

The fate of the *Legenda aurea* in Quebec's *Notre Légende dorée*.

Brenda Dunn-Lardeau

Résumé: *Plusieurs se souviendront de Notre Légende dorée dont parle Brenda Dunn-Lardeau dans cet article. Elle nous décrit l'ouvrage en trois volumes du Frère H.-E. Bergeron, sa réception et ses emprunts à la longue tradition des légendes dorées en France. Elle conclut que la version québécoise s'inscrit plutôt dans le didactisme de la littérature religieuse pour la jeunesse au début du siècle.*

The *Legenda aurea*, a collection of saint's lives was written by the Dominican Jacobus of Voraigne in the XIIIth c., and is organized along with other texts on several liturgical feast days according to the saints' anniversaries in the liturgical calendar.

A recent article by C.M. Gagnon entitled *Reminiscences de la Légende dorée au Québec* claimed that the *Legenda aurea* had had but an indirect influence in the development of hagiographical literature in Quebec as it has been filtered through the collections compiled by Giry and Rivadaneira. Her further research, in library catalogues before 1763, and in parish libraries between 1848 and 1944, confirmed that although collections of saints' lives indebted to the *Legenda aurea* (such as those of Giry and Rivadaneira,) are to be found, the *Legenda aurea* itself remains absent. These statements may well need to be reassessed in the light of the overlooked *Notre Légende dorée*. This work has not yet been examined on its own merit nor within the framework of an investigation of the literary fate of the French branch of the *Legenda aurea*.

Notre Légende dorée par "un frère mariste" (Ernest Beatrix pseudonym of Br. Hilaire-Ernest Bergeron, 1885-1963) Montréal, Bibliothèque de l'Action française, 1923, claims to be a patriotic and educational work. It is shaped according to the didactic *exemplum* literature genre. Let me describe *Notre Légende dorée*, and suggest where it stands in the context of the history of children's literature.

Notre Légende dorée is a series of three volumes published separately in 1923, 1924 and 1925, then bound together in 1926.⁴ Volume 1 gathers anecdotes on the devotion to the Sacred Heart along with a miscellany of exempla depicting the deeds of the founders of the Church and country, famous or otherwise from the seventeenth century on. Although XVIIth century heroes get the larger share of attention, there are also more modern episodes on French-Canadians who settled outside Quebec, in Manitoba and Sas-

katchewan for example, and even outside Canada, such as those who set out to work in the United States at the turn of the century and remained faithful to their faith and language. There are also recollections of endearingly pious traditions that have lived on for centuries such as that of the father blessing his family on New Year's Day.

Volume II deals with Temperance, a sensitive topic in the 1920s, and is followed by hagiographical excerpts on the founding figure-heads of the Church and country. Faithful to the political and religious context of the time in Quebec, where nationalism and Catholic faith were one, the author includes historical examples of Christians who gave their lives to the service of the nation. Among these, three were entitled to being called venerable, the first degree of recognition towards canonization. They are the founders of religious congregations (i.e. Mother Marie de l'Incarnation, Mother Marguerite Bourgeoys and Mother d'Youville).

Notably, lay heroes also have their lives written in the mold of the hagiographical genre, as if Brother Bergeron were working for their canonization cause also. And in the case of the Canadian martyrs, i.e. the French Jesuits who were massacred by Iroquois Indians between 1642 and 1649, our compiler showed a certain amount of foresight; they were canonized in 1930, a mere six years after the publication of volume II. The same foresight applied to Mother Marie de l'Incarnation, Mother Marguerite Bourgeoys, Mother d'Youville as well as to Brother André; all were subsequently elevated to higher levels within the three degrees of canonization process leading to full sainthood (i.e. Venerable, Blessed and Saint). Volume III is devoted to the Virgin Mary and to exempla of human courage in which Mary plays a decisive role.

A fourth volume in this series had been planned under the double theme of the Sacraments and Saint Joseph. However, it was published separately in 1927 under the more pragmatic title of *Histoires canadiennes pour catéchismes*; we will return to it later. In this compendium, of which 3000 copies were printed, four chapters dealt with the following topics: Saint Joseph, Saint Anne, the virtue of Charity and the Sacraments.

In 1954 Br. Bergeron went on to publish *Histoires canadiennes* which comprises two series. The first one boasts twelve volumes of edifying Canadian anecdotes while the second one lists seven volumes devoted to secular Canadian stories. Yet despite the updated title which seems to hint at a will to broaden his audience, Br. Bergeron may be said to have mixed the new with the old, since nearly all the contents of *Notre Légende dorée* and *Histoires canadiennes pour catéchismes* found their way into *Histoires canadiennes*.

Thus we witness the fortune of exemplum literature up to the middle of the XXth century: *Notre Légende dorée* first published in 1923, 1924 and 1925, then bound in a single volume in 1926: its continuation in 1927 entitled *Histoires canadiennes pour catéchismes*; and a further compilation in 1954 published under the more general title of *Histoires canadiennes*.

