

CANADIAN MISSION LITERATURE: 17th CENTURY

by

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I have been engaged for some time in trying to translate the letters of St. Charles Garnier, and to make a little study of them and his life. Naturally, I have been somewhat enthusiastic in this little work and some of this has shown. That is perhaps the reason I was asked to give a paper, to be presented to you at your annual meeting. But when I came to grips with my subject, I realized that to deal solely and only with the letters of St. Charles Garnier would be to touch but the fringes of a vast field of research. You see, there are only twenty eight known letters from the hands of the saint. (And some of these are but extracts, quoted in the Annual Reports, known as Jesuit Relations). There are four in the handwriting of the missionary.

1: two addressed to Very Reverend Father Mutius Vitelleschi and a third addressed to Very Reverend Father Vincent Caraffa. These are kept in the General Archives of the Society of Jesus. Two of them have been published, with translation, in the JESUIT RELATIONS AND ALLIED DOCUMENTS (Thwaites Edition Vol. XXV, 82-XXX, 146).

2: The fourth autograph letter was written to Father Pierre Boutard, S.J. It is to be found in the Archives de la Province de Lyon S.J. (MSS du P. Prat S.J.). It was published, but not translated, in LES JESUITES ET LA NOUVELLE FRANCE AU XVII^e SIECLE by Father Camille de Rochemonteix.

There are four extracts of letters from Father Garnier, published in the annual reports. These have been republished in Thwaites, with translations. (JR XII 128; JR XX 64 JR XXX 126 JR XXXV 138).

However the most important, and the bulk of the letters, are to be found in contemporary copies in Saint Mary's College Archives (Montreal). The first two are in a MSS 'Copie Contemporaine'. One is addressed to his father and tells the story of his crossing over to Canada: the second is to his brother Father Henri de Saint-Joseph. These two letters have been published in LETTRES DU BAS CANADA June 1949 pp. 28-30 and 30-33. In the same Archives is a collection

of some eighteen letters. It is possible that we owe this copy of Father Garnier's letters to one of his brothers, Father Henri de Saint-Joseph. Unfortunately the collection of letters has suffered damage and some letters, of a certainty, have been lost. They were published in the 1929 RAPPORT DE L'ARCHIVISTE DE LA PROVINCE DU QUEBEC.

Though it is true that much can be learned from a study of these letters, and no complete translation has ever been published, I have come to the conclusion that such a study would not be suitable for our group at this time. It would prove perhaps too specialized and might get involved in too great minutiae.

I would therefore, like to bear upon your patience further, and give an outline of the whole field of mission letters in the seventeenth century in Canada. And here I fall into the other extreme, of dealing with too large a canvas. For the scope of this paper is as wide as the whole of New France, from the stormy shores of the Atlantic to the vast unknown regions of the Great Lakes and even beyond, from the dreaded mystery of Hudson's Bay into the very hinterland of the Mississippi Valley and south to the Floridas. It includes the story and the heroism, the quarrels and the triumphs of priest, brother, sister and layman in the life of the Christian Church. It deals with Franciscan (Recollects and Capuchins) Jesuits, and the secular or diocesan clergy. And we must not forget the work of the sisters, Hospitalliers, Ursulines, and the Canadian Foundation of the Congregation de Notre Dame. The laymen and women too loom large in this heroic age of the Canadian Missions. True the scope of this paper does not include the telling of the story, but only an outlining of where to go for the writings of all these men and women. Much has been done. But still more needs to be done - the Manuscript material alone is scarcely tapped. This may surprise many of you as you know of a great amount of matter that has been published, and a great deal more that has been utilized in the writings that are available to us.

It is only just that before I get further into the subject of this paper, I pay a little - inadequate though it be - tribute to the pioneer workers (historians) in the field of Canadian Church History. Naturally, I cannot be exhaustive and some names will certainly be overlooked. This does not mean that I or any other delver into this subject, do not appreciate what has been done.

