

2014-09-30

# Shamans and Saints: The Role and Adaptation of Catholic Ritual in the Missions of New France Before the Destruction of Huronia

Main, Kimberly

---

Main, K. (2014). Shamans and Saints: The Role and Adaptation of Catholic Ritual in the Missions of New France Before the Destruction of Huronia (Master's thesis, University of Calgary, Calgary, Canada). Retrieved from <https://prism.ucalgary.ca>. doi:10.11575/PRISM/27769  
<http://hdl.handle.net/11023/1894>

*Downloaded from PRISM Repository, University of Calgary*

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Shamans and Saints: The Role and Adaptation of Catholic Ritual in the Missions of New  
France Before the Destruction of Huronia

by

Kimberly Anne Main

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN HISTORY

CALGARY, ALBERTA

SEPTEMBER, 2014

© Kimberly Main 2014

## **Abstract**

The contact between two cultures produces numerous changes. This occurrence among the Natives of Canada has been examined by numerous authors over the years. In New France, these examinations have typically focused on the Natives and Europeans as uniform groups who made decisions solely for economic and political reasons. The Jesuits, and their efforts to make converts, has been viewed as part of this colonialist effort to make the Natives French.

Focused on New France before 1650, this thesis seeks to examine the relationship between Natives and Jesuits as individuals who interacted in a spiritual world which was bounded by tradition and ritual. The Jesuits sought to use their rituals to convert the Natives but were also willing to adapt to Native customs when it was pragmatic and theologically sound. Ritual was an integral factor in the daily lives of the Natives and Jesuits and shaped the contact narrative.

## **Acknowledgements**

Ad maiorem Dei gloriam

I would like to thank my Mom, Dad, and sister, Kasey, for their support; without their reassurance and help, this thesis would have never come into being. To my friends, particularly the TNG (you know who you are), you have kept me sane. I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. David Marshall, for his patience and encouragement.

I would also like to thank Frs. A. Sumich, FSSP and B. McDonnell, FSSP, for their willingness to answer my numerous questions on the minutiae of Catholic rituals. I would like to acknowledge Marie-Andrée Fortier, of the Ursuline Archive, for her aid in finding sources; and Bruce Henry and Fr. J. Monet, SJ of the Jesuit Archive in Montreal, for their advice in conducting research for this thesis. This thesis would not have been possible without funding from the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and support from the John D. Petrie Memorial Bursary.

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	ii
Acknowledgements .....	iii
Table of Contents .....	iv
List of Abbreviations .....	v
INTRODUCTION: “THAT GOD MAY BE KNOWN:” CONVERTING THE NATIVES OF NEW FRANCE .....	1
CHAPTER 1: THE FIRST JESUITS IN ACADIA.....	29
CHAPTER 2: “RESCUED FROM THE SERVICE OF THE DEVIL:” JESUIT AND NATIVE PERCEPTIONS OF THE SPIRITUAL REALM.....	48
CHAPTER 3: SACRAMENTS OF LIFE.....	71
CHAPTER 4: SACRAMENTS OF DEATH.....	105
CONCLUSION.....	130
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	139

## List of Abbreviations

AMUQ

Archives du Monastère des Ursuline de  
Quebec

*JR*

*Jesuit Relations*

*MNF*

*Monumenta Novae Franciae*

## INTRODUCTION: “THAT GOD MAY BE KNOWN:” CONVERTING THE NATIVES OF NEW FRANCE

In the Relation of 1642-1643, the Jesuit superior of the Canadian mission, Barthélemy Vimont, wrote about the Jesuits’ purpose in New France:

The main thing is, that God may be known, that he may be loved, that the faith be planted and enlarged. This is the word, or the precious stone, for which it is necessary to sell, give, lavish, one’s life and one’s blood. Blessed are they who make this rich acquisition on so good terms.<sup>1</sup>

Although the metaphor changed over the years, and in some cases was not as explicitly stated, this religious sentiment was the guiding principle for the Jesuits in New France. The statement, however, did not provide specifics in how this hard work was to be accomplished. The historiography of Native-newcomer relations has examined several different missionizing techniques to bring about conversions, including preaching, catechism, and the reshaping of traditional Aboriginal social structures. However, one of the central characteristics of Catholicism, liturgy and ritual, has been widely ignored. This thesis seeks to examine how the Jesuits converted these Natives through the rituals which were practiced.

This thesis will argue that the Catholic liturgy and ritual played a fundamental role in the Native-Newcomer relationship. Ritualized spiritualities were a common ground between the Jesuits and the Natives and at the same time were mutually misunderstood. The Jesuits, although having French biases, were not colonizers and did

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents (JR)* ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites. Vol. 25: 31 (Cleveland: The Burrows Brothers Company, 1896-1899. Accessed through <http://eco.canadiana.ca/search?q=jesuit+relations&collection=jsr>.

not make being “French” a prerequisite for conversion. The Jesuits, were instead, focused on the salvation of souls. As they began to understand Native traditions, the Jesuits were more willing to let these traditions exist and give them Christian meanings. The Jesuits were forced to examine their own rituals in the light of Native understandings of the world in order to preach effectively. This also meant they allowed practices which the Natives would have found familiar into their own rituals as long as they coincided with the tradition of the church. The Jesuits’ spirituality and theological beliefs led them to believe that the Natives did have a choice in their own conversion. Guided by a genuine desire to save souls, the Jesuits sought to bring the sacraments to the Native people of New France.

Basic Canadian education teaches that there were priests sent to Canada to convert the Aboriginal populations; further Jesuits have been attributed with the greatest number of conversion in the earliest years of the missions particularly in the areas around Quebec and Huronia. The Montagnais and the Huron were the populations in most contact with each other and with Europeans in these locales, and thus will be the focus of this thesis. Since there were significant changes to the population of the Native communities as well as changes in governance that occurred with the destruction of Huronia in 1649, this thesis will limit itself as much as possible to the period before this event.

As stated, most people are aware, or are taught, that there were Jesuits in New France whose sole occupation was the conversion of the Natives. These early missions, however, are often reduced to the Aboriginal resistance, bringing of disease, and a utilitarian view of the necessity of conversion as essential to the fur trade, and religious



orders were have been viewed as an “industry.” However, it seems that in most instances, the topic is left with this understanding alone, or taken up by historians to focus on rituals which were of lesser importance in the grand scheme of Catholic practice.<sup>2</sup> It was not necessary to have a devotion to the rosary, but one had to be baptised and attend Mass every week. What is neglected is the acknowledgement that overall, these personal devotions were part of the larger framework of liturgy and ritual. Private and personal devotions are important, and certainly had an effect on the lives of those who practiced them. However, the public rituals and sacraments were carried out among all of the Christian faithful, and thus were a clearer and more uniform space in which ritualized actions were performed. Further, the Mass and Divine Office, the two most important parts of the Jesuit’s life, are almost entirely neglected in the historiography. When it comes to the aforementioned prayers of the Church, the Council of Trent, 1545-1563, led to a codification of how these prayers and rituals were to be practiced. Furthermore, in the texts of the ritual, the priest is given no leeway to alter the ritual. So then, it is necessary to consider how the priests applied the strict censures of the church to a missionary environment and a people whose language was ill-suited for Catholic vocabulary. When it comes to the terminology of liturgy and ritual, the former will be used to discuss the Mass and at times the Divine Office (breviary) as it pertains to

---

<sup>2</sup> Introductory Canadian university-level textbooks often describe the Jesuits in negative terms, although with nuances on their culpability for destroying Native culture. These textbooks often have very little space to explore the complexity of the relationship between Jesuits and Natives. See for example: J. M. Bumstead, *A History of the Canadian Peoples* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2007), 42-47; and R. Douglas Francis *et al.* *Origins: Canadian History to Confederation* 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (Toronto: Nelson Education, 2013), 56-59.

the codified (and ritually prescribed) actions.<sup>3</sup> Ritual is a broader term encompassing not only proscribed practices, whether commanded by the Church, or those that happen more spontaneously, when it comes to any sort of prayer. To neglect the importance of codified ritual to the Jesuits, and their occasional willingness to modify it, is to neglect the supreme importance which the Church gave to these rituals and indeed the whole context in which the Jesuits operated. In swearing an oath of obedience to the pope, they foreseeably must have been willing to include their obedience to the ritual books and prayers of the Church, over which the Pope had complete and final control. Any modification on this may indicate very profound personal, and at times collective, opinions regarding the conversion of Natives.

### *Historiography*

There have been several broad themes in regards to the Natives of New France and the arrival of missionaries. The first works on the seventeenth century relations tend to focus on governance and the success of France in subduing the Canadian wilderness. Such books include Reuben Thwaites' *France in America*.<sup>4</sup> Peculiarly, completing this book after editing the *Jesuit Relations*, he managed to whittle down the Jesuits' role in New France to a handful of mentions which merely viewed them as actors of the French crown. Later books, such as Cornelius Jaenen's *The Role of the Church in New France*, viewed the Jesuits and Natives as having their own agency but still as being pawns in

---

<sup>3</sup> The breviary was the prayer book for the eight canonical hours that priests and religious were bound to pray. They often consisted of reading the psalms, a Gospel, and other specific prayers and hymns.

<sup>4</sup> Reuben Gold Thwaites, *France in America, 1497-1763* (New York: Harper Bros., 1905).

France's game.<sup>5</sup> The same year, Jaenen would also publish a book which started the shift in how Aboriginal-French contact was viewed.

Jaenen's *Friend and Foe* starts with an overview of how Natives and Europeans viewed the world: "the red man lived in harmony with his environment...but the white man felt the need to conquer and dominate it."<sup>6</sup> However, like many other authors, Jaenen has neglected to see that both Jesuits and Natives had rituals to implore the divine's intercession in influencing their environment. Jaenen puts emphasis on the fact that mysticism "swept France at the beginning of the seventeenth century."<sup>7</sup> This particular fact is not thoroughly examined but goes further than most authors' acknowledgement of the influence of the Council of Trent and trends in spirituality. The role of mysticism and personal spiritual experience will be examined in the light of how these affected the Jesuits' ministry to the Natives. He further asserts that the mysticism of the missionaries was a bridge between the natives and themselves.<sup>8</sup> He illustrates how each culture was so intrinsically linked with their religion that it was incomprehensible to separate the two.<sup>9</sup> This thesis will explore how both cultures began to regard themselves and how adaptation of culture occurred for ritualized ceremonies. Jaenen continued to examine the role of assimilation in New France in terms of governmental policy and a mutual willingness of Natives and French who were willing to adapt some cultural

---

<sup>5</sup> Cornelius J. Jaenen, *The Role of the Church in New France* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1976).

<sup>6</sup> Cornelius J. Jaenen *Friend and Foe: Aspects of French-Amerindian Cultural Contact in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976),8.

<sup>7</sup> Jaenen, *Friend and Foe*, 48.

<sup>8</sup> Jaenen, *Friend and Foe*, 70.

<sup>9</sup> Jaenen, *Friend and Foe*, 56.

customs.<sup>10</sup> In a retrospective analysis of his book, Jaenen highlights his argument that once contact was made, a shifting “mutual dependency” between the French and the Natives marked this relationship, one that could not be ruptured once it was made.<sup>11</sup> It was not only the Natives who assimilated French ways, the French also assimilated some Native practices.<sup>12</sup> In his conclusion, Jaenen argues that the Natives and French discriminated against each other based, not on race, but on their own superior “somatic norm image,” or their own particular cultural ways of doing and being.<sup>13</sup> That is not to say that one group did not dominate, but he argues the actual relationship is best summed in how he titled his book: they were, at the same time, friends and foes.

Scholars, such as Carole Blackburn, have also examined the role of syncretism which occurred. The arguments surrounding syncretism are usually used to gauge the extent to which the parties involved viewed the shifting power paradigm. Carole Blackburn’s *Harvest of Souls* argues that Jesuits and Natives had different views of spirituality.<sup>14</sup> The Jesuits’ had an “exclusive” view of religion, whereas the Natives “tended to incorporate the Jesuits’ message into an existing spiritual repertoire.”<sup>15</sup> In some cases, this happened. In others, Richard White’s theory of the ‘middle ground’ is a more effective vision of what happened in the conversion narratives.<sup>16</sup> The middle

---

<sup>10</sup> Jaenen, *Friend and Foe*, 154.

<sup>11</sup> Cornelius J. Jaenen “*Friend and Foe Revisited*,” *French Colonial History* 12 (2011): 4.

<sup>12</sup> Jaenen, *Friend and Foe*, 184-185.

<sup>13</sup> Jaenen, *Friend and Foe*, 193.

<sup>14</sup> Carole Blackburn, *Harvest of Souls: The Jesuit Missions and Colonialism in North America 1632-1650* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000).

<sup>15</sup> Blackburn, *Harvest of Souls*: 127.

<sup>16</sup> Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011). White argues that the middle ground really did not begin to exist until 1650, even though some of its elements were present in earlier years.

ground emerges, not necessarily after reflection, but rather in the course of hasty decisions which were “creative, and often expedient, misunderstandings.”<sup>17</sup> As will be shown throughout the third and fourth chapters, the Natives did not always understand the difference between what was essentially French and Catholic, often combining practices in the absence of priests. Because of the conditions of the missions “a process of mutual invention” existed.<sup>18</sup> These views of syncretism, however, do not take into account those Natives who converted for simply religious reasons.<sup>19</sup> Although there were considerations for trade and security, historians cannot let cynicism colour what may have been ‘authentic’ conversions by the Natives. In some ways this doubt about the conversion is reasonable. A significant number of conversions occurred on the deathbed or during Iroquois raids; these conversions were made in desperation. This cynicism, however, also seems to be in reaction to the early hagiographies and providential histories, along with the general shift to secularism. In some cases, personal bias against religion has coloured the analysis of the Jesuits’ actions. The historiography has often viewed syncretism in an “all-or-nothing” approach with Natives and Jesuits both being either being syncretists or not.<sup>20</sup> Jesuits, however, tended to be less syncretic than Natives, and for different reasons. Natives may adapt for the cementing of trade alliances, whereas the Jesuits adapted to make conversion easier.

---

<sup>17</sup> White, *The Middle Ground*, xxvi.

<sup>18</sup> White, *The Middle Ground*, 50.

<sup>19</sup> For a view of the symbolism of this syncretism and its link between Europe and New France, see Karin Vélez, “‘A sign that we are related to you’: The Transatlantic Gifts of the Hurons of the Jesuit Mission of Lorrette, 1650-1750” *French Colonial History* vol 12 (2011): 31-44.

<sup>20</sup> See Takao Abe’s *The Jesuit Mission to New France* which explores the historiography of this aspect in-depth.

There is also a debate in the historiography which sets a dichotomy between the Jesuits and their Recollet predecessors in terms of how syncretic they were willing to be in order to obtain a conversion. Trigger has written that the Recollets were very occupied with making the Huron French before they made them Christian.<sup>21</sup> The Jesuits, however, were to leave as much of their converts' traditions intact while carrying out their evangelization. Blackburn has also followed this dichotomy.<sup>22</sup> She argues that the Recollets needed to look and sound French whereas the Jesuits followed a "policy of coercion with relative accommodation."<sup>23</sup> The Jesuits, she argues, wrote about the ideals of conversion with little tolerance for Native traditions, yet in practice were far more lenient. James Axtell has argued that the Jesuits followed in many ways the Recollet approach to conversion, withholding baptism if the person was not sufficiently French, and then turning to a reserve system, such as the "reduction" of Sillery, when possible. These reductions were to keep the influence of the sinful and worldly French away from new and potential converts. Luca Codignola has made a similar argument, writing that the Jesuits required a higher threshold of religious knowledge of their converts than any other group in Europe.<sup>24</sup> They would also allow for conversions as long the Natives would attend church when possible, and observe Sundays and other feast days as non-

---

<sup>21</sup> Blackburn, *Harvest of Souls*, 200-202. Emma Anderson, *The Betrayal of Faith: The Tragic Journey of a Colonial Native Convert* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007), shows that a complete immersion in French culture and religion did not necessarily mean a successful conversion when one, this time Pierre-Antoine Pastedechouan, returned to their home.

<sup>22</sup> Blackburn, *Harvest of Souls*, 131.

<sup>23</sup> Blackburn, *Harvest of Souls*, 131.

<sup>24</sup> Luca Codignola, "Les frontières de la mission: efficacité missionnaire, acculturation réciproque et centralisation romaine" *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Italie et Méditerranée* T. 109 :2 (1997): 788.

work days.<sup>25</sup> Denys Delâge, in *Bitter Feast*, contended that the Jesuits’ “proselytizing zeal” prevented them from becoming relativists.<sup>26</sup> Considering the religious atmosphere of the time, concession in terms of religious dogma would have been unthinkable. Changes to ritual, however, may have been more tenable, particularly as some European locales experienced more significant liturgical changes after the establishment of the Tridentine missal. Takao Abé has argued that the Recollet’s were only “absolutists” because of the circumstances in which they operated: little missionary experience, few friars, a demanding patron (Champlain), and lack of infrastructure.<sup>27</sup> These factors, however, do not take into account the differences in personalities and spiritualities which existed between the two orders.<sup>28</sup> Nicholas Cushner’s *Why Have You Come Here?* examines how one culture replaced another when it came to the Jesuits’ conversion efforts in North America.<sup>29</sup> Cushner argues that because of the Jesuits’ experiences in other nations as well as failures in North America, they were not very open to “cultural relativism,” rather “cautious adaptation” was more their style.<sup>30</sup> After their return to New France, in 1632, the Jesuits were not affected by this competition, and certainly did

---

<sup>25</sup> James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Cultural Origins of North America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 58-64.

<sup>26</sup> Denys Delâge, *Bitter Feast: Amerindians and Europeans in Northeastern North America, 1600-64* trans. Jane Brierley (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993), 48.

<sup>27</sup> Takao Abé, *The Jesuit Mission to New France: A New Interpretation in the Light of the Earlier Jesuit Experience in Japan* (Boston: Brill, 2011), 103-105.

<sup>28</sup> A.J.B. Johnston, *Religion in Life at Louisbourg, 1713-1758*, (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1984), 31, 39. The Recollets were often known for being simple teachers, usually assigned as chaplains for soldiers. They were also not particularly known for their attachment to the rules, as there are several recorded incidents of prohibited marriages taking place in Louisbourg.

<sup>29</sup> Nicholas P. Cushner, *Why Have You Come Here?: The Jesuits and the First Evangelisation of North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 3.

<sup>30</sup> Cushner, *Why Have You Come Here?*, 153.

not report on it. If anything, a competition in conversions was too reminiscent of the politics of the secular French which they disdained in their writings.

Throughout the historiography, there have been several works that have been widely influential. Bruce Trigger's *Natives and Newcomers* offers an extensive examination of the "Indian-White relations in the St Lawrence lowlands during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries."<sup>31</sup> There are two particularly important arguments that Trigger makes: first, that Native culture was not static and did change on its own over the centuries.<sup>32</sup> Second, that Natives' eventual and differing degrees of economic dependence upon Europeans did not mean that they lost agency.<sup>33</sup> In terms of this study, both of these points of argument are critical as they intersect with each other. Since the Natives were willing to adapt their rituals, how they chose to do so becomes a point of power. Since European technological advances may have allowed Natives more time to devote to their rituals and trade with Europeans meant more goods for the rituals, particularly mortuary practices, Trigger posits that the relationship between the Europeans and the Natives may have actually increased the complexity of the Natives' ritual practices.<sup>34</sup> His examination of the Huron also views their perceptions of the Jesuits, including how the Jesuits' preoccupation with death more firmly cemented their views that the Jesuits were shamans.<sup>35</sup> Trigger also argues that the Jesuits believed it was

---

<sup>31</sup> Bruce Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic Age" Reconsidered* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), xi.

<sup>32</sup> Trigger, *Native and Newcomers*, 91. Trigger lists the fourteenth century as one of most change to Iroquoian life, and lists the emergences of war chiefs (93) and cannibalism around this time (96).

<sup>33</sup> Trigger, *Native and Newcomers*, 25.

<sup>34</sup> Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers*, 218. Trigger writes that the benefit of interaction with the Europeans in regards to their ritual practices began to wane in 1649.

<sup>35</sup> Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers*, 246-247.



Satan who was preventing the conversion of the Hurons; the people themselves only lacked instruction in Christian principles.<sup>36</sup> Trigger holds that this occurred up until 1640, a year held by numerous other historians (such as Takao Abé and James Axtell) as the turning point in Jesuit-Huron relations. This thesis will show that the view of the demonic was a more variable belief, depending heavily on the individual missionary's experience. Finally, Trigger argues that although the Huron were the "losers" in history, they ultimately made the decision in 1649 to accept that presence of the Jesuits, thus retaining their agency in their conversion.<sup>37</sup> Trigger's book essentially was one of the first truly measured examinations of both European and Natives cultures and how they interacted, adapted to each other, and maintained their own agencies despite the accidents of history.

Published the same year, James Axtell's *Invasion Within* took a very broad look at native-newcomer relations, examining well into the late eighteenth century in both New France and colonial America.<sup>38</sup> Such a large coverage of the topic gives a good overview; however, it leaves many questions unanswered. Axtell, however, is one of the more level-headed writers of the Jesuit-Native interaction (his conclusion will be dealt with separately). He writes that the Jesuits were in many ways at the mercy of the Natives to accept them and care for them, and in particular why the *donnés* (essentially non-priest Jesuits) of the later years would become especially useful in conversion of

---

<sup>36</sup> Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers*, 251.

<sup>37</sup> Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers*, 297, 335.

<sup>38</sup> James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Cultural Origins of North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

Natives since they could carry firearms.<sup>39</sup> While not necessarily condemning the Jesuits, he illustrates how bizarre the Jesuit world could be to the Natives. For example, Catholicism is based on “the life of Jesus Christ (a man the Indians had never heard of) in the Near East (a part of the world they did not know existed) more than sixteen hundred years before (an inconceivable length of time for oral peoples).<sup>40</sup> Physical realities that were unknown to the Natives were in many instances the reason why translation of the religion in the indigenous languages was so difficult.<sup>41</sup> Some of these translation difficulties will be discussed in the following chapters. However, it was not only religious beliefs and practices that made the Jesuits appear as sorcerers. The simple action of writing, something that any educated man would do without much thought, was perceived as reading minds, and thus, as having a supernatural power.<sup>42</sup>

After his examination of the missionary work in New France, Axtell then covers the attempts made by Protestant missionaries in the American colonies and the necessity they found to convert the Natives to a “whole Way of Living.”<sup>43</sup> Although interesting, it has very little bearing on this study. However, of some interest are his arguments that any really successful Protestant conversion efforts utilised techniques that the Jesuits had first established in New France.<sup>44</sup> He also argued that the Jesuits, and Catholicism, provided a more easily understandable faith because of the richness of the ritual, the logic of working out one’s own salvation rather than being predestined, and that Native women

---

<sup>39</sup> Axtell, *Invasion Within*, 61.

<sup>40</sup> Axtell, *Invasion Within*, 105.

<sup>41</sup> Axtell, *Invasion Within*, 108-109.

<sup>42</sup> Axtell, *Invasion Within*, 103.

<sup>43</sup> Axtell, *Invasion Within*, 135.

<sup>44</sup> Axtell, *Invasion Within*, 275.

could hold greater roles as Catholics, although different from their previous roles, than Protestant women.<sup>45</sup> As will be shown, the elaborate Catholic ritual was consciously used by the Jesuits to aid in their conversion efforts. The following chapters examine how this ritualism of the Jesuits was a key to converting the Natives, but also something the Natives took up and tried to adapt. He goes as far to argue that Christianity actually helped the Natives cope with their new position in a colonized land, and further, that their adaptations of Christianity allowed them to otherwise preserve aspects of their own culture.<sup>46</sup> Despite this very positive view of the Native-Newcomer relationship, Axtell's conclusion is far from unbiased, despite his other injunctions throughout the book. He rather argues that the "invaders" completely ransacked Native culture and life and left them to fight European wars.<sup>47</sup> He particularly aligns the Jesuits with these invaders and therefore turns them into the worst of the colonizers while forgetting his own argument that the Jesuits were more accepting than any other group.<sup>48</sup> Finally, he ends his conclusion with the argument that those who saw themselves as "'chosen people' of God" should have been shown more "self-understanding, tolerance, and true humiliation," particularly in the light that many captured Europeans, French and British/Americans, elected to stay with the Native captors and assimilate to Native life.<sup>49</sup> This view of the religion and culture in the seventeenth and eighteenth century is too

---

<sup>45</sup> Axtell, *Invasion Within*, 278.

<sup>46</sup> Axtell, *Invasion Within*, 285-286.

<sup>47</sup> Axtell, *Invasion Within*, 330.

<sup>48</sup> Axtell, *Invasion Within*, 279.

<sup>49</sup> Axtell, *Invasion Within*, 333. See John Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995). Also, Julie Wheelwright, *Esther: the remarkable true story of Esther Wheelwright: puritan child, native daughter, Mother Superior* (Toronto: HarperCollins Canada, 2011).

simplistic and culturally relativistic considering how missionaries and Natives viewed their own respective cultures. This line of argumentation is anachronistic in imposing a modern understanding of Christian virtues on missionaries who clearly taught, and believed, that there was no salvation outside the Catholic Church. In general, it is not good history to fashion the past, and judge it, on the conceptions of modern values while condemning those of the past as intolerant or misled. If the historian does this, they are guilty of the same cultural superiority of which they accuse the actors of the past.

Karen Anderson's *Chain Her By One Foot* continues to perpetuate a negative view of the church and the clergy as an oppressive force.<sup>50</sup> Anderson's book was a very important contribution to feminist history of New France, and continues in various ways to affect the view of this topic as a standard place in the historiography regarding the Jesuits' and their treatment of Natives. It is perhaps time to move on or at least reduce the credence of her place in the historiography. Jesuits are her main target as they were the most prevalent missionary force among the Natives, and her book deals in particular with Aboriginal women. Her book starts out with a description of a marriage ceremony, and she almost conspiratorially asks why the Jesuits would have so carefully recorded "the vows exchanged by two obscure people in the backwoods of a remote land."<sup>51</sup> The reality is that she seems to entirely misrepresent the Jesuits. First, she lists their first

---

<sup>50</sup> Karen Anderson, *Chain Her By One Foot: The Subjugation of Native Women in Seventeenth-Century New France*, (New York: Routledge, 1991). Allan Greer, *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2005), 207; indicates that the large majority of the current historiography is very negative towards the Jesuits, including Anderson and Carole Blackburn's *Harvest of Souls*.

<sup>51</sup> Anderson, *Chain Her By One Foot*, 2.

records of their missions as 1632, which is incorrect.<sup>52</sup> Their writings started first in Acadia and continued as soon as they were re-established in New France. The Jesuits were present among the Hurons in 1625. She cites 1632 as this was the year that the official *Jesuit Relations* began to be published by Cramoisy. Thwaites has published many of these earlier writings which illustrate detailed attempts at conversion from the earliest years. Further, there is a patent misunderstanding of religion. For what reason would a missionary not record such an event, certainly joyous in their own eyes. It is Anderson who has put these two people of the marriage anecdote off as “obscure;” however, to the Jesuits, every soul mattered and the actual process of conversion was important. She also sets up a dichotomy of Natives being born into a free state, and thus culturally superior, and the French as inferior because they knew “wealth, power, prestige, fear, submission, and loyalty” as their “watch words.”<sup>53</sup> The irony of course is that many of these terms could be equally applied to Native societies, only adapted to their own cultural understanding. For example, while the French valued gold and furs, the Natives valued beads and other trade goods because of their value in rituals.

Anderson’s analysis of the role of women also focused on their religious roles.<sup>54</sup> On several occasions, Anderson links the devil and women, stating that in one instance, “the Devil was at work in the New World and women’s nature made them even more susceptible to his influence than did men’s.”<sup>55</sup> This does not seem to be supported by the

---

<sup>52</sup> Anderson, *Chain Her By One Foot*, 2.

<sup>53</sup> Anderson, *Chain Her by One Foot*, 31.

<sup>54</sup> See Jan Noel, *Along a River: The First French-Canadian Women* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013) particularly chapter one for further discussion of women’s rights in France in comparison to women of European descent in New France.

<sup>55</sup> Anderson, *Chain Her by One Foot*, 57.

Jesuits' reports, particularly in regards to witchcraft, as the Native equivalent, the shaman, was a role primarily carried out by men. Again, she writes that women were viewed by the Jesuits as targeted by the devil, who was "extraordinarily active among the native peoples."<sup>56</sup>

Although her book was seminal to feminist history in Canada, it was gravely biased against clergy and Jesuits in particular. That is not to say they were innocent in every way. However, that the priests were giving reports to both their superiors, and those paying their subsidies, is far different than actively collecting "intelligence." At the same time, if they did pick up on rumblings of discontent, it would be an understandable response to protect not only oneself but also those in their care. Anderson's use of historical documents is questionable in a couple ways. Anderson was not a historian, rather a sociologist, however, that does not excuse the documentary issues with this work.<sup>57</sup>

A very significant theme throughout much of the historiography is that of failure, which is present to some degree in all of the sources mentioned. This theme developed in two distinct waves. The first focused on numerical failure of the Jesuits. According to their contemporaries, and the scholars who studied them, they did not make enough

---

<sup>56</sup> Anderson, *Chain Her by One Foot*, 91.