The number of copies sold is a common measure of a book's success and, on this account, I gratefully acknowledge information disclosed by the archivist at the Marist Brothers' Library at their Provincial House in Iberville, Quebec. Volume I on The Sacred Heart sold 3140 copies, volume II on Temperance, 3260 and Volume III on the Holy Virgin, 3198.⁸

Of course figures are relative and must be evaluated according to the size of population and the extent of book-buying of the 1920s for the Province of Quebec. And this is precisely the question that *Le Semeur*, the monthly organ of the French-Canadian Catholic Youth Organization set out to examine in a 1924 issue. It stated that sales of 500 copies are considered normal, a thousand, satisfying, two thousand, a very good result, 5000 a great success, while 10000 was accounted outstanding.⁹ Given these figures *Notre Légende dorée* fared quite well. Quite a success actually if one considers that it is but a compilation of *exempla* gathered from literary, historical and religious material.¹⁰

An explanation of the degree of success of what is essentially second-hand material of established French-Canadian authors, mostly from the XIXth century, can be inferred from the study of the reception of the work. First of all only religious and nationalistic periodicals mention it. For instance, *Le messager canadien du Sacré-Coeur*, a devout monthly, presents the first volume on the Sacred Heart which was of obvious interest to its readers as having unearthed the unsuspected richness of French-Canadian history. It is deemed as a tasteful anthology of edifying or heroic traits while the pedagogical intention of the educator is both recognized and praised. With all due respect there is in my view something here of a mutual admiration society caught in the act as two of the stories *Notre Légende dorée* were taken from that very same periodical. Volume III is similarly welcomed as a collection of interesting and comforting deeds showing the power and kindness of Mary¹¹.

As for *Le Semeur*, it comments on the second volume of *Notre Légende dorée* as an artistic bouquet of French-Canadian flowers the author has bestowed onto his fellow countrymen along with wise advice on temperance.¹² And not surprisingly, the *Bulletin des Études*, which is the monthly organ of the Marist Brothers, a congregation devoted to the education of children, of which Br. Bergeron was a member, presents all three volumes enthusiastically. The review takes up again most of what Br. Bergeron had said about the work himself in his Preface. Our editor says that the first volume has received the congratulations of the highest ecclesiastical dignitaries and that its sales have been met with success. The book is seen as a safeguard educators would make good use of against the invasion of foreign literature of questionable morals. It is also suggested as an appropriate school prize that will provide families with wholesome and pleasant literature. This last piece of information is congruent with the mention that books may be purchased by mail order either per unit, or by the dozen and even a hundred units at a time. The third volume

on the Virgin Mary is described as edifying reading suited to stimulating devotion to the Virgin Mary with, once again, an all French-Canadian content.¹³

The monthly *L'Action française*, the mouthpiece for the League of Rights of the French in Canada, which also happens to be the publisher of *Notre Légende dorée*, is as might be expected, equally laudatory. At the time the first volume was forthcoming *L'Action française* praised it as a collection of moving stories taken from French-Canadian history which would bring to the forefront the intensely Christian life of our ancestors and the constant intervention of God in our past.¹⁴ One can readily understand this warm welcome as *L'Action française* wholly subscribed to the view that the popularizing of history would bind a country more closely to its land and heritage and conversely that to love one's country it is necessary to know its history and to feel tied to a tradition of honour.¹⁵ *Notre Légende dorée* was timely as it filled a void in this publisher's collection by presenting the ideology it supported to a young audience. Volumes I and II were introduced as an auxiliary to catechism lessons as well as offering wholesome and invigorating reading for the young. Here the title is subject to several interpretations: the reviewer stresses that "Légende" has to do with the title only, since the stories are true, and adds that it deserves to be called *Légende dorée* because these flowers grown on Canadian soil radiate heroism and charm that has less to do with earthly than heavenly flowers.¹⁶

As for volume III on the Virgin Mary, *L'Action française* found it appropriate not only for catechizers but also for preachers during the month of May. It is again suggested that this book be given as school prize¹⁷ – a suggestion *L'Action française* was prompt to put to work in its own pages as *Notre Légende dorée* was advertised in 1927 among a collection of fifteen publications suitable for colleges, teaching congregations, school boards, and parish libraries as either a school book or school prize.¹⁸ A word of explanation on parish libraries: they were introduced by the clergy in Quebec between 1848 and 1944 as a way of fighting the spreading of more liberal-minded public libraries and controlling the influence of books on the minds of their flock.

L'Almanach de la langue française chimes in with all the above-listed reviews.¹⁹

Outside religious literature there was also mention of *Notre Légende dorée* in the intellectual newspaper *Le Devoir* which recalled how Br. Bergeron had dreamed as an educator and a patriot of a means of teaching catechism in a livelier way that used all Canadian examples. To fill this void, he had no choice but to set himself to collecting meaningful anecdotes on the contemporary and historical heroes of New France.²⁰

To our knowledge, the only university periodical to review *Notre Légende dorée* was *Le Canada français* published by Laval University in Quebec City. This reviewer followed suit with the preceding ones in recognizing the patriotic and moral value of the work and stressing how the exemplum literature

is considered more palatable to young minds. In this case the leitmotiv of wholesome and pleasant reading finds a variant under the pen of this reviewer as he finds it will introduce parents to the good pages of our literature.²¹

The success story of *Notre Légende dorée* is becoming easier to comprehend as it is clear that it was designed as an auxiliary to the teaching of catechism and was opportunely channelled through the Catholic school system by the combined efforts of the establishment, first by its publisher who fostered such moral and patriotic works sharing the ideology of conservation, and secondly by the network of Marist schools and possibly other schools run by religious congregations as the advertising pages of *l'Action française* allow us to think. Moreover this didactic literature was to leave the school eventually in the guise of a prize and find its way onto the home library shelf where its edifying material would provide the wholesome and pleasant reading several reviewers have stressed so far.

Apart from *L'Action française* and *L'Almanach de la langue française* that recommend volume III to preachers, the other reviewers echo the aims Br. Bergeron had himself clearly put forth in his Preface to *Notre Légende dorée*. In it he circumscribed the book's readership to educators' and parents' interested in the feats of French-Canadian history. By doing so Br. Bergeron endeavoured to make a contribution to the moral and patriotic education of young people.²² These didactic aims were to be made more explicit in the Preface of *Histoires canadiennes pour catéchismes* in which he claimed that any catechism or moral lesson would leave but a vague recollection in a child's mind without an example or a story to impress the essential points of it in memory. This is all the more true when the material is foreign instead of indigenous as stories that come from afar seem to lose some of their convincing power along the way. Br. Bergeron was confident that those catechizers who wanted to teach religion in a lively way and with long-lasting results would find a dependable auxiliary in his collection drawn from a uniquely Canadian heritage. The lessons of our forefathers would consequently live on in their spiritual heirs.²³

Several key words ring with such insistence in the Preface and reviews that they deserve some analysis.