Perhaps we can begin by mentioning some of the earliest historians and writers whose books have become authorities, or quasi-authorities in themselves. And here I need only give their names - their work is a must for the historian of the Church in Canada. Lescarbot, Champlain, Sagard, Brebeuf, LeJeune, Biard, Charles and Jerome Lalemant, Vimont, Ragueneau, Ducreux, Charlevoix, Bressani, Lafitau - the list is already too long.

In the matter of publishing original documents concerning missionaries and church affairs in the seventeenth century there are scholars such as Father Felix Martin S.J., Father Auguste Carayon S.J., and Edmund Bailley O'Callaghan who prepared the way for writers such as Parkman and J. Gilmary Shea to write their histories of the Indian Missions. And don't think that I am minimizing the magnificent and individual research of these last. To Father Felix Martin we owe the first great re-edition of the Jesuit Relations (under the auspices of the Government of the United Canadas) and to him we owe the copies of many documents utilized by the various scholars, under the leadership of Reuben Cold Thwaites, in the 1896-1901 collection known as THE JESUIT RELATIONS AND ALLIED DOCUMENTS. One cannot over-estimate the value of that collection of documents to the study of both church and secular history of North America, but it is time that we had a new, scholarly and up-dated edition of these and other documents. The re-edition by Loyola University was no real service to scholarship.

The names of other Canadian scholars eminent in the field would make a list far too long to be entirely interesting. But it would be an injustice to the value of what they have done to omit the names of Father Camille de Rochemonteix (Les Jésuites et la Nouvelle-France) and Father Arthur E. Jones (Old Huronia) for Jesuit Mission History, of Mm. les Abbés Faillon, Ferland, Laverdière and Casgrain for the general history of the church in Canada, of Streit (Bibliotheca Missionum) and Gagnon for early bibliography. And we cannot enumerate those scholars of the Public Archives of Canada, and of Les Archives de la Province de Quebec who have done magnificent work for our history in the Annual Reports published by these two governmental departments. Their name is legion and their merit is great. I do not here make any attempt to list the names or tally the efforts of modern scholars who have laboured and are

labouring in the field of Canadian Church History, no matter how meritorious and valuable it may be.

To seek for documents relative to seventeenth century church history is a task that could take the efforts of many students and scholars and the time needed for this research could take their many life spans. For the early period, let us say the first half of the century, the greater part of the research must be spent in the Archives and in the Libraries of Europe. This is understandable in that the time of the pioneer was not favourable for the preservation of original documents in this country. And further, most of the early documents are letters and reports sent back to the mother-country. It is rare to find original documents of this period in Canada or the United States. Printed works are indeed found in the great Canadian and American Libraries such as the New York City Library, Harvard University Libraries, Congressional Library (Washington), the John Carter Brown Library to name one or two in the United States. In Canada, we must seek for aid in our researches from Laval University Library (Quebec), the Library of St. Sulpice (Montreal), the Library of La Ville de Montreal, the libraries of the two Public Archives already mentioned.

For the second half of the century original documentation becomes more abundant. To our researches in Europe must now be added search in the Les Archives de la Province de Quebec, the Archebiscopal Archives of the Diocese of Quebec and other lesser Canadian Libraries and Archives.

It is rather hard to begin this section. Principally the question to be asked as we begin our studies is where do I go, where do I begin. I think we can pre-suppose that our historian has long passed the first stage of his research and has made himself the master of what has been written and done for Church History in Canada. But he is in the position where to really contribute to this field he must verify from original resources what has been done and by original research add his own little bit to the overall picture. Lest he merely flounder in the morass of TOO MUCH, he will seek out any Calendars that might aid him, e.g. Leland's Guide to Materials for American History in the Libraries and Archives of Paris or Matteson's List of Manuscripts concerning American History preserved in European Libraries and noted in their published

Catalogues and similar printed lists. These two, as well as other Calendars were published by the Carnegie Institute, Washington. Our own Public Archives of Canada have printed useful lists of material found in some European Libraries. But as of the moment everything so far published is truly out-dated and woefully inadequate.

