

*Will to Power: The Missionary Career of Father Morice*, by David Mulhall. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986.

For the last fifteen years of the nineteenth century, Father A. G. Morice, O.M.I., ruled the northern interior of British Columbia as a missionary "priest-king" from his base at Fort St. James. He physically and mentally coerced his Indian communicants, ignored his missionary superiors, used his authority over the Carrier Indians to extract concessions from the Hudson's Bay Company, and routinely manipulated the regional Indian Agent to his personal advantage. Morice's ambitions stretched beyond local dominance. The priest modelled much of his life after his hero, Father Emile Petitot, who had received public acclaim for his labours among the Dene of the Mackenzie District. Like Petitot, Morice sought the adulation of the intellectual world, writing copious reports of his missionary work, compiling an ethnohistory of the Carrier, and working assiduously on a Carrier linguistic text.

The attraction of Father Morice for a biographer is obvious. As an articulate and outspoken egomaniac, he left ample documentation of his activities and perspective; because of his tendency toward controversy, others could not avoid offering comments on his behaviour. This, combined with Morice's numerous publications, provides a substantial basis for a scholarly analysis of the missionary's career. Mulhall is careful not to claim too much for his work, eschewing 'psychobiography' and claiming that he has avoided "both copious comparisons and detailed 'context' descriptions" (p. x). On this latter point, Mulhall is too modest, for one of the strengths of the study lies in his sensitivity to the cross-cultural setting within which Morice worked, and the complex social and economic forces impinging on missionary work with the interior Indians.

*Will to Power* offers a thorough narrative of Morice's missionary career, with only occasional gaps forced by the lack of documentation, such as when he travelled to France in 1896. Mulhall is at his best in assessing Morice's relationships with the Indians, equally careful in describing Morice's adaptation of the Durieu missionary system as he is in explaining the persistence of Native spirituality with a Catholic framework. Similarly, the priest's effort to dominate the lives of others, including the unfortunates sent by the church to work with him, Hudson's Bay Company officers, and Indian Agents, is well described. There is no hagiography here, but neither is there simplistic criticism of a rather obnoxious and disagreeable man. Mulhall instead seeks to understand the motivation and character of this unusual man. He draws on William Dunning's 'Marginal Man' explana-

tion for the 'non-democratic' behaviour of white leaders on frontier, but modifies this useful model by pointing to the role of personality and social role in determining patterns of behaviour and opportunities for establishing control. One does not come to like Father Morice through *Will to Power*, but the reader does leave with a comprehensive understanding of this most complex individual.

A number of questions remain, however. Mulhall makes no attempt to assess contemporary intellectual response to Morice's scholarly writings (although offering his own assessments of the work). Most of Morice's books were self-published, but there is little explanation given of how the information was subsequently disseminated. Were the books sent to France, or kept within church circles? Similarly, one wonders if contemporaries interested in ethnography consulted his studies or applauded his methodology. Why was Morice denied the intellectual accolades he so desperately sought if, as the author argues, his studies of the Carrier represented such path-breaking work?

More troubling, because of what it could potentially tell us about Catholic missions to the Indians, are Mulhall's inadequate explanations of the church's failure to discipline Morice. The missionary repeatedly ignored his superiors, dealt with subordinates in a cavalier fashion, and displayed little interest in the Christian mission to which he supposedly dedicated his life. His interest was, according to Mulhall, simply in dominating those around him. The church knew of his difficulties, and received numerous complaints about his behaviour, but moved very slowly against him. Mulhall suggests that a shortage of men in the district prevented precipitous action, but that explanation is insufficient. Why did the church retain such a clearly 'unchristian' man in the order? Was there no concern expressed for the impact of the priest on the Indians? Was the Oblate order worried only about maintaining mission stations, or were there other motives? On a different level, what attracted Morice, and other Oblates, to the harsh 'Durieu' missionary system, which was not uniformly adopted within the Oblate order?

In a different vein, it is unfortunate that Mulhall's careful attention to initial Native-missionary contact is not balanced by a similar assessment of Morice's legacy among his Indian congregations. Did his brand of authoritarian Christianity bind the Natives to the church, or did they abandon Catholicism once Morice's grip had been released? The author makes good and careful use of oral testimony to flesh out description of aspects of Morice's life among the Indians, but does not use this same evidence to judge the missionary's long-term impact. The omission is unfortunate,

for the book ends with a painfully sad portrait of Morice, shunned by a church that had finally removed him from a position of power, unrecognized for his ethnographic studies, and ignored by his former charges; it would have been appropriate to turn back to the venue of Morice's power, and to assess the lingering images of the "priest-king" in the northern Interior of British Columbia. It was there, and not in a small Winnipeg home, that the principal impact of Father A. G. Morice's career rested.

The volume reflects the typically high standards of the University of British Columbia Press, but a couple of technical details merit attention. An excellent series of photographs illustrates the text, but they are jumbled together in a fashion that does the illustrations a disservice. More unfortunate is the absence of a suitable series of maps (one is provided) to enable readers to trace Morice's lengthy travels among the Indians.

One does not wish to end a review of a well-researched, finely written biography on a negative note, but a major puzzle remains. Why are scholars drawn to exceptional individuals within the missionary corps? A biography of Morice is helpful, but one is left knowing a great deal about a unique and unrepresentative character, and wanting to know more about the less flamboyant or controversial missionaries. While biographies such as *Will to Power* and Jean Usher's *William Duncan of Metlakatla* help us understand these highly publicized figures from British Columbia's past, they leave us with a far from complete, and even misleading, portrait of the missionary enterprise. Is it too much to hope that future historians will, while not eschewing controversial individuals, look for more representative individuals or perhaps assess the background, motivation, and impact of the broader missionary corps? Given David Mulhall's ability to handle the multi-faceted Father Morice, it is to be hoped that he will subsequently search for a larger canvas.

*University of Victoria*

KEN COATES

*British Columbia: Visions of the Promised Land*, ed. and intro. Brenda Lea White. Vancouver: Flight Press, 1986. Pp. 115.

"Vancouver has always seemed," muses Ron Woodall,

like a city that only dabbles at being a city, its citizens a population that only dabbles at its pursuits. I hasten to add that I consider myself a dabbler. The dictionary will tell you that the term describes a person who does things in a slight or superficial manner. My definition differs slightly. I see dabbling as