Treasuring and knowledge of "history" were seen as the guarantee of the continuation of these values and the basis for national pride by the nationalistic and religious elite. The lesson the reader should have derived was that religion and country were linked together from the beginning and that this should remain so. This is never questioned as the Quebec clergy seems totally oblivious to the fact that a separation had taken place in Quebec as in France at the turn of the century. Because of the Catholic majority, many decisions were deemed good for both State and religion.²⁴ The book's design and its reception offer ample evidence of its being fully in keeping with the ideology of conservation despite some concessions to more modern educational methods.

As for the repeated epithets of "wholesome" and "pleasant" they refer to moral and didactic considerations. We have mentioned earlier how the Quebec clergy had taken a keen interest in the books their flocks read. In 1843 Mgr. Bourget had instituted the "Order of Good Books" linked to a similar movement founded in Bordeaux in 1831 and supported by Pope Gregory XVI whose aim was to spread piety and get rid of the unquenchable thirst for books of questionable morals. Then came the parish libraries the clergy could control as the ones approved for their congregations.

While these libraries always had a high percentage of religious and hagiographical literature from France, it was not until the years 1927 to 1939 that material with indigenous contents was developed and written by Quebec authors.²⁵ In this respect Br. Bergeron was at the forefront of a trend to encourage national rather than foreign religious literature.

The epithet of "pleasant" reading is a reference to Br. Bergeron's advocating of a brand of didactic realism which dates back to Comenius with his *Didacta Magna* in 1630 and which has had its proponents ever since. The basis for it is the recognition of the psychology of the child as distinct from that of the adult. A logical consequence of the observation that children are more sensitive to concrete examples which appeal to the senses rather than dry and abstract teaching is the development of a specific children's literature.²⁶ This new pedagogical attitude had its followers in France, notably Fénelon who applied it to the teaching of moral lessons.

It may therefore be instructive to compare *Notre Légende dorée* to the Marist catechism it was meant to accompany. Catechisms may be deemed as the epitome of moralizing and didactic literature and the one the Marist Brothers used in their schools does nothing to contradict that statement. The Marist Brothers taught from *Marie enseignée à la jeunesse* which was first published in France in 1896, then reprinted in 1899. This catechism is based on the question and answer pattern.²⁷ The student's booklet was entitled "Petit catéchisme sur la Sainte Vierge".

A summary of questions 336 and 338 will suffice to show the erudite but somewhat tedious contents of this miniature theology. The first question requests detailed historical information on the Feast Day of the Seven Sorrows of our Lady and the second inquires about the moral lesson that should be derived from what has been taught on Our Lady's Seven Sorrows.²⁸

One will readily understand that Br. Bergeron's anthology was instantly appealing and was welcomed as a breath of fresh air bringing a sense of excitement and some thrilling emotions with its snippets on Native Canadian Indians, life in rural communities, and miniature adventure plots concerning the hardships of pioneers. But then faithful to his didactic realism, Br. Bergeron does not for one minute let his imagination run loose. On the other hand, *Notre Légende dorée* faces the modern reader with the perplexing situation of a book designed for young people but in which they do not form the subject of the

vignettes. Only in two vignettes in the volume on Temperance do children appear, first as the innocent victims of alcoholic fathers, and then as the heroic 9-year-old who vows never to touch the wicked beverage. Furthermore, only in two other instances are children directly addressed, and then only as an attention-getting device to drive in the moral lesson more firmly.²⁹ (Gélinas)

Historians of children's literature will have recognized the makings of a traditional book in which the child is still considered as a miniature adult and is being prepared for the future adult role. In this case the directive force is twofold as the child must become a good Catholic as well as a good French-Canadian patriot.³⁰

Even though many stories are moving and are filled with compassion and humanity, children are not spared details on the hardships sent as retribution to those who lack temperance or defy the laws of God. This is still a book on vice and virtue.

From the basis of past historical facts Br. Bergeron shows the way towards an ideal where the supernatural is very much at home and no miracle is too small to go unaccounted for. The child is there in a distant sort of way as the keeper of traditions to which, it goes without saying, submission is expected. Actually, what is felt as most important is not so much the individual child's future and welfare as that of society as a whole.

This brings us to realize that in the history of children's literature *Notre Légende dorée* ranks differently according to the measuring scale used. Compared to the Marist catechism, *Notre Légende dorée* appears as innovative with references that are not foreign to young readers and a tone that is not dry and stern. But when compared to Western European children's literature of that time, which is opening to new perspectives that involve seeing the child as distinct from the adult with regard to needs and interests, *Notre Légende dorée* is closer generally speaking to the 1850-1890 European period with its traditional concern for making the teaching of religion more palatable and more specific to French school books. It is also close to the works of leisure written after 1870 whose purpose was to instil useful knowledge in the future citizen.³¹

How then can we compare the original *Legenda aurea* and this distant offspring? From our research it appears that what may be ascribed to Jacobus of Voragine has less to do with the letter of the original *Legenda aurea* than with its structure and spirit.

For one thing, both the *Legenda aurea* and *Notre Légende dorée* are compilations aimed at answering practical and pastoral needs as the study of their reception confirms. However, while the *Legenda aurea* remains within the realm of the hagiographical genre, Br. Bergeron's contribution adds a distinct patriotic element. Indeed, he has chosen to address himself to a particular group of Christians, namely young French-Canadians, on the subject of their elders' favourite saints and saints-to-be, along with historical heroes who always stand out as spiritual models.

