superintendent of the EFC's Pacific (i.e., BC) District from 1957-66 when much of the expansion occurred.

60. Compiled from Robert A. Rapp, "A History of the Pacific Northwest District Conference of the Evangelical Free Church of America" (Graduate research project, Western Evangelical Seminary, Portland, 1976), Appendix O.

61. Yoder, interview with author, 19 February 1980.

62. *Western Regular Baptist*, January 1954 and July 1955; Richards, *Baptists in British Columbia*, 114-7; and Pousett, "The History of the Regular Baptists," 130-133.

63. Lloyd Mackey, "Canadian Churches Gain Independence from Their US Counterparts," *Christianity Today* 28 (14 December 1984): 70-71.