

THE JESUIT MISSION TO THE HURONS, 1611-1650

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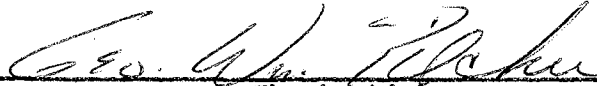
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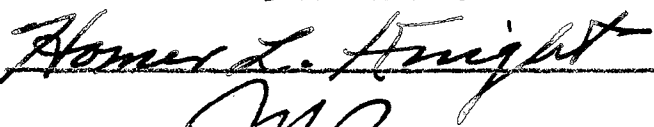
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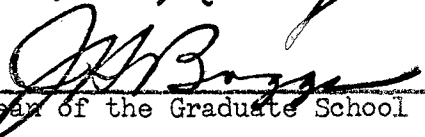
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## PREFACE

The Missionaries of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), who were in New France from 1611 to 1650, recorded for historians all that is known about the Huron Indians who lived on the high terrain between Lake Simcoe and Georgian Bay of Lake Huron. These records are found in the first half of the seventy-three volumes of The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites. This primary work comprises ninety per cent of the source material for this thesis.

The purpose of this study is to present a brief history of the founding of the Society of Jesus; a description of New France and of the work of the first Jesuits there; the motives for the Jesuit Mission to the Hurons; the establishment of the mission and the methods used for the conversion of the Hurons to the Christian faith; the Huron beliefs, customs, and ceremonies; the difficulties encountered by the Jesuits; and to appraise the ultimate results of the mission.

When the first permanent mission was established in Huronia in 1634, the Jesuits estimated that there were about thirty thousand Hurons; but in 1650 there were only three hundred left to form a colony at Quebec, plus a few scattered remnants. The factors which caused this depopulation and impeded the missionaries throughout were disease, famine, and the Iroquois Nations.

Indebtedness is acknowledged to Dr. George William Pilcher, my chief thesis adviser, for his valuable guidance and criticism throughout this study; to Drs. Norbert R. Mahnken and Alexander Meir Ospovat, for their constructive remarks; to Dr. Homer Louis Knight, Head of the History

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## CHAPTER I

### THE FIRST JESUITS IN NEW FRANCE, 1611-1613

Historians are indebted to the wandering Missionaries of the Society of Jesus for their intimate knowledge of New France in the seventeenth century.<sup>1</sup> The Society of Jesus, called Jesuits, was founded by Saint Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), a Spanish soldier and ecclesiastic, in 1534.<sup>2</sup>

The first twenty-five years of the life of Ignatius had been devoted to secular ideals. But while recovering from a severe leg wound after the Battle of Pamplona in 1521, the spark began to glow that gave him the powerful urge to serve the Lord. He attributed the origin of this spark to the fact that during convalescence his greatest consolation was

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<sup>1</sup>The records or Relations and letters of these Jesuit missionaries of New France were preserved in the Archives of Jesus in France, Rome, and Canada. Most of these documents have been reissued in Reuben Gold Thwaites (ed.), The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France 1610-1791 (73 vols.; New York: Pageant Book Company, 1959). Thwaites compiled these documents in the original French, Latin, and Italian texts with parallel English translations and notes, portraits, maps, and facsimilies and published them first in 1896-1901. Subsequent references to The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents will appear as JR with the specific volume number.

<sup>2</sup>Theodore Maynard, Saint Ignatius and the Jesuits (New York: P. J. Kenedy, 1956), 1-101; Walter Nigg, Warriors of God: The Great Religious Orders and Their Founders, ed. and trans. by Mary Ilford (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), 315-353; Denis Meadows, A Popular History of the Jesuits (New York: Macmillan, 1958), 1-18; Alban Goodier, The Jesuits (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930), 8-15; James Brodrick, The Origin of the Jesuits (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1940), 1-66; Peter Lippert, The Jesuits: A Self-Portrait, trans. John Murray (1st ed.; Freiburg: Herder, 1958), 44-59; Thomas Joseph Campbell, The Jesuits, 1534-1921: A History of the Society of Jesus from its Foundation to the Present Time (London: The Encyclopedia Press, 1921), 1-35.

to gaze upon the heavens and the stars for long periods of time. Walter Nigg wrote, "The picture of Ignatius gazing upon an unending sea of stars is a vivid symbol of the mystery of that profound soul."<sup>3</sup>

The conversion of Ignatius was gradual. From 1521-1523, he experienced a period of reorientation; but it was at Manresa, a city in northeast Spain, that his spiritual struggles became decisive. "Manresa saw the birth of his life's work; it holds the key to his entire development."<sup>4</sup> Here the Being of God became real to Ignatius; here God hammered his soul mercilessly into its providential shape. Ignatius also learned from Thomas à Kempis' Imitation of Christ that holiness was inner purification. His great desire was to find God's will for his life. He soon came to recognize the absolute necessity of study if he were to help souls. Thus, at thirty-three, he began his studies of theology in Spain but soon left to complete them in Paris after being accused of heresy by the Inquisition; here he remained for seven years. In Paris, he met Peter Favre and Francis Xavier who were his first companions and lifelong friends.