In contrast, Jacobus of Voragine made up his legendary volume exclusively with saints from the universal Church. It is this component critics have singled out as a major source of the book's success, i.e., its circulation among the "*res christiana*". It was only centuries later, especially in the XIVth and XVth centuries, that vernacular versions adapted devotional needs of national Churches by adding supplements to the original kernel of saints. Such "new" saints, for example, were Genevieve in France and Othmar in German-speaking countries.³²

There are similarities between the two works which Father B. Lacroix, o.p., has described as components in the making both of Quebec hagiographical literature and of *all* hagiographical literature. In both there is "the same unity of purpose, the same need to moralize even if indirectly through the use of exempla, the same mystical and cosmic solidarity between heaven and earth, between God and his angels, among humans and the saints of paradise. The same theology that rewards the good and punishes evil, an identical quest of the supernatural and a liking for retribution is found. In addition there is continuity of forms inherited from the Middle Ages, notably the same sequence of episodes strung together by more juxtaposition in spite of different historical periods. The compiler's will to edify is such that stories may be from different centuries. What is essential is that they reflect the same values. There is also a tendency to exaggerate".³³

Another common point is the way both works were circulated, used and adapted to the changing need of their audience of readers. Previous study has shown how the vernacular versions of the *Legenda aurea* were translated and later revised according to the stylistic tastes of their day. Also, as mentioned earlier room was made for national and regional saints. Moreover this constant updating was more often than not the work of Dominicans and members of other congregations. Recent research has also shown that the Dominicans used the *Legenda aurea* as a manual in their schools and also as an auxiliary to preaching.³⁴ In the twentieth century the Marist brothers and their supporters have not veered far from these time-tested methods: they distributed the anthology in their schools as an auxiliary to catechism and suggested its use by preachers. Br. Bergeron also resorted to revisionary techniques, although to a lesser degree than in the *Legenda aurea* such as giving a new title and expanding the contents to make his collection more appealing. The modern day difference of course came with support of the establishment in the printed media in the form of reviews from nationalistic and religious periodicals that subscribe to the ideology of conservatism.

If one considers *Notre Légende dorée* from the perspective of the history of children's literature and of history itself, it is clear that the children Br. Bergeron is writing for are miniature adults in front of whom the dominant values of the contemporary French-Canadian of the time are proudly being displayed, viz. religious, social and political conservatism.

Topics in the booklet which account for and foster this attitude deal with the special French-Canadian devotion shown to the Sacred Heart, Saint Anne and Saint Joseph. There is also a constant justification of historical and religious figures who built the Church and the country. It is piquant to note that even the social issue of drinking that plagued the 1920s is chiefly treated as a sin against the cardinal virtue of temperance. The history of the country is turned into a spiritual epic against which the figure of the Indian, uncivilized and pagan, acts as a foil to the heroes since he is good only after being baptized!

In this context *Notre Légende dorée* is not an adaptation proper for children of the original *Legenda aurea* material as is *La Légende dorée* by A. de Gériolles, 1896, *Nouvelle Légende dorée* by Mairiel d'Esilon, 1900 and 1903, and *Légende dorée de mes filleuls* by Daniel Rops, 1950, 1961 and 1963.³⁵

Notre Légende dorée is not alone of its kind, however, as in the twentieth century several other collections of legends have used the name of *Légende dorée*. These are not adaptations proper but works that fit the general idea of a legendary approach to new hagiographical material. A few examples of this tendency may be listed chronologically: *La Légende dorée au-delà des mers* in 1930, *Légendes dorées des saints bretons* in 1960, *La Légende dorée des saints de France au Moyen Age* in 1965, *La Légende dorée d'Afrique du Nord* in 1973 and *La Légende dorée d'Autun: Chalon, Mâcon, Charolles et Louhans* in 1974.³⁶ This is an interesting development in the fortune of the *Legenda aurea* as the title is here used not so much as reference to the specific work but as synonym of its hagiographical genre.

There remains the question of knowing how Br. Bergeron got acquainted with the *Légende dorée*. Possibly this occurred through either of the French translations produced at the turn of the century by Father Roze in 1900 or by T. de Wyzewa in 1902 but perhaps even by the one G. Brunet had translated in three volumes in 1843.³⁷

Bearing in mind that any comparison between works written centuries apart demands some caution, it may be said that *Notre Légende dorée* which is neither solely history, nor solely hagiography, provides a French-Canadian supplement to the *Legenda aurea*. The heroes, whether they be saints or saints-to-be such as the Canadian martyrs, are shown to be as worthy as the Christians of the original legendary.

Thus, through the metaphor of the title, the story of the golden salvation of the soul as told through edifying spiritual models is being told again with equal unswerving faith and heroism in the Church of the New World.

However, contrary to the *Legenda aurea* which put history in the background and kept to the religious meaning of the lives, *Notre Légende dorée* now as being of interest to historical specialists only, since it linked its message to a nationalistic ideology that is now out-of-date, politics and religion are now considered as two distinct entities in Quebec.

Finally, in the history of children's literature *Notre Légende dorée* stands out as innovative indigenous religious literature within the Quebec context, traditional as compared to contemporary European works where authors had already started writing for the child from the child's perspective.

