

Mais cet héritage, figurant certainement parmi nos biens culturels les plus précieux, pourra-t-il être sauvegardé et mis en valeur à long terme? Bien que les auteurs affirment que les archives paroissiales sont habituellement bien tenues, nous ne pouvons toutefois être plus optimiste qu'il ne faut sur les plans de la conservation permanente et sur celui de l'accès aux documents. Les communautés paroissiales québécoises souffrent aujourd'hui de mutations profondes puisqu'encore hier toutes étaient pourvues d'un curé titulaire et parfois d'un vicaire. Ces belles années sont choses du passé car dans plusieurs diocèses un nombre croissant de paroisses n'a plus de curé résident alors que les communautés sont prises en charge par des administrateurs laïcs et des animateurs de pastorale. Si l'inéluctable diminution des effectifs cléricaux pose des défis de taille aux catholiques dans le maintien de la pratique religieuse, cette situation fait également peser certaines menaces sur le patrimoine archivistique et architectural des paroisses du Québec. Jusqu'ici, le curé de paroisse était d'office le conservateur des archives paroissiales. Les inventaires le démontrent bien : les curés de paroisse ont le plus souvent fait un excellent travail archivistique. Mais, avec leur lente disparition des paroisses, rien ne permet d'affirmer qu'il en sera toujours ainsi dans les prochaines années. Sur le plan de l'accessibilité, on sent déjà un certain resserrement puisque des diocèses recommandent de limiter l'accès aux chercheurs faute de facilités pour les recevoir (je fais bien sûr abstraction ici des documents qui ne peuvent être divulgués en vertu des règles de protection des renseignements personnels). À nos yeux, la conservation de ce trésor archivistique ne trouve tout son sens que s'il peut être consulté et mis à profit par la recherche. Diane Saint-Pierre traite de quelques-unes de ces questions dans son récent article intitulé «Les archives de paroisse : création, conservation et mise en valeur : une étude des paroisses de la Côte-du-Sud» (*Archives* 22, 1 (été 1990) : 57-78).

Les communautés locales, les administrations diocésaines ainsi que les Archives nationales du Québec devraient immédiatement réfléchir à la manière dont on assumera la protection et la mise en valeur des archives paroissiales dans le prochain quart de siècle. Diverses mesures peuvent être d'ores et déjà imaginées comme la création de centres régionaux ou diocésains d'archives paroissiales. Ces centres auraient pour avantage de ne pas trop éloigner les documents du lieu de leur création tout en permettant de respecter certaines normes de préservation et de faciliter la consultation. Ce n'est peut-être pas là la seule possibilité envisageable, mais il semble évident que l'État québécois devra supporter financièrement ces initiatives. Comme le disait récemment à même ces pages Debra Barr au sujet des archives religieuses en général (*Archivaria* 30) : «to overcome the limitations of budgets and boundaries, we need to lift up our eyes and organize.» Il faudra donc plus qu'un acte de foi pour protéger et mettre en valeur les archives paroissiales. L'inventaire de Diane Saint-Pierre et de Yves Hébert n'est-il pas un excellent outil de prise de conscience?

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Saving China: Canadian Missionaries in the Middle Kingdom, 1888-1959. ALVYN AUSTIN. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986. xvii, 395 p. ISBN 0802056873.

One evening in September 1888, over one thousand young Torontonians gathered in a torch-lit parade to bid farewell to the first group of Canadian missionaries leaving for China. This event inaugurated over seventy years of Canadian missionary adventures in

China. Alvyn Austin's *Saving China: Canadian Missionaries in the Middle Kingdom, 1888-1959* is an able chronicle of this fascinating aspect of Canadian history.

Austin, the son of Canadian missionaries who were associated with the evangelical China Inland Mission, offers a lively overview of Canadian Christian missionary activities in China. Sponsored by Canada's mainline churches as well as by several nondenominational Protestant organizations, Canadian missionaries endured unenviable hardships in establishing their fields and surviving life in a country where language and social customs were completely foreign. Through the development of churches, schools, hospitals, and orphanages, Canadian missionaries attempted to introduce both Christian theology and western culture into China.

Austin portrays Canadian missionaries as idealists who were committed to the notion of evangelism and service in foreign lands. Despite denominational differences, most Canadian missionaries were of British stock and came from middle-class and upper middle-class backgrounds. Many were raised on farms or in small towns, and they shared a commitment to British Anglo-Saxon values. Few had any prior knowledge of Chinese language, culture, or history, and most arrived in China entirely ignorant of the country and people they sought to serve.

Austin identifies three distinct eras of missionary activity. The first era, from 1888 until the beginning of the twentieth century, was characterized by the "saving gospel" — the simple introduction of Christianity into China. Missionaries of this era were concerned with little more than establishing mission outposts from which they could begin to proselytize and convert the Chinese to Christianity. After 1900, missionaries increasingly emphasized the importance of providing education and medical services, which was the "social gospel" era of Canadian missions. After 1928 Canadian missions were dominated by the political dimensions of Chinese life — and reflected a "political gospel."

The strength of Austin's work is his narrative account of the rise and fall of Canadian missions in China. The book describes the impact of many major developments of twentieth-century China on the Canadian missions: the Boxer Rebellion; the rise of Chinese nationalism and civil war in the 1920s; the conversion of Chiang Kai-shek and his later defeat at the hands of Mao's communists; and the official expulsion of Christian missionaries after 1949. At the same time, Austin is sensitive to the personal dimensions of the story. Vivid portraits of missionaries such as Jonathan Goforth, Hudson Taylor, Robert McClure, and James Endicott are offered. The naivety and self-righteousness of Canadian missionary policy is not ignored; nor is the human dimension of frustration, disease, and death. *Saving China* is both the story of Canadian missionaries in China and the missionary strategies of churches and missionary agencies "to evangelize the world in this generation."

The detailed narrative of *Saving China* makes it required reading for all archivists working with collections relating to Canadian missions. The author has drawn on a wide variety of primary and secondary sources, and has presented a comprehensive overview of Canadian missions to China.

Still, weaknesses in the book are apparent. Most glaring is the book's failure to analyze many of the events it describes. The role of Canadian missionaries within the Canadian churches is never satisfactorily assessed, nor is their overall impact on the

evolution of Chinese culture. Many of the internal differences within the missionary movement itself are also not discussed. As William Hutchison has proven for American Protestant missions, liberal and evangelical groups had widely divergent theologies of mission. Austin offers occasional hints as to what these might be for Canadians: "It is almost possible to identify an individual's missionary theology from his or her photograph; those wearing Chinese dress tended to be the most evangelical — people who could not compromise their theology; on the other hand, those who continued to wear Western clothing, and who could not compromise on cultural grounds as they saw it, were the liberals." Tragically, this and many other observations are never developed into a fully cohesive analysis. The book explains what the missionaries did, not why they did it. Nonetheless, *Saving China* serves as a valuable introduction to Canadian missions to China. Its narrative will be indispensable to those interested in understanding the nature of Canada's work abroad, and of interest to students of Canadian history and religion.

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