<sup>57</sup> Anderson also does not include Axtell's work which would in some ways challenge her arguments that European and Catholic religion was particularly harmful to Aboriginal women. Also see Nancy Shoemaker, review of *Chain Her By One Foot : The Subjugation of Native Women in Seventeenth-Century New France*, by K. Anderson, *American Indian Quarterly* 16:4 (Autumn 1992), 541, for an analysis of the lack of chronological context in the use of primary sources.

converts, and their missions were destroyed.<sup>58</sup> Some of those attitudes still exist in the later historiography but usually as a further proof of Aboriginal resistance to change. The second variation on this failure regards the destruction of the Native culture by the Jesuits. While the latter concern definitely has a place in the historiography (although perhaps it is an issue more of morality and ethics), the paradigm of failure is not particularly useful when the main actors in this story did not view their actions in this regard. If anything, the Jesuits viewed what they did in terms of triumph. This is not just a matter of semantics; the salvation of another was their greatest goal. Le Jeune wrote: “all the great affairs of conclaves, of the courts of sovereigns, of Palaces, and of Cabinets, are only child’s play, in comparison with saving or losing a soul.”<sup>59</sup> The loss of a soul might be a failure, but it meant far more to the Jesuits than just a numbers game, it also factored into their own salvation. The Natives, however, did not have this view of “winning souls” and were more concerned with maintaining a cohesive community. When it comes to the destruction of culture, it is also necessary to inquire to what degree each group adapted the customs of the other. Trigger and Axtell have both suggested that it was the Natives’ own choices, their agency, which would eventually contribute to their cultural destruction.<sup>60</sup> Biased hindsight plays a major role in the interpretations which only seek to fault the Jesuits and French as a whole.

---

<sup>58</sup> Reuben Thwaites’ *France in America* and Adam Shortt and Arthur Doughty, eds., *Canada and its Provinces: a History of the Canadian People and their Institutions*, vol 1: New France, (Toronto: Glasgow, Brook & Company, 1914), 71.

<sup>59</sup> *JR* 9: 71-73.

<sup>60</sup> Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers*, 335; Axtell, *Invasion Within*, 285-286. Axtell argues that the Natives took on and adapted Christianity as a way of preserving their own culture by “taking on the protective coloration of the invaders’ culture.” He also states that the European presence in New France was a reality that had to be dealt with, and converting provided a mechanism for coping in the new colonial status.

There are also several books which have introduced new methodologies in the study of Jesuits in New France. Perhaps one of the most creative books on this topic is an examination of the Canadian missions making reference to the earlier Japanese ones. Takao Abe's *The Jesuit Mission to New France* argues that the Franciscans were not "cultural absolutists," which is in contrast to most historians.<sup>61</sup> Further, Abe questions whether the Jesuits should be seen as the Recollets' opposites at all, question labelling the Jesuits as cultural relativists.<sup>62</sup> As such, he argues that because the Jesuits would delay adult baptisms for fear that the people would fall into apostasy, he claims that they were no different from the Recollets who withheld the faith because the Natives did not acculturate; it was only a difference of "customs."<sup>63</sup> As will be explored, the Jesuits' would have viewed premature baptisms as an unkindness to the Natives and even a threat to their own souls if they were to not practice due diligence in regards to the steadfastness of their converts. Abé's transnational history complicates the questions surrounding the "cultural transformations" which took place; however, some of his arguments try to stretch the links between Japan and New France too far. There were also very different styles of governance between Japan and New France which he over-simplified, making the comparison between the two countries much more difficult to make. There may be some institutional memory of the Japanese missions, but for the Jesuits of New France,

---

<sup>61</sup> Abe, *The Jesuit Mission to New France*, 10. Cultural absolutism is generally seen as the necessity to make the Natives French before converting them, whereas cultural relativism is seen as converting the Natives in the culture in which they were 'found,' usually resulting in syncretism.

<sup>62</sup> Abe, *The Jesuit Mission to New France*, 81.

<sup>63</sup> Abe, *The Jesuit Mission to New France*, 111.



the missions of South America more often bear the immediacy and proximity of importance in their minds.

While in many ways being outside the chronological and geographic bounds of this study, Tracy Leavelle's *The Catholic Calumet* offers some points of guidance in treating the source material.<sup>64</sup> Leavelle's focus is on the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century relationship between Jesuit missionaries and the Natives of the upper Great Lakes, primarily the Illinois and the Ottawa.<sup>65</sup> Leavelle argues that there was an ambiguity in the relationship between the Natives and the missionaries in their understandings of each other and what it meant to convert. This ambiguity, he argues, is what allowed for a functioning relationship which bridged the cultural practices of each society.<sup>66</sup> For this study, however, Leavelle gives a critique of many other historians work and interpretation of the *Jesuit Relations*. He states that in "attempt[ing] to counter the hagiographic style and heroic tone of some earlier historical accounts, scholars often dismiss the over religious elements in missionary literature as formulaic and essentially meaningless constructions or as merely another expression of colonial propaganda."<sup>67</sup> For the last several decades, there has been a significant amount of suspicion about the Jesuits' writings, particularly in regards to their more spiritual writings. Leavelle's admonishment gives at least the reminder to the historian that what the Jesuits wrote

---

<sup>64</sup> Tracy Neal Leavelle, *The Catholic Calumet: Colonial Conversions in French and Indian North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012.)

<sup>65</sup> Leavelle, *The Catholic Calumet*, 11, 14.

<sup>66</sup> Leavelle, *The Catholic Calumet*, 18.

<sup>67</sup> Leavelle, *The Catholic Calumet*, 15.

about their religious beliefs, they actually meant. This will be considered throughout the thesis in the interpretation of the *Jesuit Relations*.

Another theme in the historiography is the actual practice of religion. Many of the sources which deal with religious history tend to consolidate the Jesuits into a group which was rather homogenous.<sup>68</sup> Luca Codignola has identified many of the individual Europeans involved in the New France missions and how they interacted on a higher, often more political, level.<sup>69</sup> He has also indicated that the Jesuit missionaries in New France usually spent the rest of their lives in those missions, rather than being cycled through.<sup>70</sup> Despite this important characteristic, as well as his observations in general, the implications of these relationships and missionary “stability” were not examined in light of the Natives they served. This thesis will examine the effect of the individual Jesuits with whom they had contact. Emma Anderson’s *Betrayal of Faith* and Kathryn Labelle’s *Dispersed but not Destroyed*, view the Natives whom they examined as individuals with their own desires and motivations.<sup>71</sup> This has seldom been carried out on the Jesuit priests except for the earliest hagiographic works which often kept to standard sainthood models. Further, when it comes to the particulars of religion, most works focus on the intellectual side of the Jesuits, their view of demons, and how this has affected their missions. Some of the best work on this has been by Peter Goddard. While

---

<sup>68</sup> A view of Jesuits in North America, while identifying individuals, still only deals with them in the collective. Luca Codignola, “Roman Catholic Ecclesiastics in English North America, 1610-58. A Comparative Assessment” *CCHA Historical Studies* 65 (1999), 107-124.

<sup>69</sup> Luca Codignola, “Competing Networks: Roman Catholic Ecclesiastics in French North America, 1610-58” *The Canadian Historical Review* 80: 4 (Dec. 1999): 539-584.

<sup>70</sup> Codignola, “Competing Networks,” 552.

<sup>71</sup> Kathryn Magee Labelle, *Dispersed but not Destroyed: a History of Seventeenth-Century Wendat People* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 2013).

the Jesuits did indeed believe in the Devil and his powers, Goddard has shown a particularly different view of their beliefs regarding the Devil's agency in New France than many other historians.<sup>72</sup> Goddard has also argued that by the early seventeenth century, France had moved away from witchcraft trials, and as intellectual elites, the Jesuits would have also readily embraced a disdain for these accusations, relying more on a re-education of ignorant people. Goddard, though, has neglected to see the changing views on demonology over time and with individuals. Particularly important to the belief in the devil was also individual Jesuits' experience with demonic visions, particularly those experienced by Brebeuf. The 'good' side, that is the guardian angels, in the spiritual realm has been neglected in the historiography but features just as prominently in the *Jesuit Relations*. Other authors, such as Dominique Deslandres, have considered the role of the Council of Trent and the common conversion techniques used by the Jesuits.<sup>73</sup> However, in the case of Deslandres, the council is only mentioned in regard to the changes that were made and how they were received by the French clergy. Although these changes included a codification of the various Catholic sacraments and rituals, there has been no examination in regards to how ritual was carried out in New France.

There are a few texts which have looked at the ritual practice of religion in French North America. A. J. B. Johnston's *Religion in Life at Louisbourg, 1713-1758* shows

---

<sup>72</sup> Peter Goddard, "The Devil in New France: Jesuit Demonology, 1611-1650," *Canadian Historical Review* 78 (March 1997): 40-62. His views on the intellectual formation of the Jesuits, and its implication, will be further examined in chapter two.

<sup>73</sup> Dominique Deslandres, *Croire et Faire Croire : Les missions françaises au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris : Fayard, 2003), 53, 155-159.

how religion was lived and rituals practiced in a later period.<sup>74</sup> Although this monograph covers a period corresponding to a full century after the scope of this thesis, and in an area fairly separate from New France in terms of actual governance and demographic composition, it does provide a realistic model for examining the impact of religion and religious communities on the daily lives of individuals.<sup>75</sup> In his examination of Louisbourg, Johnston highlights a key point on the historiography of his topic that suits this examination as well: “yet, to date, there has been little acknowledgement that the community, overwhelmingly French and Catholic, also had a spiritual dimension.”<sup>76</sup> In many ways, this is how the Jesuits’ have been treated by the existing literature, more as agents of colonialism, change, and trade than as missionaries who were French, Catholic, and Jesuit. All these categories inevitably shaped their treatment of conversion in New France. Further, Johnston did exemplary work to gather both statistical data as well as anecdotes showing the application of ideal Catholicism (usually as shown by the *Ritual of Quebec* published at the turn of the 1700s by Bishop Saint-Vallier, as well as a collection of pastoral letters and circulars) as well as the actual application and at times adaptation of these rules to the local church.<sup>77</sup>

---

<sup>74</sup> A. J. B. Johnston, *Religion in Life at Louisbourg, 1713-1758* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1984.)

<sup>75</sup> Johnston, *Religion in Life at Louisbourg*, 5.

<sup>76</sup> Johnston, *Religion in Life at Louisbourg*, 3.

<sup>77</sup> For example, see Johnston, *Religion in Life at Louisbourg*, 16-17, 20, 39. The first two references come out of Saint-Vallier’s *Rituel* of the Diocese of Quebec and mandate the holy days of obligation; the other two list the exceptions that were made on the official level, to ease the practice of Catholicism for those in Louisbourg. The last reference gives examples of individual transgressions of church rules, on varying levels, and the repercussion thereof.

Allan Greer's *Mohawk Saint* has made many advances in the study of Jesuit-Native relations by examining the lives of both parties involved while avoiding both hagiography and "faceless collectivities."<sup>78</sup> While his work focuses mainly on Catherine Tekakwitha, his method of viewing both actors with agency is important. Catherine and her spiritual director, and later the promoter of her sanctity, Claude Chauchetière, had a relationship which challenged the normative narrative of colonizer-colonized.<sup>79</sup> Chauchetière seems to have gained spiritually more from their relationship than did Catherine. Greer has acknowledged the deep spiritual practices of both individuals as well as the cultures from which they originated. This thesis seeks to use similar techniques to examine the old narratives while re-evaluating how the parties involved negotiated their relationships with each other.

Perhaps the most important influence on this thesis, and only source which has examined ritual in New France, is Claudio Salvucci's *The Roman Rite in the Algonquian and Iroquoian Missions*.<sup>80</sup> Salvucci must be lauded for being truly one of the first to examine the liturgical life in the missions of New France, and he does so from the foundations of the missions through to the Second Vatican Council. His examination follows particularly the Mass but also the seven sacraments and other ritual devotions introduced into the missions (such as the Rosary and various chaplets). Indeed, the role of liturgy is absolutely essential for the study of New France. The saying *lex orandi, lex credendi* is the most apt phrase for his work. Since Catholicism is the essence of the

---

<sup>78</sup> Greer, *Mohawk Saint*, vii.

<sup>79</sup> Greer, *Mohawk Saint*, 5.

<sup>80</sup> Claudio Salvucci, *The Roman Rite in the Algonquian and Iroquoian Missions: from the Colonial Period to the Second Vatican Council* (Merchantville, NJ: Evolution Pub., 2006).

Jesuits, the essence of Catholicism in the missions must be examined. Liturgy is the public manifestation of theological beliefs. The fault with Salvucci's work, however, comes from a seemingly ideological viewpoint to make the Jesuits both theologically orthodox but also liturgically flexible enough to adapt liturgy to the needs of their converts. In many ways he is correct; however, his work does not compare the changes in liturgy as situated in their political and historical context or in comparison to liturgical practices already in force in Europe. Further, the analysis of liturgy from the early missions through to the twenty century is contained in such a narrow volume that it leaves room for analysis. His work, however, is an important starting point in determining the kinds of liturgical changes made over the years and in particular missions.

The last source to be examined here deals in the rituals surrounding death: Erik Seeman's *The Huron-Wendat Feast of the Dead*.<sup>81</sup> His book examines the way in which the Huron's feast of the dead offered a link to the Jesuits. He also examines the larger practices related to death (deathbed scenes, last words, burial traditions), and calls them "deathways."<sup>82</sup> Although the Jesuits tried to avoid syncretism, especially in their first years in the missions, Seeman's understanding of deathways as a bridge between the two cultures is well-founded. The Jesuits, as will be shown, adapted Native customs to what they felt was essential for a Christian death. Death is an overarching theme in the *Jesuit Relations* and is a critical locale for analysing the exchange in rituals.

---

<sup>81</sup> Erik R. Seeman, *The Huron-Wendat Feast of the Dead: Indian-European Encounters in Early North America* (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 2011).

<sup>82</sup> Seeman, *The Huron-Wendat Feast of the Dead*, 2.

This thesis examines the Jesuit mission in Acadia, and then follows the Jesuits' missionary attempts in and around Quebec and Huronia until 1650. This date permits the final recording of all the martyred Jesuits as well as the Hurons' escape from their traditional lands. This prevents the complicating factors of the mixing of tribes, the withdrawal of numerous Jesuits, and the increase of governmental and military affairs in the missions. As will be examined in chapter one, there is very little historiography that focuses on the early years, and particularly the missionaries, of Acadia. Although this chapter is concerned mainly with the Jesuits' arrival in 1611, it does focus on some of the occurrences proceeding their arrival, particularly the mass baptism done by Father Jesse Fleché in 1610. Acadia sets the groundwork for the Jesuits' knowledge of both the land and people of New France. It will also provide a useful comparison for the better known, and lasting, missions of New France proper.

The second chapter will explore the intellectual and religious heritage of particularly the Jesuits and important colonial figures, but it will also, when possible, explore these themes among the Native populations with which they were interacting. The Jesuits' tendency towards Thomistic theology affected their view of free will and the role of grace in conversion. This would affect how they viewed the Natives' ability to convert. Further, intellectual, religious, and political changes in France helped to determine the Jesuits' perceptions of the devil in New France. Also explored is the role of the individual Jesuit's spiritual and "real" (for lack of a better word) experience as it shifted over the years and changed their views on the presence of the demonic. There were numerous religious and intellectual changes that were occurring in France among both the clerics and the laity, and to truly understand the ideas and attitudes that they

brought to New France, and thus their conversion efforts, the formation of their mind and souls is of critical importance. The roots of this spirituality and how it affected others will be examined both in this chapter as well as a specific chapter on the rituals pertaining to death in the missions. Likewise, to avoid outright Eurocentrism, it is necessary to examine how each Native population, to be examined here, viewed the world and, in particular, their unique religious and ritual life.

The third chapter will examine so-called “sacraments of life,” and it will take into consideration any liturgical and ritual changes. It will consider the sacrament of baptism and its particular role in the missions. It will be argued that in many ways baptism was the most important sacrament in both the spiritual realm as well as an indication of enculturation and missionary progress. The reception and practices surrounding Marriage and Communion will be examined for their place in the discourse, and in particular if they became more important to the missionaries as time went on and converts increased. Communion in particular will show the attention to ritualized action. Further, the rituals surrounding Communion will illustrate that the Jesuits themselves both linked their French practices as being integral to Catholic practice, while trying to modify the “French” aspects, which they believed were unnecessary or superfluous in a perfected France.

The last chapter will deal with the sacraments and rituals surrounding death. It is here that the Jesuits appear to have the greatest and most significant initial and lasting changes in regards to Native culture. Baptism will again be examined, but this time solely in regards to proximity to death, as well as confession, extreme unction, and viaticum (last rites). Confession will be examined first on its own as being in the state of



sin meant one was spiritually dead. This will then be followed by confessions made as part of the deathbed scene. This chapter will illustrate the understanding of Jesuit's towards death and how, for them, death was something to be "done well" so that one may attain Heaven. This will necessitate an examination, where possible, of the Native's understanding of life after death and the rituals they observed. How these two visions, those of the Jesuits and the Natives, combined profoundly affected the understanding surrounding and the perceived need for conversion.

Collectively, these chapters deal with the under-examined aspects of ritual. The Jesuits believed they were to establish a "new Jerusalem" and thus a perfected France. The new religion brought with it numerous liturgies and rituals which the Jesuits would use initially to awe the Natives and thus encourage them to convert. The rituals, however, were foreign and often misunderstood by the Natives who held a different standard for spirituality, that is, that practices could change if it meant better access to the spirit world or a better preparation for the afterlife. This thesis uses the Jesuits' own writings, in both the Relations, as well as some of their other unpublished letters and journals to bring to light the difference in their writing for general consumption as well as internal communications. The Jesuits did not see themselves as colonizers. The Jesuits, while wanting this new Jerusalem, were ultimately motivated by the concern of the souls of the Natives as well as their own. Conversion and the practice of religion in Catholicism can only fully be understood when rituals are also examined. Changes in these rituals were typically not accidents (although mistakes were sometimes made). Any changes made usually came from thoughtful consideration by the Jesuits, in ways which were practical, so as to allow as pure of an understanding of Catholicism as

possible while making the beliefs accessible to their converts. The thesis uses many of the same writings which have previously led to the hagiographical writings about the Jesuits and instead offers a discussion on the realities of the intersection of French culture, Jesuit spirituality, the role of ritual, and the complication of individual actors in the conversion effort.

## CHAPTER 1: THE FIRST JESUITS IN ACADIA

A twisted triangle of religion, politics, and distrust led the Jesuits to their first mission in New France: Port-Royal. Although the Jesuits arrived in 1611, the story itself starts years before with both the establishment of fisheries off the North American coastline as well as a monopoly granted for the fur trade in 1603. This monopoly was founded with the hope that it would not only bring revenue but also bring about a colony in New France and the conversion of the Natives.<sup>1</sup> To fulfill these goals, a permanent habitation would need to be settled and missionaries brought to New France. It is in the selection of these first settlers and missionaries that the ideological strains were established. Essentially, there was some strain in the relationship between the Catholics, Huguenots, and the practice of Gallicanism. While the earliest settlers appear not to have had much difficulty with the co-existence of two denominations, there was nevertheless incomplete unity with the presence of both Catholic and Protestant clergy. Further, Gallican church beliefs had become entrenched among the elites of the colony and were obviously the opinion of many Frenchmen. These two threads would prove to be a difficult introduction to the mission of New France for the Jesuits. They endured enough suspicion when it came to the question of the nationalistic loyalties but also numerous rumours that they were bent on domination of every field they entered (giving birth to conspiracy theories that have lasted until today). Some of the fears around these Jesuits

---

<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Jones, *Gentlemen and Jesuits: Quests for Glory and Adventure in the Early Days of New France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986).

came from their seeming omnipresence in numerous far-flung missions, such as in Asia.<sup>2</sup> Yet, at the same time, it was these missions that taught the Jesuits to have an openness to the indigenous people and how to convert them. This mentality was immediately identifiable in the mission work of Acadia. Thus, a history of missions and their Catholic rituals in New France must start with the first work that was completed – especially since one of these first priests to Acadia would return as one of the first Jesuit priests to Quebec.

There is very little historiography that covers the first years of Acadia. Elizabeth Jones' *Gentlemen and Jesuits* is perhaps the most comprehensive, reviewing the *Jesuit Relations* and the writings of Marc Lescarbot and Samuel de Champlain.<sup>3</sup> She acknowledges that many of the sources she reviewed were generalist and in some cases inaccurate. Further, she argues that Port-Royal should be considered the “first enduring European settlement north of Florida.”<sup>4</sup> She readily admits that the study of the Port-Royal colony might be strange if counting only the successes, but she concludes that the human element of the story (with its successes and failures) is compelling enough to tell the story.<sup>5</sup> With this criteria, the story of the Jesuits will be examined in this paper and thus later extrapolated into their mission in Huronia. Her book is a wonderful distillation of the “facts” of what happened according to the primary sources of the colony (Biard,

---

<sup>2</sup> Takao Abé, *The Jesuit Mission to New France: A New Interpretation in the Light of the Earlier Jesuit Experience in Japan* (Boston: Brill, 2011), 3. Abé points out that there was a definite knowledge amongst the Jesuit priests in New France about the conversion efforts and techniques in several of their missions, particularly those in Japan. Further, their spread out presence around the globe gave a sense of an all-encompassing dominance.

<sup>3</sup> Jones, *Gentlemen and Jesuits*, x.

<sup>4</sup> Jones, *Gentlemen and Jesuits*, ix-x.

<sup>5</sup> Jones, *Gentlemen and Jesuits*, x.

Champlain, Lescarbot) as well as some legal documents and accounts from France which provide necessary context. However, her writing is lacking in secondary literature which would provide a deep analysis rather than just a clarification of chronological events. Despite this, she does argue convincingly that there were important occurrences in Acadia that would shape how the colonies of New France would co-develop.

Perhaps the other most important work which helps in the understanding of the early years of New France and Acadia is Bruce Trigger's *Natives and Newcomers*.<sup>6</sup> His particular contributions are in regards to dating the first arrival of Europeans in New France as well as the effect of their presence on the Natives who lived there. Although he covers the complete length of the colonization effort of Ste Croix and Port-Royal (1603-1608,<sup>7</sup>) under De Monts' monopoly in just a few pages, he does it with a succinctness and analysis that gives understanding to both the geographical and human limitations and struggles of this new colony.<sup>8</sup> A further source on these earliest years is David Hackett Fischer's *Champlain's Dream*.<sup>9</sup> It is appropriate that any real understanding of these early years of Port-Royal must consider Champlain. In some ways, he serves as a good frame for the colony under the monopoly. He arrived in 1604 with the first men, and continued on to found Quebec in 1608 once the monopoly had expired. However, this results in Fischer's real coverage of Acadia ending with the departure of Champlain and thus not being able to assess the effects of the Jesuits. This major work of course focuses

---

<sup>6</sup> Bruce Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic Age" Reconsidered* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> This monopoly was initially three years, but de Monts gained a one year extension.

<sup>8</sup> Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers*, 306-307.

<sup>9</sup> David Hackett Fischer, *Champlain's Dream* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2009).

on Champlain primarily and his actions, which is fitting to the medium of a biography. It does benefit, however, from being a more recent publication and the attendant discoveries that come along with it. For example, Fischer was able to include evidence from a 2003 forensic pathology report which supported accounts written by Champlain about their first winter's struggle with scurvy.<sup>10</sup> Each of these authors draw largely from the same corpus of texts, but each one has managed the analysis and narrative in such a way that there is a slightly different picture and perception from each one.

Despite a short visit by Vikings half a millennium before, the first continued presence of Europeans around the shores of New France began in the early sixteenth century according to Trigger, with the Spanish bringing furs back to Spain in 1525.<sup>11</sup> From this point on, there was a consistent presence of Spanish, English, and French fishing, as well as some trading, with the Natives they encountered. Because these visits were only to gain fish, there was no attempt at settlement during this period. The first real and sustained establishment in the New France area began with Acadia and the erection of a settlement. Regardless if this was supposed to be an actual colony or “an outpost of empire,” as Fischer argues, the settlement in Acadia, first at Ste Croix and then at Port-Royal, did have a permanence to it.<sup>12</sup> Establishing a colony was a fashionable thing to do at this time, and Henri IV wanted to fall in line with countries like Spain. In

---

<sup>10</sup> Fischer, *Champlain's Dream*, 172.

<sup>11</sup> Fischer, *Champlain's Dream*, 161. Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers*, 135.

<sup>12</sup> Fischer, *Champlain's Dream*, 158. Fischer states that the settlement was to be a “base” for further exploration. While indeed it did act as this base, the explorers returned back to it and worked for its development.

particular, it was the failing power of Spain and the Treaty of Vervins in 1598 that paved the way towards the possibility of French colonization.<sup>13</sup>

This treaty highlights a number of religious and political issues at this time. In effect, the Treaty of Vervins ended the war between France and Spain, especially once Henri converted to Catholicism. This did not mean that all citizens of France had to be Catholic, since the Edict of Nantes ensured Protestants (Huguenots) safety to practise their religion. We can actually see this in action with the founding of this first settlement. In 1604, Pierre du Gua, sieur de Monts was granted a monopoly for three years in Acadia between the fortieth and the forty-sixth parallel.<sup>14</sup> De Monts was himself a Huguenot, yet he was tasked with the establishment of a Catholic colony and with converting the Natives to Catholicism. De Monts was not the only Protestant on this journey to Acadia. On the ship there was one Protestant minister whose name has not been recorded.<sup>15</sup> In all accounts, this minister was treated in much the same way as the two Catholic priests who also made the journey, one of whom was named Fr. Aubry.<sup>16</sup> Aubry was from a higher class, and his parents followed him to the port, begging him not to go. It seems that for this priest, as well as many of the other settlers, this journey was more about the excitement and adventure rather than the desire to convert souls.<sup>17</sup> The anonymous two men of the cloth were usually found bickering over their religious denominations, and at times it came to blows. Because of this constant fighting, it became somewhat

---

<sup>13</sup> Jones, *Gentlemen and Jesuits*, 17.

<sup>14</sup> Jones, *Gentlemen and Jesuits*, 5. His name is alternatively spelled Pierre Dugua, sieur de Mons.

<sup>15</sup> Jones, *Gentlemen and Jesuits*, 8.

<sup>16</sup> Fischer, *Champlain's Dream*, 157.

<sup>17</sup> Jones, *Gentlemen and Jesuits*, 8-9.

disheartening for the settlers, and at most, an entertainment for the Natives. It did not, however, result in any conversions – one of the theoretical goals of the settlement.<sup>18</sup>

The first establishment, as previously stated, was made at Isle Sainte Croix in 1604. Fischer maintains that this location was chosen over the other possible locales because of its defensibility against Europeans.<sup>19</sup> These features also made it a very difficult first winter. They had low supply of food, firewood, and water and had to make constant journeys to fetch these items. Due to the problems with gaining food and bouts of scurvy, almost half of the 79 men on the island died that first winter. With such disappointment and the realization they needed a better place to settle, they chose Port-Royal, a place that had been discovered in 1604. Here, crops grew abundantly unlike in the sandy soils of Ste Croix.<sup>20</sup> Port-Royal continued as a station for explorations of the surrounding coasts, with some men remaining to grow crops and tend to the settlement. Others, like de Monts returned to France. De Monts returned in 1605 to inform the king of the developments surrounding the settlement and to help quell any rumours of its poor performance that were circulating in France.<sup>21</sup> Because of the scarcity of means of communications, as well as the unpopularity of the monopoly among French traders, numerous stories circulated in France about the new settlement. The monopoly did not stop illicit trading and new ships to the settlement often brought more news of this sort.<sup>22</sup> This was not the only difficulty they encountered.

---

<sup>18</sup> Jones, *Gentlemen and Jesuits*, 24-25.

<sup>19</sup> Fischer, *Champlain's Dream*, 166.

<sup>20</sup> Jones, *Gentlemen and Jesuits*, 35.

<sup>21</sup> Jones, *Gentlemen and Jesuits*, 62-63.

<sup>22</sup> Jones, *Gentlemen and Jesuits*, 80.



The winter of 1605-1606 brought a continued fight with scurvy. Twelve of the forty-five men at Port-Royal succumbed to the disease. This included the combative priest and Huguenot minister. Gabriel Sagard, a Recollet, would record their death and burial as such:

It happened that a priest and a minister died around the same time, the sailors buried them in the same grave, for if dead, they should rest in peace, because when they were living, they could not agree [on anything], everything swirling in derision.<sup>23</sup>

Evidently, while the sailors may have respected their own personal religious beliefs, the behaviour of these two clerics seemed like a mockery. The minutiae of these religious quarrels were of no importance to them. Jones argues that even Lescarbot, while liking the Catholic faith and its rituals, did not necessarily like its priests.<sup>24</sup>

Lescarbot wrote his own account of this time in Port-Royal, and it deftly shows what he believed the role of religion should be. Although he seemed to be in full support of the extension of the Catholic Church's presence, he wrote that "we must first establish the State, without which the Church cannot exist. And for this reason the first help should be given to this State, and not to what has the pretext of piety. For, when the State is founded, it will be its duty to provide for that which is spiritual."<sup>25</sup> This reflection on the relationship between the church and the state was written in 1612, just a year after the Jesuits had arrived in Port-Royal. Although it is a general statement, in many ways it

---

<sup>23</sup> Gabriel Sagard, *Histoire du Canada et voyages que les freres* (Paris: Claude Sonnius, 1636). Chapter 2. Accessed 13 January 2014. <http://www.gutenberg.ca/ebooks/sagard-histoire/sagard-histoire-00-h-dir/sagard-histoire-00-h.html>. "Il arriva qu'un Prestre & un Ministre moururent presque en mesme temps, les matelots qui les enterrerent, les mirent tous deux dans une mesme fosse, pour veoir si morts, ils demereroient en paix, puis que vivants ils ne s'estoient pû accorder, toutes choses se tournoient en risée."

<sup>24</sup> Jones, *Gentlemen and Jesuits*, 74.