NOTES

- 1 C.-M. Gagnon, "Réminiscences de la *Légende dorée* au Québec" in B. Dunn-Lardeau, ed. *Legenda aurea: sept siècles de diffusion*. Actes du colloque sur la Legenda aurea: texte latin et branches vernaculaires. Montréal et Paris, Bellarmin-Vrin, 1986, p. 213-224.
- 2 C.-M. Gagnon, *La littérature populaire religieuse au Québec. Sa diffusion, ses modèles et ses héros*. Études et documents en sciences de la religion. Cahiers de recherches en sciences de la religion, 1986, 335 p., especially pp. 61-136.
- 3 Br. Ernest-Beatrix is the pseudonym of Br. Hilaire Ernest Bergeron (1885-1962). His obituary written by Br. Louis-Ignace (Marius Thébiol) describes him as a tireless worker. Although short-sightedness forced him to give up teaching, he became actively involved in the training of teachers after the manner of Br. Pierre-Gonzalès. Of the latter, Br. Louis-Ignace says: "Par ses pratiques, répandues au moyen du *Bulletin des Études*, qu'il créa et dirigea seul pendant plusieurs années, la formation pédagogique de nos éducateurs devint le problème essentiel, à cette époque où, il faut bien le dire tout était à créer, dans la Province de Québec". Br. Pierre-Gonzalès had wanted the Brothers to sit for University exams. An even greater stir was created when there was question of studying Latin for the Brothers (i.e. outside the classical colleges system) for the official B.A. Br. Ernest-Beatrix took these exams successfully in 1914 at Laval University. He also studied in Italy. Br. Beatrix was fascinated by finding Canadian material that could lead to edification or general culture. He was also responsible for the Marist Brothers' beatification causes. He became a member of the Society for Canadian Writers in 1944 and the French-Canadian Genealogical Society in 1949. He put together several pedagogical publications. The following titles were taken from his notice in the *Répertoire bio-bibliographique de la Société des écrivains canadiens*, Section de Montréal, 1954, 248 p.

Bibliography: a) *Notre Légende dorée*, Montréal, l'Action française, 1923, 1924, 1925; *Histoires canadiennes pour catéchismes*, 1927; *Manuel de langue française*, Montréal, Granger, 1930; *Chez les sauvages*, Montréal, Ed. Albert Levesque, 1931 et 1951; *Héroïsme et apostolat*, 1932; *Humour, légendes et aventures*, 1932; *Manuel d'enseignement rural* (Maître), Montréal, Granger, 1932; *Manuel d'enseignement rural* (Élève), 1935; *Précis d'agriculture*, 1940; *Manuel d'agriculture*, 1942; *Le Canard paie*, Iberville, Frères Maristes, 1944; *Formulaire mathématique*, Montréal, Granger, 1946; *Des histoires. . . Iberville*, Frères Maristes, 1951. b) *L'anglais-éclair*, Montréal, Granger, 1942; *Atlas-géographie*, Saint-Vincent-de-Paul, Frères Maristes, 1952. Taken from the Marist Brothers', *Précis d'Histoires saintes*, Eglise canadienne, 1930, 472 p., *Notions de sciences physiques et naturelles*, 1933, 428 p.; *Hors des sentiers battus*, 1935, 4 vol.; *Petite histoire sainte*, 1938, 136 p.; *Le vénérable Marcellin Champagnat*, 1942, 64 p.; *Le frère mariste*, 1943, 20 p.; *Histoires canadiennes*, 1954, 19 vol.; *Neuvaine au Bienheureux Marcellin Champagnat*, 1957, 36 p.; *Résumé du mémoire au comité d'étude sur l'enseignement agricole et agronomique*, 1961. *Fines bêtes*, 1965, (oeuvre posthume).

- 4 Notre Légende dorée par un frère mariste [Ernest-Béatrix, pseudonyme du Fr. Hilaire Ernest Bergeron]. Bibliothèque de l'Action française, 1923, 1ère série, 127, 1924, 2e série, 128 p., 1925, 3e série, 142 p.
- 5 *Histoires canadiennes pour catéchismes* par un frère mariste, Bibliothèque de l'Action française, Montréal, 1927, tome I, 246 p.
- 6 Ernest-Béatrix, frère mariste, *Histoires canadiennes*, Le Rosey, Iberville, 1954. The first series is on: Compilations d'anecdotes, d'histoire, de récits édifiants exclusivement canadiens. The titles of these books are 1. *Le Sacré-Coeur-Les Sacrements*. 2. *La vierge Marie*. 3. *Saint Joseph, Sainte Anne*. 4. *Serviteurs de Dieu*. 5. *Servantes de Dieu*. 6. *Héroïsme et apostolat*. 7. *Vie chrétienne*. 8. *Charité*. 9. *Jeunesse*. 10. *Tempérance*. 11. *Indiens et Esquimaux*. 12. *Sanctuaires, pèlerinages, dévotions*. As for the 2nd series on: Recueils d'anecdotes, de légendes, de récits profanes du pays canadien, the title of these books are: 1. *Humour, légendes, aventures*. 2. *Chez nos sauvages*. 3. *Récits d'auteur*. 4. *Lecteurs de loisirs*. 5. *Histoires tragiques*. 6. *Le chien de Montgomery, et trente autres anecdotes de nos animaux canadiens*. 7. *Réparties et bons mots*.
- 7 The first series of *Notre Légende dorée* subtitled *Le Sacré-Coeur - Récits divers* forms the core of volume I of the first series of *Histoires canadiennes* under the title *Le Sacré-Coeur - Les Sacrements* (2nd edition, 5000 copies). Only the two vignettes have been omitted. There are "Conversion d'une sorcière", a story of more than doubtful authenticity and "Un incendie arrêté". The second series of *Notre Légende dorée* subtitled *Tempérance*. *Extraits biographiques* finds its way into volume X of the first series of *Histoires canadiennes* under the title *Tempérance* (in the 1954 edition, it is noted that this volume is sold out). The third series of *Notre Légende dorée* subtitled *La Sainte-Vierge-Traits de courage* reappears in volume II of the first series of *Histoires canadiennes* under the title *La Sainte Vierge*. For this volume, the editor has noted 2nd edition, 6000 copies. Finally, *Histoires canadiennes pour catéchismes* surfaces back as volume III of the first series of *Histoires canadiennes* with the subtitle *Saint-Joseph - Sainte-Anne*. Here, the editor has indicated 2nd edition, 5000 copies.
- 8 We are grateful to Br. Laetaré Maheux, archivist at the Provincial House of the Marist Brothers in Iberville (Quebec), who obligingly forwarded us this information. We also thank M. Jacques Lévesque for compiling the reviews on the reception of *Notre Légende dorée* with the help of a grant from the SSHRC. The following periodicals and newspapers were checked: *L'Action catholique*, *L'Action française*, *L'Action sociale catholique*, *L'Almanach Beauchemin*, *L'Almanach de la langue française*, *L'Ame des livres*, *L'Apôtre*, *Le Canada apostolique*, *Le Canada français*, *L'Enseignement secondaire*, *Le Messager canadien du Sacré-Coeur*, *La Nouvelle revue théologique*, *La Revue canadienne*, *La Revue des jeunes*, *La Revue trimestrielle*, *La Semaine religieuse de Montréal*, *La semaine religieuse de Québec*, *Le Semeur*, *Le Terroir*, *La Patrie*, October, 1923, *La Presse*, October, 1923, March, 1924, February, 1925, October, 1963, *Le Canada*, October, 1923, and *Le Devoir*, October, 1923, November, 1923, March, 1924, February, 1925 and October, 1963.
- 9 *Le Semeur*, 1924, no 21, p. 124.
- 10 The first series is made up of fifteen texts dedicated to the Sacred-Heart of which eight are taken from religious periodicals and five from *Le Règne du Sacré-Coeur* by E. Gouin, P.S.S. Then, out of the twenty-five texts in the "Récits divers" section, six are from religious periodicals and thirteen from literary and mainly historical sources. Amongst known authors, the following are noteworthy: A. Buies, *Promenade dans le Vieux-Québec*. H.R. Casgrain, *Histoire de l'Hôtel-Dieu de Québec*, pèlerinage au pays de l'Évangéline. L. Conan, 3 text published in *La voix du Précieux-Sang*. L'abbé Ferland, *Histoire du Canada* F.X. Garneau, *Histoire du Ca-*

