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Review of *Archbishop A.-A. Tache of St. Boniface: The "Good Fight" and the Illusive Vision* By Raymond J. A. Hue!

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Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface: The "Good Fight" and the Illusive Vision. By Raymond J. A. Huel. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2003. xxv + 429 pp. Photographs, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95. paper.

Alexandre Taché, one of the very first Canadians to join the French Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate who arrived in Canada in 1841, was sent to work in Canada's Northwest in 1845 where he became second bishop of St. Boniface in 1853, and later archbishop. He remained there until his death in 1894, a half-century during which the region was transformed from a vast hunting emporium for furs to a refuge for tens of thousands of Canadian, American, and European settlers brought into the area after 1860 on the rapidly expanding tracks of American and then Canadian railways. Taché built up the Catholic Church of the Northwest to include dozens of missionary stations, infirmaries, hospitals, day schools, and boarding schools, in addition to a college, a mission-supply network, and small newspapers. In the process, he became a leading player in the social and political controversies of the period, including the Red River uprising (1869-70) and Northwest Rebellion (1884-85) led by Métis leader Louis Riel, and the Manitoba schools question (1890 ff.), political controversies that became national issues in Canada.

Raymond Huel has written a thoroughly researched and documented biography of Taché, one that will no doubt become a necessary reference for anyone seeking to understand the man and his times. He emphasizes Taché's vision, his dream of building a new Québec in the Canadian West, a sister province to the French and Catholic Province of

Québec. While there are no significant new discoveries here, and the text at times is repetitive, the book constitutes good, solid, and thorough reporting. In the mass of factual details that are noted, this reader spotted only two errors, the first when the Sisters of Charity are said to have arrived in Red River in 1841, rather than 1844, the second when the American General Douglas MacArthur is said to have belonged to the US Marine Corps, rather than the US Army.

Huel is harsh in his judgment of Taché, a man who has often been presented as larger than life by hagiographic writers. We are told repeatedly that he was lacking in leadership and interpersonal skills, an authoritarian deficient in the charisma and charm necessary to win people over to his point of view. Some may consider Huel overly severe in this regard.

All in all, Raymond Huel has written a sound and reliable biography of one of Canada's leading churchmen, one that should stand the test of time.

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