<sup>25</sup> *JR* 2: 147.

refers to the problems that Lescarbot and Jean de Biencourt, sieur de Poutrincourt had with the Jesuits. For Poutrincourt, it was primarily a problem of funding. Poutrincourt had been left in charge of Port-Royal by de Monts when the latter had returned to France. Poutrincourt tried each year to get sufficient funding to support his settlement, but it was hard to come by. The Jesuits, however, benefitted significantly from royal favour and in particular Madame de Guercheville, who, when the Jesuits were refused sailing on a ship sailed by Huguenots, took up the collection of four thousand livres to buy out the ship.<sup>26</sup> Very few of the difficulties between Poutrincourt and the Jesuits got reported in Father Biard's relations back to his superiors. Evidently, his writings were still capable of getting monetary support, unlike Lescarbot's writings for Poutrincourt, and thus he wanted to minimize the problems in the settlement. The Jesuits were often considered too involved in the affairs of governance and accused of wanting to run things themselves. A particularly anti-Jesuit piece of literature arose out of Acadia, called the *Factum du Proces entre Jean de Biencourt et les PP. Biard et Masse, 1614*.<sup>27</sup> Jones argues that *Factum* was written by Simon Imbert, a caterer for the ship which arrived in 1612. It also carried the Jesuit lay brother Gilbert du Thet. Imbert held anti-Jesuit opinions and both men were suspicious of each other on the journey.<sup>28</sup> Du Thet believed that Imbert was stealing money and goods from the ship, while Imbert countered that du Thet was not only aiding Madame de Guercheville in attaining the rights to all of Acadia

---

<sup>26</sup> Jones, *Gentlemen and Jesuits*, 163.

<sup>27</sup> *Factum du Proces entre Jean de Biencourt et les PP. Biard et Masse, 1614* in *Monumenta Novae Franciae I : La Première Mission D'Acadie (1602-1616)* ed. Lucien Campeau (Quebec: Les Presses de l'universite Laval, 1967), 320-406.

<sup>28</sup> Jones, *Gentlemen and Jesuits*, 196.

except Port-Royal, but also of holding treasonous opinions regarding Henri IV.<sup>29</sup>

Accusations of treason against the king were very serious; the Jesuits had only just begun regaining the trust of the monarch. An attack on the king in 1594 which had some tenuous links to the Jesuits, resulted in them all being expelled; they were only allowed back into France in 1603 with some restrictions on their teaching and preaching. Many felt that they had indeed been behind a plot to kill the king, mainly prodded on by the support of Spain.<sup>30</sup> As stated in a previous chapter, since the Society of Jesus was founded in Spain, many who distrusted this ambitious order believed it was with Spain that their loyalties lay. This accusation of du Thet's treason was significant enough that the Jesuits demanded to be allowed back to France to defend themselves. Poutrincourt refused and the Jesuits took the drastic action of barricading themselves on a ship, demanding to speak to its captain, and threatening excommunication to anyone who breached the room.<sup>31</sup> The room was breached and Biard and Massé declared excommunication against everyone. Massé, however, was persuaded to leave the room, while Biard remained. It is in the *Factum's* report of the proceeding talk with Massé that the overt dislike of the Jesuits was evident. The author writes that Massé was condemning of the actions taken toward himself and Biard:

[Massé] "came before me in his square bonnet [biretta], I asked him why he left without my consent, being in this country under my charge. He replied that he did not recognize [my authority] and that he had more authority and power from the King in the country than I, and he excommunicated me, protesting against all

---

<sup>29</sup> Jones, *Gentlemen and Jesuits*, 200-201.

<sup>30</sup> Jones, *Gentlemen and Jesuits*, 135-137.

<sup>31</sup> Jones, *Gentlemen and Jesuits*, 204-206.

the evils that had been committed against him and his companion, Father Biard.”<sup>32</sup>

The author clearly believes that the priests had overstepped their authority. However, there is perhaps a little bit more to this, considering the author’s decision to clearly record the head-covering of the cleric. Jones notes that it was hats in this society which clearly indicated rank and authority; judges and professors would also wear similar birettas to priests.<sup>33</sup> The author, however, also notes that it is square. Jesuits did indeed have their own style of biretta which had four blades. This style would have given it a more square appearance than a “regular” three bladed or even two bladed biretta, as Campeau suggests.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, this statement could have more clearly emphasized that this was a Jesuit who had come in all his scheming and power-hungry ways to declare his authority. Stretched perhaps a bit further, the use of “*bonnet*”, although a common word to denote a hat, may also have indicated something a bit more Spanish. There is a particular type of Spanish biretta called the *bonete*, and its earlier constructions can look rather square.<sup>35</sup> Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, is often depicted wearing a biretta which could be one of these early *bonete*.<sup>36</sup> If this was indeed a purposeful choice of words, it

---

<sup>32</sup> *Factum*, in *MNF* I, 376. “Estant venu devant moy avec son bonnet carré, je luy demande pourquoy il s’ingéroit de s’en aller sans mon congé, estant en ce pays sous ma charge. Il répliqua qu’il ne me cognoissoit en rien et qu’il avoit plus de puissance et autorité du Roy en ce pays que moy et qu’il m’excommunioit, protestant contre moy de tous les maux que l’on avoit commis contre luy et son compagnon, le Père Biard”.

<sup>33</sup> Jones, *Gentlemen and Jesuits*, 207.

<sup>34</sup> Lucien Campeau, ed, *Monumenta Novae Franciae I : La Première Mission D’Acadie (1602-1616)* (Quebec:Les Presses de l’universite Laval, 1967), 207.

<sup>35</sup> Dieter Philippi, “The Spanish Bonete - Bonete Español de 4 Picos con Borla,” on *Philippi Collection*, <http://philippi-collection.blogspot.ca/2010/12/spanish-bonete.html>, accessed 14 January 2014. Dieter Philippi, “Jesuit Biretta,” on *Philippi Collection*, <http://philippi-collection.blogspot.ca/2013/09/jesuit-biretta.html>, accessed 14 January 2014.

<sup>36</sup> Jacopino del Conte, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 1556, *Jesuit Institute*, <http://jesuitinstitute.org/Pictures/Ignatius04.jpg> , accessed 14 January 2014.

would have further pushed the insinuation that the Jesuits were in league with the Spanish. Regardless of the various possibilities, the author was not pleased to be confronted in this manner by a Jesuit.

Poutrincourt seemed particularly affected by the numerous anti-Jesuit sentiments of France and passed them on to his son, Charles de Biencourt.<sup>37</sup> In 1613, when their ship was attacked and Port-Royal was burnt by the English, Biencourt accused the priests of being in league with the English. This was a rather illogical conclusion considering the grave danger the Jesuits found themselves to be in.<sup>38</sup> The English were rampantly anti-Jesuit and the Jesuits themselves would only have to look a few years back into their history to find Jesuit martyrs in England. For example, Edmond Campion was executed 1581, and the even more contemporary Francis Page, who became a Jesuit while in prison, and was executed 1602.<sup>39</sup> Fathers Biard and Massé would survive their capture by the English and would return to France. Biard would stay in France while Massé was part of the first mission to Quebec, and died in Sillery in 1646. In the death notice, there was a note that Lescarbot regretted his ill-treatment of the Jesuits. Whether or not this was fabricated, Jones argues that it probably came from Charles La Tour as a means of ingratiating himself with the Jesuits.<sup>40</sup> By this time, the Jesuits had gained their true

---

<sup>37</sup> Jones, *Gentlemen and Jesuits*, 210-211.

<sup>38</sup> Jones, *Gentlemen and Jesuits*, 239.

<sup>39</sup> Louise Imogen Guiney, "St. Edmund Campion." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 5. (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909.) Accessed 13 Jan. 2014 <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05293c.htm>>. Edwin Burton, "Ven. Thomas Tichborne." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 14. (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912.) Accessed 13 Jan. 2014 <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14721c.htm>>

<sup>40</sup> Jones, *Gentlemen and Jesuits*, 249.

power in New France; however, in Acadia, their experiences were quite different and may have formed the way in which they conducted themselves in Quebec.

The Jesuits' first encounter with the Natives at Port-Royal was with the chief Membertou.<sup>41</sup> Stories of Membertou permeate the early accounts of New France. For example, Marc Lescarbot, a lawyer and writer, described Membertou as their captain, *sagamore*, and their *Aoutmoin*, a combination of prophet and shaman.<sup>42</sup> Throughout their presence in Acadia, the French tended to have a very good relationship with Membertou. He would also become the first Native converted, in 1610, by the secular priest Jessé Fleché. This first set of baptisms occurred on Saint John the Baptist day, June 26. Membertou was named Henry, after the King of France, who was also named as his godfather.<sup>43</sup> Fleché did not seem to have many qualms about baptising the family members of Membertou considering the very little religious instruction they had received. Perhaps most indicative of this was the fact that Membertou's eldest son, Membertoucoichis (also known as Judas, and baptised as Louis), had two wives, both of whom were baptised as well as their children.<sup>44</sup> There is no indication that Louis was told that he must separate from one of his wives. Poutrincourt had dutifully recorded all the baptismal names as well as their godparents. Jones indicates that Lescarbot included this record in his writings as a way of reminding the nobles of court of their presumed support of the mission, and that they should send supplies so as to continue the

---

<sup>41</sup> Jones, *Gentlemen and Jesuits*, 67.

<sup>42</sup> *JR* 1: 75.

<sup>43</sup> *JR* 1: 77.

<sup>44</sup> *JR* 1: 109-111.

Christianization of New France. For Poutrincourt, this list was finally proof that conversions were taking place in New France, and were a justification of his presence.<sup>45</sup>

When the Jesuits arrived in Acadia, they were not impressed with what they found. They had heard of the conversions, but the actual formation of these new converts was very lacking. Biard writes on January 21, 1611, very soon after his arrival at Port-Royal, of Fleché's conversions. Thwaites' copy of Biard's account includes Fr. Auguste Carayon's inclusion of a later memoir from the eighteenth century. This memoir roundly condemns Fleché's conversions as "yielding to thoughtless zeal."<sup>46</sup> In his own writing, Biard seems a bit more forgiving, saying that it was "amusing" that the Natives did not remember their baptismal name or what it meant to be baptised.<sup>47</sup> Biard wrote this letter to his superior in France, and probably thought better of too harshly condemning the work of another priest. This initial conversion fiasco would affect the way in which they would go about converting the Natives. Baptism were only performed in the danger of death or if the person had been well instructed for a couple years.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, the total number of converts was very low, and Biencourt was not pleased. He could not show any great progress to those who might have given him financial support from France.<sup>49</sup>

The Jesuits, despite not baptising the Natives, were developing a significant liturgical life that did include the Natives. In January 1612, Father Biard wrote to his superior in France.<sup>50</sup> He outlined what had occurred in the settlement as well as tried to

---

<sup>45</sup> Jones, *Gentlemen and Jesuits*, 145.

<sup>46</sup> *JR* 1: 129.

<sup>47</sup> *JR* 1: 143.

<sup>48</sup> *JR* 2: 9.

<sup>49</sup> Jones, *Gentlemen and Jesuits*, 197.

<sup>50</sup> *JR* 2: 5-55.

give an overview of Native life. One of his first points was what they had done as men of religion. Biard wrote that they offered Mass every day, “solemnly sing it Sundays and holidays together with Vespers.”<sup>51</sup> Clearly, they were not doing the bare minimum when it came to the Mass, as they were offering a High Mass on the days of obligation. Further, it seems like the priests wanted the practise of religion to be as public and ritualized as possible. Biard writes that they “frequently [had] the procession” for the feasts.<sup>52</sup> They also included the Native children, while yet unbaptised, in “carrying the bells, candles and holy water” in these processions.<sup>53</sup> He writes that if they can get them to act as Christians, that in time they will be willing to convert. Biard also notes how poor of an example the Christian sailors were. “Sailors,” he writes, “who form the greater part of our parishioners are ordinarily quite deficient in any spiritual feeling.”<sup>54</sup> However, the Jesuits must have felt that the French sailors were just as ignorant in religion as were the Natives. This relationship with the sailors must have also influenced the Jesuits’ later decisions among the Huron to make missions that were separated as much as possible from French influence. In Acadia, Biard writes that the sailors had taken to teaching the Natives to swear and blaspheme in French, particularly the women much to his disgust (he describes them as “otherwise...very timid and modest”).<sup>55</sup> These Frenchmen were only a bad influence on the Natives and could wreak havoc on the Jesuits’ conversion efforts.

---

<sup>51</sup> *JR* 2: 7.

<sup>52</sup> *JR* 2: 7.

<sup>53</sup> *JR* 2: 53.

<sup>54</sup> *JR* 2: 7.

<sup>55</sup> *JR* 2: 9.



The priests had much difficulty, especially in the first years, to make any success in converting the Natives. It came primarily down to their lack of knowledge of the language, Micmac, as well as the different understandings of religion and spirituality. In some ways, the reader can hear Biard's frustration with his inability to speak the language and his reliance on Biencourt for translation.<sup>56</sup> Biencourt's facility with the language usually stayed with issues of trade and alliance. Religion was far beyond his abilities. In his attempt to convert the Natives, they often had to adjust abstract Christian terms to ones that had more easily expressed understandings. Even with these attempts to ensure better catechises than Father Fleché ever provided, the complexity of Christianity, considering the lack of language skills by the missionaries, had a very difficult time transcending the complexity of the Aboriginal spiritual practices. Biard writes that in their desperation to get across the meaning of Christianity, they were "compelled to make a thousand gesticulations and signs" to explain religious concepts.<sup>57</sup> For example, it would be rather difficult to translate theological principles such as the Trinity into a hand-gesture. The Natives seemed to listen to these charade performances, but not necessarily because they wanted to learn more about religion. Rather, they were entertained by these priests who were essentially flapping their arms. Conversions using these techniques were hard. Converting the dying, however, was a much easier task.

The Jesuits were very amenable to baptising those who were on their death-bed, particularly those who were children. Biard almost gleefully records the first baptism

---

<sup>56</sup> *JR* 2: 9.

<sup>57</sup> *JR* 2: 11.

they performed on a dying young girl.<sup>58</sup> He asked her parents if he could baptise her since she was so ill, and they gave her up as if “she was no better than a dead dog.”<sup>59</sup> They baptised the child, and she died a couple days later bearing the name of Madame de Guercheville, “who may rejoice that already her name is in heaven...[because] this chosen soul flew away to that glorious place.”<sup>60</sup> In many ways, this was a victory for the Jesuits, a soul they had won for heaven. Biard had managed to get parents to accept baptism, a first step in the right direction for the missionaries. Even if the parents did not believe in the sacrament, they still allowed it. Biard’s writing also seems to indicate that the Native soul had no problems entering heaven if they had been baptised and endured a good death. The conversion to Christianity, for the Jesuits, was all about making sure that a person died baptised and converted so that they may enter Heaven. Living was only a means to an end. This, however, alarmed the Natives, and many, like the girl’s parents, only allowed baptism as it was seen as a last resort. It is no wonder that the Natives saw hypocrisy in the teaching of the Jesuits. This supposed life-bringing water was far too connected with the death of their own people.

The Jesuits’ concern with death also meant they were particularly concerned in changing the way in which the Natives carried out their own death rituals. On one occasion, Membertou’s son, Louis, was ill, and the Natives were preparing in their usual way: an oration, or final speech, by the dying, the slaughter of his dogs so that he would have company in the coming world, the final feast, and then the cessation of food.<sup>61</sup> The

---

<sup>58</sup> *JR* 2: 15.

<sup>59</sup> *JR* 2: 15.

<sup>60</sup> *JR* 2: 15.

<sup>61</sup> *JR* 2: 17.

Jesuits quickly put a halt to the killing of the dogs as it had horrified them. Dogs did not have eternal souls, and thus could not accompany the people in the afterlife. The reader can witness that the Jesuits were not completely averse to all aspect of these ceremonies, they did allow certain traditions which appeared the least “pagan” to them.<sup>62</sup> For example, Biard told Membertou that the “farewells and a moderate display of mourning, and even the tabagie, would be permitted.”<sup>63</sup> Biard, however, had hope that Louis may survive, and very cautiously reports that after applying a relic of Saint Lawrence, Louis made a recovery.<sup>64</sup> Not all people had miraculous recovery, however.

The Jesuits were not willing to compromise on the issue of Christian burial. When Membertou was dying, he told Biard that he wanted to be buried in the traditional burial grounds. Biard strongly objected to this, declaring that he must be buried in Christian ground. It is interesting to note that in this account by Biard, unlike later accounts, Biencourt is seen as cooperating fully with Biard in urging Membertou to follow Christian burial.<sup>65</sup> In the later accounts, Biencourt made a compromise with Membertou, saying that he could be buried in traditional grounds and that Biard could bless his grave.<sup>66</sup> Biard rebuked this plan stating, perhaps flippantly, that in order to do such a thing, they would need to exhume all the others in those burial grounds.<sup>67</sup> This later account came from Biard himself, and thus it was not an attempt by other authors to show how narrow-minded the Jesuits could be.

---

<sup>62</sup> *JR* 2: 19.

<sup>63</sup> *JR* 2: 17. Tabagie was one’s last farewell feast.

<sup>64</sup> *JR* 2: 19.

<sup>65</sup> *JR* 2: 21.

<sup>66</sup> *JR* 3: 203.

<sup>67</sup> *JR* 3: 205.

There was some sense that concessions would have to be made in all regards when dealing with the Natives. Lescarbot wrote a particularly clear assessment of the contemporary situation as well as a reflection on the history of Christian adaptation of ritual and syncretism. He wrote that it would be unreasonable to believe that they could quickly dispel the beliefs and practises of the Aborigines and replace them with Christianity.<sup>68</sup> He particularly mentions activities such as Rogation processions (asking for blessing of crops), and bonfires on St. John the Baptist day.<sup>69</sup> These traditions, well established in Catholicism by this point, had been adapted from pagan origins and Christianized. Lescarbot suggested that the same would take place in Acadia. Although he understood that this was a form of enculturation and syncretism, his assessment was still Christo- and Eurocentric. These practices entered into the Church, he wrote, “to convert to a good usage what had only been abused.”<sup>70</sup> In other words, the Church’s purpose was to sanctify that which could be remolded into something Christian, and anything else would have to be suppressed. This does seem to be what the Jesuits attempted to do, regardless of how successful they truly were.

The Jesuits in Acadia joined a mission which had already been formed by the religious and political events which preceded them. They entered into a very complex situation that swirled in rumours, suffered a lack of communication, and at times, endured paranoia. The settlement itself suffered from a lack of funding and an unclear mission in regards to habitation and the pursuit of finding new land and new sources of wealth. The

---

<sup>68</sup> *JR* 2: 158.

<sup>69</sup> *JR* 2: 158.

<sup>70</sup> *JR* 2: 158.

harsh first winter would have severely affected morale and provided little hope of a successful settlement. The relocation to Port-Royal did improve the situation somewhat. It was also at Port-Royal that any real conversion efforts could take place, but the first baptisms only occurred in 1610. The arrival of the Jesuits brought fear to the little settlement. The Jesuits did not approve of the religious instruction that had taken place and nor were they pleased with the conduct of most of the men living at Port-Royal. Because of their reputation in Europe, the Jesuits were often viewed very suspiciously.<sup>71</sup> Further, they had been able to find sponsorship for their work whereas Poutrincourt had not. This exacerbated the political opinions regarding the connection of church and state. Lescarbot in particular supported the Gallican notion that the church was upheld by the state. In the end, the Jesuits learnt valuable lessons in Port-Royal about the necessity of learning the language, living amongst the people, and the extent to which they needed to allow certain indigenous practices. It appears that when ceremonies related to death, that final step into new life, the Jesuits were less keen to make exceptions. Death had to be done right in order to gain heaven, and it was the Jesuits' responsibility to make sure that happened.

---

<sup>71</sup> The Jesuits were seen as those only interested in their own self-goals, and as had been mentioned, suspected of various acts such as collusion with the Spanish and possible assignation of the king. Their real loyalty could never be assessed, and even their vowed obedience to the pope was questioned, giving rise in later years to the notion that the superior general of the Jesuits was a "black pope," commanding or providing an alternate to the pope in Rome.

## CHAPTER 2: “RESCUED FROM THE SERVICE OF THE DEVIL:” JESUIT AND NATIVE PERCEPTIONS OF THE SPIRITUAL REALM

In Paul Le Jeune’s Relation of 1638, he recounts the conversion of one Native at Quebec who was baptised on the feast of Francis Xavier and was given that name in baptism.<sup>1</sup> A week after his baptism, this new convert related to Le Jeune an occurrence:

“Yesterday, towards evening,” he said to me, “while thinking of God, I saw myself surrounded by a great light; I saw the beauties of Heaven, of which thou tellest us; I saw the house of that great Captain who has made all. I was in a state of delight which cannot be expressed.”<sup>2</sup>

This vision faded into what can be understood as a vision of hell. The Jesuit’s response to this event is telling. Le Jeune writes: “Now I can assure You Reverence that we did all we could to discover whether this were an imposture or a dream,” even “threatening him with severe punishments.”<sup>3</sup> Clearly the Jesuits’ who were in attendance did not jump to the miraculous as the first explanation of this event. It was only after they had ruled out the normal, particularly dreams, that they came to believe this new convert, who was later rewarded with carrying one of the poles of the Corpus Christi canopy.<sup>4</sup> This chapter seeks to examine how the workings of the Jesuits’ spirituality, their individual experiences, and how realities of New France affected the manner of converting the

---

<sup>1</sup> *JR* 14: 139.

<sup>2</sup> *JR* 14: 139.

<sup>3</sup> *JR* 14: 141.

<sup>4</sup> *JR* 14: 145. Carrying the Corpus Christi poles was a great honour, and often one that involved a significant amount of politics. This will be examined in a following chapter. Another similar incident occurs among the Huron where one day a Huron man is praying in front of an image of Jesus, which begins to move. The Jesuits are reluctant to believe the story, but also conclude that it means that Jesus was displeased with how “little respect” the man had towards his prayers. Eventually the four Jesuits believe the man, who then requests baptism. *JR* 19: 205-207.

Natives. These factors were unique for each missionary and changed over time. It also argues that while the Jesuits were cautious in declaring any occurrence as either miraculous or demonic, they were also very ready to call on their good angels and the saints.

The Jesuits straddle a difficult line in the Early Modern period of being both highly educated and erred on the side of caution towards scientific explanations for phenomena, which their contemporaries would more readily declare as miraculous, while at the same time holding strict adherence to doctrine and religious fervour including the traditions of their order. This, at times, contradictory position colours the Jesuits' experience and reporting of their missions in New France. Initially formed to root out heresy in European lands (particularly the Huguenots in France), the Jesuits quickly became involved in the conversion of pagans in other lands. Numerous times the missionaries of New France cite the work and example of Francis Xavier in his missions of India and Japan and often pray for his intercession.<sup>5</sup> The Jesuits, however, were also individuals, and this becomes clear when seeing how the *Jesuit Relations* were compiled, edited, and printed. In some cases this individuality is removed by the various editors: the local superior, the superior of New France, and finally the Provincial superior in France, who all made these accounts suitable for public readership. They had to make sure that any difficulties were downplayed so to prevent the fear that the mission was hopeless and therefore unworthy of gaining benefactors. Also included in the *Jesuit Relations* are those more private documents which were not included in the publications

---

<sup>5</sup> For example: *JR* 10:109, 113; *JR* 19: 227.

of the seventeenth century, such as letters of the priests to the Superior in Rome, their letters home, or perhaps even more revealing when it comes to liturgy and the Jesuits' relationship with their surrounding Frenchmen, the *Jesuit Journal*. All told, the Jesuits' intellectual and spiritual formations as individuals from communities of French Jesuits affected how they approached the conversion of the Natives as well as their reporting of it.

The Jesuits had a rather rigorous education as well as period of religious formation lengthier than many other religious communities at this time. Jesuits would often take up to ten years to complete their formation and be ordained priests. This included three years of philosophy and four years of theology, in addition to learning the classical languages.<sup>6</sup> This ability to learn languages was essential to the missionary activity in New France. Those with the best ability to pick up the language of the respective tribes were highly valued. Fr. Charles Garnier was valuable early in the Huron missions because of his quick appropriation of the language.<sup>7</sup> This learning of language was critical to their role in teaching and converting the Natives.

During their formation, they were expected to teach. This teaching took place on a variety of levels from the basic catechesis of young children, through all levels of primary instruction as well as into teaching at the university level. Fr. Brebeuf, after completing his novitiate, taught in the first form of a secondary school and one year in the Jesuit College of Rouen.<sup>8</sup> Others, like Fr. Charles Lallemand, had more prestigious

---

<sup>6</sup> Greer, *Mohawk Saint*, 70-71.

<sup>7</sup> *JR* 11: 19.

<sup>8</sup> René Latourelle, "Brébeuf, Jean de (Échon)," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 1, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003—, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/brebeuf\\_jean\\_de\\_1E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/brebeuf_jean_de_1E.html).



teaching positions, such as being a physics and logics instructor and the principal of Clermont College.<sup>9</sup> Jesuits sent to New France came from all of these experiences. It meant that they were experienced in the teaching of the basic rudiments of the Catholic faith as well as the very complex questions concerning doctrine, theology and philosophy. That they needed this knowledge becomes evident when they reported some of the questions the Natives posed them. Questions could come from all levels. Le Jeune reports the curiosity of Marguerite Therese who was sent to live with the Carmelites of Dieppe. The superior of the convent reports that her questions involve such topics as “shall we be resurrected, if we shall see God, if our bodies will be glorified, in regard to the holy Sacrament, if God is concealed there under sacramental elements.”<sup>10</sup> These questions have the sense of a child’s curiosity towards what they have grasped in their catechism classes. No doubt the Jesuits in New France faced similar questions. They also faced the more practical questions of the elders, who asked about the afterlife, primarily if there was marriage, if animals were present, and if the men would have beards.<sup>11</sup> Le Jeune assures the reader that he could answer all these questions satisfactorily except in regards to the beard. He does not know the answer, but for the Natives, this question has a more than superficial meaning. It seems to reflect the need to make sure that their afterlife would continue to retain the features which they had previously held would occur. Having to grow a beard in Heaven may have been a stretch too far in the direction of becoming French. Le Jeune also relates the questions, sent by

---

<sup>9</sup> Léon Pouliot, “Lalemant, Charles,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 1, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/lalemant\\_charles\\_1E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/lalemant_charles_1E.html).

<sup>10</sup> *JR* 11: 99.

<sup>11</sup> *JR* 11: 209.

the seminary director, of some of the seminarists, who show their deep understanding of the Jesuits' teachings but also a certain doubt. For example, they wonder how a merciful God could damn an unbaptized child; where God and his angels were located before the creation of Heaven and Hell; and how the souls of the damned could make an appearance on earth if at the same time they "do not come out" of Hell.<sup>12</sup> Their questions are not necessarily mocking, but the seminarists are fully capable of honing in on the areas where Catholicism and the Jesuits' teaching of it could be contradictory or unclear. Le Jeune actually praises these questions and considered them evidence that the Algonquin and Montagnais were intelligent people.

The Jesuits, being educated in scientific methods preferred scientific answers. This becomes abundantly clear from both the aforementioned anecdote as well as many other examples throughout the *Jesuit Relations*. In many ways, this means that they could be considered sceptics.<sup>13</sup> This view was also shared by the Natives, primarily in regards to their view of the causes of illness. Fr. Jerome Lallement wrote that the Hurons recognized three causes of disease. Natural disease could be cured with natural remedies. Scurvy would be the most prominent example, which could be cured with tea made from the bark of a tree. The second cause of disease was when one had desires, usually manifested in dreams, which went unfulfilled. These were cured by obtaining the desired object or experience. "Finally, the others are diseases caused by a spell that some sorcerer has cast upon the sick person; these are cured by withdrawing from the patient's

---

<sup>12</sup> *JR* 16: 183-185.

<sup>13</sup> Scepticism at this time meant did not mean "disbelief," rather it was seeking evidence to support a belief. See Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle* revised and extended edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), xxi. Ebrary.com

body the spell that causes his sickness.”<sup>14</sup> Lallemand dismisses the latter two causes of illness, maintaining that only natural diseases afflicted the Huron. What the Huron felt were brought about by disobeying their dreams, or by the infliction of a curse, Lallemand effectively rebuffs as a sort of hypochondria.<sup>15</sup> Lallemand had also denied that the dreams were a concrete way in which the demons communicated with the Natives.<sup>16</sup> These dreams were either only “illusions” or the manifestation of a normal human desire. Lallemand’s treatment of the presence of demons, however, shows the complexity of belief held towards demons, since he held that demons could indeed contact people, but they did not communicate through the Huron’s dreams like they claimed.

The existing literature, however, does not take into account the complex view the Jesuits had regarding the presence of demons and evil in the missions of New France. Several authors have argued that the Jesuits saw evil everywhere.<sup>17</sup> Others, like Allan Greer, have posited that the superabundance of demons in the *Jesuit Relations* is due to the problem of not having an appropriate vocabulary to deal with the Native view of everything having a spirit.<sup>18</sup> Further, the Jesuits had a binary approach to spirits; they are either evil or good. Goddard has examined the Jesuits as sceptics who were part of a movement in France that was moving away from superstition and the belief in the power

---

<sup>14</sup> *JR* 33: 199.

<sup>15</sup> *JR* 33: 199-201.

<sup>16</sup> *JR* 33: 197.

<sup>17</sup> Goddard has illustrated the historiography of this argument in: Goddard, “The Devil in New France,” 40-41.

<sup>18</sup> Allan Greer, ed. and trans. *The Jesuit Relations: Natives and Missionaries in Seventeenth-century North America* (Boston-New York: Bedford-St Martin’s, 2000): vi.

of witchcraft.<sup>19</sup> However, none of these sources manage to quite capture the Jesuits' belief of the presence of evil in the colony.

Numerous sources have focused solely on the evil angels, the demon and devils, of New France, without referencing the good angels that Jesuits also viewed to be at work among the missions. Whereas the demons help to prevent the conversion of the Natives, the Jesuits hold that they had "every occasion to believe that the good Angels have often interested themselves in most of these baptisms."<sup>20</sup> These "good angels" could be understood as guardian angels, as opposed to the occasional mention of Michael the Archangel, who has a more modern devotion as protector against evil spirits.<sup>21</sup> The angels were also protectors of the missionaries. Le Jeune writes in his Huron Relation: "I imagine that all the Guardian Angels of these neglected and abandoned Natives are continually endeavouring and labouring to save us from these dangers," which included the perpetual threats against the priests' chastity.<sup>22</sup> That Le Jeune believes that the Huron have Guardian Angels is indicative of the belief that they have souls and that God watches over them in some way. Further, it is these Hurons' angels who watch over the Jesuits. In the working of the Jesuits' view, since the angels want the best for the souls they overlook, protecting their (literal) saviours is in the best interest of all involved. However, there was more than a simple dichotomy between the good and bad angels.