In August, 1534, Ignatius and a little band of friends gathered in the underground chapel of St. Denis on Montmartre. Peter Favre was the only priest among them. After he had celebrated mass, the group took the vow they had agreed upon beforehand. They swore to go to Jerusalem in order to help their fellow Christians in the Holy City. They renounced their families and all worldly goods except money for their journey. But if the war with the Turks detained shipping for a year, or if they were sent back by the Guardian of the Holy Sepulchre, they would then go to

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<sup>3</sup>Nigg, Warriors of God, 315.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 319.



Rome to place themselves at the Pope's disposal for the welfare of their fellow men.

They ultimately went to Rome. On this journey, Ignatius had a vision that caused him to have great devotion to the name of Jesus. He henceforth wanted his congregation called the Company of Jesus. "God's will, he believed, was that he should constitute a little compañía de Jesús, a mobile unit that would always be prepared for service in any field."<sup>5</sup> This was done by a papal bull of September 27, 1540, which confirmed the new order, limiting it to no more than sixty members. The Company was later called Society and chose Ignatius as General. The last sixteen years of his life were devoted to directing the new congregation. His one concern was to save souls, and it placed him among the great "fishers of men" in the history of the church.

The life of the Society was governed by its Constitution, which Ignatius drafted. This Constitution stated:

The purpose of this Company is not simply to attain, by divine grace, to the salvation and perfection of their own souls, but with equal zeal to seek to further the salvation and perfection of their neighbors.<sup>6</sup>

Rigid requirements had to be met before a candidate could be admitted to the Society. The Jesuits were the first to become an intellectual aristocracy in the service of the Church. The Jesuit order departed completely from the old monasticism. Ignatius was convinced of the need for starting on an entirely new path, determined by the needs of the times. Thus, instead of remaining sedentary, devoted solely to prayer, the Jesuits actively engaged in promoting the Gospel in pagan foreign fields. There was no distinctive habit for members of the Society.

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 330.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 339.

Their method was that of cultural adaptation; that is, they adapted themselves to the customs and languages of the pagans rather than expecting them to change their entire mode of living. The Jesuits professed absolute obedience both to their superiors and to the Pope.

Even though the Society of Jesus was characterized by intelligence in the service of religion, the order did not consider a person's intellectual endowments as the most important thing about him. The order recognized something higher than reason. Ignatius thought that one could go too far along the road of intellect. He thought that people who were too clever rarely accomplished great things or properly glorified God. Awareness of the limits of intelligence stemmed directly from a deeply rooted religious wisdom.

The Society expanded rapidly after 1540. Its main concern was the neglected pagan missions, the Hurons being one of them. Eventually the Society was sharply criticized because of its alleged intervention in politics; and because of pressures on the Pope, Clement XIV was compelled, in 1773, to order the dissolution of the order. The banished Jesuits found refuge and smoldered in Protestant Prussia and Orthodox Russia. Forty years later, Pope Pius VII restored the Society; and it resumed its leading role within the Church.

The Jesuits of New France first arrived in Acadia in 1611, and ultimately spread throughout the region, meeting the savage before contact with civilization had much effect upon him. These Jesuits were cultured scholars of France who chose to live in the foul and unwelcome huts of the Indians. It was necessary to know the Indians intimately in order to convert them to the Christian faith. Prior to and at the same time that the Jesuits arrived in Canada, they were active in China, Japan, the Philippines, Virginia, Northern Mexico, and along the west coast of North

America.<sup>7</sup> But "few Jesuit missionary activities have gained greater renown than the labors of the French fathers in Canada."<sup>8</sup>

"Nothing fouler and more hideous than the savage Canadians could have been imagined, before they began to soften under the influence of religion."<sup>9</sup> The first Jesuit fathers to arrive in New France were Pierre Biard and Ennemond Massé who landed at Port Royal, by formal order of the Queen Regent, Marie de Médicis, on May 22, 1611, after a four-month voyage.<sup>10</sup> The Fathers began at once to build a chapel, to learn the

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<sup>7</sup>See Arnold Horrex Rowbotham, Missionary and Mandarin: The Jesuits at the Court of China (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1942); Malcolm Vivian Hay, Failure in the Far East: Why and How the Breach Between the Western World and China Began (Philadelphia: Dufour Editions, 1957); Arnulf Camps, Jerome Xavier, S. J. and the Muslims of the Mogul Empire: Controversial Works and Missionary Activity (Schoneck: Nouvelle revue de science missionarie Suisse, 1957); Pasquale M. D'Elia, Galileo in China: Relations Through the Roman College Between Galileo and the Jesuit Scientist-Missionaries (1610-1640), trans. Rufus Suter and Matthew Sciascia (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960); George Harold Dunne, Generation of Giants: The Story of the Jesuits in China in the Last Decades of the Ming Dynasty (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1962); Matteo Ricci, China in the Sixteenth Century: The Journals of Matthew Ricci, 1583-1610, trans. by Louis J. Gallagher (New York: Random House, 1953); John Laures, Kirishitan Bunko: A Manual of Books and Documents on the Early Christian Missions to Japan (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1957); Horacio de la Costa, The Jesuits in the Philippines, 1581-1768 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961); Clifford Merle Lewis and Albert J. Loomie, The Spanish Jesuit Mission in Virginia, 1570-1572 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953); Peter Masten Dunne, Pioneer Jesuits in Northern Mexico (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1944); Early Jesuit Missions in Tarahumara (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1948); Pioneer Black Robes on the West Coast (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1940).