nada. H. Larue, *Histoire populaire du Canada*. C. Roy, *Propos canadiens*.

The second series on Temperance comprises eleven texts on that topic along with thirty-odd biographical excerpts. Most of these stem from religious sources and five are from *Le grand menteur, autour de la buvette* by P.G. Roy. There is also a text by H.R. Casgrain and one by L.Conan. The third series on the Holy Virgin brings together thirty-three texts compiled from religious sources with the exception of ten literary ones from H.R. Casgrain (4), Father Faillon (3), Faucher de Saint-Maurice (1), Y. Marmier (1) and L.Conan (1). In the section on traits of courage, the fifteen-odd texts are essentially from religious books and periodicals. There is however a literary text taken from Philippe-Aubert de Gaspé's *Mémoires*.

The religious periodicals from which the excerpts have been compiled for either of the three series are: *L'Action catholique*, *L'Almanach du Sacré-Coeur*, *La Bannière*, *le Bulletin des Études*, *le Bulletin eucharistique*, *le Bulletin des oeuvres de la jeunesse* (which reproduces a speech by Honoré Mercier in 1891), *Les Cloches de Saint Boniface*, *Les Études*, *Le Messager canadien du Sacré-Coeur de Jésus*, *Le Petit messager du Sacré-Coeur de Jésus*, *La Tempérance*, *Le Rosaire*, and *La Voix du Précieux Sang*.

- 11 *Le Messager canadien du Sacré-Coeur*, 1924, p. 189 and 1926, p. 45.
- 12 *Le Semeur*, 1924, p. 306.
- 13 *Le Bulletin des Études*, December, 1923, p. 2, January, 1924, p. 3, for the first series; December, 1924, for the second series, and October, 1925, p. 2 for the third series.
- 14 *L'Action française*, vol 10, February, 1923, p. 125 and vol. 10, September, 1923, p. 252 for interpretations of the title.
- 15 *L'Action française*, vol. 10, September, 1923, p. 186.
- 16 *L'Action française*, vol. 10, October, 1923, p. 252.
- 17 *L'Action française*, vol. 13, February, 1925, p. 125.
- 18 *L'Action française*, March, 1927, p. 127.
- 19 *L'Almanach de la langue française*, 1928.
- 20 *Le Devoir*, November 19, 1923, p.1.
- 21 *Le Canada français*, vol. 11, no 4, December, 1923, p. 313. This review bears the initials C.R. It is interesting to note that a Spanish translation of the *Legenda aurea* which was published at the same period as *Notre Légende dorée* stands out with the latter as being explicitly aimed at a family audience. It is *La leyenda dorada, vidas de santos* por Jacobo de Voragine. Puesto en romance por Miguel A. Rodenas. Madrid [U. Rico], 1913, 2 vols. De la Coleccion Rosa, para los familias [B.N. Madrid R 40688]. On the subject of educators and families using the *Legenda aurea* as reading material for the young, it will be remembered that Michel Tournier's hero in *Le roi des aulnes* (1970) is to fulfill the duty of recitator at mealtime at his boarding school on March 8, 1938: he is to read the Life of Saint Christopher from the *Légende dorée* which will have a sweeping effect of his life. Finally, as late as the mid-1950s it was still the tradition amongst Catholic Peruvian families to read *Los flos sanctorum* by Rivadeneira, a work derived from the *Legenda aurea*, at the angelus time.
- 22 *Notre Légende dorée*, 1st series.
- 23 *Histoires canadiennes pour catéchismes*, p. 7. Here literary reference gives way to pedagogical intent, and perhaps to a desire to avoid possible misunderstanding surrounding the word "legend", whose etymological meaning (*Legenda*: what must be read) is often forgotten. This may explain why one of the reviewers of *Notre Légende dorée* insists on the veracity of its contents despite its title (see no. 15). Among accounts of this book at the time of its publication we may list: *L'Action française*, July, 1927, p. 64, *L'Action française*, September, 1927, p. 186, *L'Action française*, 18, 1927, p. 186, *Le Semeur*, 24, 1928, p. 195, *Le Messager canadien du Sacré-Coeur*, 37, 1928, p. 42.