---

<sup>19</sup> Goddard, "The Devil in New France," 47. Goddard argues that this move was in part to re-win the favour of the monarchy after the Jesuits' exile from France.

<sup>20</sup> *JR* 19: 195.

<sup>21</sup> *JR* 24: 75. The Archangel Michael is mentioned as "Michel," a name given to an Atticameges' convert at Sillery. The Jesuits hoped that Michael would "stretch forth his arm and his might, for the defense of these new Christians of the North, and of these peoples, the most forsaken in the world."

<sup>22</sup> *JR* 11: 113.

The Jesuits' held a dual belief in the presence of evil, informed by personal experience and belief, that posited there was a general sense of evil present in the world through original sin as well as particular evil spirits. Both of these sources of evil could have powerful effects on themselves as well as the Natives they were trying to convert. Because the Natives were unbaptized they, in the language of the Church, belonged to the realm of the devil. Jean Brebeuf writes in the first Huron Relation that it is through baptism that people are "rescued from the service of the devil."<sup>23</sup> This evil manifested itself in resistance to conversion, gossip, and calumny. Of course, these are also ready examples of a people who resisted a wholesale change in their culture and spirituality. However, the Jesuits seem to focus these complaints on those who were extraordinarily resistant as well as what they felt were sudden changes in those who were on the path to conversion and then resisted.<sup>24</sup> This was the typical domain of the devil in the world, who spreads discontent, malice, and is the Deceiver. This was also the typical evil that all Christians would face in their daily lives in regards to temptation and sin.

The Jesuits also did believe in malevolent evil spirits, but they typically concluded this after a time of investigation or doubt. Their views towards the presence of demons also changed after time and in regard to specific circumstances. After the initial years, most of the Jesuits were quick to dismiss the power of shamans who they find are knowledgeable in various common tricks that deceive others (a normal manifestation of evil) rather than it being a true summoning of a demon. The first Huron Relation, written

---

<sup>23</sup> *JR* 10: 11.

<sup>24</sup> *JR* 14: 77. In this instance, the Jesuits write that it is when the Devil has the most power is when the sorcerers forbid the Huron residents from resorting to baptism.

and sent by Brebeuf to Le Jeune, is full of instances of the power of demons. There is one particular incident which reinforces both the Jesuits' acceptance of powerful demons as well as the reluctance to see these demons everywhere. One Huron obtained a doll given to him by several sorcerers to regain his health:

a little idol in the form of a doll, which he asked, for the sake of being cured, from a dozen Sorcerers...having put it into his Tobacco pouch, it began to stir therein, and ordered the banquets and other ceremonies of the dance, according to what they say. Certainly you have here many silly things, and I am much afraid there may be something darker and more occult in them.<sup>25</sup>

Brebeuf had dismissed many Huron practices as "silly," but after hearing of this event, he was more willing to believe there might be some power to the Natives' practices. This instance is also unique because it is the doll which orders the traditional curing feasts. The innate desire of the Huron man to have these curative feasts has been externalized and projected onto this doll. Since this occurrence could not be explained nor denied, it was considered supernatural. It was also an occurrence which seemed to be separate from the man, and thus not directly his fault (despite the fact he procured the doll). It is interesting to note that the shamans become particularly insistent that they can summon demons after the Jesuits have dismissed them of having this capability. It is in these circumstances that the Natives are clearly trying to negotiate this emerging middle ground. This development, however, comes later into their missions. The early years were marked with confusion in this regard. Le Jeune shows the range of this dual belief and his vacillating in regards to his understanding of the devil's role among the Natives. Le Jeune was told by Makheabichtichiou, a Montagnais chief who had come to Quebec,

---

<sup>25</sup> *JR* 10: 209.

that demons had taught them how to make medicines from toads. Le Jeune states that “if he tells the truth, there is no doubt they have communication with the Devil.”<sup>26</sup> Le Jeune clearly believes that the devil could be having communications with the Natives, but he still introduces doubt into the chief’s story. He goes on to cite other occurrences which lead him to believe that “it is probable that the Devil sometimes has visible communication with these poor Barbarians.”<sup>27</sup> Le Jeune developed a theory in regards to how the power of the devil works in New France:

I have believed until now that in reality the devil deluded them, filling the understandings with error and their wills with malice, though I persuaded myself that he did not reveal himself visibly, and that all the things their sorcerers did were only Deceptions they contrived, in order to derive thereupon some profit. I am beginning to doubt, even to incline to the other side.<sup>28</sup>

This passage shows the effect that personal experience has upon Le Jeune. He is skeptical until he could no longer explain certain phenomena, such as tents which shake when the sorcerer summons the spirits.<sup>29</sup> A few years later, there is a revision on this sentiment. Le Jeune writes, “I am inclined to think that there are, really, some among them who have communication with the Demons; but the majority of them are only impostors, practicing their enchantments to obtain presents from the poor sick, to render themselves popular, or to make themselves feared.”<sup>30</sup> Again, the Jesuit shows a willingness to revise his understanding of a culture based on his observations. He retained his skepticism while also acknowledging, within his own understanding of the

---

<sup>26</sup> *JR* 12: 15.

<sup>27</sup> *JR* 12: 21-23.

<sup>28</sup> *JR* 12: 17.

<sup>29</sup> *JR* 12: 17.

<sup>30</sup> *JR* 16: 149.

world, that the Natives have powers that he cannot quite understand, and which he associates with the devil.

Le Jeune's last point, about being feared, is a ready view that there was an emerging middle ground that the Natives were trying to navigate and control. The Natives began to understand that the Jesuits did have a certain fear of the devil, even if they professed their own ability to conquer it through their new introduced French rituals. It was sometimes a fear that may have been overestimated. There were very few incidents of what would be considered actual possession. One particular Huron stated that he felt a demonic resistance when he tried to enter the chapel at village of St. Jean. Later, he would yell that a "Devil had entered into his body."<sup>31</sup> He would go on to threaten the lives of the French in the village, ceased eating for several days, ridiculed baptism and even physically attacked the church building before the possession ends.<sup>32</sup> This incident is peculiar because this man, while not yet being baptized, was in the process of converting. The Jesuits do not write of any particular fear they have of the man, rather writing that they feared that he would die due to lack of food and with "no one to assist" him, a common way of reporting dying without the sacraments.<sup>33</sup> They further report that the man continues to desire baptism, but that they would have to be cautious in granting it to him.<sup>34</sup> This possession may be a psychological break of the man, who uses the language of the Jesuits as a way to express the major changes occurring around him: the influence of the faith within his village (manifested most

---

<sup>31</sup> *JR* 23: 143.

<sup>32</sup> *JR* 23: 143-147.

<sup>33</sup> *JR* 23: 145.

<sup>34</sup> *JR* 23: 149.



clearly by the church), the all-encompassing desire the Jesuits have in wanting baptism for all, and the presence of the French. Ultimately, either the devil or the man's demonstration fails. The other Christians, particularly Estienne Totihri, a prominent Christian in the village, made a strong stand against the man, willing to die by his hand for being Christian and, perhaps to this man's greater concern, willing to being seen as French.

There is the effort to adopt the language of the Jesuits while attempting to maintain their own spiritual power. When the Natives first started sharing their spiritual beliefs with the Jesuits', they used their own terms: *manitou* or *oki*.<sup>35</sup> As time goes on, the Natives stop using their own term (at least in the way the Jesuits report it), and also seem to align the capability of these spirits to that which the Jesuits' expect. The last usage of the word "oki" was among the Hurons, as reported by Fr. Bressani in 1653.<sup>36</sup> They no longer summon or have dreams from their manitou or oki, they have dreams and summon demons. In this way, they are able to incorporate their traditional beliefs along with the beliefs of the Jesuits. Further, it places these "sorcerers" on the same level as the Jesuits and in a position to intimidate them. They know that the Jesuits have at least some fear of the devil, and if they conjure it, they are able to regain a position of power over the Jesuits, who they often claim are themselves sorcerers.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> *JR* 12: 21; *JR* 12: 243. In this latter example, the Huron have called the French "ohki" because they believe them to be supernatural spirits who have brought (supernatural) causes of their sickness and death.

<sup>36</sup> *JR* 39: 21.

<sup>37</sup> *JR* 34: 169 actually takes this accusation further. A single look from Brebeuf was enough to "bewitch" people because he was himself a demon. It is unclear if the Jesuits distinguished between demons and sorcerers or if they were in some ways interchangeable terms when relaying the narrative.

Around the same time, the Natives were more commonly co-opting the language of the Jesuits; the Jesuits were also starting to relax in regard to what is considered evil. A wife of an Atticameges' captain was baptized, but her husband demanded that she continue to prepare the traditional feasts. Vimont, who is writing the Relation of 1642-1643, quoted this woman as stating that her non-Christian husband wanted her to prepare a feast "at which the Devil will be honored."<sup>38</sup> She consults a priest who tells her she should resist, but if she "shouldst judge that he [her husband] might molest thee, or weaken toward the Faith on that account, thou couldst behave as usual, without claiming anything else than to obey thy husband and prepare for him to eat."<sup>39</sup> Unlike previous commands by the Jesuits to avoid at all costs feasts at which various Native spirits may be invoked or honoured, this Jesuit seems to be operating on the basis of achieving the greatest end good, the conversion of as many people as possible. First, he desires the conversion of the husband, and denying the feast may be a halt in any progress towards this goal. Second, the desire for wifely obedience is clear. Since she herself would not be worshipping the "Devil," she is merely providing food for her husband. The state of Native marriages was of great concern to the Jesuits, and will be later explored. In this case, the greater good, and more practical step, was to allow her to cook the feast. However, in a move showing her own agency, she declares that nothing can make her prepare the feast and that God will give her the strength.<sup>40</sup> This convert clearly shows a

---

<sup>38</sup> *JR* 24: 87.

<sup>39</sup> *JR* 24: 87-89.

<sup>40</sup> *JR* 24: 89.

greater abhorrence to the evil she saw in the feast than the Jesuit saw in the good that may be accomplished.

In perhaps the final word on the shift by the Jesuits over the years, there is a somewhat general statement and even warning by Fr. Paul Ragueneau, in the Relation of 1647-1648, to any future missionaries in New France:

one must be very careful before condemning a thousand things among their customs, which greatly offend minds brought up and nourished in another world. It is easy to call irreligion what is merely stupidity, and to take for diabolical working something that is nothing more than human.<sup>41</sup>

He continues, “I have no hesitation in saying that we have been too severe on this point.”<sup>42</sup> This instruction clearly illustrates the change in position on what is evil and that many more customs may be tolerated. It, nevertheless, does not rule out the possibility of demonic happenings, rather, it cautions against resorting to this as an answer. His final point may actually be a form of regret, acknowledging that certain aspects of the Native culture were compatible with the strict Catholicism they preached and practised.

Finally, it is unquestionable that personal experience in these cases had a clear effect on the belief of the presence of demons in the mission as well as how this was reported. In some ways, the reader of the Relations gets a “twist” in the story after the deaths of the Jesuits, particularly Fr. Antoine Daniel and Fr. Jean Brebeuf. In two separate incidents, it becomes clear that the Jesuits are not solely men of learning and rational education, at least a few were also mystics. The first reported incident occurs after Daniel’s death. Fr. Chaumonot reports having a vision of Daniel which assure him

---

<sup>41</sup> *JR* 33: 145.

<sup>42</sup> *JR* 33: 145-147.

that through his (Daniel's) martyrdom many souls made it into Heaven.<sup>43</sup> This report, however, was not in the publication that could be bought. It was part of the private yearly report sent to Rome, and at this time the Superior of the Jesuits Caraffa. While it may have been seen within the Society, it was not made available for public reading.<sup>44</sup> The visions that the individual missionary like Brebeuf experienced had a profound effect on how these missionaries would have viewed the physical and spiritual world. Some of Brebeuf's visions were published in the Relation of 1648-1649. In many ways, this account reads very much like a hagiography, with both Gabriel Lallemand and Brebeuf carrying out their duties heroically until the end, one completing as many baptisms as possible and the other confessions while their village was under attack.<sup>45</sup> What is important, however, is that the reader is informed that Brebeuf had frequent visions as they explain Brebeuf's own approach to the spiritual realm. Often these visions are of Jesus carrying the cross and Mary, who "usually left in his soul desires for sufferings."<sup>46</sup> Brebeuf also has numerous visions of demons who sometimes come to him in the form of

---

<sup>43</sup> JR 33: 267. The source is unclear whether only Chaumonot alone saw this vision, or if he was the one reporting this vision among a greater number of Jesuits during a meeting. Nevertheless, the occurrence shows the willingness of at least two Jesuits (Chaumonot and Ragueneau, who writes this report) to believe in the vision of this deceased confrere.

<sup>44</sup> Thwaites editing and collecting of Jesuit writings has brought all these separate writings together. Pierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix wrote some of the earliest texts in *Histoire et description generale de la Nouvelle France, avec le journal historique d'un voyage fait par ordre du roi dans l'Amérique septentrionale* in 1744. Other collections have been compiled earlier by Auguste Carayon in 1864 (*Première mission des Jésuites au Canada; lettres et documents inédits*) and Camille de Rochemonteix's *Les Jésuites et la Nouvelle-France au XVIIe siècle: d'après beaucoup de documents inédits* in 1895. The latest attempt at collecting all documents related to the Jesuits in New France has been carried out by Lucien Campeau in the *Monumenta Nova Franciae*.

<sup>45</sup> JR 34: 129. For an examination of the topic of hagiography within the New French context, see Allan Greer, "Colonial Saints: Gender, Race, and Hagiography in New France" *The William and Mary Quarterly* 57: 2 (Apr. 2000): 323-348.

<sup>46</sup> JR 34: 161.

threatening animals and in others as skeletons.<sup>47</sup> The writer assures the audience that Brebeuf did not seek these visions, and that “he never guided himself by these visions.”<sup>48</sup> This last comment was actually more of an assurance that he was obedient to his superiors above all else, the “blind” obedience for which the Jesuits were renowned.<sup>49</sup> Regardless, the fact that he was having these visions would have affected how he perceived the supernatural world of the Natives. This may have been the defining difference between Jesuits like Brebeuf, who did tend to write more often about the presence of the devil, and Ragueneau, who while praised as intelligent, seemed more destined for roles of governance and politics than mysticism.<sup>50</sup> Regardless, the Jesuits believed it did not truly matter what the role and specific power of evil in New France was, the Natives could still indeed be converted.

It is stated from the beginning of the Jesuits’ presence in French North America that the Natives they encountered were people who are able to convert and only lacked education. This idea is not only through their experience with the people, but with a specific theological principle that the Jesuits had embraced. Grace, the free gift from God, was needed for the people to convert. The early founding Jesuits in Europe

---

<sup>47</sup> *JR* 34: 171.

<sup>48</sup> *JR* 34: 177.

<sup>49</sup> John W. O’Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 352.

<sup>50</sup> Léon Pouliot, “Ragueneau, Paul,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 1, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ragueneau\\_paul\\_1E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ragueneau_paul_1E.html). Marcel Trudel *The Beginnings of New France: 1524-1663*, trans. Patricia Claxton (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), 242 argues that Ragueneau may have become overly involved in the governance of the colony with the departure of J. Lallemant. His style of governance and involvement, Trudel argues, gained the Jesuits enemies in the colonies after 1650.

maintained grace and hard work were needed for conversion.<sup>51</sup> Detractors argued that Jesuits were relying on work alone and not on the grace of God. By the time the Jesuits landed in New France, the Jesuits refined their position on the workings of grace and work. They could not force Natives to convert, and Natives who did not convert may not have as yet received this grace. This position would be challenged starting in 1640 with the publication of Cornelius Jansen's book, *Augustinus*, which posited that it was "impossible for the Just" to resist God's grace, as well as arguing that Jesus did not die for all.<sup>52</sup> This would mean that those who did not convert and who did not live holy lives were not among the elect, and were destined for Hell. This debate would rage in the religious life of New France. Although it is after the scope of this thesis, the Jansenist attitudes towards Grace, Free Will, and the effects of the Crucifixion are in starkest contrast with how the various Jesuit missionaries spoke about Grace in regards to the Natives.

Their position on Grace, however, left the Jesuits in a peculiar situation. It was not their ability in any way which was the final cause for conversion. Whether a Native converts or not is hinged on two points: whether the Native has received God's grace, and whether or not they have co-operated with that grace. The Trent Catechism taught that even if one did all they humanly could to avoid sin, without God's grace salvation could

---

<sup>51</sup> O'Malley, *The First Jesuits*, 249-250. "Hard-work" in the case meant missionary work; if they preached enough sermons and prayed a sufficient number of prayers, some believed that those who were predestined for salvation would convert through these acts of the Jesuits.

<sup>52</sup> William Doyle, *Jansenism: Catholic Resistance to Authority from the Reformation to the French Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 21, 91.

not happen.<sup>53</sup> The Jesuits were put into a particular bind when they were criticized for not converting many Natives, particularly in the early years. Even towards the end of the Huronia mission, Fr. Charles Garnier implied that there were accusation that the Jesuits were not doing their all, as “some perhaps might imagine in France – that a certain slothfulness and independence is sought by those who come into these regions.”<sup>54</sup> Living in the ‘uncivilized’ world was not the problem, but to the missionaries, there was no grace in nature, in and of itself.<sup>55</sup> This view of the necessity of grace and its relation with the Natives comes about in the education program of the Jesuits. Goddard has argued that ignorance was seen as a block to grace, and therefore education was needed for grace to be granted.<sup>56</sup> This argument is contrary to what was taught at Trent, that grace was “gratuitously” given to people, even those who were “evil” so that even others could be sanctified.<sup>57</sup> While this teaching does not guarantee that this is what the Jesuits believed, there are more subtle hints throughout the Relations which indicate that the decision to convert was a grace, and there was not much the Jesuits could do about this grace being granted.

---

<sup>53</sup> *Catechism of the Council of Trent for Parish Priests: Issued by order of Pope Pius V.* trans. John A. McHugh, O.P. and Charles J. Callan, O.P. (Charlotte, NC: TAN Books, 1982), 578.

<sup>54</sup> *JR* 30: 147.

<sup>55</sup> Peter Goddard, “Science and Scepticism in the Early Mission to New France” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 6:1 (Feb. 2006): 49, argues that the missionaries even saw grace as necessary to the civilization of the Natives, not just their salvation.

<sup>56</sup> Peter Goddard, “Converting the *Sauvage*, Jesuit and Montagnais in Seventeenth-Century New France” *The Catholic Historical Review* 84: 2 (Apr. 1998): 221.

<sup>57</sup> *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, 116.

The opinion that the Jesuits' held of grace was present throughout the period under study. Le Jeune's Relation of 1633 has this hopeful anticipation of the conversion of the Natives at Quebec:

We have been filled with strong hopes that at least, after so many storms, God would look upon our poor Savages with a merciful and kindly eye, as he has given courage to these Gentlemen to carry out their purpose in spite of the opposition that demons, envy, and the avarice of men, have aroused against them.<sup>58</sup>

God has already, according to this passage, given those sent to convert the Natives many graces. According to Le Jeune, the grace and mercy of God toward the Natives was now being waited upon. Le Jeune further writes that the Natives were to be pitied because they do not yet know Jesus.<sup>59</sup> In many of their writings, the Jesuits indicate that Jesus did indeed die for all, including the Natives. With the attacks of the Iroquois, Jogues directly connects them with a triumph of evil, which was so terrible for him to see because "whole nations [were] redeemed with so much love and paid for in the money of a blood so adorable."<sup>60</sup> Taken together, these statements indicate that the Jesuits believe they have worked their hardest to attain salvation for the Native, they have co-operated with God's Grace, and it was now up to God to provide the Grace for the Natives to convert and to remain strong in the face of any threats. In many ways, this limited their own culpability if fewer Natives than expected converted.

The Jesuits recognized the decision of the Natives in accepting conversion. The Jesuits did not approve when Catholicism was shunned and rejected, but they understood

---

<sup>58</sup> *JR* 5: 83-85.

<sup>59</sup> *JR* 5: 71.

<sup>60</sup> *JR* 31: 31.



that there was a choice on some level. In the autumn of 1638, Brebeuf and several of the Jesuit at Ossossane penned a letter to a priest, probably Le Jeune, preparing for their own deaths due to a rumoured planned attack. They wrote that they feared “divine Justice” would come down upon those who did not convert.<sup>61</sup> Further, the Hurons, “through their own malice, [were] closing the door to the Gospel and to grace.”<sup>62</sup> The image of the door is rather telling. It can be opened again; it is not an image of perpetual separation. The Jesuits were not killed that autumn, and they would continue to labour to help the Natives respond to the Grace they believed they were being given.

Le Jeune believed that the way the land appeared and the lives of the Natives were a result of this lack of Grace among them. He believed that this would change once Grace had been accepted. He brought with this idea his own ethnocentric beliefs in regards to sedentary living, valuing it as morally superior to more mobile forms of living. He wrote that the Hurons’ lives were marked by “barbarism, ignorance, poverty, and misery...[which] are a continual reminder to us to mourn Adam’s fall.”<sup>63</sup> The current land of these Natives was thus filled with the disorder that comes only from the devil. At the same time, this passage indicates that the land is akin to Eden which could be regained through conversion and a shift in how the Natives lived. Le Jeune had this same sentiment in the previous Relation, writing “New France will some day be a terrestrial Paradise if our Lord continues to bestow upon it his blessings, both material and spiritual.”<sup>64</sup> He goes on to compare the land to Eden, stating that the Natives are the

---

<sup>61</sup> *JR* 15: 63.

<sup>62</sup> *JR* 15: 63.

<sup>63</sup> *JR* 10: 111-113.

<sup>64</sup> *JR* 9: 191.

“first inhabitants” and must “do to it what Adam was commanded.”<sup>65</sup> By this, Le Jeune argues that clearing and cultivating the land must take place, something he desired more than increasing New France’s population. For this scheme, the Jesuits would need to plant “the fear of God” among the people and which he states “does not grow in the land of the Hurons.”<sup>66</sup> He writes that this technique has been used since the beginning of the Jesuits to “charm away the spirit of impurity.”<sup>67</sup> Le Jeune’s own examples are thus laden with the imagery of cultivation and the transformation of land. His particular way of instilling the fear of God into the Natives was through images, and he requested pictures that would show hell and its tortures in a particularly clear way.<sup>68</sup> Part of Le Jeune’s insistence on this rather harsh view towards the Natives and the land seems to come from his own personality and beliefs.<sup>69</sup> More positive representations of Grace at work develop in the Relations where he was not the sole author.

Jerome Lallemand’s Relation of 1642 includes a couple incidents where Natives have begun accepting Grace, and this would primarily mean receiving baptism themselves or allowing their children to receive it. Charles Tsondatasa, who was heavily

---

<sup>65</sup> *JR* 9: 191.

<sup>66</sup> *JR* 10: 111.

<sup>67</sup> *JR* 10: 111.

<sup>68</sup> *JR* 11: 89. John Steckley, “The Warrior and the Lineage: Jesuit Use of Iroquoian Images to Communicate Christianity,” *Ethnohistory* 39 (No. 4): 1992, 483, argues that the Jesuits took their known militaristic imagery and adapted it to the image of the ideal warrior in the Iroquoian world. He also writes that the images, both artistic and verbal, used by the Jesuits also used events, such as loss of a child, that the Natives would fear most. This adaptation thus show a keen understanding of the Native cultures in which they were operating in order to convert them.

<sup>69</sup> Very particular to the story of Le Jeune (and unique among the other Jesuits in the mission) was that he was a convert from Calvinism. His particularly strident views and practices may come out of this upbringing as well as his zeal to reject the teachings of his former religion. Léon Pouliot, “Le Jeune, Paul,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 1, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003-, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/le\\_jeune\\_paul\\_1E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/le_jeune_paul_1E.html).

involved in the “superstitions of the Country,” had been baptised at Quebec after promising to “abandon all that God has forbidden.”<sup>70</sup> Lallemand recounts how this convert navigates life as a new Christian, including difficulties in his marriage as well as the (untrue) news of the death of his nephew.<sup>71</sup> The real test of the neophyte’s faith was the illness of a young niece, an illness which was said to be the sort “caused by a certain Demon” and which would need feasts and dances to heal.<sup>72</sup> Charles Tsondatsaa refuses these customs to be carried out, preferring that the girl die than to violate his conscience and the vow he made to abandon the traditions. He was most frightened by the prospect that the niece would die without baptism, and it was a real possibility as the priests were away until the next day. Another convert, Joseph Teondechoren had been taught how to baptise, and he carried out the sacrament.<sup>73</sup> Charles then admonished the mother stating “Thank God on behalf of thy child, for the grace she has just received through Baptism.”<sup>74</sup> The child had thus been released from the bonds of sin, and she would be able to attain heaven. Clearly, the necessity of baptism, and the vocabulary revolving this whole incident, reflects what the Jesuits would consider as the workings of Grace amongst the Natives. In one final gift from God (and as a real bonus for the Jesuits), the girl has a miraculous recovery. Clearly, baptism did not result in the death of all its recipients, just as the Jesuits frequently assured the Natives. This event also exemplifies what Lallemand writes about Grace: “A Grace from God that is well received attracts

---

<sup>70</sup> *JR* 23: 81-83.

<sup>71</sup> *JR* 23: 85.

<sup>72</sup> *JR* 23: 87.

<sup>73</sup> *JR* 23: 87-89. The practice of laity-performed baptisms will be examined in chapter three.

<sup>74</sup> *JR* 23: 89.

many others after it.”<sup>75</sup> In this case, it brought together the Christian Natives as well as winning another soul. The Jesuits report these conversions as solely being the workings of Grace. The following chapter will examine these baptisms and conversions in light of other factors.

The Jesuits of New France clearly balanced on this fine line between religious belief and scientific rationalism. Their education also prepared them as individuals living for a common goal. The events of France and their religious customs affected how the Jesuits treated and viewed Natives and their spirituality. They did not believe demons were *everywhere*, but they did not believe that demons did not exist or communicate with the Natives either. This is a rather practical belief. It was much easier to ignore most identifications of evil spirits in the missions and only respond if there was some occurrence which made it necessary. The operation of Grace was a belief that placed them in a peculiar standing in France, and one that would bring them into an incredible theological fight in the years to come with the Jansenists. However, being in New France allowed the Jesuits to practice their beliefs without the resistance from others. The Natives knew no other interpretation of Grace and thus it allowed a freer practice for both the Jesuits and the Natives. The following chapters will examine how the practice of these beliefs and the Jesuits’ view of themselves affected the various sacraments and how the Natives did as well.

---

<sup>75</sup> *JR* 23: 161.

### CHAPTER 3: SACRAMENTS OF LIFE

The rituals and sacraments of Catholicism are at the very heart of the religion. It is necessary, therefore, to examine how these were practiced, modified, and understood in the missions of New France. From the very first arrival of Jesuits, it is evident they tried to involve Natives in these rituals. The question is to what extent. Claudio Salvucci, as mentioned, has produced evidence, dating primarily after 1650, that there were concrete liturgical changes and adaptations made in the Iroquoian and Algonquian missions.<sup>1</sup> These changes were not present in the first forty years of the Jesuits' presence in New France. The Jesuits were aware that their religion had a certain impressive nature due to the elaborate rituals and ceremonial vestments and decided to use that to their advantage in the process of evangelizing. At the same time, the Jesuits tried to retain as much 'ritual purity' as possible, including some particularly French customs while eliminating parts they saw as unpalatable. Throughout these changes, the various Native tribes showed an interest but also a mingling of their own traditions and understandings into these religious proceedings. This chapter will examine three sacraments, all associated in some way with the theme of life-giving grace. Baptism opened the gates of Heaven to the recipient, marriage was for the stability of families, and communion nourished the grace received through baptism. They will all be examined by how they were both taught and received and any changes they underwent.

---

<sup>1</sup> Salvucci, *The Roman Rite*, 5, 25 31, 57 showing the vernacular signing in church, including during requiems, during Mass and Vespers as well as rotating and condensed introits. His sources include the *Jesuit Relations* as well as eighteenth and nineteenth century liturgical manuals.

Before examining the individual sacraments, it is necessary to see how the Jesuits believed ceremony could work to their advantage in the missions. It is clear that from the very beginning, they involved Natives in the ceremonies. In Acadia, the children were enlisted in the Corpus Christi processions in 1612.<sup>2</sup> They were not just regular participants, they were involved in carrying the bells and candles – integral parts for any Corpus Christi procession and at the front, one of the most prominent positions.

The funerals were by far the most common occurrence in the early years of the mission and were thus a prime opportunity for the Jesuits to exhibit their ceremonies as well as the differences in customs. In Le Jeune's 1634 Relation, he recorded the baptism of the dying infant Pichichich. The child, christened Adrian after his godfather, died when he was eight months old.<sup>3</sup> It appears that because of the child's young age, the priests decided to bestow every ceremony they could. Le Jeune writes: "These simple people were enchanted seeing five Priests in surplices honoring this little Canadian angel, chanting what is ordained by the Church, covering the coffin with a beautiful pall, and strewing it with flowers. We buried him with all possible solemnity."<sup>4</sup> By their own account, they achieved what they set to accomplish – to awe the Natives through their respect for this newly-won soul. The passage is further indicative of following the rituals, as they chanted what the church has in its liturgical books. Therefore, the ceremonies did not have to be altered to achieve some good, in their opinion. Every

---

<sup>2</sup> *JR* 2: 53

<sup>3</sup> *JR* 6: 129.

<sup>4</sup> *JR* 6: 131.

exercise in ritual was thus a way of bringing both God and France to the Natives of New France.