<sup>8</sup>Martin P. Harney, The Jesuits in History: The Society of Jesus Through Four Centuries (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1962), 254.

<sup>9</sup>Joseph Jouvency, "An Account of the Canadian Mission," JR, I, 205.

<sup>10</sup>Letter from Father Pierre Biard to the Very Reverend Father Claude Aquaviva, General of the Society of Jesus, Rome. Dieppe, January 21, 1611. JR, I, 126-137; Letter from Father Pierre Biard to Reverend Father Christopher Baltazar, Provincial of France, at Paris. From Port Royal, New France, June 10, 1611. JR, I, 138-182; Letter from Father Ennemond Massé to Reverend Father Claude Aquaviva, General of the Society of Jesus. Port Royal, June 10, 1611. JR, I, 184-187; Letter from Father Pierre Biard to the Very Reverend Father Claude Aquaviva, General of the Society

language of the country, and to instruct the Frenchmen who had emigrated from old to new France.<sup>11</sup>

New France, as the French called it in 1611, extended from the forty-first to the fifty-second, or even the fifty-third degree of latitude. It was called New France because it was opposite and near to France. It had an exceedingly varied seacoast, indented by bays and rivers, broken and irregular. The Gulf of St. Lawrence and the French Bay (Bay of Fundy) were of vast size. The enormous island of Newfoundland, noted for cod fishery, lay in the mouth of the Gulf of St. Lawrence.<sup>12</sup>

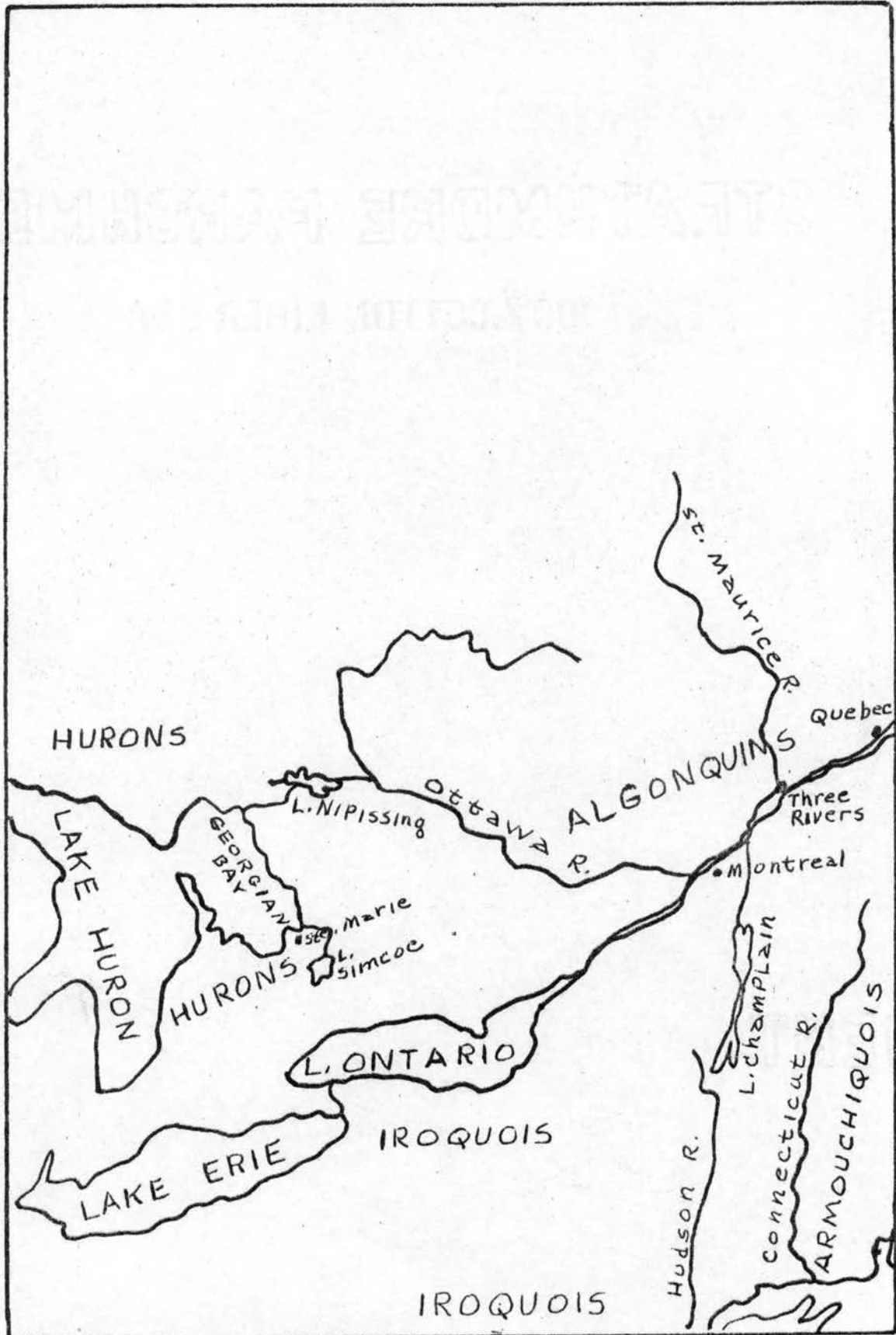
The shores of the gulf and rivers to the north were occupied by the Excomminqui or Excommunicated. This tribe was very savage and was said to be cannibalistic. In the interior, toward the west, dwelled the Algonquins; then the Montagnais. The Iroquois lived at the headwaters of the St. Lawrence River and controlled a territory extending far to the south. They were known to the French because of their constant warfare against the Montagnais and Algonquins. To the south, the coast gradually advanced up to the forty-third degree where it was interrupted by the French Bay which advanced far into the interior. The French Bay formed the southwest boundary of the Acadian peninsula which had a circuit of

