Over the years, historians have paid only sporadic attention to Christian missionaries in British Columbia. While excellent studies periodically appear, they tend to reflect themes and approaches developed elsewhere. *Good Intentions Gone Awry* thus reflects a more general shift in missionary studies from male leaders to the much more poorly documented roles played by missionary women and indigenous evangelists. The true originality of Hare and Barman’s book lies in the manner in which they approach their subject. Perhaps for the first time, a book has emerged from British Columbia that should serve as a model to be emulated elsewhere.

The heart of *Good Intentions Gone Awry* is occupied by letters written by Emma Douse Crosby to her mother from her departure from Ontario in 1874 until her mother's death in 1881. The daughter of a prominent Methodist minister, Emma Douse attended and became a teacher at Hamilton's Wesleyan Female College. Thomas Crosby had already established a reputation as an energetic missionary to Native groups in southern British Columbia when he returned to Ontario to raise funds for a new venture to the north. After a brief courtship, he married Emma and within weeks the couple began the long journey to
their new home. Seeking assurance and yet not wanting to alarm her mother, Emma chronicled her experiences in letters, often dashed off to meet the unpredictable arrival of the Hudson's Bay Company boat, the *Otter*, the only reliable connection to the outside world. Rarely complaining, accepting her lot as a missionary wife, Emma endured long periods of uncertainty and loneliness, particularly during the winter months when the *Otter* did not make the journey north from Victoria, and during her husband's frequent absences. The mission demanded much of both Thomas and Emma: besides evangelistic work, they built their own house, grew much of their own food, administered Native and non-Native staff as the mission grew, taught in the school, comforted and provided basic medical support for Tsimshians and Whites in the area, and wrote inspirational accounts to solicit funds to continue and expand their work. The task of a nineteenth century missionary often required considerable sacrifice. In the end, Emma and Thomas buried four of their eight children on the northern coast.

One cannot read these evocative letters without admiring Emma's strength and fortitude. Still, *Good Intentions Gone Awry* is not an exercise in hagiography. Hare and Barman link each letter within a running commentary, producing in a coherent narrative that places Emma's experiences into context and continues the story to her death in 1926. They follow a number of themes over the years, but two are especially important. The first is the critical role played by the Tsimshian in their own conversion. Methodism came to Fort Simpson at the invitation of high ranking Tsimshian, notably the Dudoward family. This has long been recognized by historians, but Hare and Barman add new details concerning of the variant roles Tsimshian played as sponsors, parishioners, neighbours, teachers, and ministers. Much of the evidence they draw upon is indirect and faint—mere
traces in Emma’s letters. Yet the editors’ reading of the letters “across the grain” for traces of Tsimshian agency never appears forced or unreasonable. Indeed, it deepens the reader’s appreciation of Emma’s situation and character.

The second theme provides the book with its title. The Methodist mission to the Tsimshian, like colonial missions elsewhere, floundered on the contradiction between a religious ethic of radical equivalence and the inability of most missionaries to shake assumptions of European racial superiority. Once they became established, Thomas and Emma seem to have become blind to their continuing dependence upon their Tsimshian hosts. Along with detachment came an increasing authoritarianism. Thomas originally went to the north to nurture a Christian community in Fort Simpson; instead, he devoted most of his time and energy running far-flung empire of remote village stations. In the early trying years Emma welcomed adolescent Tsimshian girls into her home for companionship and to help care for her young children; soon, however, she separated her children from the community and oversaw the creation of a Girls’ Home that became a prototype of later residential schools. The Crosby’s stayed too long and, in the end, lost of the support of both the Tsimshian leaders and church authorities.

*Good Intentions Gone Awry* is not only good history; it’s a joy to read. Hare and Barman provide a compassionate portrait of Emma while critically exploring the contradictions that undermined the missionary enterprise. Most intriguingly, they describe their project as an act of repatriation to the Tsimshian nation. It is thus fitting that Caroline Dudoward concludes the book with a moving testimonial to her illustrious ancestors.