The insistence on ceremony continued throughout the years and even intensified. As the Jesuits became more established in their respective areas, they began to amass those items needed for the various ceremonies. The Jesuits in Quebec and at Sainte Marie were far better equipped to carry these out. In the Relation of 1642, J. Lallemant again recorded the necessity and power of these ceremonies:

The outward splendor with which we endeavor to surround the Ceremonies of the Church; the beauty of our Chapel;...the Masses, Sermons, Vespers, Processions, and Benedictions of the Blessed Sacrament that are said and celebrated at such times, with a magnificence surpassing anything that the eyes of the Savages have ever beheld, - all these things produce an impression on their minds, and give them an idea of the Majesty of God, who, we tell them, is honored throughout the World by a worship a thousand times more imposing.<sup>5</sup>

Beside the conviction that the ceremonies would have a striking effect on the Native mind, the Jesuits were also using the force of what was happening in France as a factor. Whether they realized it or not, this link with France may have been enough leverage for those Natives who believed that converting was akin to becoming “Norman,” a term synonymous for French used by the Natives.<sup>6</sup>

The Jesuits were founded to be missionaries and not parish priests.<sup>7</sup> However, because of the circumstances of New France, the reality was far different. In his Relation of 1635, Le Jeune recounted the roles the Jesuits played in the new colony and mission:

“Now to wander from the subject of our Residences, we exercise in these all the functions of curé or Pastor, as there are no others here besides ourselves; we

---

<sup>5</sup> *JR* 23: 23.

<sup>6</sup> *JR* 2: 89.

<sup>7</sup> O'Malley, *The First Jesuits*, 135.

preach the word of God, we administer the Sacraments of Baptism, of the Altar and of Penance, of Extreme Unction; we assist at the Sacrament of Marriage; at times we bury and lay out the dead; we visit the sick; we teach Christian Doctrine to the children, and, as they are becoming more numerous through the arrival of families, we shall soon give them elements of letters, as I have said. Thus, if the beginnings are small, the end may be great and blessed.”<sup>8</sup>

From the early years of the Native missions, the Jesuits were involved in more than just baptisms and conversion. They were involved with ensuring that the Natives would begin to live a completely Catholic, and therefore sacramental, life. The ways in which the missionaries interpreted this sacramental living was peculiar to their own French culture and was influenced by the devotions and spirituality of their own religious institute. Throughout the narratives of the Jesuit Relations, this development and evolution toward sacramental living by the Natives is evident. While the first baptisms were done solely in the danger of death, once healthy converts existed, the practice of the other sacraments was a necessary continuation of the practice of Catholicism. Notably missing from this list of pastoral duties are the sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Orders. The Council of Trent reaffirmed that Confirmation was a sacrament.<sup>9</sup> However, for a two-fold reason this sacrament is not recorded in the period under study. First, it was not necessary for salvation, so it was not given a priority among the Jesuits. The Jesuits were occupied with the catechises of the other sacraments and therefore did not teach about one that was not absolutely required for the salvation of the Natives or help settle them into a more European way of living. Secondly, and perhaps much more important, was that Confirmation needed to be administered by a bishop. There was no

---

<sup>8</sup> *JR* 7: 267.

<sup>9</sup> *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, 210.



bishop in New France until Francois Lavalf arrived in 1659 with the position of Vicar Apostolic.<sup>10</sup> Even after the establishment of the diocese of Quebec, only those in proximity to the bishop, or with the means to visit Quebec, received Confirmation, even into a much later period.<sup>11</sup> The second missing sacrament was Holy Orders. All the priests in New France at this time came from France. Jerome Lallemant had desired to establish a Jesuit novitiate in Quebec as early as 1633, but he feared that Rome would not approve. He initially wished this novitiate for Jacques Junier, one of the donnés, but even this was not allowed.<sup>12</sup> Even if they were able to establish a novitiate or seminary, there would still be the necessity of sending the men to Europe to be ordained. Consequently, with few secular priests in New France, the ordination of Quebec men would have to wait until the establishment of the Grand Seminaire under the direction of Bishop Laval. Therefore, almost the entirety of spiritual guidance was carried out by the Jesuits in this period.<sup>13</sup> It is thus necessary to examine how each individual sacrament was carried out and treated by the parties involved.

### *Baptism*

Baptism was considered the most necessary of all the sacraments. It was the one which made the person Catholic and assured at least the chance for salvation. For

---

<sup>10</sup> Jaenen, *The Role of the Church in New France*, 31.

<sup>11</sup> Johnston, *Religion in Life at Louisbourg*, 119. Johnston notes that even into the eighteenth century, there were quite probably many residents of Louisbourg who were never confirmed.

<sup>12</sup> *JR* 6: 55-57. Thwaites, *JR* 38: 12 states that Junier ran away from Sillery after being with the mission for twenty years.

<sup>13</sup> After the destruction of Huronia, other priests started to join the missions, the largest example of this was the Sulpicians.

children who died after baptism, this meant they went straight to Heaven, as indicated in the quote concerning Pichichich.<sup>14</sup> The Jesuits were aware, at least to an extent, of the view the Natives may have held in regards to baptism. Besides the often mentioned fear that baptism caused death, other Natives tried to procure baptism as a means of healing. In one such instance, a woman was refused baptism because she held this belief and did not want to receive catechism instruction.<sup>15</sup> The Jesuits were, however, more keen to baptise ill children in the hopes that the parents would follow suit.<sup>16</sup> This practice would only take root once baptism was not as strongly linked with death.

Baptism was not only associated in the Relations with the Natives' own salvation, it was strongly linked to the Jesuits' as well. The Jesuit had to be very careful that in the conversion and saving of other people's souls, he did not lose his own: "those who aid in the conversion of souls are not always saved, the first conversion one ought to make is that of one's self."<sup>17</sup> Fearing losing their own souls could sway a Jesuit to both refuse as well as agree to perform a baptism. As shown in chapter one, the Jesuits in Acadia reacted strongly to the actions of Fr. Flesché. They did not want to risk their own, and the Natives' salvation, by performing baptisms which were purely for superstitious reasons, or out of a desire of creating a bond with the French. After having a presence in New France for a couple of years, the Jesuits started making changes to their initial practice. In the Relation of 1637, Le Jeune shared his understanding of the purpose of the sacraments: "I answer that the Sacrament is made for man, and not men for the

---

<sup>14</sup> *JR* 6: 129.

<sup>15</sup> *JR* 9: 73.

<sup>16</sup> *JR* 9: 97.

<sup>17</sup> *JR* 9: 75.

Sacrament; and consequently it is better to endanger the Sacrament than the salvation of the man.”<sup>18</sup> Therefore, they were to be careful about who they admitted to baptism (and the other sacraments), but they were not to extensively delay baptism for four or five years.<sup>19</sup> Le Jeune further describes that it was dependant on the individual and that there was no real rule that they kept. Moderation was thus the key to the Jesuits’ administration of baptism as either haste or tardiness were both potentially detrimental to the Natives’ as well as their own salvation.

Through this disciplinary change, several Natives were able to force the Jesuits into administering baptism using their own arguments against them. On one occasion, a warrior requested baptism three years previous, but he was denied because he would not give up traditional practices. He approached the Jesuits again, this time out of necessity as he was going off to war. He assured them that he did believe in the Faith and needed them to baptise him. The final convincing point was when he told them that, if he went to Hell, “you will be the cause of it.”<sup>20</sup> This, in conjunction with his promise to pray, gained him baptism and the new name “Eustache.”<sup>21</sup> This man was able to turn the rhetorical table on the Jesuits and use their common threats of Hell against them. As far the Relation states, he was thus not required to take any further catechism lessons and was baptised on Holy Saturday with the others, and “performed his Devotions on Easter Sunday” before heading off to war with other Christian Natives.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> *JR* 11: 139.

<sup>19</sup> *JR* 11: 141.

<sup>20</sup> *JR* 23: 29.

<sup>21</sup> *JR* 23: 29.

<sup>22</sup> *JR* 23: 29. Sometimes the question of delaying baptism worried the Jesuits themselves. In one example, a priest ministering at the hospital was going to delay baptising a sick woman until the next day, but

In all other regards, the Jesuits tried to maintain the ritual laws set out and to maintain a certain standard of knowledge necessary for the healthy converts. Le Jeune listed in 1637 that at a minimum, the new converts had to believe in the “mystery of the holy Trinity and of the Incarnation” before they were allowed to be baptised.<sup>23</sup> Three years earlier a convert named Joseph was quizzed on the “articles of the Creed, and upon the commandments of God” before he was baptised.<sup>24</sup> This suggests that the Jesuits were making sure that at least an elementary level of religious understanding was imparted to the Natives. There was also the idea that the Jesuits had an ideal threshold of knowledge for potential converts, and once reached, it was best to perform the baptism, on the condition that the person had “a firm determination to keep the commandments of God.”<sup>25</sup> To what extent the Natives understood this teaching as the Jesuits intended is unclear. This education before baptism was also hampered by the difficulties in vocabulary connected with core tenets and parables of Christianity. For example, words such as “salt, leaven...mustard seed...Kingdoms, Kings,.... shepherds, flocks, and a sheepfold” were foreign concepts.<sup>26</sup> Some of these words would become more familiar to the Natives as they became more acquainted with the French, but it would still prove to be a difficulty. Therefore, the Jesuits would have been driven to use alternate examples more relevant to those they were converting. Even the grammar of the Natives proved to cause problems.

---

decided against it when he asked himself: “If his woman dies without baptism, whose fault will it be?” *JR* 18: 215.

<sup>23</sup> *JR* 11: 129.

<sup>24</sup> *JR* 6: 123

<sup>25</sup> *JR* 14: 89.

<sup>26</sup> *JR* 20: 71.

An oft-cited passage shows Brebeuf tinkering with the words of baptism, as the usual (European) linguistic structure does not exist in Huron.<sup>27</sup> Writing to his superiors, he requested permission to use “In the name of our Father, and of his Son, and of their holy Ghost,” judging that this expression “sufficiently expressed” the Catholic understanding of the three persons of the Trinity.<sup>28</sup> It is unclear if this was being used for baptisms, or more probably, the Natives making the sign of the cross. Regardless, it illustrates that the Jesuits were trying to work within the capabilities of those they were converting as well as deferring to proper authority on matters of belief and practice.

How then were healthy adult baptisms administered? Once the most stringent rejections of baptism had ceased, the Jesuits tried, as much as possible, to follow the rituals and practices of the church. As early as 1637, there seemed to be a shift among the Huron. Le Jeune wrote that “these sacred waters, having sometimes saved the lives of whole families, are now in great report among them.”<sup>29</sup> Although sounding superstitious and utilitarian, the Jesuits took what they could get when it came to Natives being open to baptism. After completing whatever instruction they needed, the Jesuits would sometimes send the Hurons on a retreat to the house in Ste Marie. After this retreat, they would go on to be baptised on the appointed feast days – Holy Saturday

---

<sup>27</sup> *JR* 10: 119.

<sup>28</sup> *JR* 10: 119.

<sup>29</sup> *JR* 14: 213. 1637 seems to be a better year for a shift in the New France missions as more people began to accept baptism. This also coincides with the year that Le Jeune and De Quen wintered with the Huron: *JR* 11: 209. Most of the historiography has focused on 1640 as the turning point with the listing of a four point plan for the conversion of the Natives. See Abé, *The Jesuit Mission to New France*, 116-118; Axtell, *The Invasion Within*, 58-59. Jaenen has the turning point in 1639 with the establishment of the permanent Huron mission but using many of the same points. Jaenen, *Friend and Foe*, 85.

(Easter Vigil), Pentecost, and a few select others.<sup>30</sup> Adult baptisms were, unless in case of necessity, to be carried out in the chapel or priests' cabin, "with the ceremonies of the Church."<sup>31</sup> The initial reason was to instill a "respect" for baptism. In other instances, this was recorded as being "baptised solemnly," such as the 107 out of 300 Hurons baptised in 1639.<sup>32</sup> This was a continuation of the desire to make all church related rituals celebrated to the highest degree that was feasible and allowed.

However, when death was close and no priest was near, there was some recourse available to the Natives. The Jesuits taught several trusted people how to perform emergency baptisms. This was not unprecedented as the catechism of Trent taught that even Jews and heretics could baptise people as long as they intended "to do what the Catholic Church does in that act of her ministry."<sup>33</sup> A previous example has shown that these baptisms did in fact take place. There were also times, however, that the proper way of baptising was forgotten. One Native at the mission of St Michel tried to baptize his dying sister. First, he spoke of Heaven, Hell, and of repentance, very much as the Jesuits would do to one in the same circumstances. His sister was obviously influenced by this and she asked for baptism:

He, who had never administered that rite, commended her to God; baptized her, as far as he was able; and, in order, as he said, that she might be more surely baptized, he made her renew her acts, and repeated her Baptism five or six times. But none of them had any effect, one more than another; for, although the water

---

<sup>30</sup> *JR* 16: 177; *JR* 23: 21-23. There is an indication that those who went on retreat at Ste Marie were baptised there, they would also be examined by the priest. It would be reasonable to assume that once baptisms really became more popular, the ability for the laity to go on these preparatory retreats would have become more limited.

<sup>31</sup> *JR* 10: 83.

<sup>32</sup> *JR* 15: 189.

<sup>33</sup> *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, 182.

was not wanting in her Baptism, he had forgotten the formula, or had never learned it.<sup>34</sup>

Nevertheless, the sister was able to regain enough health that a Jesuit was able to be fetched and a proper baptism administered.<sup>35</sup> The writer surmised that God saw this act of faith and thus preserved the sister's health long enough for a true baptism. The Native had clearly picked up the essence of the ritual, part of his prayer was about the removal of sin. He was also used to the Jesuits lecturing on the last things before the administered baptism, as well as the person insisting they would follow God even if they got better.

Another incident with a Native using water to heal is also recorded.<sup>36</sup> However, in this instance, it appears as though the juggler (or medicine man) was attempting to create his own method of healing that was not so French in nature. Although using water by sorcerers was a custom among the Natives, it appears as if it picked up some Catholic ritual along the way.<sup>37</sup> The original use of water in the ceremonies was usually for discerning the cause of the sickness, and not the bringing about of its cure. This seems to have changed once the Natives had greater contact with the Jesuits. One juggler said a "demon" had taught him how to make his own healing water, so he "sprinkled all the sick of the village" with it.<sup>38</sup> In many ways, this sprinkling of water sounded practically the

---

<sup>34</sup> *JR* 26: 297.

<sup>35</sup> *JR* 26: 299.

<sup>36</sup> *JR* 19: 243.

<sup>37</sup> *JR* 15: 179; *JR* 17: 213.

<sup>38</sup> *JR* 19: 243. There is another instance of this happening in *JR* 13: 241 where a captain sprinkled "mysterious water" over the ill, but why he did this was not explained. "Juggler" was initially interchangeable with sorcerer, however, juggler became to mean a healer who just carried out traditions, and was often used disparagingly by the Jesuits. Sorcerer became more associated with those the Jesuits thought to have actual healing power, granted from Satan.

same as the Jesuits' use but only originating from the juggler. In a way, it may have been a way for the man to combine what he saw was the efficacy, or at least allure, of the Catholic ritual with his traditional power. The action by the juggler, however, may have even strengthened the new converts since the medicine men also resorted to a Christianized ritual.<sup>39</sup> Thus, at least some Natives viewed baptism and holy water in very similar ways as the Jesuits and were keen to imitate the rituals.<sup>40</sup>

At times, it seems as if the Jesuits were over-zealous in their administrations of baptisms. However, the reality is one that is more problematic. There were a variety of factors including age, health, and location that a Jesuit would take into account before baptising a Native. One Jesuit wrote in the Relations, particularly in references to the Attimengues, that: "if we had granted Baptism to all who asked for it, they would nearly all be baptized."<sup>41</sup> They were far more unlikely to baptise people with whom they did not have permanent missions. The Attimengues would visit Quebec, and would request baptism, but it was not always received. It has already been shown that the Jesuits were relatively conservative with baptising Natives, primarily out of the concern of their own souls as well as the Natives. However, there were also those who were not old enough to request baptism for themselves. There are, of course, instances in the *Jesuit Relations* where baptisms were done without permission. These baptisms were almost exclusively done on children who were dying, and usually under the pretext of giving them some

---

<sup>39</sup> Axtell, *The Invasion Within*, 123.

<sup>40</sup> In another instance, an Iroquois was captured and a seminarist tried to baptise him, but forgetting the words, he said the *Pater* instead. In the same way as the other story, death was delayed until a proper baptism could be carried out. *JR* 15: 171.

<sup>41</sup> *JR* 26: 95



sweetened water to drink. The first recorded surreptitious baptism occurred December 4, 1636. Brebeuf had sent Fathers Le Mercier and Garnier to Ossossané because illness was raging there, and with orders they were to return to Ste Marie for the feast of the Immaculate Conception. Their actions are thus recorded: “I will even add that some little innocents were baptised in their last moments, unknown to, and against the wishes of their relatives, under the pretext of wishing to give them some of these sweets.”<sup>42</sup> In the minds of the Jesuits, this was the most charitable action they could take.<sup>43</sup> Ragueneau provides the only exception to the necessity of the child being ill, and he justified it, in hindsight, because of the outcome. Ragueneau and Chaumonot had come across a young boy of four, “full of health,” who was living in a house suffering from sickness. He baptises him because he believed it was likely that the boy would fall ill anyways and they would not be able to baptise him since so many others were already ill. Then to truly assure the reader he was in the right, the boy fell ill and died.<sup>44</sup> In some of his reporting of these baptisms, Ragueneau seems to be quite pleased with his cunning ways in performing these secret baptisms. While some of the others Jesuits are pleased in making baptisms through cunning, none quite shared Ragueneau’s thrill, and others are not mentioned at all of having practiced secret baptisms. This appears to be a particular

---

<sup>42</sup> *JR* 13: 165-167. Pijart also has two recorded secret baptisms: *JR* 14: 41-43. Ragueneau and Chaumonot also do this: *JR* 19: 221-223. Ragueneau appears to be the most critical of all the Jesuits in regards to parents who refused baptism, in this case calling the mother “Megera.”

<sup>43</sup> While this seems as a rather archaic practice, the most recent Code of Canon Law permits the baptism of any child in danger of death, “against the will of the parents.” It is highly likely that a similar mindset reigned in the seventeenth century. *Code of Canon Law* Canon 868 §2 (1983) [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/\\_\\_\\_P2X.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/___P2X.HTM)

<sup>44</sup> *JR* 19: 221-223.

idiosyncrasy of Ragueneau's personality, the others were a little more subdued in their triumphs. When it came to adults, however, there were no surreptitious baptisms.

At a bare minimum, the Jesuits would not baptise a dying adult unless there was some sort of indication they wanted to be baptised (even if this was incredibly tenuous). This may have to do with the teaching of the Church at this time. While baptism was seen as a necessity for achieving Heaven, in adults, the desire to be baptised was usually sufficient to merit Heaven if one died before baptism. Desire itself was not a sure guarantee of Heaven, only baptism could provide this. However, a person who desired baptism at least had a chance of Heaven and it prevented violations against the free will of the ill person.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, the teaching of the time stated: "should any unforeseen accident make it impossible for adults to be washed in the salutary waters, their intention and determination to receive Baptism and their repentance for past sins, will avail them to grace and righteousness."<sup>46</sup> This sort of baptism is more commonly called "baptism by desire." Examining one ill lady, a Jesuit recorded the following: "she answered confidently all the questions I put to her in following the order of the administration of this Sacrament to persons who have use of their reason."<sup>47</sup> Use of reason, thus, was presumed by the Church in the administration of the rite.

---

<sup>45</sup> This discussion relates to the previous discussion on grace, see chapter 2. The two were inexorably linked. Children, while technically having free will, were subject to those in authority over them, and the Jesuits' could have easily justified taking this role on themselves in the lack of other Christians (non-Christians did not have authority in this sense.) Adults, however, retained their free will, and a violation of this harmed the Jesuits' souls as well as the strength of the sacrament.

<sup>46</sup> *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, 189.

<sup>47</sup> *JR* 6: 139-141.

One particular instance of this happening is recorded in Le Jeune's Relation of 1640 at the Mission of La Conception. Some Huron men were out fishing when they were attacked by an unknown nation. The one was hit with arrows, and dying, was brought back into the village as Fr. Garnier also arrived. Garnier went to "instruct" the man but found that "he had no further judgement, his mind was, without pause, in continual frenzies."<sup>48</sup> Garnier prayed to God, and one of the Jesuits' most called upon saints in New France, Francis Xavier, to have "pity on this poor man." Garnier's prayer was answered, and the man "as if coming back from a deep sleep, exclaims: 'Thou who hast made the world, have pity on me!'"<sup>49</sup> This was a common way the Christian Hurons prayed seeking the mercy of God, as well as indicating a sense of abandonment to the will of God, as taught by the Jesuits. The man would go on to request baptism, and received it after having a short instruction, and dying shortly thereafter. Baptism, thus, was not administered until he was lucid.

Another instance relates the Jesuits' acknowledgement of the age of reason. A child of thirteen was ill, but the Jesuits would not baptise him unless he "recovered consciousness."<sup>50</sup> The age of reason is generally assumed in Catholicism to be seven years old; thus, this child would not qualify for the exemption that canon law otherwise provided to infants in danger of death. In the meantime, the Jesuits made sure to instruct the parents, hoping that they would become more amenable to having their child baptised. The Relation records that "as soon as he saw him even slightly revived,"

---

<sup>48</sup> *JR* 19: 227.

<sup>49</sup> *JR* 19: 227.

<sup>50</sup> *JR* 14: 31.

Garnier would begin teaching him. Assuring himself that the body would remain “entirely conscious” for a while, Garnier left to talk to his superior, and then returned to baptise the child, naming him Joseph.<sup>51</sup> Even when they clearly desired the baptism of a child, and even with acceptance of the parents, the Jesuits would not contradict church law in regards to baptising those who were of the age of reason and unconscious.

Even in circumstances that were less than ideal, the Jesuits would often try to work with the realities they faced. One man was ill and finding that the “wizard[‘s]” remedy did not help, despaired and tried to commit suicide by stabbing himself several times in the chest. A priest was summoned and the man was baptised. He assured the priest that he requested baptism for the spiritual benefits alone: “Do not believe that I have asked for baptism in the hope of prolonging my life, since I am already almost dead – look at my wounds, and see if it is possible to escape it; it is only the hope of heaven which has impelled me to become baptized.’ The Father induced him to offer an act of regret or having caused his own death. Soon afterward, he died.”<sup>52</sup> This incident shows that attempted (and technically successful) suicide did not necessarily separate one from God. In this instance, the man was, in the eyes of the Jesuits, fortunate not to have killed himself instantly, and by showing regret, the Jesuits were able to perform the baptism he requested. Even suicide could lead to a good death that was so prized in this time.

There were a couple of reasons why the Natives would seek baptism. The most commonly cited reason was the connection they saw between being Christian and being

---

<sup>51</sup> *JR* 14: 31.

<sup>52</sup> *JR* 18: 29.

French. It was a cementing of the trade relationship as well as a way to gain weapons.<sup>53</sup> There were some indications of this relation early on by the Jesuits, such as the giving of small religious items (crosses, rosaries), but in the later Relations, there is the mention of weapons being given.<sup>54</sup> Tesswehas and his wife, Mitigoukwe, both sought baptism and to be married. The Jesuits instructed them, and while “Monsieur de Maison-neuve...gave him the name of Joseph: ...Madame de la Peltrie, his Godmother, [gave him] an arquebus.”<sup>55</sup> In a time of increasing fear of Iroquois attacks, converting was a good way of ensuring a better chance of gaining protection in some form from the French.

There were also more subtle societal considerations to be understood when it came to wanting to convert. Catechumens were kept at the door of the church before their Baptism at least as early as 1639.<sup>56</sup> However, this practice seems to vary a bit through the years. At other times, they are allowed in the Church, but during Mass, they must leave after the sermon, or more precisely just before the offertory (meaning if the creed was said, they would be present for it), or even total exclusion during the Mass.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers*, 229. Trigger states that the Jesuits managed to make conversion a precondition of trade, but also argues that this was a bluff as the French would have continued trade with them regardless of their religious status. Kenneth M. Morrison, “Baptism and Alliance: the Symbolic Mediations of Religious Syncretism” *Ethnohistory* 37: 4 (Autumn, 1990): 416-437 argues that the Montagnais saw a symbolic connection between trade and the baptismal alliances they made with their French godparents, and their conversion was an attempt to maintain a “communal solidarity.” Anderson, *Chain Her by One Foot*: 149 argues that it was actually the greed of specific Native traders which contributed to their conversion, since they would have to abandon traditional ceremonies, this meant they also did not participate in the redistribution of goods which was part of these ceremonies.

<sup>54</sup> The Jesuits gave rosaries to Natives, and had them wear them around their necks as a visible sign of their conversion. *JR* 26: 287. The Relation also notes that in wearing rosaries around their necks, it was seen as protection against the temptation to sin. In some ways, this practice may have been a replacement for the practice of wearing talisman in pouches around their necks.

<sup>55</sup> *JR* 24: 235.

<sup>56</sup> *JR* 16: 119.

<sup>57</sup> *JR* 10: 19-21; *JR* 12: 223.

This practice was a clear and tangible marker of a separation in society – one that was not common to the Huron way of life. Being kept outside the church door was also used as a public penance; those with this punishment were still obliged to attend Mass, but knelt outside the door.<sup>58</sup> Exclusive actions were treated suspiciously, and thus, it is no wonder the Jesuits were accused of sorcery. The first converts were also excluded from the rest of society, which would be considered a “manifestation of witchcraft.”<sup>59</sup> However, in the 1640s when the Jesuits stopped seeing demons everywhere, Natives stopped being as suspicious of the Jesuits and more were willing to at least give these new rituals a chance. Exclusion from the culture of the growing French dominance at church may have also made the people more willing to convert, so as to be allowed to gain entry into this newly forming society. The further the Christian community increased, the more the non-converts would feel excluded whereas they used to be the majority.

Even the enemies of the various tribes with which the Jesuits worked understood the symbolism and potency of baptism. The Iroquois attacked St. Ignace on March 16, 1649. Among them, a Huron “renegade” tortured Brebeuf by pouring boiling water over him as a sort of baptism.<sup>60</sup> This Huron lectured Brebeuf in much the same way that he would have lectured the Hurons. The water of baptism would wash away his sins – but this time it was for openly preaching in spite of being tortured. The lay Jesuit Renault reported that the torturer spoke to Brebeuf: “thou sayest that Baptism and the sufferings of this life lead straight to Paradise; thou wilt go soon, for I am going to baptize thee, and

---

<sup>58</sup> *JR* 27: 147.

<sup>59</sup> Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers*: 257.

<sup>60</sup> *JR* 34: 27-29.

to make thee suffer well, in order to go to thy Paradise...Go to Heaven, for thou art well baptized.”<sup>61</sup> This Huron took the words and actions of Brebeuf and made them into an incredibly powerful and symbolic torture.

Baptism was thus a very potent symbol and action to all in New France. In the eyes of the French, it indicated a change in the “savage” people, and for the Natives, it indicated a forming alliance with the French. Tracy Leavelle has warned against dismissing the religious fervor of the Jesuits, and the same must be considered with the Natives who chose conversion. Some of them did suffer for this choice, especially in the first years when they were in the very small minority.<sup>62</sup> The Relations do not record the reasons for these conversions, and the Jesuits would have taken the healthy converts with precaution but also in good faith. Once healthy Natives were being baptised, the more difficult task of ensuring Catholic living ensued.

### *Marriage*

For the Jesuits, the Natives’ marriage practices concerned them the most. The Jesuits and Natives did share common ground in regards to marriage, but there were also many cultural misunderstandings when it came to division of labour. The greatest concern, and the one to be examined here, is the fear that the Jesuits mention repeatedly through their Relations: how can they make sure that Natives begin living in marriages that will not result in divorce. Vimont writes that the hardest Christian practice for the

---

<sup>61</sup> *JR* 34: 29.

<sup>62</sup> Leavelle, *The Catholic Calumet*, 15.

Natives to adopt the Christian notion of marriage.<sup>63</sup> Their first solution was with the young, and their second, was a recourse to ritualization.

There was one other reason why baptism could be delayed: the person was of marriageable age yet single. Marriage was fraught with concerns for the Jesuits such as polygamy, or among the Huron, the easy ability to leave a spouse. In many cases, the Jesuits lamented their marriages and hoped “their marriages may be rendered stable.”<sup>64</sup> This was also used to solicit donations so that a couple could have a plot of land and be made sedentary. Marriage stability and sedentary living went very much together in the view of the Jesuits. It would also be easier to establish a new couple on their own land than to try and relocate an established family out of a longhouse.

The Jesuits feared that young Natives who converted would be tempted out of the faith by marrying those who had not converted. “The inconstancy of marriages,” Vimont wrote, “and the facility with which they divorce each other, are a great obstacle to the Faith of Jesus Christ. We do not dare to baptize the young people, though they may be very well disposed, because experience teaches us that the custom of abandoning a disagreeable wife or husband has a strong hold on them.”<sup>65</sup> Further, one father wanted his two children baptised, but knew they would have to wait on account of “the fear of [their] marrying Infidels.”<sup>66</sup> At this time, Catholics were not permitted to marry non-Catholics. Thus, any marriages of this sort would be considered an abandonment of the faith.

---

<sup>63</sup> *JR* 25: 247.

<sup>64</sup> *JR* 21: 137.

<sup>65</sup> *JR* 22: 229.

<sup>66</sup> *JR* 22: 227.