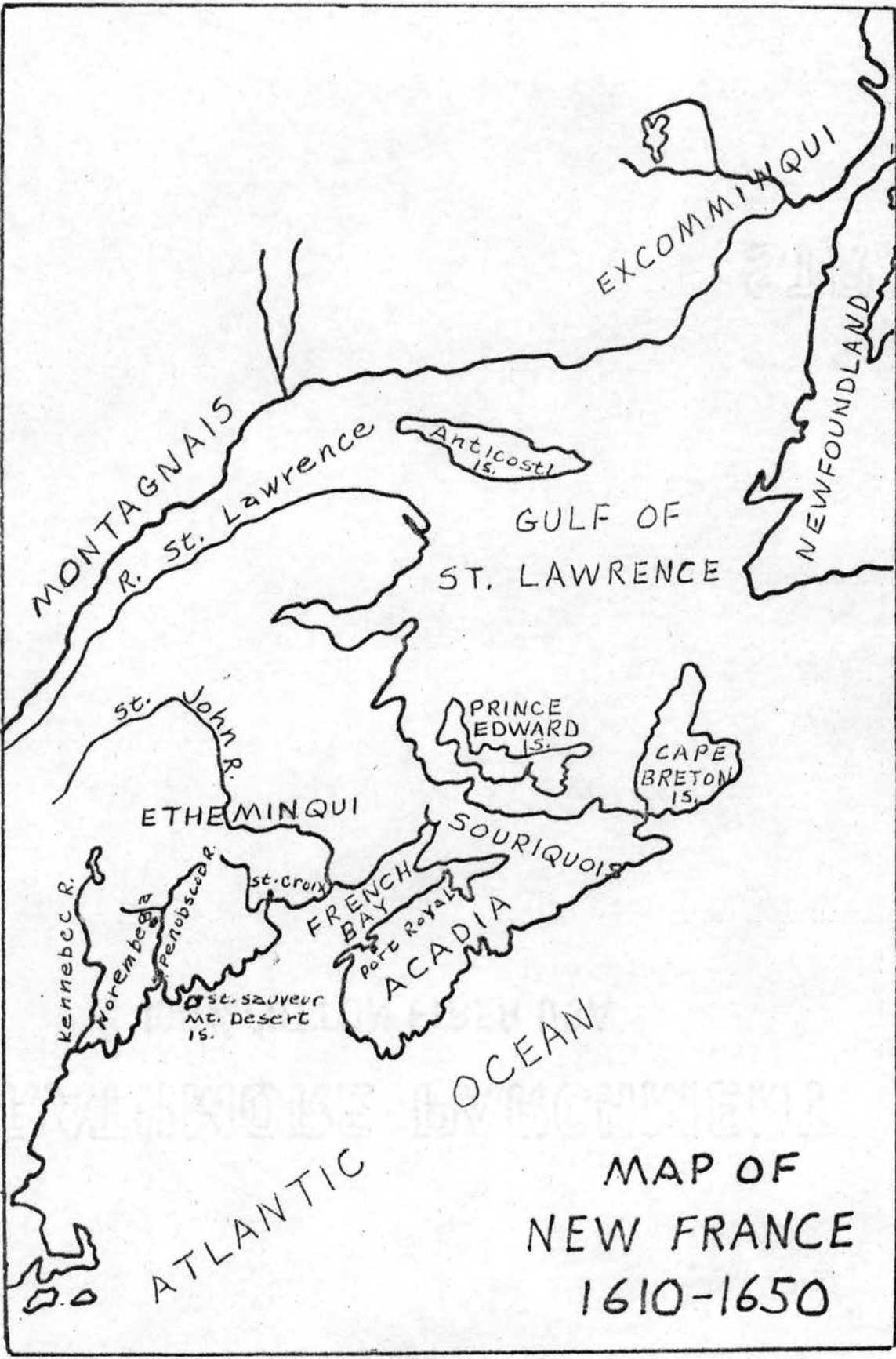
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of Jesus. Port Royal, June 11, 1611. JR, I, 188-191; Reverend Pierre Biard, "Letter from Port Royal in Acadia sent to the General of the Society of Jesus," January 31, 1611/12. JR, II, 83-85; Joseph Jouvency, "An Account of the Canadian Mission," JR, I, 207-209.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 211.