The main libraries of Europe are known to all of you. In France there is La Bibliothèque National in Paris. The vast amount of material in this depository has never been fully catalogued, may never be catalogued, and much too often, even when catalogued in the past, precious documents have been lost, or at least cannot now be found. It is a huge and vast treasure house for the story of Canada and the Canadian Church. Our own Public Archives have done a truly splendid job of trying to make available what is to be found there. One of the most precious sections, at least for some of my field, is that known as Mélanges Colbert. Unfortunately for my own studies I have not been able to study or do research work in any of the Archives of France. I have always had to have recourse to the assistance of others.

Speaking of other Depositories in France we must note that a vast, almost untapped source for Canadiana are the various Archives of the many Departments of France, for instance, Father Campeau in his recent publication *La Première Mission d'Acadie (1602-1619)* found precious material in La Bibliothèque de Grenoble, Les Archives départementales de Meurthe-et-Moselle at Nancy, La Seine-Maritime at Rouen. And we must not forget, among many others, Les Archives Nationales at Paris and La Bibliothèque Mazarine. Outside of France there are other depositories that must not be omitted. The British Museum and the Public Record Office in London must be consulted wherever the English infringe on New France and sometimes even when they don't. Another largely untapped source is the Bibliotheca Vaticana. But doesn't this all frighten you? If so, I may say that for many years now our Canadian Embassy in Paris has had at least one scholar always at hand for the work of the Canadian Archives.

But there is one European Archives with which I am somewhat familiar, although I have not done anything special there for a long time. This is the ARCHIVUM HISTORICUM ROMANUM SOCIETATIS JESU now in Rome. These archives are filled with the documentation needed

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for the governing of the Order. The correspondence of the Superior General of the Order in Rome with the Provincial and local superiors forms the great bulk of this documentation. This is only natural when one considers the strong centralization of government set up by St. Ignatius. From the very beginning St. Ignatius desired the members of the Order, according to their office to keep in frequent touch with the Father General.

The only difficulty in the earliest days was the difficulty of mailing and delivery of correspondence, the difficulty of distance and the dependance for the most part on private entrepreneurs for delivery. The Constitutions of the Order at first obliged every Provincial and local superior to write at least once a week (two very useful articles on the above points are 1: Georg Schurhammer, Die Anfänge des römischen Archives der Gesellschaft Jesu (1538-1548) in AHSI 12 (1943) 89-118 and 2: Mario Scaduto, La Corrispondenza dei primi Gesuiti e le poste italiane, in AHSI 19 (1950) 236-253) if they lived in Italy, and once a month if they lived elsewhere in Europe. However, the second General Congregation held in 1565 ordered a lessening of this frequency. Provincial Superiors were required to write once a month, while the Father Rectors and other superiors directly appointed by the General had to write only quarterly. Other superiors and consultors were required to write only once a year.

This did not take into account the difficulties of the foreign missions. The Provincials of India and of Brazil could only keep in touch when the slow navigation allowed. And we know that even in the most favourable of circumstances, in New France, none could write oftener than once a year.

This correspondence was overwhelming. It could not all be kept. There simply was no room. Kept for a reasonable time, most of it had to be destroyed. But it is not completely lost, in that at least the registers of letters written in answer by Father General have been kept. Besides not all the originals have been destroyed. Some attempt has always been made to keep the documents that might prove most useful for the history of the Order. In other words all papers and documents that would seem to have some permanent value. Examples of this are those annual reports detailing the beginning of a mission or apostolic work, and any that might cast further light

on that mission.