This worry about marriage also went the other way, as there were not enough Catholics to marry. Hence, the Jesuits were not necessarily concerned about those intending to convert after marrying non-converts. They were more concerned that the steps occurred in the right order. The Natives eventually adopted these concerns, with both men and women refusing non-converts as spouses. In one instance, the Natives held to the permanency of marriage stricter than the church. One man was married to a woman, and he was a Christian. Under the teaching of the Pauline privilege, he separated from his wife.<sup>67</sup> The Natives highly objected to his action, telling him that “a true Christian should never leave his wife,” even if she hated his faith and never intended to convert.<sup>68</sup> They would eventually reconcile, and the Relation of 1642 records her as “receiving instruction quite willingly,” but also with an ultimatum from her husband that if she did not convert, he would indeed leave her.<sup>69</sup>

In fact, the Jesuits had a definite progression in their treatment of Natives and their married lives. In the first interactions with the Natives, they viewed couples as married. Marriage was a natural state but also one that could be solemnized by the Church. The first couples they encountered did not have to go through any sort of recognition of their relationships, only a commitment to maintain that spouse for the rest of their life. In the previous example, even though the couple were not married in the church, the Jesuits continually refer to them as married, and as husband and wife. The Jesuits would later go on to perform marriages for those who converted. These marriages

---

<sup>67</sup> *JR* 22: 75.

<sup>68</sup> *JR* 22: 75.

<sup>69</sup> *JR* 22: 77.

were completed “with the ceremonies of the church.”<sup>70</sup> It illustrates a desire to work towards the ritualization of whatever institutions they could. The insistence on ritual after a few years also was in line with impressing the Natives into taking a certain sacrament seriously.

Marriages were important to the Jesuits as a visible and daily sign of their efforts. While baptism was the first step, stable and monogamous marriages were more clearly seen in the society. Further, since the large ritual feasts were a contributing factor in those tribes which practiced polygamy, the change to monogamous relationships had the side-effect of a reduction of these feasts.<sup>71</sup> Sedentary marriages were one of the most powerful ways the Jesuits enforced an ethnocentric view on the world. There was no actual condemnation by the church of migratory living. However, the Jesuits did see it as a threat to the necessity for new converts to attend church frequently. This seems to be a bit alleviated once the Jesuits started making calendars and utilising dogiques, to be discussed below. Family structures and normal patterns of living, while changing under the direction of the Jesuits, would be significantly altered with the destruction of Huronia.

### *Communion*

This final section will deal with the reception of communion as well as some of the related ceremonies and rituals. The rituals surrounding communion were particularly indicative of the view the Jesuits brought to New France. The frequency of reception,

---

<sup>70</sup> *JR* 26: 151; *JR* 15: 105.

<sup>71</sup> Since it was a point of honour that feasts had to be more extravagant than preceding feasts, more wives were needed in preparing these elaborate feasts. Thus, by only being allowed to have a monogamous marriage the feast's size was reduced to that which one wife was able to prepare.

*pain benit*, and Corpus Christi rituals were all practiced in a very French manner, and also were indications of the Jesuits' theological views. Despite hesitating in giving the converts communion, and some misunderstandings by the Natives, the Natives ended up receiving communion relatively frequently. The Jesuits also tried to bring French customs into the Mass and processions while removing parts which were in their opinion excessively French.

The first converts would not receive communion, and this makes perfect sense. These first converts were typically on their deathbed, and having just been baptised, were in states of grace that ensured salvation. Communion was not necessary. Further, the reception of communion needed much more teaching than did baptism. There were also many fears and rumours circling around the sacrament of communion. The Natives obviously got some sense of the Catholic practice of communion, the reservation of it in a tabernacle, and the belief that it was the body of Christ. At the same time, they thought that the Jesuits "brought a corpse from France, and that there was, without a doubt, something in our tabernacle that was making them die."<sup>72</sup> The Natives clearly picked up on some of the language regarding Communion either from the Jesuits or from the French. Their concern about a dead body also showed a fear of the foreign coming from France. The Jesuits were very careful at first in teaching about the Eucharist, and as well as translating the word to emphasize the Greek 'thanksgiving' aspect, rather than "Body and Blood of Christ." John Steckley states that this was in the hopes of discouraging an

---

<sup>72</sup> *JR* 15: 33.

association of Communion with cannibalism.<sup>73</sup> The first converts to receive communion usually went through extensive preparation.<sup>74</sup> For example, at Pierre Tsiouendaentaha's first communion, a priest accompanied him throughout the entire Mass, instructing him on which prayers to say, and how to properly make his thanksgiving after communion.<sup>75</sup> The time from one's baptism to one's reception of first communion also varied significantly. Pierre received communion at the Mass, right after his baptism.<sup>76</sup> Also peculiar to several Native celebrations of Catholic sacraments, an elder would add their own opinion on the proceedings. In this case, Tendoutsahoriné stood up after Pierre's baptism, encouraging the others to seek baptism while they had their health, and not on their deathbeds.<sup>77</sup> Others would have to wait longer for their reception of first communion. One waited several months, and this was in conjunction with doubts the Jesuits had about this convert after his baptism.<sup>78</sup> This man seems to be one of the exceptions as even a couple years of later, in 1639, it had become common practice for someone to be baptised one day and receive first communion the next.<sup>79</sup> Once adult converts became more common and well-established, the frequency of communion reception increased dramatically.

The actual frequency of reception depended on the individual, the priest, and whether they were at an established mission. Although some did receive weekly, it was

---

<sup>73</sup> John L. Steckley, ed. and trans. *De Religione: Telling the Seventeenth-Century Jesuit Story in Huron to the Iroquois* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 11-12.

<sup>74</sup> Seeman, *Huron-Wendat Feast of the Dead*, 84.

<sup>75</sup> *JR* 14: 93-95.

<sup>76</sup> *JR* 14: 95.

<sup>77</sup> *JR* 14: 93-95.

<sup>78</sup> *JR* 14: 145.

<sup>79</sup> *JR* 16: 119.

more common to receive communion once a month. Those who were in more immediate danger of death, such as patients at the hospital, would receive more frequently. In their case, they “confessed and received communion every two weeks.”<sup>80</sup> The Natives may have had, at most, a vague understanding that their reception frequency was a bit irregular.

The Jesuits were on a particular side of a theological debate when it came to the frequency of communion reception.<sup>81</sup> As with Le Jeune’s statement about sacraments being for the people who received them, this same belief applied with communion. As long as the recipient had prepared by confession (to be dealt with in the next chapter) and other requisite prayer and fasting, they could receive. Jesuits had believed in weekly communion for their own priests, one of the first, but not only, religious orders which followed this practice. In New France, this practice was far more common, and may have even increased to daily reception by some of the Jesuits because in the mission villages there were not enough priests to say the daily Masses in rotation to prevent more frequent reception.

Despite the frequent communion reception, the Jesuits also introduced the practice of *pain benit*, or blessed bread, among the Natives. *Pain benit* was a specially prepared bread that would be blessed during the Mass (the actual occurrence in the Mass varies for unknown reasons) and then distributed after the Mass, and sometimes the next day, to everyone. The Jesuits described this as being a full Catholic custom, but it was

---

<sup>80</sup> *JR* 19: 13.

<sup>81</sup> Jaenen, *The Role of the Church in New France*, 125. Bishop Saint-Vallier would end up instructing the priests to refuse communion more often, as in his opinion, communion was received far too frequently in Canada. It is necessary to note that Saint-Vallier was accused of being a Jansenist.

mainly associated with the church in France. This practice seems to have been introduced five years earlier in the missions than is recognized by the many cited sources, which do not even recognize this practice among the Natives, only in the French churches in Quebec.<sup>82</sup> The oft-cited passage on pain bénit comes from the Jesuit Journal of 1645: “the bread was blessed when the priest went to open his book. This was the 1<sup>st</sup> bread blessed for several years, during which it had been stopped, on account of the precedence in its distribution which everyone claimed.”<sup>83</sup> It seems as if the Jesuits preferred this practice among the Natives because it was simpler. In Lallemand’s Relation on the Huron of 1637, sent to Le Jeune at Quebec, he wrote that they wished to “observe as many as possible of the Ceremonies of the Church” and thus on Sundays and Feast Days, the neophytes would get “pain bénit.”<sup>84</sup> There could be a competition in the order in which the bread was received, but Lallemand seems to have set out an order for the reception on resurrecting the tradition. The French had the tendency to turn this into a matter of

---

<sup>82</sup> Gilles Boileau, “Le pain bénit,” *Histoire Québec* vol 6:3 (2001): 19; Claude Verreault, « La meilleure façon d’ambitionner sur le pain bénit... » *Québec français* 71 (1998): 92; Anselme Chiasson, « Histoires de pain bénit en Acadie » *Histoire Québec* vol 6:3 (2001) : 20 : all mention pain bénit as having been reintroduced into the colony for Christmas 1645. There is also a much earlier mention of pain benit in the Jesuit Relations which seems to have been missed in these references for reasons unknown. It is awkwardly worded in English, (see footnote below) but is very clear in French. It speaks of both the pain bénit as well as the custom of giving a couple times of year a special sermon called the “Grand Prone” (this information is completely lost in the translation.) It was a practice of reciting all the essential Catholic beliefs in order to make sure that all had at least basic instruction even if they managed to miss any other catechetical teaching. “Le service se fait maintenant avec solennité; outres les Messes basses, on en chante une tous les Dimanches & toutes les Festes, où se fait l’Eau beniste, & le Pain benit : on recite le Prosne pour l’instruction des plus ignorans, on ne manque pas de prescher en son temps, d’expliquer le Catechisme apres les Vespres.” *JR* 9: 146. In all likelihood, this celebration of pain bénit is probably what Lallemand mentions in 1645 as a custom that had previously been practiced and then stopped.

<sup>83</sup> *JR* 27: 113.

<sup>84</sup> *JR* 17: 42-43. The translator seemed a bit unaware of this term, even if the footnotes have an understanding. It was rendered into English as “consecrated bread.” *JR* 17: 43. This bread is not to be confused with the hosts which were consecrated into the Body and Blood of Christ and received during communion. Further, the text may give an indication that the Natives did not just receive the pain bénit but took turns making it: “entr’autres celle du pain benit, que ces bons Neophytes font chacun à son tour.”

competition by trying to create the most ornate and decorated breads they could which Lallemand records happening in 1646. Madame Marsolet, for the Sunday before Septuagesima, made a pain bénit which included “a crown of gauze or linen puffs” and “gold écus pieces.” Before blessing it, however, the Jesuits were diligent in removing all the extra decorations and “blessed it with the same simplicity that I had observed with the preceding portions, especially with that of Monsieur the Governor, - fearing lest this change might occasion Jealousy and Vanity.”<sup>85</sup> This aspect of the practice was the most off-putting to Lallemand, and he clearly wished to remove those excesses.<sup>86</sup>

Very critical to the practices surrounding communion was the feast of Corpus Christi. This ceremony cemented both religious belief in the Eucharist as well as societal hierarchy. From the very first celebration of Corpus Christi in Acadia, the Jesuits sought to make sure the Natives had some sort of active role in the ceremony. In Quebec, a prominent Native was given the canopy pole.<sup>87</sup> This was a high honour; the other three poles were from the most important ranks of society, and one canopy holder was selected by the governor. Lallemand also introduced the very old practice of including the various guilds in the procession.<sup>88</sup> This practice was established in the Middle Ages, and can be

---

<sup>85</sup> *JR* 28: 153-155.

<sup>86</sup> George-Émile Giguère, “L’Église catholique a-t-elle subi des modifications en venant en Nouvelle-France?” *Revue d’histoire de l’Amérique française* 15:2 (1961):190, 194; argues that all the theological debates of the mother country did not cross the ocean and at the same time there was no real church in New France because of the lack of dioceses but also of concrete government structures. Thus “il ne peut être question de relations Église-État.” However, incidents like the making and distribution of pain bénit illustrate that at least some of the tensions of conflict between governmental positions and a zealous clergy could come to long-drawn-out bouts of petty behaviour which had much deeper roots in the respective beliefs of Gallicanism and Ultramontanism.

<sup>87</sup> *JR* 28; 193; *JR* 32: 91. In 1646, this honour went to Noel Nagabamat, and in 1648, it was Native Jean Baptiste.

<sup>88</sup> *JR* 32: 91 lists 12 different trades represented by torch-carriers. Two years before, in 1646, trades were invited for the first time; a total of six trades represented: “carpenters, masons, sailors, Toolmakers, brewers

seen as trying to reproduce the mixing of religion and trade as occurred in France. In the procession, along with the singing of French and Latin hymns and chants, the Natives would also sing songs in their own language. What either the French or the Natives thought of this combination of traditions and languages is not recorded.<sup>89</sup> The Jesuits obviously thought it worked well as Lallemand records Corpus Christi and the rubrics and rituals they followed and the traditions he tried to expand. He would also assiduously record all the rubrical mistakes he made, particularly in regards to Corpus Christi. In 1648, he recorded his error of having the presiding clerics, either the acting priest or deacons, wear maniples (a small liturgical vestment worn over the left forearm).<sup>90</sup> With such attention to detail, the Jesuits, and particularly Lallemand, had a keen desire to keep to the rules of the church.

For the majority of the time, Mass was said very closely to the rubrics. Lallemand wrote in the margins of the Jesuit Journal about consulting several missals in order to make sure that he was performing one of the services of Holy Week correctly. This minor entry into the journal also illustrates this Jesuit's ability to adapt to the circumstances and take initiative, as "scarcely two missals ... agreed," and Lallemand would have to make a decision.<sup>91</sup> It is also clear from the Jesuit Journal that the Jesuits

---

and bakers" who decorated their torches according to their trade. *JR* 28: 193-195. For an examination of this tradition in England, see: Jeremy Goldberg, "Craft Guilds, the Corpus Christi Play and Civic Government," in *The Government of Medieval York: Essays In Commemoration of the 1396 Royal Charter*, ed. Sarah Rees Jones (York: Borthwick Institute Publications, 1997), 141-163.

<sup>89</sup> Although not noted for the Corpus Christi procession, at the procession of the feast of the Assumption, at one of the altars they stopped at, the Natives sang the Ave Maria in their "own language" as part of the larger procession. *JR* 28: 225.

<sup>90</sup> *JR* 32: 91.

<sup>91</sup> *JR* 32: 81.



sought to have as good as liturgical finery as they could afford. There was no real improvising with the liturgical furnishings. The governor, in 1645, asked the Jesuits to lend a secular priest, Fr. Nicolet, a “*furnished oratory*. He was given one in which there was a silver chalice, a new chasuble, a very beautiful and large cloth, and a handsome alb, and everything else in keeping; he especially desired that he be given a candle and hosts; in short, nothing was wanting.”<sup>92</sup> The Jesuits sought to give honour to God through the furnishings which they used. One of their practical innovations, the reason for which is not quite explained, was the decision to use only one candle during non-obligatory Masses.<sup>93</sup> Numbers of candles were usually dictated by rubrics, something which could be spiritually dangerous to violate.<sup>94</sup> However, considering Fr. Nicolet’s need of candles, it seems that a candle-shortage made them take this practical step.

There was one particularly interesting entry in the Jesuit Journal which may have led to the precedence of the later changes made in the Masses for the Natives. Again, it illustrates a desire towards providing as much ceremony as possible that followed the rubrics but adjusted for the constraints of a colony on the periphery. Lallemand wrote in

---

<sup>92</sup> *JR* 27: 86, italics in original. Analyse et traitement informatique de la langue française (atilf), *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français (1330-1500)* <http://www.atilf.fr/dmf> suggests the original French “nape” for “large cloth” is an altar cloth.

<sup>93</sup> *JR* 27: 93.

<sup>94</sup> See *Missale Romanum* (Paris: Societatem Typographica Librorum Officis Ecclesiastici, 1603). <http://www.archive.org/details/MissaleRomanum1603>. One of the sections of the Roman Missal was “De Defectibus,” a listing of things which were considered problematic, whether intentional or accidental, and which could result in the priest committing a sin if the rules were not followed: “Quicquid enim horum deficit, scilicet material debita, forma cuintentioned, & ordo Sacerdotalis in consiente, non conficitur Sacrame[n]tum. Et his existentibus, quibuscumque aliis deficientibus, vertias adest Sacramenti Alij vero sunt defectus, qui in Missae celebratione occurrentibus, etsi veritatem Sacramenti non impediunt possunt tamen aut cum peccato, aut cum scandalo cotingere,” *Missale Romanum*, 102/893. It was also a defect to not have wax candles: “Si non adsint luminaria cerea.” This grammatical structure point to at least two candles, or otherwise it was a defect. *Missale Romanum*, 105/893.

the Jesuit Journal of 1647 that they had resumed saying High Mass for Sundays and Feast days “in the usual manner in which we say, - with a *veni creator, gloria, Credo*, and *O Salutaris hostia*, - being irregular, and likely to displease those who newly came from France, who expect to find, at least in some place of new France, a parish mass.”<sup>95</sup> From this account, it can be assumed they were chanting part of the kyriale (the Gloria and the Creed make up part of this, and is joined by the kyrie, sanctus, and agnus dei,) and replacing the propers with the Veni Creator and O Salutaris. Propers are prayers said by the priest, and during a High Mass, chanted by a choir or schola, consisting of an introit, gradual, alleluia or tract (depending on the liturgical season), offertory, and a communion verse. These were all integral parts of a High Mass, and it is clear that at least some of the parishioners were not pleased with this innovation away from the expected norm. What was the cause of this change? There was no rationale in the Jesuit Journal but certain motivations can be guessed. The propers and kyriale were all Latin chants – thus requiring at least a few literate people, who could also pronounce Latin, and read Gregorian chant notation or similar styles.<sup>96</sup> It can also be readily imagined that the sources containing these chants, whether in missals or collections of music, would be difficult to obtain in the colony. This practice, however, may explain the phenomena that Salvucci catalogues in his book. In the later years, the propers that the Native choirs sang maintained the Gregorian chant styles while being in their own respective languages. Further, Salvucci writes that while most congregational responses remained in Latin, the

---

<sup>95</sup> *JR* 30: 183-185.

<sup>96</sup> It is unlikely that this was in a polyphonic style as there is no mention of this style in the Mass itself. The only mention for music being sung in more than one voice was songs sung before Midnight Mass, while they were waiting for the Mass to begin. These songs were also in French. *JR* 27: 113.

propers could take one of two forms – they either were replaced by a vernacular hymn or the propers were greatly reduced and re-used over a liturgical season.<sup>97</sup> This meant that the priest continued to say all his prayers in Latin, but the choir would tend towards the vernacular (something which was not technically allowed in a High Mass). However, in a culture that has lower literacy rates, it would have been far easier to get them to follow the tune of the chants and replace them with prayers which repeated from week to week. A hymnal from Kahnawake shows that this situation evolved over the years and would eventually become more in line with the liturgical calendar of the rest of the church in Quebec with new texts being published in the 1890s and in 1959.<sup>98</sup> These changes, among both the French and the Natives, show a desire to maintain the correct liturgical practices while understanding the logistical and personal limitations of the colony.

It is clear that the Jesuits' teaching in regard to the Mass did not always come out clearly enough, as they focused on aspects which they felt were more immediately important. The emphasis on attending Sunday Mass, or at least not working (hunting) on the "true day" was the essential part of their teaching to the Natives.<sup>99</sup> They would frequently write up calendars for those who would be away from the villages, marking out the necessary days of abstention from work, meat, as well as mandatory fasting. They, however, were reasonable, allowing that illness could prevent someone from attending Mass, or the absence of the priest made it impossible. The priests did try to make the Mass understandable to those who attended. Vimont writes that when De Quen

---

<sup>97</sup> Salvucci, *The Roman Rite*, 25.

<sup>98</sup> *Hymnal*, (Caughnawaga: Imprimerie Notre-Dame Richeulieu, Quebec: 1971.)

<sup>99</sup> *JR* 15: 93. *JR* 26: 77 shows a Native who is more upset about losing his calendar than any of his other possessions which he lost while navigating a rapid.

would say Mass, before he began, he “pronounced aloud in their language the prayers, which each one also repeated aloud.”<sup>100</sup> This means that the prayers which changed with every Mass was made known to the people: they would not be ignorant of these prayers despite the difference in language. There are two separate incidents which indicate that this teaching was not always accepted nor understood. In one instance, a woman could not make it to Mass, and the next time she saw a priest, she informed him that she had celebrated Mass in her lodgings:

An old Algonquin woman stayed in her cabin, to look after some little children, and behaved as if she had been at Mass. She set up an image of our Lord, knelt before it with the children, recited her beads, rose as is customary at the Gospel, adored our Lord as is done at the elevation, and says as they are accustomed to do after Mass, - insomuch that, when the Father went to see her, she told him that she had been to Mass in her cabin; the Father asked her how, and learned what I have just related.<sup>101</sup>

Evidently, the woman misunderstood what constituted a Mass, and took on the external rituals as being the sole threshold for completing the obligation.

On another occasion, the priest left Tadoussac for the year, but the people still desired “to hear holy Mass.” However, to the disgust of the priest, one man “presented himself, in order to express its sacred ceremonies with all the solemn preparation and all the devotion that an over-fervent mind can experience.”<sup>102</sup> Further, because there was no priest for confession, a woman decided to take on that role. The Jesuits acknowledge that this was through “simplicity and ignorance.”<sup>103</sup> What perhaps disturbed this Jesuit the most was that they had adopted numerous French customs which he sought to eradicate

---

<sup>100</sup> *JR* 23: 309.

<sup>101</sup> *JR* 24: 29-31.

<sup>102</sup> *JR* 29: 127.

<sup>103</sup> *JR* 29: 127.

and preached against on his return. He wrote that the Natives believed they had to live in the “French fashion” in order to become “good Christians.”<sup>104</sup> Lallemand sums up the great faults of the French and the Natives as such:

The Savages and the French, in the matter of compliments, hold the two extremes: the former are insipid and boorish in the little respect which they bear for another; and the French are annoying in the excess of their ceremonies, and very often deceptive in the too great demonstrations of their friendship. Rustic candor is preferable to a feigned courtesy; excess was never good in whatever it be; if these good Neophytes adopt it they will soon be weary of it.<sup>105</sup>

While both groups may have their fault, Lallemand believed that the character of the Natives was more in line with Christian virtue, or at least malleable enough to achieve that perfection that he sought of them.

Baptism and Communion were the sacraments which marked initiation into the church. For the Jesuits, this meant that the Natives now had at least the opportunity to achieve Heaven when they died. For many Natives, baptism in particular signified an association between themselves and the French. It could mean much more. The seeming downfall of their own traditional beliefs in the curing of illnesses could lead many to re-examine their culture and to take a chance on the new one. However, it is an unfortunate assumption to dismiss the faith of some of these new converts. Some became lay preachers either maintaining Christian practice in the absence of the priests, or in helping translate among new tribes. Dogiques were people that the Jesuits chose to help lead services when they were absent, and to particularly maintain the observance of Sunday.<sup>106</sup>

---

<sup>104</sup> *JR* 29: 127.

<sup>105</sup> *JR* 29: 127-129.

<sup>106</sup> *JR* 21: 159.

Others had a desire to fulfill what they viewed as their Christian obligation while misunderstanding teachings of the Jesuits, through imitation of rituals. The incidents surrounding the various misunderstandings and practices illustrate how the transfer of religious principles was fraught by the constraints of teaching the Natives the full breadth of Catholic thought. Regardless, the Jesuits still maintained a desire to compete with the Natives by their use of rituals. Thus, in institutions like marriage, the Jesuits sought to have the Natives solemnize them in the Church. Even if they rejected the idea of the Natives having a belief in the divine, they understood the role of ritual in the Native culture. They tried to supplant it with Catholic traditions. The Natives continued to connect France with Catholicism, in part because of the Jesuits' own cultural superiority, and this led to religious missteps. In France, no one would really need to be taught that only a priest could say Mass, but among the Natives, it was a lesson which was missed on at least a few occasions. The Jesuits viewed these two sacraments, baptism and communion, as ones which were particularly life- and grace- giving. Baptism removed the guaranteed spiritual death of original sin and communion brought further graces to become holier. The next chapter will deal with death and the sacraments surrounding it. As was shown in this chapter, the Jesuits will continue to bring their own interpretation to the rituals involved, as well as face the Natives' desire to maintain some of their own customs.

## CHAPTER 4: SACRAMENTS OF DEATH

A striking aspect of the *Jesuit Relations* was the sheer number of deaths recorded. A significant number of these deaths came about from the contact between Natives and Europeans as well as a result of the Iroquois raids. This chapter does not seek to examine the causes of deaths but with how death was dealt. For both the Natives and the Jesuits, death was both a physical condition and a spiritual one. Both of these aspects will be examined in regards to how these two cultures used ritual to deal with death and how the rituals interacted. First, however, to be examined will be the role of the sacrament of penance, as it is most usually called in the Jesuits' writing. Here again, the Jesuits had a particular view on this sacrament and implemented it in New France. Linked with this sacrament were the penances both imposed by the priests as well as taken up by the converts. It was in these penances, of fasting or corporal mortifications, that the Natives both exhibited zeal, the desire to imitate the greats of the Catholic religion, and possibly assimilate mortifications which they had already used. Penance fits thematically with this chapter on death as it was one of the key steps in preparing for a good death, as well as removing the spiritual death of the soul if one was in serious sin. In the wilds of New France, with its many threats from both nature and people, death could happen at any time, and thus the soul should be cleansed regularly to prevent dying in serious sin.<sup>1</sup> It

---

<sup>1</sup> This view of life-long preparations for death began in the sixteen century in Europe. Philippe Ariès *The Hour of Our Death*, trans. Helen Weaver (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1981), 300, provides a thorough examination of the changing attitudes toward death from the Middle Ages through the nineteenth century. Many of the European views on death were practised in New France, however, the deathbed was still an important place of conversion, unlike in Europe. Ariès also states that mentions of Purgatory were rare before 1640, yet Huron students also mention it in the Relation of 1640; this early mention seems to be because of the particular theological beliefs of the Jesuits, who were able to teach to their converts without the demands of popular piety affecting their preaching. *JR* 20: 137.

was also part of the sacrament of Extreme Unction, the final sacrament to send one on their journey to Heaven. Dying well had a strong foundation in both cultures. There were certain things a dying person must do to die well. The Natives saw the Jesuits' view on death as one that was rather morbid, and caused by a desire to kill the Natives. The Jesuits, however, were exhibiting a long-standing custom of preparing for death, and shared their views with all whom they came into contact. After death, the necessity of a funeral and burial was obvious, but even the manner and location of burial was a barometer of religious belief. Death was the final step in the earthly life, and both the Native and the Jesuits viewed it as the beginning of eternity.

The Council of Trent re-emphasized the importance of confession. The Lateran Council in 1215 ordered that the Sacraments of Communion and confession had to be received at least once a year during the Easter season. Trent reiterated this mandate. It also encouraged the pious confession of venial, or lesser, sins.<sup>2</sup> The Jesuits highly supported this practice of pious confession. In the early years of the Society, the Jesuits were criticized for hearing frequent confessions, which O'Malley states was classified as once a month.<sup>3</sup> By the time they reached New France, the Jesuits were advocating weekly confessions as a preparation for attending Sunday Mass, and most especially before the reception of communion. The Jesuits were also promoters of general confession which was the practice of confessing all the sins of one's life rather than just the sins since the last confession.<sup>4</sup> This practice was in the constitution of their religious

---

<sup>2</sup> *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, H.J. Schroeder, trans. (Charlotte, NC: TAN Books, 2011): 93-95.

<sup>3</sup> O'Malley, *The First Jesuits*, 136-139.

<sup>4</sup> O'Malley, *The First Jesuits*, 137-139.



institute, and it was also found in the *Spiritual Exercises*, the lengthy religious retreats that they observed yearly. The retreats were also promoted to those they served, and at least on one occasion, Huron Joseph Chihouatenhoua went through the typical eight day retreat.<sup>5</sup> While the Jesuits upheld the good of these frequent confessions, it appears that it caused severe guilt among some new converts.

There are frequent references in the Relations to those Natives who confessed their sins even daily. Joseph seems to have exhibited a great amount of guilt even in regards to his venial sins. He, therefore, sought to confess daily.<sup>6</sup> The Jesuits, however, were not interested in stopping his practice as they felt his abhorrence of all sin had a good effect on his family, which they stated lived like “Christians and with edification.”<sup>7</sup> For a savage, this was perhaps the best complement a Jesuit could give. There were other converts who did not accept so readily the idea of sin.

The Jesuits had to overcome a part of native morality which believed in the communal responsibilities rather than the individual actions. In questioning one woman in preparation for her baptism, Le Jeune asked a woman to be sorry for “having offended God...[because] she did not know what sin was.”<sup>8</sup> The others with her also stated that she had never sinned, but Le Jeune was not convinced of this. She persisted in this statement, until Le Jeune “threatened her with hell” in which case she “confessed to me

---

<sup>5</sup> *JR* 19: 137. When Jesuits first entered the order, they were to observe the whole thirty day retreat. After that, they would go on to make a yearly eight day retreat. Ste Marie was built, in part, to facilitate these retreats.

<sup>6</sup> *JR* 19: 249.

<sup>7</sup> *JR* 19: 249-251.

<sup>8</sup> *JR* 13: 199.

that she had sinned, that she was very sorry for it, and that she would sin no more.”<sup>9</sup> This statement provided him the ability to baptise her, but it was also the same requirements for a good confession. One needed to confess their sins, that they were contrite, and that they would amend their ways. In confession, the priest would then assign a penance to make up the temporal punishment that was due. Penance, however, was not only for the most devout among the Natives, it could also serve a public statement of sinfulness.

On several occasions Natives participated in public penances. Public penance could mean two different things in the *Jesuit Relations*. It could mean the public profession of sins, or it could mean the actions that were mandated by the confessor to do publically. In some cases, it meant both. Of particular interest is an episode of the former sorcerer Estienne Pigarouich and his companion Francois Kokweribagougouch as they had violated their marriages by taking up mistresses while away from their homes.<sup>10</sup> The account by the Jesuits focused more predominately on Estienne. Estienne initially decided to confess publically in the chapel during the sermon at Mass. Notably, two elders stood up after his declaration of sinfulness and accepted his admission of guilt. For this confession, Estienne had requested being loaned “French garments, which will remind me that I must no longer live as an Infidel, but as a Christian.”<sup>11</sup> Clearly, Estienne had linked the wearing of French clothing as a sort of putting on the new man.<sup>12</sup> He stated that as he had committed public sins, he must atone for them publically. His resolution, however, weakened after he left for Quebec, having taken up with his

---

<sup>9</sup> *JR* 13: 201.