<sup>12</sup>Biard, "Letter from Port Royal in Acadia," JR, II, 67, Anon, "A Relation of Occurrences in the Mission of New France during the Years 1613 and 1614," JR, II, 199, 203; Joseph Jouvency, "Concerning the Country and Manners of the Canadians, of the Savages of New France," JR, I, 242-297; Pierre Biard, "Relation of New France, of its Lands, Nature of the Country, and of its Inhabitants, Also, of the Voyage of the Jesuit Fathers to said Country, and of their Work there up to the time of their Capture by the English," 1616, JR, III, 27-283 and IV, 7-167.





MAP OF  
NEW FRANCE  
1610-1650

more than fifteen hundred miles. This tongue of land was occupied by the Souriquois tribe. Port Royal lay on the parallel of  $44^{\circ} 40'$ , not on the Ocean side, but on the side called French Bay. To the west of Acadia, in the interior, lived the Etheminqui; to the south lived the Armouchiquois. These seven tribes differed from each other in language and character.<sup>13</sup>

Only the Algonquins, the Montagnais, the Etheminqui, and the Souriquois were well known to the French in 1611. Together they numbered about four thousand souls, the Souriquois comprising half that number. These four tribes were friendly with the French because of the association while fishing for cod and from trading in furs. The Indians had neither metal, cloth, vegetables, nor manufactured articles of any kind. They dressed in hides and ate meat and resorted to the French for other items, giving in return furs which was the only thing of value they had.

The whole region of New France was very cold. The country was damp because of the sea; it abounded in rivers, ponds, and lakes. A cold wind was always blowing. The continuous forest seldom allowed the soil to become really warmed through. Mountains, covered with perpetual snow and frost, formed a wall far away to the north and the west.

The French noted that nearly all the Indians were beardless and of average stature. Their color was dusky. They commonly painted their faces; in mourning, they blackened them. They loved justice and hated violence and robbery. Each man was his own master and protector. They had Sagamores who were leaders in war; they waged war as a tribe on account of wrongs done to a private individual.

The French observed that the only work that the male Indians did was the hunting and waging war. During the chase, they endured hunger and

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<sup>13</sup>Biard, "Letter from Port Royal in Acadia," *JR*, II, 69, 71, 73; Anon., "A Relation of Occurrences," *JR*, II, 201, 209.

cold for as long as eight or ten days. They hunted with the greatest ardor when the snow was the deepest and the cold the most severe. But once they had returned with their booty and retired to their tents, they became indolent. All the labor was imposed upon the women as well as the rearing of the children. The women transported the game from the place where it had fallen. They hewed wood and drew the water. The household utensils were made and repaired by them. They prepared the food, skinned the game, sewed garments, and even set up the tents for the night. In short, the women were regarded and treated as slaves.<sup>14</sup>

The religion of the natives, as described by the French, consisted of certain incantations, dances, and sorcery which they used to either procure the necessities of life or to get rid of their enemies. Their Automoinos, or medicine men, consulted the Evil Spirit concerning life and death and future events. They also had strong faith in dreams. They had no temples, sacred edifices, rites, ceremonies, or religious teaching. Neither did they have laws, arts, or government, except certain customs and traditions to which they clung tenaciously.<sup>15</sup>

When the two Jesuit Fathers, Biard and Massé, arrived at Port Royal in 1611, they found the Christian religion almost nonexistent. They were the only priests present; however, a secular priest from the diocese of Langres, Jessé Fléché, had been there earlier in the year. But he returned to France after baptizing only about one hundred aborigines. Fléché did not know the language and could not instruct the Indians in the doctrines of the church. The natives had accepted baptism as nothing more than a sacred pledge of friendship and alliance with the French. Otherwise,

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<sup>14</sup>Biard, "Letter from Port Royal in Acadia," JR, II, 77.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 75.



Christianity meant almost nothing to them; they kept all their previous customs. "Concerning the one God and the reward of the just, they have learned some things, but they declare that they had always heard and believed thus."<sup>16</sup> There was only one small chapel.

Fathers Biard and Massé said mass everyday and sang it on holidays and Sundays. They offered public prayers morning and evening. They administered the sacraments and buried the dead. The natives were occasionally present at these Christian services conducted at the settlement, but the Fathers found that those Indians who had been baptized were no better than the heathen because they lacked instruction. Thus, they resolved not to baptize any adults unless they were previously well catechized. In order to catechize, they needed first to learn the language.<sup>17</sup>

Learning the language of the Indians was a very difficult task. It was difficult to talk about God to the natives because they had no definite religion and consequently no words to describe things which they had never seen or even conceived. The conceptions of the Indians were limited to concrete and material things. They did not understand abstract, internal, or spiritual things. So it was not easy to transmit the symbols and fundamental truths of Christianity.<sup>18</sup>

Father Biard thought that the miserable savages, continually weakened by hardships, would always remain in a perpetual infancy as to language and reason:

I say language and reason, because it is evident that where words, the messengers and dispensers of thought and speech, remain totally rude, poor and confused, it is impossible

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 89.