Noteworthy of attention is the review signed by Father Charbonnier in *La Revue nationale*, 6, 1927, pp. 365-68 as well as the one published in *L'Action française* in 1927, p. 125-26. The new title of Br. Bergeron's book triggered serious thought concerning the central question of the teaching of religion. The first sees the historical method as superior to logical and analytical exposition of facts since he compares the soul of the masses to that of the child. "Il s'agit de savoir si l'intelligence du peuple est préparée à l'étude des doctrines surnaturelles par voie de raisonnements, ou s'il ne vaut pas mieux offrir aux foules un exposé concret des vérités chrétiennes" (p. 365). The archetype of this manner lies in Christ's parables. Therefore, educators have the duty of revising their texts or they will see children so bored until they will be totally put off by them. Concerning the notion of patriotic catechism, Father Charbonnier recollects several excellent ones imported from Old France, foreign in that they contained a thousand allusions unfamiliar to young Canadians (p. 367).

The second review also favours historical method for teaching religion. However, instead of likening the soul of the child to that of the masses, the author links the method to the psychological and pedagogical tradition which dates back to Fénelon's *Traité de l'éducation des filles* in 1687. For Fénelon, who was preceptor of Louis, Duke of Burgundy, "La littérature n'est pas un but en soi, mais un moyen plaisant et direct d'attirer l'attention de l'élève sur des vérités religieuses et morales" Ottevaere-van Praag, *La littérature pour la jeunesse en Europe occidentale (1750-1925)*, Peter Lang, Berne, 1987. p. 60). As a consequence, for Fénelon, "la morale doit être indirecte et découler de l'histoire de la fable; elle ne doit pas résulter de pesants développements." (Ottevaere-van Praag, p. 61).

Here are a few paragraphs from this review still impregnated with XVIIIth century spiritual sources to which is added, for our Quebec clergy, the new component of nationalism: "Fénelon dans son magnifique traité de l'*Éducation des Filles* remarque qu'il faut ignorer profondément l'essentiel de la religion pour ne pas voir qu'elle est toute historique. C'est par un tissu de faits merveilleux, écrit-il, que nous trouvons son établissement, sa perpétuité, et tout ce qui doit nous la faire pratiquer et croire. Les histoires, dit-il encore, semblent allonger l'instruction, mais elles l'abrègent beaucoup et lui ôtent la sécheresse des catéchismes où les mystères sont détachés des faits." "L'abbé Fleury, contemporain du grand archevêque de Cambrai et son collaborateur dans l'éducation des enfants de France, partage les mêmes idées à cet égard; il conseille aux catéchistes de son siècle le revenir pour l'enseignement religieux à la vieille méthode historique, où l'on se servait principalement de la narration et de la simple déduction des faits pour fonder les dogmes et les préceptes de morale. Il estimait que cette manière était non seulement, la plus sûre et la plus proportionnée à toutes sortes d'esprits, mais encore la plus facile et la plus agréable."

"L'art de bien faire le catéchisme n'est pas un don qui s'acquiert sans peine. Il requiert plus d'un élément. Le maître intéressant ne méconnaît pas un des traits les plus remarquables de la psychologie de l'enfant, dont l'intelligence, rebelle aux abstractions, montre au contraire une merveilleuse aptitude à saisir les faits; il recourt à plus d'une industrie, mais surtout il ne tarit pas en histoires, en beaux exemples, en riches comparaisons. Aux sources universelles: l'histoire sainte, l'histoire de l'Église, la vie des saints, l'éducateur averti a grand soin d'ajouter le précieux trésor de foi, de pitié et de sacrifice de nos ancêtres. Le catéchisme patriote aime à puiser chez ceux qui ont vécu sur notre sol leur rude vie de chrétien les leçons qui font de nos chers enfants les cœurs nobles et braves, gloire de notre Canada français."

24 Paul-André Turcotte, *L'enseignement secondaire public des frères éducateurs (1920-1970)*. Utopie et modernité, Bellarmin, Montréal, 1988, 220 p.