<sup>10</sup> *JR* 25: 249-255.

<sup>11</sup> *JR* 25: 253.

<sup>12</sup> Ephesians 4:24, Douay-Rheims 1899, American Edition [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)

“concubine” again.<sup>13</sup> Father De Quen had been trying to get Estienne to repent, and “if he were willing to confess his sin, and to correct himself for it, he would willingly hear his confession; but that he could not at once admit him into the Church.”<sup>14</sup> De Quen had a number of restrictions that he wanted to place on Estienne, and he refused them. From Quebec, Estienne would go on to Trois Rivieres to meet up with his wife. After Brebeuf refused to hear his confession in the hopes of making him more contrite for his sins, he left again. He then went to Sillery, where, when the Natives found out about his behaviour, did not welcome him anywhere, and he was surprised to be treated as if he were an “excommunicated person.”<sup>15</sup> Estienne, would eventually show up in Montreal, after being given a letter by Brebeuf allowing him to confess there.<sup>16</sup> Buteux would be the one who would finally hear his confession. He would place on him a number of requirements as his penance: to announce publically that he had caused scandal; that Estienne would no longer keep the company of non-Christians; that he would pray in the chapel kneeling and beg God for forgiveness after having made a sacramental confession; and finally, request the “pardon of the Christians...and take the discipline publicly as an atonement for thy faults.”<sup>17</sup> This time, Estienne went through with the confession and the public penance, exceeding Buteux’s expectations. Vimont concludes Buteux’s account by requesting that all readers of the Relation pray for Estienne as he could either be a large help or hindrance in the success of their mission.

---

<sup>13</sup> *JR* 25: 261.

<sup>14</sup> *JR* 25: 273.

<sup>15</sup> *JR* 25: 261

<sup>16</sup> At this time, one had to confess to their parish priest or else obtain permission to confess elsewhere.

<sup>17</sup> *JR* 25: 277.

This incident reveals several things in regard to the attitude of the Natives and the Jesuits when it came to confession and penance. Unlike Joseph, whose confessions were more about the private practice of staying away from sin, Estienne's sacramental and public confessions of sin served a role to the whole Native community. From the first confession, it is clear that a link was established for all involved connecting public sin and public confession. The Natives were also very quick to forgive the seemingly contrite Estienne. However, when he returned to his sins, the reaction was swiftly and markedly different. Estienne had believed he would have been welcomed by both the French and the Natives, but this was not the case. Although there is no indication that the Jesuits started this exclusion of Estienne, they certainly supported it. This action was particularly poignant at Sillery since it was a Christian village. There would have been few Natives living at Sillery at this time who were not Christian. Further, the Jesuits often found public penances were necessary to send a message to the unconverted that they were not hypocrites.<sup>18</sup> Transgressors of public morality would not be tolerated.

Estienne's punishment included having to whip himself, but the Jesuits had to restrain him. The use of corporal mortification was not unheard of in the missions. The Natives adopted the practice for reasons which are unclear, but often became too zealous in their application. In one instance at Tadoussac, one man had a discipline (whip) which he decided to use in the chapel in order to expiate his "debts...and God's justice."<sup>19</sup> He

---

<sup>18</sup> *JR* 26: 147-149.

<sup>19</sup> *JR* 27: 195. This incident in many ways sounds similar to the torture of captured Iroquois. Since the torture was a way of making peace with the loss of a relative and in some cases a way of incorporating the captive into the society, it might be a reasonable speculation that those who practiced this communal penance as a way of joining into this new (French) family of the Creator.

asked for someone to whip him, and then encouraged the others to whip themselves. The whole incident was observed by a priest preparing to say Mass. He did not initially stop the exercise “for fear of opposing the workings of the holy Ghost.”<sup>20</sup> He would eventually step in and stop the collective penance, telling them they were not to take on any other “public penance” without talking to their confessors.<sup>21</sup> The priest took the discipline and “hung [it] up on a nail in the Chapel, as a warning that it was there to chastise publicly those who should be guilty of any public scandal.”<sup>22</sup> This whole episode is again reminiscent of the Natives attempting to imitate the French but also contained aspects of their traditional practices. It is not recorded if the Jesuits specifically spoke on the use of physical penances, but if they were using stories of the saints, hagiographies of the time usually emphasized feats of corporal mortification.<sup>23</sup> The Jesuits took this incident as zeal going a little too far. For them, obedience to one’s confessor and humility (and even humiliation) was the more important aspect of any penance. This incident, however, may have been an attempt to adjust traditional Native practices involving corporal punishments to Christianity.

The physicality and public nature of this collective penance may have had much deeper roots in Native society than the Jesuits knew. The instigator of the incident was using Christian rationalization of the penance; it was needed to make up for their sins in order to reach a place in Heaven. However, the fact the penance was public and included

---

<sup>20</sup> *JR* 27: 197.

<sup>21</sup> *JR* 27: 199.

<sup>22</sup> *JR* 27: 201.

<sup>23</sup> The contemporary accounts of the North American Jesuits’ deaths emphasized the physicality of their deaths and their desire to experience this pain in the service of God. It could be considered the most extreme form of mortification. *JR* 34: 229.

all present, including children and infants, hints at something more. The Natives did not have a cultural understanding of individual guilt when it came to crimes. Guilt was to be paid collectively. In the first years in New France, the giving of gifts in compensation for the murder of a Frenchman was attempted, but it was rejected by the French, particularly Champlain.<sup>24</sup> The Jesuits would slowly become more accustomed to this practice. Therefore, the Natives in this penitential exercise were applying their traditional mindset towards atonement with God. The physical aspect was not new either. For example, Allan Greer explains that practices such as disfiguring one's self and cutting one's flesh was a traditional aspect of Native women's mourning practices.<sup>25</sup> Mourning the death of a relative could have been linked to the mourning of one's sin and thus the ready connection towards physical penances. In another instance at Tadoussac, the Natives began taking upon themselves long fasts, spending several days without any food, because they saw it was necessary for salvation. The Jesuit reports that "zeal without knowledge is a bad guide," and felt that this was also coming from a desire to imitate the French, who they believed fasted frequently.<sup>26</sup> On many occasions, however, the Jesuits had recorded the ability for the Natives to travel long distances and carry out hunts with very little food. Fasting could have been part of their own tradition when it came to communication with the spirits. Both Jaenen and Trigger have pointed out the mystical tradition among the Natives and that this could have been a link between the two

---

<sup>24</sup> *JR* 6: 19.

<sup>25</sup> Greer, *Mohawk Saint*, 12.

<sup>26</sup> *JR* 29: 127.

cultures.<sup>27</sup> Thus, these practices of public penance seem to be an extension of traditional customs which have taken on new understandings in light of Christian teaching.

Beside being an integral aspect of any public penance, the Jesuits typically focused on recording confessions as being part of the deathbed scene. In fact there were three sacraments involved at a proper deathbed as well as certain sentiments that the dying person should express. First, people were to confess their sins. The Jesuits tried when possible to make sure that this last confession was a general one, spanning the person's entire Christian life. There were also occurrences that when people were going out on possibly dangerous journeys or hunts, they would make a general confession. One young man's experience is described as thus: "he made – of his own accord, and without any one instructing him to do so – a general Confession, dating from the time of his Baptism" and moving on to another town, he confessed again, and received Communion. The Jesuit concluded that "God was preparing him for so holy and glorious a death."<sup>28</sup> Second, the administration of viaticum, that is communion, followed. Viaticum is understood to be the person's last communion and thus the spiritual nourishment they need to die well. Lastly, the actual administration of Extreme Unction, which involved the blessing of the person and their senses in order to atone for their sins and to ask for healing, or if it did not occur, a holy death. Regretting one's sins and calling upon God were the final acts which consisted of the "*ars moriendi*": the "specified proper deathbed

---

<sup>27</sup> Jaenen, *Friend and Foe*, 70 points out the mystical traditions of both the French and the Natives. Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers*, 205 argues that the Montagnais particularly desired brandy for its "hallucinogenic" properties.

<sup>28</sup> *JR* 35: 227.

behaviour.”<sup>29</sup> This practice had reached its zenith in the Middle Ages with the black death, but it continued to be a part of Catholic spirituality. The Jesuits, in several instances, write short remarks in their Relations about dying good deaths. Le Jeune wrote in 1633: “Patience; it matters but little where we die, but a great deal, how.”<sup>30</sup> In this case, “how” was not the cause of death but the attitude displayed and the behaviour exhibited as one died. Similar aspects were not unknown in the Native practice either.

The majority of deathbed scenes in the early *Jesuit Relations* recount efforts of the priests to halt the Native practices of *athataion*. This was the “farewell feast” of the Huron, and there were similar practices among the Montagnais.<sup>31</sup> It was an occasion to offer food, have singing, dancing, and a final farewell speech. The greatest problem that this feast brought about was what the Jesuits saw as either a slow suicide or euthanasia. After this feast was given, the person was no longer to accept food. Stories passed on by Massé may have further influenced this view, as he had seen in Acadia “cold water” being poured on a man who a sorcerer had claimed was cursed – a self-fulfilling prophecy.<sup>32</sup> Like their views on the presence of the demons, the Jesuits began to alter their views on these feasts. In the Relation of 1648-49, Ragueneau records the death of a Christian child. The child requested to be brought to Ste Marie to die among the Christian, and his mother wanted to provide him the traditional farewell feast. The Jesuit also records that the mother wished to use this feast as a time to explain her child’s conversion. The child, however, was very concerned that the farewell feast was

---

<sup>29</sup> Seeman, *The Huron-Wendat Feast of the Dead*, 32.

<sup>30</sup> *JR* 5: 71.

<sup>31</sup> *JR* 10: 61.

<sup>32</sup> *JR* 3: 123.



something which the Jesuits had disallowed. Eventually, “the Father who has charge of that Mission had assured him that in that feast there was no sin.”<sup>33</sup> The change in policy showed that the Jesuits were truly starting to understand Native custom. Further, it is quite possible they saw the benefit of a large feast where the dying extolled the benefits of their newly adopted faith. As long as there were not offerings to the spirits, the Jesuits saw that the traditional practices could be adapted and coexist with Christian practice.

The Jesuits, on one occasion, also used the *athataion* feast for their own ends. In October of 1638, the Jesuits in Huronia were fearing for their lives. Brebeuf had gathered most of the missionaries at Ossossané and had written their final letter to their superior. They then called a farewell feast.<sup>34</sup> Since rejecting an invitation to a farewell feast was incredibly poor manners, when the Jesuits called this feast, they guaranteed themselves a captive audience. Whatever was said by the Jesuits was not recorded, however, the mood was sombre. In the end, the Jesuits were not massacred that year as they had feared (or, in actuality, hoped). There have already been accounts of Natives using and adopting Catholic rites, but this was a peculiar use of the social norm of the Huron society.

The Catholic deathbed and the expected last harangue fit well together, and could be interpreted by Jesuits and Natives as leaning towards one tradition or another. One case in 1648 exemplifies this sort of good death that the Jesuits desired of those to whom they ministered. The convert, according to the author, “has been guilty of some

---

<sup>33</sup> *JR* 34: 113.

<sup>34</sup> *JR* 15: 67.

escapades since he has been born into the Church.”<sup>35</sup> Whatever this man did, he clearly was not a model convert. In reality, he was probably more in keeping with the average convert. The Jesuits tend to over-represent in their writings those at the extremes: the most pious converts and those who apostatize in spectacular fashion.<sup>36</sup> His sins seem rather reasonable of one who had changed religion: he fell back into his “former superstitions” apparently to appease another person. The entire ritual of his deathbed illustrates the behaviour desired by the Jesuits:

When we took Viaticum to him in his cabin, and gave him Extreme Unction, he spoke to his people and said: “I have no more strength to speak, but I still have enough heart to weep for the scandal that I have given you. Retain no remembrance of my evil examples. I do not grieve for my sufferings, but I am very sorry for having offended God, and for having been wicked among men. I pardon those who have urged me to return to my old songs that I used for speaking to the demon. Pardon me also both for the many evil words that I have said, and the many evil actions that I have committed, and of which you have had knowledge. I am exhausted; speech fails me; pray to God for me. My heart tells me that I shall go to Heaven, for God is good. I will remember you, but drive the wicked away from amid your cabins, lest they should pervert you.”<sup>37</sup>

In many ways, the Jesuits could not have described a more perfect deathbed. He participated in the sacraments and then went on to repudiate his past life. He further made acts of faith and hope in his speech which were also encouraged by the Jesuits. His final words were words of advice to those assembled. It is no wonder that the author had noted he hoped this man’s soul “will be in Heaven” by the time the Relation was read in

---

<sup>35</sup> *JR* 32: 235.

<sup>36</sup> Throughout the Jesuit accounts, very few people are actually mentioned in any great detail, and those who are usually fall along these polarising lines of saint or apostate. Lucien Campeau’s *Biographical Dictionary* provides a listing of every person named in the Jesuits Relations up to 1654. Most entries on Natives are only a few lines long, some are only their names.

<sup>37</sup> *JR* 32 235-237.

France.<sup>38</sup> The sacraments that he received seemed to have given him the strength, according to the chronology of the record, in order to make this speech. Even though it was incredibly Christian, it still would have had a very familiar feeling to the Natives assembled around the man. This deathbed scene spanned the gap between the two cultures through the ritualization of death.<sup>39</sup>

The Jesuits and the Natives often had very similar understandings of death. People had spirits, there was an afterlife, and one's family could be met there. Death was not the final end, it was the beginning of an eternity.<sup>40</sup> However, there were also several differences. For the Natives, the duality of a Heaven and Hell did not exist. All people would go on to the afterlife. This afterlife also very much replicated the life they lived on earth. Further, the Huron believed a person had "two souls...one separates itself from the body at death, yet remains in the Cemetery until the feast of the Dead...the other is...bound to the body...it remains in the ditch of the dead after the feast, and never leaves it, unless some one bears it again as child."<sup>41</sup> This belief was completely different from the Catholic one. Catholics believed that there was one soul that left the body at death and went to its immediate and particular judgment. It would either be sent to Hell

---

<sup>38</sup> *JR* 32: 235.

<sup>39</sup> Seeman, *The Huron-Wendat Feast of the Dead*, 24. Seeman calls the activities and rituals surrounding death "deathways" which were a way of communicating between the two groups. The Jesuits also tried to bridge other parts of Native belief with their own. One of the best examples is when they asked to be told the Huron creation story of Ataentsic. Le Jeune however regards the account superficial and unable to be defended under examination, *JR* 10: 133. However, while listening to the account, Le Jeune picked out some details which he related to the Christian story of creation (*JR* 10: 137) and how this meant the Huron "had formerly some more than natural knowledge of the true God." *JR* 10: 125. Le Jeune's examination the Huron creation story shows a willingness to see the link between Christianity and Native beliefs, while still maintaining the superiority of his own religion.

<sup>40</sup> Seeman, *The Huron-Wendat Feast of the Dead*, 1-2.

<sup>41</sup> *JR* 10: 287.

for all eternity, or to Heaven, with the very significant chance of needing to spend time in Purgatory to atone for the sins one had not sufficiently made up for during one's lifetime. Heaven was also a very different place: it was in no tangible way related to what the person had known on earth. It was to be the constant adoration of God. This conception of Heaven indeed became very terrifying and was a reason for resisting conversion. Their world had changed significantly enough, and they did not want to spend their afterlife with the French. The Huron afterlife was considered to be rather the same as when they were living, lived within their nation and as spirits. What the Jesuits were proposing as the afterlife was incredibly foreign to them. Perhaps even more terrifying was that the Jesuits taught "that God was the God of the Iroquois as well as of the Hurons."<sup>42</sup> Some greatly feared that they would be tortured by their earthly enemies in this new, French afterlife.

Preoccupation with death was associated with sorcery, and thus the Jesuits' own spirituality led them to be considered sorcerers. There is no real record in the *Jesuit Relations* about what the Natives abstractly thought about death. They had their rituals surrounding the deathbed and burial, and their ideals in what was regarded as proper when it came to being tortured. One was to be brave and stoic on the deathbed and when tortured. However, there is no indication that they put in as much thought about death as did the Jesuits, and this made them suspicious. Trigger has written that the Jesuits' rituals were perceived as being shamanistic. It was further worsened by the fact that, in the Hurons' view, the Jesuits did not put enough effort in hoping for the recovery of the

---

<sup>42</sup> *JR* 13: 73.

ill person, rather they were more concerned with their death.<sup>43</sup> The lack of the Jesuits' ability to halt the epidemics, Trigger argued, meant that they were being dishonest. This dishonesty was not conducive to the communal living pattern and was indicative of sorcery, one of the only crimes, along with treason, that could be punished by death.<sup>44</sup>

How much were the Jesuits involved in thoughts about death? Quite a bit. The Jesuits saw death as process one worked through on the way to eternal life. Therefore, it was something to which they looked forward as long as they were in a holy state. After Isaac Jogues escaped death the first time, he lamented that he was not killed. He wrote to a fellow Jesuit saying "my sins have rendered me unworthy to die among the Iroquois."<sup>45</sup> For him, escaping death was the greater punishment. There also existed the theology that dying as a martyr guaranteed Heaven as it removed sin.<sup>46</sup> For Jogues, it was also an indication of personal sanctification. Several of his Jesuit confreres had made vows regarding their deaths. Brebeuf, for example, made a vow around the year 1638 "to never fail, on my side, in the grace of martyrdom, if by your infinite mercy you offer it to me someday" and that "it shall no longer be a lawful thing for me, when remaining at my option, to avoid opportunities of dying and of shedding my blood for you."<sup>47</sup> Brebeuf's assistant at the mission, Gabriel Lallemant, had made a similar vow: he had "consecrated

---

<sup>43</sup> Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers*, 246-247.

<sup>44</sup> Blackburn, *Harvest of Souls*, 74.

<sup>45</sup> *JR* 25: 65.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas*, "Second Part of the Second Part: Question 124" trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1920 *New Advent* <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/3124.htm> Jesuits were heavily into Thomistic thought, and the Summa taught that dying for the faith could act as baptism. By this time, this theology had evolved, at least in the understanding of the Jesuits, to include the forgiveness of sins after baptism.

<sup>47</sup> *JR* 34: 165-167.

himself to Our Lord for the purpose of receiving from his hand a violent death, either in exposing himself among the plague-stricken in Old France or in seeking to save the Savages in the New.”<sup>48</sup> There is an important difference in these vows. Brebeuf explicitly wished to be martyred and saw it as a grace offered by God. Lallemand, however, did not necessarily want to be martyred, although it is probable he considered the likelihood of it happening when he was transferred to work with Brebeuf. His offering was just to die in the service of God. Both men saw this as the highest achievement that they could accomplish in their missionary work.

Throughout all the *Jesuit Relations*, there are numerous phrases which indicate a willingness to die. Tracy Leavelle and Erik Seeman have pointed out that in some instances these writings have been dismissed by authors as just formulaic expressions of piety.<sup>49</sup> Sometimes these writings do appear to be religious filler, but at the same time, it sometimes appears as if the Jesuits were trying to reassure themselves in their beliefs by writing these phrases. The Jesuits beliefs towards death would have been made more concrete after the martyrdoms as dying for one’s faith was no longer only theoretical. It was not solely out of ideology that Ragueneau wrote to his superior in Rome: “for we are sons of the Cross, -oh, that we may die upon it!”<sup>50</sup> These were men who had seen the ritualized torture of the Hurons and Iroquois, and by this time, Ragueneau would have read the Jesuit donné Regnaut’s account of the attack on Brebeuf and G. Lallemand as well as how he prepared their bones.<sup>51</sup> Death was not abstract to them; they had dealt

---

<sup>48</sup> *JR* 34: 229.

<sup>49</sup> Leavelle, *The Catholic Calumet*, 15; Seeman, *The Huron-Wendat Feast of the Dead*, 3.

<sup>50</sup> *JR* 35: 29.

<sup>51</sup> *JR* 34: 27-35.

with the dead and dying from the moment they arrived in New France. This did not stop them in their zeal for wanting to die.

The Jesuits shared their beliefs about preparing for death with all they encountered. In Paul Ragueneau's Huron Relation of 1648 and 1649, he wrote that the Native men, women and children had suffered from the Iroquois attacks and this was "the true mark of Christianity." He also wrote that "it is a blessing for us that a part of this truly heavy cross is our portion for ourselves; that we have seen some of our brethren there shedding their blood and enduring torments, the cause of which may indeed enable them to pass some day for martyrs."<sup>52</sup> This martyrdom thus lets them truly unite themselves with Jesus, and in a manner, die like him. In earlier Relations, the Jesuits had wondered if they "could hope for the conversion of this country without the shedding of blood...it would be a sort of curse if this quarter of the world should not participate in the happiness of having contributed to the splendor of this glory."<sup>53</sup> Le Jeune would not be disappointed as the martyrdoms occurred over the years. Whether this was the shedding of blood, or the fear of the Iroquois, mass amounts of baptisms happened before the destruction of Huronia. Françoise Weil has shown that there were about as many baptisms between the arrival of the Jesuits until 1647 (a total she has calculated as 5107), and the 5700 estimated baptisms which occurred in 1649 and 1650.<sup>54</sup> It is highly unlikely that the Jesuits would have eased their rhetoric of good death and dying in this circumstance. In fact, this was the long awaited chance to finally go to Heaven.

---

<sup>52</sup> *JR* 34: 79-81.

<sup>53</sup> *JR* 17: 13.

<sup>54</sup> Françoise Weil, "La christianization des indiens de la Nouvelle France, XVII-XVIII siècles," *Hispana Sacra* 40 (1988):752-754.

The Jesuits also shared their views on death with others whom they came into contact. Le Jeune was involved in writing numerous spiritual letters, some of which originated in Canada.<sup>55</sup> It appears that a number of these letters were meant for other people who belonged to religious orders. These writings focused on the acceptance of suffering and dying to oneself. To one woman, Le Jeune wrote in comforting her in the death of her father, she was to receive communion daily (during the octave an unspecified feast) and “faites les exercices de la bonne mort, surtout tendez toujours à la mort.”<sup>56</sup> Although telling her that her father was most likely in Heaven, Le Jeune still instructed her to meditate on her own death. The situations of life were to orient oneself to the will of God.

The Jesuits also wrote letters to the nuns in Quebec. For example, around 1660, Ragueneau wrote to Mother St. Pierre. He focused on the fact that her name in religion was that of Peter and his name was Paul:

Vous portez le nom d'une martyre, avec celui de Paul qui l'a aussi été; ah s'ils pouvoient vous obtenir l'un et l'autre la grâce du martyr! Soyez martyre tous les jours de votre vie avec St Paul qui disoit qu'il mourroit tous les jours quotidiennement ... (illegible) car c'est toujours vivre et toujours mourir. Etendra [sic] le jour que vous mourrez pour prendre une vie que ne sera plus mourante.<sup>57</sup>

Thus, martyrdom was desirable by accepting a physical death. It also meant the daily dying to self and accepting the hardships that one encountered in their daily life.

Although this letter was written after the destruction of Huronia, it illustrates that the

---

<sup>55</sup> Pouliot, “Le Jeune, Paul,” in *DCB*.

<sup>56</sup> Paul Le Jeune, *Lettres Spirituelles: Écrites à plusieurs personnes de piété vivant en religion et dans le monde touchant la direction de leur intérieur* (Paris: Victor Palmé, Libraire-éditeur, 1875), 16.

<sup>57</sup> Paul Ragueneau, «5<sup>e</sup> Cayer la Mere St. Pierre Rie (Genevieve Boucher de Boucherack) 68<sup>e</sup> Resp. » Archives du Monastère des Ursulines de Quebec (AMUQ) Ecrits du Père Paul Ragueneau, 5<sup>e</sup> cahier; Spirituel 1/H3,2,1.3 VIIe siècle; SA-1-5-13; 1r.



Jesuits continued to advocate the acceptance of sufferings and death after their very close encounters with the deaths of their confreres. If anything, the martyrdoms of the eight Jesuits led to an even wider spread in the writings about death.

In 1652, a manuscript was compiled regarding the deaths of the eight martyred Jesuits. This manuscript included the already published texts from the previous years' *Jesuit Relations* as well as previously unpublished material such as private letters between the individual priests and others. This manuscript was recopied several times and circulated in Jesuit circles. In some ways, it reflects the hagiographies of the middle ages. For example, in the section on the (first) capture of Isaac Jogues, Buteux had written that:

Il lève les yeux en hault, se souvient des messes qui'il a dicte, et offre ce poulce à dieu, en satisfaction du peu de respect qui'il a porté aud fils de dieu, en touchant son sacré corps.<sup>58</sup>

Tortures and physical pain were something that must be accepted and transformed into something that was holy. The scenes of martyrdom, much more graphically recounted in the manuscript than in the *Relations*, was not about showing the enemy that you were strong and brave as in the Native tradition. Rather, for the Jesuits, it was about their faith being stronger. For the readers then, the manuscript almost reads as a sort of challenge to bear their own sufferings.<sup>59</sup> After the death of the eight martyrs, the Jesuits did not have

---

<sup>58</sup> *Mémoire touchant la Mort & Les Vertus des Peres Isaac Jogues, Anne de Noue, Anthoine Daneil, Jean de Breeuf, Gabriel Lallement, Charles Garnier, Noel Chabanel & un Seculier René Goupil* forward and transcribed by Arthur Melançon AMUQ Relations avec les Autorités ou organismes Ecclésiastique « Martyrs Canadiens. Recherche » 1/B6, 9,3; SA-6-5-1-2. 12. This transcription has been corrected to match the original manuscript which can be found: Fonds de la Campagne de Jésus. Collège Saint-Marie (Montréal, Qué.) LAC MG 17 A-6-3. 19-91.

<sup>59</sup> Paul Perron, "Isaac Jogues: From Martyrdom to Sainthood," in *Colonial Saints: Discovering the Holy in the Americas* eds. Allan Greer and Jodi Bilinkoff (New York: Routledge, 2003), 160: suggests that even the

to look to the founders as examples (although this did continue), they now had their own martyrs as an example for living as well as to call on in prayer in times of need.<sup>60</sup>

In many ways, their death meant the achievement of Heaven as well as seeing their loved ones again. Death was not all about the morbid. For example, when Isaac Jogues sailed from Dieppe in April 1636, he wrote a final letter to his mother. He wrote:

Adieu madame ma mere ie vous remerci de tant daffection que vous mavez toujours témoigné et princpalemt [sic] dans cette dernière entrevieue Dieu nous rassemble dans son S<sup>t</sup> paradis si nous ne nous revoyons sur terre.<sup>61</sup>

He also wished for farewell words to be given to his siblings. Although acknowledging the physical separation, it would not be a final goodbye because of the hope of Heaven. For the Jesuits, death could either bring perpetual life together in Heaven or permanent separation in Hell, but this did not seem to diminish any joy in their thoughts on death.

Despite all their talk surrounding death, the Jesuits were not actively trying to shorten their lives or those they served. In numerous of the *Relations*, the Jesuits were trying to at least give some sort of material support or at least comfort to those who were sick and dying. One was not allowed to hasten or procure one's own death or the death of another. This teaching, however, confused the Natives. Le Jeune had a conversation with a "sorcerer" one day. The sorcerer inquired if the priest actually wanted to go to the afterlife about which he frequently spoke. He added he did not want to die, but if he got

---

writing style and verb usage in some of the martyrdom narratives, particularly Jogues' first capture, create an "intensified durativity."

<sup>60</sup> Julia Boss, "Writing a Relic: The Uses of Hagiography in New France," in *Colonial Saints: Discovering the Holy in the Americas* eds. Allan Greer and Jodi Bilinkoff (New York: Routledge, 2003), 215: argues along a same line, that the "lives" of the New France martyrs helped to define the relationship of the colony with that of the "European metropole."

<sup>61</sup> Isaac Jogues, "Copie d'une lettre d'Isaac Jogues adressee à sa mère" AMUQ « Relations avec les autorités ou organismes Ecclésiastiques » 1/B, 6, 9; SA-6-5-1-2; 1/B6,9,1 Vol.1.

tired of his life, he would kill himself. Le Jeune replied that killing oneself would take one to Hell, as “God forbade us to kill ourselves.”<sup>62</sup> The sorcerer, with a bit of wry response, offered to kill Le Jeune “that thou mayest go to Heaven.”<sup>63</sup> Again, Le Jeune told him that even to accept such an offer was sinful. The sorcerer replied then that the Jesuit really did not have a desire to die. Because of a lack of hell in the Native spirituality, the sorcerer saw death as just a means to an end. The Jesuits, however, maintained that there were correct ways to die. One could suffer patiently through illness or injury, or they could accept their martyrdom. They were not, however, to hasten their death.

The Jesuits were also sometimes frustrated by the deaths of their converts. They were glad they had made converts, usually in illness, and that these people would achieve Heaven. There was however a sense of irritation that a number of the converts did not live. On multiple occasions in their writings, the author will dryly comment as such: “for our thought was of the church militant, whereas God provided for the church triumphant.”<sup>64</sup> The reason for this sentiment shows the external pressure the Jesuits were facing. Foremost, this excerpt came from a letter that J. Lallemand wrote to the general superior of the Jesuit order in Rome. There was clearly an external focus on numbers of converts, just as there had been in the earliest years. The Jesuit has to remind his own superior that they were making the converts, and it was up to God to see if they lived. There would have also been the pressure from the Natives, and a hope of convincing

---

<sup>62</sup> *JR* 7: 165.

<sup>63</sup> *JR* 7: 165.