<sup>17</sup>Letter from Father Pierre Biard to the Reverend Father Provincial, at Paris. Port Royal, January 31, 1612. JR, II, 7, 9.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 11; Anon., "A Relation of Occurrences," JR, II, 221.

that the mind and reason be greatly refined, rich, and disciplined. However, these poor weaklings and children consider themselves superior to all other men, and they would not for the world give up their childishness and wretchedness. And this is not to be wondered at, for as I have said, they are children.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to laboring in the settlement, Biard made two journeys out from Port Royal, one for twelve days and the other for six weeks:

We have begun to know and to be known, we have taken possession of these regions in the name of the Church of God, establishing here the royal throne of our Savior and King, Jesus Christ, his holy Altar; the Savages have seen us pray, celebrate the mass, and preach; through our conversations, pictures, and crosses, our way of living, and other similar things, they have received the first faint ideas and germs of our holy faith, which will some day take root and grow abundantly, please God, if it is followed by a longer and better cultivation.<sup>20</sup>

Thus at the end of a seven-month sojourn at Port Royal, Fathers Baird and Massé did what they could until they could learn the language. They were comforted to see the little savages, though not yet Christians, willingly carrying the candles, bells, holy water and other things, marching in good order in the processions and funerals which occurred. The good Fathers thought that if the Indians became accustomed to act as Christians, they would become so in reality in His time.<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile in France, the Society of Jesus had obtained authority from the Queen to allow Fathers Biard and Massé to be relieved of their station at Port Royal and to go into any part of New France to study the language of the natives and practice the Christian faith among them. Therefore, two more Jesuits, Father Jacques Quintin and Gilbert du Thet,

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<sup>19</sup>Letter from Father Pierre Biard to the Reverend Father Provincial, at Paris. Port Royal, January 31, 1612. JR, II, 13.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 53.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 55; Biard, "Letter from Port Royal in Acadia," JR, II, 91, 93, 99, 101.

a lay brother, were provided with a Royal Commission to assist them. They arrived safely on the coast of New France in the middle of May, 1613.

The Commission provided that Fathers Biard, Massé, and Quintin, and Brother du Thet should be allowed to establish a new settlement in a suitable place and to have a sufficient number of colonists to protect it. A year's supply of food for thirty persons and horses and goats had been sent along with Quintin and du Thet. In addition, there were weapons for defense and four tents to be used for shelter until their new residence could be built. A military leader, Captain La Saussaye, had command and was to have charge of the households of the colonists both during erection of the buildings and also when they had been completed and fortified.<sup>22</sup>

A letter from the Queen relieved Fathers Biard and Massé from their duties at Port Royal. They collected their baggage and left two days later with the others with the intention of founding a new settlement in the neighborhood of Norembega, a site several miles up the Penobscot River. However, before reaching their destination, the vessel became stuck on a sand bar in a bay to which they gave the name St. Sauveur because of the favorable outcome. They explored the shores of the region and conversed with the Indians inhabiting the spot. The natives praised the country and begged them to settle there. The whole company heartily approved and selected a site for the building upon a suitable hill. They consecrated the place by erecting a cross, marked the ground for erection

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<sup>22</sup>The best reference for the founding of St. Sauveur and the subsequent capture by the English is found in Anon., "A Relation of Occurrences," JR, II, 247-279. The full title was listed in footnote 12. A brief resume of the first Jesuits at Acadia and of their capture by the English is given in P. F. X. De Charlevoix, History and General Description of New France, trans., with notes, by John Gilmary Shea (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1962), I, 260-286.

of buildings and dug up the earth for laying the foundations. They called their abode by the same name as the harbor, St. Sauveur, which was on Mount Desert Island.<sup>23</sup>

La Saussaye, the commander of the colonists, became so interested in agriculture and animal husbandry that he took most of the colonists from the work of building and set them to farming. The remainder of the group thought that buildings and fortifications were more important and should be completed first. So all of them soon became embroiled in a dispute which caused them to spend their days idly, away from work quarreling. This inactivity contributed to a greater calamity, the destruction of the Jesuit missions at Port Royal and St. Sauveur.<sup>24</sup>

This disaster came in the form of the Virginia English who made an annual summer voyage to the fishing grounds of the Peucoit Islands to obtain food for the coming winter. But this particular summer of 1613, the English became lost in the heavy fogs and were carried by the currents to the shore of St. Sauveur. Some unwitting savages mistook them for French and directed them to the French ship in the bay. This was indeed welcome news to the half-naked and half-starved Englishmen who proceeded under full sail, sounding the signal for battle, toward the almost undefended French ship. Brother du Thet, one who was assisting in the defense of the French vessel, was mortally wounded by a violent shower of bullets. La Saussaye, the colonists, and Fathers Biard, Massé, and Quintin were taken captives by the English Captain, Sir Samuel Argall.

The Captain now craftily extracted from La Saussaye's trunk the Royal Commission which had given the Fathers and the colonists the

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<sup>23</sup>Anon., "A Relation of Occurrences," JR, II, 249.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 251.

authority to establish their colony in New France. After this duplicity, the Englishman demanded of the Frenchman to prove by what right he had planted a settlement upon the shores of Canada. La Saussaye cited his authority by the document in his chest; but when he opened his chest, the Commission was gone. Then the English Captain became angry and told all of them that they were mere pirates and worthy only of death, treating them as enemies. Only the courage and intervention of the Jesuit Fathers persuaded Argall to spare the group. From that time on, he treated the Fathers with great consideration.<sup>25</sup>