25 Gagnon, *La littérature*, p. 100, 111 as well as pp. 99 and 136.

26 Ottevaere-van Praag, especially p. 46.

- 27 In 1937, a revised version was published under the title *La Vierge Marie enseignée à la jeunesse* and as for the preceding editions, a student's manual entitled *Petit catéchisme sur la Sainte Vierge* accompanied the teacher's manual.
- 28 *Marie enseignée à la jeunesse*, Librairie générale catholique et classique, Emmanuel Vitte, Lyon, 1899, p. 194 and 195.
 "Question 336. Quel jour l'Eglise honore-t-elle les douleurs de la Sainte Vierge? L'Eglise en célèbre la fête le vendredi de la semaine de la Passion et le troisième dimanche de septembre.
 Ces deux fêtes son connues sous le nom de Compassion de la Sainte Vierge ou de Notre-Dame des Sept-douleurs. La première qui remonte à l'Antiquité est en usage dans tous les pays catholiques depuis le pontificat de Benoit XIII (1724-1730). La seconde se célébrait déjà dans diverses églises et quelques ordres religieux, lorsque le Pape Pie VII, par un décret du 18 septembre 1814, l'étendit à tout l'univers catholique.
 Question no 338. Que devons-nous faire pour bien profiter de cette instruction? Nous devons: 1) remercier Jésus-Christ de nous avoir donné Marie pour mère; 2) à l'exemple de Saint Jean, rendre à Marie tous les devoirs d'un bon fils, l'honorer, l'aimer, avoir recours à elle avec la confiance et la simplicité d'un enfant."
- 29 Notre légende dorée, 2e série, pp. 19-23 and pp. 16-19.
- 30 Ottevaere-van Praag, pp. 7-12, 291-293.
- 31 Ottevaere-van Praag, p. 291 and 293. Another earlier example of a patriotic catechism may be found in Father Guy Toussaint-Julien Carron de la Carrière's *Les nouvelles héroïnes chrétiennes, ou vies édifiantes de dix sept jeunes personnes*, 10e éd. Paris, Rusard, 1824. First published in France at the time of the Revolution, it was soon suggested as a school prize and New Year's gift. It was still published in the 1860s by Mame. We wish to thank Prof. Segolene Le Men for pointing out this work to us.
- 32 Dunn-Lardeau, and especially the chapters on the French, German and Czech branches.
- 33 Benoît Lacroix. Preface in Gagnon, *La littérature*, p. 14.
- 34 Dunn-Lardeau, *ibid.*
- 35 These adaptations are: *La Légende dorée*, adaptation pour la jeunesse de l'oeuvre de Jacques Voragine par A. de Gériolles avec lettre-préface de M. Henri de Bornier de l'Académie française. J. Lefort et A. Tappin, Paris et Lille s.d. (1986), 189 p. Work with engravings and illustrated cover. The Municipal Library of Bordeaux and the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris each possess a copy of the work with the following reference numbers [Bordeaux, B.M.A.P. p. 28.892] and [Paris, B.N. 4e H. 203]. As for A. de Gériolles, it is the pseudonym of Madame Génie de Reglöl; Madame Mairel d'Eslon, *Nouvelle Légende dorée*, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1900, 125 p., 2nd edition, 1903 and Daniel-Rops (pseudonym of Henri Petiot), *Légende dorée de mes filleuls*, Paris, Éditions du Vieux Colombier, 1950, 230 p. Illustrations by Monique de la Grandière; *Légende dorée de mes filleuls*, illustrations by Jacques Pecnard, Paris, Hachette, 1963, Infol. 105 p., illus. in black and in colour.
- 36 The complete bibliographical description of these legendaries is as follows: Maurice Brillant., ed. *La Légende dorée au-delà des mers*, Paris, Grasset, 1930; Yves-P. Castel, *Légendes dorées des saints bretons*, Chateaulin, J. Le Doart, 1960, illus.; François Garnier, *La Légende dorée des saints de France au moyen âge*. Textes choisis, traduits et présentés par François Garnier, Paris Éditions G.P., 1965, illus.; Jeanne Millier-Scelles, *Légende dorée d'Afrique du Nord*, grav. de Clotilde et Noël Pasquier-Bronde, Paris, G.P. Maisonneuve et Larose, 1973; Denis Grévot, *La Légende dorée d'Autun: Chalon, Mâcon, Charolles et Louhans*. Lyon, Lescuyer, 1974, illus.

37 G. Brunet, *La Légende dorée* par Jacques de Voragine, translation and notice. Paris, Éditions Rombaldi, 1942, 3rd edition of the edition of 1843, 3 vols. The first edition of the translation by Father Roze being unavailable, we refer to the second one: Voragine, Jacques de, *La Légende dorée*, trad. par J.B.M. Roze. Introduction de H. Savon, Paris. Garnier-Flammariion, 1967, 2 vol.; T. de Wyzewa, Le Bienheureux Jacques de Voragine, *La Légende dorée*, introduction et notes de T. de Wyzewa, Paris, Librairie académique Perrin, 1902, p. 748.

In addition, the Library of Laval University Seminary in Quebec City holds two incunabula Latin editions of the *Legenda aurea*.

Finally, the *Legenda aurea* was not totally unknown to the Marist Brothers as they mention it in the 1937 edition of their catechism (p. 47). The following excerpt shows their critical sense concerning narrations of doubtful authenticity as well as the overwhelming influence of Emile Mâle who at the turn of the century revealed the *Legenda aurea* as a source of inspiration of medieval christian art (see Emile Mâle, *L'art religieux du XIIIe s. en France*, Paris, A. Colin, 1958, 8th edition of the 1898 edition, vol. 2, p. 241-346). "Récits de la *Légende dorée* sur Saint Joachim et Sainte-Anne. – Les diverses formes des évangiles apocryphes ont été proscrits au concile de Trente. Ils avaient, au Moyen Age, fourni les données dont un vieux dominicain, le bienheureux Jacques de Voragine, mort archevêque de Gênes, vers 1300, forma sa célèbre Légende dorée. Ce livre, devenu rapidement populaire, a inspiré la plupart des récits et des peintures du Moyen Age et même de la Renaissance. C'est de là que sont venus, en Occident, les détails qui concernent les parents de la Sainte Vierge et son enfance, jusqu'au moment de l'Annonciation, où le récit authentique de l'évangile de saint Luc met fin aux incertitudes.

L'Eglise ne nous interdit pas de nous servir de ces pieux récits, mais nous met en garde contre leur authenticité, afin que nous ne les confondions pas avec les quatre seuls évangiles authentiques."

Brenda Dunn-Lardeau is a specialist of hagiographic literature. She teaches at the University of Quebec in Montreal.