<sup>64</sup> *JR* 17: 229. *JR* 19: 123 provides another very similar comment.

them that the Jesuits were not sorcerers trying to kill them. On a further psychological level, it must have been disheartening for the Jesuits, regardless of their religious convictions, to constantly deal with so many people dying. In Europe, they tended to function as teachers, not parish priests who would commonly be called to deathbeds. The Jesuits' frustration with the frequent deaths shows they were not completely obsessed with death for its own sake. They wanted a sense of normalcy, and to begin to teach the art of Christian living, not just *ars moriendi*.<sup>65</sup>

In the end, everyone would be buried, and this seems to be both a common ground for the Jesuits as well as an area which would truly show the firmness of conversion. From the first years in Acadia, a proper Christian burial was deemed as an essential aspect of converting the Natives. As related in the last chapter, the Jesuits were particularly pleased when they could bury anyone with the ceremonies of the church. That does not mean, however, that at least some of them did not have an appreciation for the burial customs of the Natives. In 1636, Brebeuf related the customs of the Huron towards the dead and in particular the feast which was held around every twelve years. Brebeuf wrote that a significant enterprise of the Huron was to amass enough goods in order to carry out proper burials.<sup>66</sup> He admired their ability to tell a dying person of his condition and to begin planning with the ill person the specifics of their burial.<sup>67</sup> At the first burial, Brebeuf writes that there fewer grave goods; rather, many of the gifts would

---

<sup>65</sup> Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, 300-301 notes that in Europe, the “art of living well” in order to prepare for death had become more standard approach to mortality.

<sup>66</sup> *JR* 10: 265.

<sup>67</sup> *JR* 10: 267

be distributed among family.<sup>68</sup> Between the first burial, and the feast of the dead, there would other yearly feasts to commemorate the dead, and it was a tradition to pass their name on to another.<sup>69</sup> Since villages were mobile, combining the burial of all the villages once every twelve years was a practical move. It also allowed for the collection of the necessary gifts. Brebeuf not only attended the feast, he invited “all our servants” to the showing of the village’s dead as he believed the feast was a very good instructional exercise on mortality.<sup>70</sup> The careful handling of the dead, even in a state of decomposition, was admired by Brebeuf who wrote that it was “a noble example to inspire Christians.”<sup>71</sup> At the actual burial, there were numerous gifts and the entire burial pit was covered with beaver robes.<sup>72</sup> Although very interested in the proceedings, the chaos of it was to Brebeuf “a picture...to me the confusion there is among the damned.”<sup>73</sup> The Catholic ritual was less frenzied to him. Brebeuf further estimated that there as between fifteen and twenty Christian Hurons who were buried in the pit. The Jesuits prayed the traditional Catholic funeral psalm *De profundis* for these converts, and hoped that the feast’s non-Christian aspects would eventually come to an end.<sup>74</sup>

The feast of the dead was certainly impressive, but the Jesuits still sought to have Christian burials. Brebeuf saw the feast, while an impressive and respectful ritual, to be a physical manifestation of the confusion of hell. They had shown in Acadia and in the

---

<sup>68</sup> JR 10: 271.

<sup>69</sup> JR 10: 275.

<sup>70</sup> JR 10: 283.

<sup>71</sup> JR 10: 285.

<sup>72</sup> JR 10: 297.

<sup>73</sup> JR 10: 297.

<sup>74</sup> JR 10: 301.

later missions the desire to have Christian converts buried in the French cemeteries with the rituals of the church. The Natives had believed that burial with the members of their tribe would ensure being together in the afterlife, and the conscious choice to be buried apart from their unconverted family members was a major signal of conversion. In the Native spirituality, it meant that those who were buried elsewhere would not share in their afterlife. The Jesuits had also wanted to reduce or eliminate the grave goods as material items were not needed in the Christian heaven. This does not mean that these items did not exist. At the 1636 feast, there were numerous grave goods, including one ring that probably would have belonged to one of the Jesuits.<sup>75</sup> It is not known if this was a gift to one of the Natives, or used as a sign of being Christian by one of the converts. Erik Seeman writes that in later burials, including ones which were supposed to be particularly Christian in nature, syncretism existed at both the cemetery of Ste Marie and in the Loretto mission.<sup>76</sup> He states that grave goods were present in both of these places, and the former's not being mentioned in the *Jesuit Relations*, but the latter being approved by the priest. Grave goods, however, do not necessarily indicate the beliefs of the dead, rather, they are more indicative of those carrying out the burials. These grave goods also included Christian items, and the motivation for their addition to the graves is unknown. This seems as well to be part of the practicality and reasonableness the Jesuits adopted in the later years of their work. As long as the grave goods did not indicate that

---

<sup>75</sup> Seeman, *The Huron-Wendat Feast of the Dead*, 71.

<sup>76</sup> Seeman, *The Huron-Wendat Feast of the Dead*, 105, 138.

the person believed they needed these items in the afterlife, they were permissible or at least tolerated.

The sacraments of confession and extreme unction both dealt with death. The former was a way to revive the soul afflicted with sin; the latter, a sacrament for the final journey. Penances that were taken up were also to deal with the debt of sin in this life, rather than having to make it up in the next. With each of these sacraments, there existed throughout the desire of the Jesuits towards a sense of perfect practice of religion mixed with the gradual realization that certain traditions could be tolerated while others were slowly left off. With both confession and burials, as seen in the examples, there continued to be a link between being Catholic and being French. Estienne desired to be dressed in French clothes when he made his first public confession. The Jesuits preferred that the Natives be buried in the cemetery, and thus, French burial grounds. The implication of this was final. Baptisms could be renounced, but a death carried out in the Christian fashion was the concluding statement of conversion.

## CONCLUSION

In trying to create an ideal France, the Jesuits would eventually have to let go of some of their cultural assumptions in order to convert, and exist alongside, the Natives. The rituals of Catholicism spoke a language of their own, and just like the attempts to translate French vocabularies into indigenous languages, the intention or purpose behind any given ritual was not always understood as the Jesuits hoped. Richard White's *The Middle Ground* provided a new way of looking at the relationship between the Natives and Europeans. His study begins in 1650 and argues that this was when the middle ground first truly emerged. Earlier views of the middle ground perspective viewed the relationship between these two groups as "European fathers and Algonquian children."<sup>1</sup> The Europeans were examined as paternal figures bringing the Natives out of the backwardness of their "savage" existence. This view denied agency to the Natives, who, depending on their actions, were merely obedient "children" or rebellious ones. This thesis seeks to study the role of the Jesuits while avoiding the paternalistic view that the Natives had less agency than the missionaries.<sup>2</sup> Unlike White's work, this thesis argues that the Jesuits were not intentional agents of colonial change and that a middle ground was present, in perhaps a more limited form, between the Jesuits and Natives who came in contact with each other.<sup>3</sup> In this middle ground, the misunderstandings joined and separated these two groups. While external actions may have been similar (that is,

---

<sup>1</sup> White, *The Middle Ground*, 268.

<sup>2</sup> The Jesuits themselves, however, had paternalistic attitudes but nothing out of normal European priestly interactions with their parishioners.

<sup>3</sup> White, *The Middle Ground*, 36-37.



Natives began to look and act Christian), internal intention can never truly be known.

There were also more conscious efforts by both groups to adapt to the “other.”

The Natives benefitted materially from the trade relationship with the Europeans; and the Jesuits felt a measure of success, more precisely by accomplishing God’s Will, in any conversion. Both groups made syncretic changes to their rituals. However, this does not mean they were essentially sell-outs, as some historiographies have suggested.<sup>4</sup>

Trigger, for example, suggests that the Natives could have refused the Jesuits but this meant a gamble in maintaining trade relations. This speculation implies that the Natives unnecessarily accepted Catholicism in a move of self-preservation and desperation (and perhaps even greed), and not because conversion was something the person wanted to do. These sources suggest that if the Natives had in some way fought back or called the French’s bluff, their conversion would not have been inevitable. Neither group adopted what they did not believe was compatible with their own values. The understanding of these values, however, developed over time and in light of individual experience.

The historiography has had several major shifts over the years. The initial writings were on the saintly lives of the martyrs. These hagiographies, however, simplified the work of the Jesuits and demonized the Natives. They also neglected the stories of the Jesuits who were not martyred but had significant roles in the missions, such as Le Jeune. These hagiographies diminished the role of the difficulties the Jesuits faced. Any difficulties in their attempts to convert the Natives was used as a plot device in which set-backs were merely trials to be overcome. These works did not consider the

---

<sup>4</sup> Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers*, 335.

role these difficulties and personal experiences had on the missionaries and how this would affect their relationship with the Natives. Later works would begin to consider the relationship between the Jesuits and the Natives. Some diminished the role of the Natives, who were seen as a group who were merely acted upon. Others began to see this lack of agency as a rhetorical device of Jesuit writing rather than an actual feature of the interaction between Natives and missionaries.<sup>5</sup> Writers such as Trigger and Del ge considered how the Native communities changed over time. These writers gave the Natives cultural agency by recognizing that Native society and religion was not static. The Natives adopted the customs and rituals of other groups, whether other tribes or Europeans, when they saw them as benefitting their spirituality and temporal/material needs. Trade goods factored heavily in this process after contact, and these trade goods were valued for their ritual value, their practicality, and even as having supernatural power of their own.<sup>6</sup>

As the Natives gained a more significant role in the historiography, the role of the Jesuits changed. Instead of being the victors, as in the hagiographies, they began to be seen as aggressors, colonizers, and oppressors. This turn in the historiography viewed the Jesuits as agents of the fur trade and the crown. Although the missionary role of the Jesuits was sometimes seen as a secondary motivation, and at times a legitimizing factor for the French presence in New France, conversion of the Natives truly was a primary goal. The Jesuits, however, wanted to create a perfect France, freed from the overreach

---

<sup>5</sup> Blackburn, *The Harvest of Souls*, 129.

<sup>6</sup> Seeman, *The Huron-Wendat Feast of the Dead*, 107.

of those in government and from the excesses of court and rank. What they found in New France, though, were Natives who either rejected the new religion or introduced their own interpretation of it. Some historians have seen this (mis)interpretation as syncretism and a necessary move to preserve Native culture. This understanding, however, presumes the benefit of hindsight. Some have argued that these new beliefs were adopted because old rituals no longer appeared to work, particularly healing rituals during the times of epidemics. The Jesuits also had rituals which did seem to work, in one instance bringing rain in a drought, when the sorcerer's ritual failed.<sup>7</sup> The Jesuits saw the more extreme practices of the converts as stemming from their zeal, something which needed to be tempered. In other cases, certain actions, such as prolonged fasts, were a result of the converts' desire to act French, something which also had to be monitored because it was seen by the Jesuits as undesirable, and a fault which they hoped to eliminate in New France. Regardless of how the Jesuits viewed their actions, Natives had agency in how they adopted the new religion. The Jesuits were cautious about baptising anyone who was not on their deathbed; yet many converts, themselves, had resisted several attempts by the Jesuits to convert. What finally convinced many of them to convert is unknown. Ulterior motivation has been highlighted in most of the historiographies, but this explanation does not account for those who converted despite the prejudice they faced for doing so. Seeing the Jesuits as an oppressive force, and the Natives conversion as solely one of temporal necessity, denies the agency that both groups had. Some Natives converted because they found Catholicism to be appealing as

---

<sup>7</sup> *JR* 10: 35-41.

a religion, and not just a way to ensure continued trade. This thesis argues that these people had various and subtle motivations for why they acted as they did. There is no ‘black and white’ reason for either the Jesuits or the Natives decisions – they were formed by their culture, tradition, and individual experiences. The misunderstandings regarding each other, however, were most clearly seen, not in their intellectual conversations but in how each group interpreted the other’s ceremonies and rituals.

The missionary efforts of Acadia laid the groundwork for the later missions. Biard and Massé played pivotal roles in the practice of ritual – introducing the “smells and bells” of Catholicism very early in their efforts. At the same time, they were very cautious in accepting people to be baptised. They also were very particular about feasts, healing rituals, and burial practices because they acknowledged the Natives’ link between culture and spirituality. The Jesuit mission in Acadia also illustrates the problems faced by the missionaries when it came to their relations with those in power. Massé would have a long presence in the Quebec missions, and his experiences were shared among the Jesuits, setting the groundwork for the later missions.

Chapter Two examined the intellectual and spiritual heritage which guided the Jesuits’ conversion efforts. The Jesuits were guided by their own order’s rationale for conversion and the experiences of those who preceded them in the mission field, particularly Francis Xavier. Their theological leanings also guided how they viewed those who they were converting, as well as affecting their views of the demonic. More importantly, though, was that each missionary was unique, with his own experiences which were not necessarily reported, or, if so, they were only fully reported after his death. For example, the fact that Brebeuf was a mystic was only made known after his

death. This information colours the interpretation of all of his previous writings. Le Jeune's experiences tended to be better reported, as he would describe Native society and at the same time document his severe dislike of their customs. He missed the living habits of the French, and his discontent would have affected how he viewed any interaction with the Natives.<sup>8</sup> In the case of Brebeuf, after his death, the reader learned of his mystical visions which clearly affected his view of the demonic. Although they may be considered personal idiosyncrasies, these experiences shaped how each Jesuit missionary approached the spirit world of the Natives. The Natives made similar conclusions based on the Jesuits' refusal to participate in certain feasts, something which was considered antisocial and a good indication of being involved in witchcraft. These more theoretical understandings of religion, spirituality, and the divine then formed the actual practice of ritual in the Sacraments.

The last two chapters delve into the rituals surrounding the sacraments. The administration of the Sacraments was fraught with moral conundrums. The conferring of sacraments on those who were ill-prepared or of superficial faith would put both the convert's and the priest's soul in danger. At the same time, the illegitimate delay of administering sacraments was just as risky to the soul. The Jesuits had the guidelines of the church, but these were written mainly for the conversion of those already living in Catholic, or at least Christian, communities. The practice of the faith on the periphery meant the Jesuits had to make decisions which would affect the salvation of all involved.

---

<sup>8</sup> *JR* 6: 243-269. This entire lengthy chapter documents the failings of the Natives' society according to Le Jeune.

Further, there were rules about how exactly these ceremonies were to be practised. Any action that was contrary to these rules meant the priest was again risking his salvation. These rules were generally manageable in Europe, but on the periphery of Catholicism and without access to ecclesiastical authorities, the Jesuits had to make decisions which were in line with Catholic belief and tradition while at the same time being practical for the situations they faced. The Natives were also faced with the assimilation of these new rituals into their culture. Some rejected the changes, holding to their traditions, and seeing very little that the Jesuits could offer. Others viewed the new rituals as a way to become more French and secure the trade relationships. Some also hoped that the metaphorical healing of which the Jesuits preached would also mean physical healing for those who were ill or injured. Some, however, did have genuine beliefs and suffered the ridicule of the traditionalists. These converts often had difficulties navigating the new reality in which they lived, often having to rely on the judgements of the Jesuits to determine whether or not most activities were permissible. Since faith and modes of living were so deeply entwined, for both groups, attempts were made to extricate the traditional spirituality from common activities such as hunting and feasting. Although initially denouncing many of the aspects of traditional Aboriginal living, the Jesuits started to allow certain traditions which could be reconciled with Catholicism. Religious beliefs were often simplified for ease of teaching, but as the missions became established, the Jesuits reconsidered their actual beliefs and how they meshed with Aboriginal practice, finding some qualities were compatible. Death was a true equalizer in this regard, and the rituals surrounding death were more mutually understandable. Dying well was an important facet of life for both the Jesuits and the Natives. How they

conceived this in practice was different, but the Jesuits found enough similarities that towards the end of the Huron mission, they were able to accept many parts of the Aboriginal tradition.

Ritual was a commonality in their respective cultures that both divided and brought together these two groups; it spoke a language of its own. The rituals of the Natives and Jesuits expressed their values and beliefs extending into the realms of social relations. For the Natives, certain feasts and practices were to be carried out for certain events in life, including the mundane. Offering thanks to the animals during a hunt is one such example. For the Jesuits, the rituals of the church touched on the milestones of life, from birth to death. The rituals also encompassed the hierarchy and cultural traditions of France as seen particularly in the Corpus Christi liturgy and the practice of pain bénit. As the Jesuits began to re-evaluate the Native traditions, they also began examining their own. The Jesuits desired to keep up a pure practice of Catholicism, but one which the Natives could understand, and which was not so heavily burdened with its connections to the local elite. The presence of the French laity among the Natives complicated their conversion attempts. The Jesuits did not want the Natives to become French, although the Jesuits would have preferred that the Natives had adopted some of the French customs. The Jesuits wanted, above all, for the Natives to become Catholic out of a genuine desire to save their souls. Conversion, however, was not only a decision to receive baptism, a one-time event. True conversion meant the adoption of the Catholic way of living, and thus, the importance of ritual becomes clearer. Catholic rituals shaped the entire day of the Jesuits, and it began to do the same for those who converted.

Neglecting to examine the rituals and how they were practiced and adopted means

overlooking an intrinsic and significant part of the converted Natives' and Jesuits' lives. This thesis argues that the narrative dichotomy of conversion and resistance is not sufficient to explain the relationship between the Jesuits and the Natives. There was a far more subtle interaction between these two groups; one group did not convert the other. Individual Jesuits converted individual Natives and individual Natives also resisted their efforts. By examining how rituals were practiced, the daily lives of the Natives can be more fully understood. Rituals were an avenue where the complexity of the cultural exchange occurred. Conversion required a life-long commitment to navigate the complexities of an altered way of living, and Catholic and traditional practices pulled the convert both ways.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### *Manuscript Sources*

Jogues, Isaac. « Copie d'une lettre d'Isaac Jogues adressée à sa mère. » AMUQ.  
« Relations avec les autorités ou organismes Ecclésiastiques. » 1/B,6,9; SA-6-5-1-2; 1/B6,9,1 Vol. 1.

*Mémoire touchant la Mort & Les Vertus des Peres Isaac Jogues, Anne de Noue, Anthoine Daniel, Jean de Brébeuf, Gabriel Lallemant, Charles Garnier, Noel Chabanel & un seculier René Goupil.* Fonds de la Campagne de Jésus. Collège Saint-Marie (Montréal, Qué.) LAC MG 17 A-6-3. 19-91.

Ragueneau, Paul. « 5<sup>o</sup> Cayer la Mere St. Pierre Rie (Genevieve Boucher de Boucherack) 68<sup>e</sup> Resp. » Archives du Monastère des Ursuline de Quebec (AMUQ). Ecrits du Père Paul Ragueneau, 5<sup>o</sup> cahier. Spirituel 1/H3,2,1.3 XVIIe siècle; SA-1-5-13.

### *Primary Sources*

*Catechism of the Council of Trent for Parish Priests: Issued by order of Pope Pius V.* trans. John A. McHugh, O.P. and Charles J. Callan, O.P. Charlotte, NC: TAN Books, 1982.

del Conte, Jacopino. *Ignatius of Loyola*. 1556. *Jesuit Institute*. Accessed 14 January 2014.  
<http://jesuitinstitute.org/Pictures/Ignatius04.jpg>.

*Factum du Proces entre Jean de Biencourt et les PP. Biard et Masse, 1614.* In *Monumenta Novae Franciae I : La Première Mission D'Acadie (1602-1616.)* Ed. Lucien Campeau. Quebec: Les Presses de l'universite Laval, 1967. 320-406.

Le Jeune, Paul. *Lettres Spirituelles : Écrites a plusieurs personnes de piété vivant en religion et dans le monde touchant la direction de leur intérieur.* Paris: Victor Palmé, Librairie-éditeur, 1875.

*Mémoire touchant la Mort & Les Vertus des Peres Isaac Jogues, Anne de Noue, Anthoine Daniel, Jean de Brébeuf, Gabriel Lallemant, Charles Garnier, Noel Chabanel & un seculier René Goupil.* Transcribed by Arthur Melançon. AMUQ. Relations avec les Autorités ou organismes Ecclésiastique. « Martyrs Canadiens. Recherche. » 1/B6,9,3; SA-6-5-1-2.

*Missale Romanum.* Paris: Societatem Typographica Librorum Officis Ecclesiastici, 1603.  
<http://www.archive.org/details/MissaleRomanum1603>.

Sagard, Gabriel. *Histoire du Canada et voyages que les freres*. Paris: Claude Sonnius, 1636. Accessed 13 January 2014. <http://www.gutenberg.ca/ebooks/sagard-histoire/sagard-histoire-00-h-dir/sagard-histoire-00-h.html>.

*The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*. Trans. H. J. Schroeder. Charlotte, NC: TAN Books, 2011.

*The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*. Ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites. Vols. 1-36 Cleveland: The Burrows Brothers Company, 1896-1899. Accessed through <http://eco.canadiana.ca/search?q=jesuit+relations&collection=jsr>.

### *Secondary Sources*

Abé, Takao. *The Jesuit Mission to New France: A New Interpretation in the Light of the Earlier Jesuit Experience in Japan*. Boston: Brill, 2011.

Analyse et traitement informatique de la langue française (atilf). *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français (1330-1500)*. <http://www.atilf.fr/dmf>.

Anderson, Emma. *The Betrayal of Faith: The Tragic Journey of a Colonial Native Convert*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007.

Anderson, Karen. *Chain Her By One Foot: The Subjugation of Native Women in Seventeenth-Century New France*. New York: Routledge, 1991.

Aquinas, Thomas. "Second Part of the Second Part: Question 124." in *Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas*. Trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1920 *New Advent*. <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/3124.htm>.

Ariès, Philippe. *The Hour of Our Death*. Trans. Helen Weaver. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981.

Axtell, James. *The Invasion Within: The Cultural Origins of North America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Blackburn, Carole. *Harvest of Souls: The Jesuit Missions and Colonialism in North America 1632-1650*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000.

Boileau, Gilles. "Le pain béni." *Histoire Québec* 6:3 (Mar. 2010): 19.

Boss, Julia. "Writing a Relic: The Uses of Hagiography in New France." In *Colonial Saints: Discovering the Holy in the Americas*. Eds. Allan Greer and Jodi Bilinkoff. New York: Routledge, 2003. 211-234.

- Bumstead, J. M. *A History of the Canadian Peoples*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Burton, Edwin. "Ven. Thomas Tichborne." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 14. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912. Accessed 13 Jan. 2014.  
<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14721c.htm>
- Campeau, Lucien. *Biographical Dictionary for the Jesuit Missions in Acadia and New France; 1602-1654*. Trans. William Lonc and George Topp. Special Edition. Hamilton, Ont.: William Lonc, 2001.
- Campeau, Lucien, ed. *Monumenta Novae Franciae I : La Première Mission D'Acadie (1602- 1616)*. 9 vols. Quebec: Les Presses de l'université Laval, 1967.
- Chiasson, Anselme. "Histoires de pain bénit en Acadie." *Histoire Québec* 6:3 (Mar. 2010): 20-21.
- Code of Canon Law*. "868 § 2." (1983).  
[http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/\\_P2X.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_P2X.HTM)
- Codignola, Luca. "Competing Networks: Roman Catholic Ecclesiastics in French North America, 1610-58." *The Canadian Historical Review* 80: 4 (Dec. 1999): 539-584.
- "Roman Catholic Ecclesiastics in English North America, 1610-58. A Comparative Assessment." *CCHA Historical Studies* 65 (1999), 107-124.
- "Les frontières de la mission: efficacité missionnaire, acculturation réciproque et centralisation romaine." *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome. Italie et Méditerranée* T. 109 :2 (1997): 785-792.
- Cushner, Nicholas P. *Why Have You Come Here?: The Jesuits and the First Evangelisation of North America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Delâge, Denys. *Bitter Feast: Amerindians and Europeans in Northeastern North America, 1600-64*. trans. Jane Brierley. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993.
- Demos, John. *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America*. New York: Vintage Books, 1995.
- Deslandres, Dominique. *Croire et Faire Croire : Les missions françaises au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Paris : Fayard, 2003.
- Doyle, William. *Jansenism: Catholic Resistance to Authority from the Reformation to the French Revolution*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999.

- Fischer, David Hackett. *Champlain's Dream*. Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2009.
- Francis, R. Douglas *et al.* *Origins: Canadian History to Confederation*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Toronto: Nelson Education, 2013.
- Giguère, George-Émile. "L'Église catholique a-t-elle subi des modifications en venant en Nouvelle-France?" *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 15:2 (1961): 189-203.
- Goddard, Peter. "Converting the *Sauvage*: Jesuit and Montagnais in Seventeenth-Century New France." *The Catholic Historical Review* 84: 2 (Apr. 1998): 219-239.
- "Science and Scepticism in the Early Mission to New France." *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 6:1 (Feb. 2006): 43-58.
- "The Devil in New France: Jesuit Demonology, 1611-50." *Canadian Historical Review* 78 (March 1997): 40-62.
- Goldberg, Jeremy. "Craft Guilds, the Corpus Christi Play and Civic Government." In *Government of Medieval York: Essays in Commemoration of the 1396 Royal Charter*. Ed. Sarah Rees Jones. York: Borthwick Institute Publications, 1997. 141-163.
- Greer, Allan. "Colonial Saints: Gender, Race, and Hagiography in New France." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 57: 2 (Apr. 2000): 323-348.
- *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- , ed and trans. *The Jesuit Relations: Natives and Missionaries in Seventeenth-century North America*. Boston-New York: Bedford-St. Martin's, 2000.
- Guiney, Louise Imogen. "St. Edmund Campion." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 5. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909. Accessed 13 Jan. 2014. <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05293c.htm>>.
- Holy Bible*. Douay-Rheims, 1899. American Edition. Accessed through [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com).
- Hymnal*. Caughnawaga: Imprimerie Notre-Dame Richeulieu, Quebec: 1971.
- Jaenen, Cornelius J. *Friend and Foe: Aspects of French-Amerindian Cultural Contact in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1976.

- ."Friend and Foe Revisited." *French Colonial History* 12 (2011): 1-8.
- ." *The Role of the Church in New France*. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1976.
- Johnston, A. J. B. *Religion in Life at Louisbourg, 1713-1758*. Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984.
- Jones, Elizabeth. *Gentlemen and Jesuits: Quests for Glory and Adventure in the Early Days of New France*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986.
- Labelle, Kathryn Magee. *Dispersed but not Destroyed: a History of Seventeenth-Century Wendat People*. Vancouver, UBC Press, 2013.
- Latourelle, René. "Brébeuf, Jean de (Échon)." In *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. Vol. 1. University of Toronto/Université Laval: 2003-.  
[http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/brebeuf\\_jean\\_1E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/brebeuf_jean_1E.html).
- Leavelle, Tracy Neal. *The Catholic Calumet: Colonial Conversions in French and Indian North America*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012.
- Morrison, Kenneth M. "Baptism and Alliance: the Symbolic Mediations of Religious Syncretism." *Ethnohistory* 37:4 (Autumn, 1990): 416-437.
- Noel, Jan. *Along a River: The First French-Canadian Women*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013.
- O'Malley, John W. *The First Jesuits*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993.
- Perron, Paul. "Isaac Jogues: From Martyrdom to Sainthood." In *Colonial Saints: Discovering the Holy in the Americas*. Eds. Allan Greer and Jodi Bilinkoff. New York: Routledge, 2003. 153-168.
- Philippi, Dieter. "Jesuit Biretta." On *Philippi Collection*. <http://philippi-collection.blogspot.ca/2013/09/jesuit-biretta.html>. Accessed 14 January 2014.
- ."The Spanish Bonete - Bonete Español de 4 Picos con Borla." On *Philippi Collection*. <http://philippi-collection.blogspot.ca/2010/12/spanish-bonete.html>. Accessed 14 January 2014.
- Popkin, Richard H. *The History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle*. Revised and extended edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. Ebrary.com
- Pouliot, Léon. "Lalemant, Charles." In *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. Vol. 1. University of Toronto/Université Laval. 2003-.  
[http://www.biographi.ca/en/lalemant\\_charles\\_1E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/lalemant_charles_1E.html).

- "Le Jeune, Paul." In *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. Vol. 1. University of Toronto/Université Laval. 2003-.  
[http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/le\\_jeune\\_paul\\_1E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/le_jeune_paul_1E.html).
- "Ragueneau, Paul." In *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. Vol. 1. University of Toronto/Université Laval. 2003-.  
[http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/raueneau\\_paul\\_1E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/raueneau_paul_1E.html).
- Salvucci, Claudio. *The Roman Rite in the Algonquian and Iroquoian Missions: from the Colonial Period to the Second Vatican Council*. Merchantville, NJ: Evolution Pub., 2008.
- Seeman, Erik R. *The Huron-Wendat Feast of the Dead: Indian-European Encounters in early North America*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2011.
- Shoemaker, Nancy. Review of *Chain Her By One Foot : The Subjugation of Native Women in Seventeenth-Century New France*, by K. Anderson. *American Indian Quarterly* 16:4 (Autumn 1992): 540-541.
- Shortt, Adam and Arthur Doughty, eds. *Canada and its Provinces: a History of the Canadian People and their Institutions*. Vol 1: New France. Toronto: Glasgow, Brook & Company, 1914.
- Steckley, John. "The Warrior and the Lineage: Jesuit Use of Iroquoian Images to Communicate Christianity." *Ethnohistory* 39: 4 (1992): 478-509.
- Steckley, John L, ed. and trans. *De Religione: Telling the Seventeenth-Century Jesuit Story in Huron to the Iroquois*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004.
- Thwaites, Reuben Gold. *France in America, 1497-1763*. New York: Harper Bros., 1905.
- Trigger, Bruce. *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic Age" Reconsidered*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002.
- Trudel, Marcel. *The Beginnings of New France: 1524-1663*. Trans. Patricia Claxton. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973.
- Vélez, Karin. "'A sign that we are related to you': The Transatlantic Gifts of the Hurons of the Jesuit Mission of Lorraine, 1650-1750." *French Colonial History* vol 12 (2011): 31-44.
- Verreault, Claude. "La meilleure façon d'ambitionner sur le pain bénit." *Québec français* 71 (May 2010): 92-93.

Weil, Françoise. "La christianization des indiens de la Nouvelle France, XVII-XVIII siècles." *Hispana Sacra* 40 (1988): 747-761.

Wheelwright, Julie. *Esther: the remarkable true story of Esther Wheelwright: puritan child, native daughter, Mother Superior*. Toronto: HarperCollins Canada, 2011.

White, Richard. *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.