Captain Argall and Turnell, his Lieutenant, agreed with La Saussaye to send all thirty of them back to France in one small boat; but this differed little from certain destruction. Again the Fathers intervened. Then Father Massé was placed on one boat, with fifteen colonists, led by La Saussaye, to set sail for France. They arrived safely at St. Malo, a town in Brittany. Father Massé was received with the greatest kindness and generosity by the Bishop of St. Malo, the magistrates, and the people of the town.<sup>26</sup>

It was resolved that Fathers Biard and Quintin, with five of the colonists, were to be placed on board the captured French vessel, with Turnell in command, to sail for Virginia. Captain Argall took eight other settlers on his boat to Virginia. Thomas Dale, Governor of Virginia, was prepared to mete out severe punishment for the Jesuit Fathers, but Argall told the Governor that no harm should befall the Fathers as long as he lived. When the Governor obstinately persisted, Argall produced the French Queen's Commission to the priests, and Dale was then restrained.

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 253, 255, 257, 259.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 261, 263, 265.

At a council meeting, it was agreed that Argall, with three ships, should return the Jesuits to New France. It was falsely said that La Saussaye and his military force were at Port Royal, and Argall was ordered to destroy and plunder the Port Royal settlement.<sup>27</sup>

Argall and Turnell returned to New France and destroyed the forts of St. Croix and Port Royal and all evidence of the French occupation. He erected English monuments in various places and declared the whole coast to be under sway of the British King. Argall returned to Virginia, but Fathers Biard and Quintin were abroad Turnell's captured French ship which was tossed for weeks by severe storms until it was blown into Portuguese waters near the Azores. A mishap near the Islands caused Turnell's vessel to collide with a Spanish treasure ship, which resulted in an investigation. Turnell had to disembark while the ship was searched. Fathers Biard and Quintin hid at various places in the boat for three weeks in order to protect the Englishman. In gratitude, then, Turnell eventually set sail for Britain and entered the town of Pembroke. Here, the Fathers testified that he was an Englishman even though he sailed a French ship. Fathers Biard and Quintin were treated with great distinction. They were then released and conveyed to Dover and thence to Itius Portus, a town on the French coast, after almost ten months of captivity. They then proceeded on to their College at Ambians (Amiens).<sup>28</sup>

Thus, the Jesuit Missions at Port Royal and at St. Sauveur on Mount Desert Island were destroyed after little more than two years of Jesuit activity in New France. In their own words,

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 267.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 268, 269, 271, 273, 275.

He who measures the undertaking by ordinary standards, will not easily see how greatly the work of the Mission of New France has advanced the Christian religion among the Savages; he who will fairly estimate an enterprise very difficult in its nature, and greatly hindered also by the interruption of calamities from without, must confess that the rugged soil has been prepared for the seed of the Gospel with very advantageous and glorious beginnings.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 277.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE HURON MISSION, 1615-1636

The Jesuits were absent from New France from the time of the capture of Fathers Pierre Biard, Ennemond Massé, and Jacques Quintin by the English Captain, Sir Samuel Argall, in the summer of 1613 until 1625. From 1615 until 1625 the Récollets (Franciscans) worked in vain among the Indians along the St. Lawrence. The Récollets were discouraged. They saw that the field was too large and that the difficulties were too great for them. They felt impelled, in 1625, to invite the powerful aid of the Jesuits who were then successful, in spite of great odds, in China, Africa, and South America. Thus, in response to the call of the Récollets, three Fathers of the black gown came to Quebec in 1625--Massé of the old Acadian Mission, Charles Lallemand, and Jean de Brébeuf, who labored longest among the Hurons.<sup>1</sup>

Previously, one Récollet friar, Joseph le Caron, had made his way, in 1615, into the distant country of the Hurons located between Lake Simcoe and Georgian Bay of Lake Huron; however, he returned the following year after learning much of their language and customs. In 1621, another Récollet, William Poulin, went to the Huron country. He was joined in 1623 by Fathers Le Caron and Nicholas Viel, and Brother Gabriel Sagard,

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<sup>1</sup>Letter from the Reverend Father Charles Lallemand, Superior of the Missions of Canada, to Sieur de Champlain. Kebec, July 28, 1625, JR, IV, 171; Letter from the Reverend Father Charles Lallemand, Superior of the Missions of Canada, to the Reverend Father Provincial of the Reverend Récollet Fathers. Kebec, July 28, 1625. JR, IV, 173-175.



the historian of the Récollet missions. All of them soon left the field except Viel who attained some measure of success despite almost incredible hardships. In 1625, while descending the Ottawa (also called the Des Prairies River) to Three Rivers to meet and arrange for co-operation with the Jesuit Brébeuf, Viel was deliberately drowned by his Indian guide in the last rapid of the river, close to Montreal. The rapid was named Sault au Récollet because of that incident.