The history of the Roman Archives of the Order is rather hectic. Preserved up to 1773 in the Professed House in Rome, they remained there after the suppression of the Order until the restoration in 1814 to the Jesuits in Rome. However, the law of 1873 confiscating the Libraries of Religious Houses but permitting a religious congregation to keep its records and archives, caused a rising fear of loss. The Jesuits hid their precious documents for three years in the basement of the Villa Torlonia, and then removed them to the attic of the Collegium Germanicum. However, part did not escape confiscation and were made part of the State Archives. These were the Archives of the Procurator of the Order, separate altogether from the main Archives. This section, now confiscated, received the name in the State Archives of Fondo Gesuitico. Father Francis Ehrle, later Cardinal, thought it prudent to have the precious documents sent out of Italy. This task was entrusted to then Archivist Father John Baptist Van Meurs. A new house had just been opened in Exaeten in Holland and this was to be the new Archives, until 1927, when they were transferred to Valkenburg, still in Holland. In 1939, just prior to World War II they returned to Rome. In the meantime Father Pacchi-Venturi negotiated the return of the Fondo Gesuitico to the Order. This now forms a not inconsiderable part of the present Archivum Romanum.

The documents are carefully classified, bound in volumes and are under the full care of qualified archivists. In this paper I do not intend to do more than to outline very briefly that which refers only to our present subject - Mission Letters in the Seventeenth Century. But we should note that some of the sections not particularly dealt with in this paper should not be altogether neglected. Besides the correspondence of Father General and the members of the Order, the Archives are divided into a section concerning the Institute of the Order (Institutum), another on the history (Historia Societatis) various letters (Epistolae Prostrorum etc.), lives of Jesuits (Vitae), and to this we must add the restored Fondo Gesuitico, which has retained its separate identity.

What is of most interest to us in Canada is that part of the Archives dealing with the administration of the missions of New France. Up to the formation of the Assistancy of France, all letters

and administrative documents referring to Canada directly are grouped under the various provinces of the Order, France, Lyons, Aquitania, Toulouse and Champagne. After the formation of the Assistancy of France the documents are grouped together under the title of Gallia (France). This latter collection is formed of some 177 Codices, of which Gallia 109 and Gallia 110 are the most important for Canada. Sufficient for the General Archives of the Order.

Among other Archives in Europe a mention should also be made of Les Archives de la Province de France S.J., now kept at Chantilly (Oise). Here, particularly in the large Collection Brotier are found many documents useful for the history of the church in seventeenth century New France.

Archives of the CLASSIS of Amsterdam, in Nieuwe Kerk (beside Royal Palace). (Classis-foreign missionary Board of the Reformed Church in Holland.) 100 folio volumes, in MSS. Begin 1574. A few Latin letters from Jesuit Missionaries in Central New York are also here found. Several of the Jesuits were protected or assisted by Dutch ministers from Indian barbarities, and this kindness was subsequently acknowledged. From Corwin, Edwin T.

The Amsterdam Correspondence Knickerbocker Press 1897, p. 84 - (reprinted from Vol. VII American Society of Church History) above passage from long citation in Spoelstra, C: Bouwstoffen voor de Geschiedenis der Nederduitsch - gereformeerde Kerken in Suid-Africa. Deel I, p. XXIX, Amsterdam, 1906.

But before we leave this matter of documentation and the principal places where the documents can be found, I must call attention to one of the most useful studies yet made on this matter. It is the Inventaire des documents concernant l'église du Canada sous le regime Français, by Ivanhée Caron and published in Rapport de l'Archiviste de la Province de Québec 1939-1940. Prior to the coming of Bishop Laval not too much unknown material is listed, but after 1659 a new era had opened for Canada, and the documentation is greater. M. l'Abbe Caron gives something new in the documents he can list. He gives summaries from the originals kept in the Archives of the Archbishop of Québec.

Is there any conclusion that one can draw from this rather sketchy survey. Yes, I think there is. There is a great need for

a complete bibliography of Canadian Church History or at least for gathering into one place a complete index as to documentation and published works. This is the more needed because we need to know what has been done and what needs to be done. The lacunae in our Canadian Church History are many. It may be true that the broad outlines have been traced, but even though this may be true of early New France early Quebec and early Ontario it is decidedly untrue to say this of any other part of Canada, especially if we are to deal with the complete history of the Church including all its parts and all its sects and denominations. For the Society of Jesus the general story has been told, but not up to the present, and the story of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and the Western Missions has been quite fully done, but the wider story yet awaits the scholar. And the first consideration is that he be given the tools to do a job. And one of the tools remains a complete and adequate bibliography.