In 1626, the Jesuit Fathers Brébeuf and Anne de Nouë, after having received some linguistic instruction from the Récollets who had been in the Huron field, went with a Récollet friar, Joseph de la Roche Daillon, to the Hurons to resume the work which the Récollets had abandoned. Daillon left his Jesuit friends with the Hurons and attempted a mission to the neighboring Neutrals. But they treated him harshly, and he rejoined his former colleagues. After two years Daillon returned to Quebec. He had been preceded in his return by De Nouë who had found it impossible to master the Huron language. Now Brébeuf was left alone with the Hurons. He labored gallantly and won the hearts of many by his easy adoption of their manners. He gathered about him a little colony of those favorably inclined to his views. But Brébeuf was recalled to Quebec in 1629. He arrived just in time to be captured by the Englishman, Louis Kirk, and transported to Great Britain.<sup>2</sup>

Even with this dual mission of the Jesuits and Récollets, there were not many converts among the Indians of the St. Lawrence. The wandering

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<sup>2</sup>Letter from Father Charles Lalemant, Superior of the Missions of Canada, to the Very Reverend Father Mutio Vitelleschi, General of the Society of Jesus, at Rome. New France, August 1, 1626. JR, IV, 177-183; Paul le Jeune, "Brief Relation of the Journey to New France, Made in the month of April last by Father Paul le Jeune, of the Society of Jesus. Sent to Reverend Father Barthelemy Jacquitnot, Provincial of the same Society, in the Province of France." Written at Kebec, August 28, 1632. JR, V, 33, 39.

habit of the Indians was not favorable to the persistent instruction of the young. The adults were not willing to commit themselves to the new doctrine. The tenuous mission of the Récollets and Jesuits was terminated when the settlements of Port Royal and Quebec fell prey to small English naval forces in 1629, and the Jesuits were carried off to England.

For a short time France did not hold one foot of ground in North America. But in 1632 the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye restored Canada to France. The authorities in France now placed the Jesuits in sole charge of the spiritual interests of both settlers and Indians. The history of their greatest missions began at this time. But it was 1634 before the Huron mission could be reopened.<sup>3</sup>

According to Brébeuf, the Hurons dwelt in about twenty towns in a narrow district on the high ground between Lake Simcoe and Georgian Bay of Lake Huron. The Huron country was not large; its greatest extent could be traversed in three or four days. The soil was quite sandy but not equally so; it produced a quantity of very good Indian corn. The Hurons were mainly a sedentary people, agricultural in habit, but also keen traders. The thirty thousand souls spoke the same tongue.<sup>4</sup>

The real name of the Hurons was Yendat:

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<sup>3</sup>Letter from Father Paul le Jeune, to the Reverend Father Provincial of France, at Paris. Quebec, 1634. JR, VI, 41, 43; Paul le Jeune, "Relation of What Occurred in New France, in the year 1634. Sent to the Reverend Father Provincial of the Society of Jesus in the Province of France. By Father Paul le Jeune, of the same Society, Superior of the Residence of Kebec." JR, VII, 213-227.

<sup>4</sup>Jean de Brébeuf, "Relation of what occurred among the Hurons in the year 1635. Sent to Kebec to Father le Jeune, by Father Brébeuf," in "Relation of What Occurred in New France in the year 1635. Sent to the Reverend Father Provincial of the Society of Jesus in the province of France. By Father Paul le Jeune of the same Society, Superior of the Residence of Quebec," JR, VIII, 115. Subsequent references will appear abbreviated as Brébeuf, "Relation of what occurred among the Hurons in the year 1635," JR, VIII, with specific page number.

The word Huron comes from the French, who seeing these Indians with the hair cut very short, and standing up in a strange fashion, giving them a fearful air, cried out, the first time they saw them, Quelle hures! (What boars heads!) and so got to call them Hurons.<sup>5</sup>

The Jesuit mission to the Hurons had a political as well as a spiritual motivation. It was thought that the missions would prepare the way for French settlement and lucrative trade as well as the continuing exploration of the extremity of North America. Spiritually, the missionaries thought that by fixing the center of their mission in a country which at the same time was the center of Canada, it would be easy for them to bear the light of the Gospel to all parts of this vast continent.

The first permanent mission among the Hurons was established in August of 1634 at a town called Ihonatiria, just south of Georgian Bay. It was the same town in which the Jesuits Brébeuf and De Nou<sup>u</sup> as well as the Récollets had previously labored. The Jesuit Residence at Ihonatiria was called Saint Joseph, and Father Jean de Brébeuf was the superior. He was assisted by Fathers Antoine Daniel and Ambroise Davost and six Frenchmen. Later, in August of 1635, Fathers François Joseph le Mercier and Pierre Pijart arrived from Quebec to assist them. An epidemic, which was something like measles along with an oppression of the stomach, plagued both the Indians and the French the first year of 1634 and 1635.<sup>6</sup>

This sickness began with violent fever, which was followed by a sort of measles or smallpox, different, however, from that common in France, accompanied in several cases by blindness for some days, or by dimness of sight, and terminated at length by diarrhoea which has carried off many and is still bringing some to the grave.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>De Charlevoix, History and General Description of New France, II, 71.

<sup>6</sup>Paul le Jeune, "Relation of What Occurred in New France in the year 1635. Sent to the Reverend Father Provincial of the Society of Jesus in the Province of France. By Father Paul le Jeune of the same Society, Superior of the residence of Quebec," JR, VII, 263; Francis Parkman, The Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1867), 42-58

<sup>7</sup>Brébeuf, "Relation of what occurred among the Hurons in the year 1635," JR, VIII, 89.

Superior Brébeuf compared the Huron dwellings to bowers or garden arbors--some of which, in place of branches and vegetation, were covered with cedar bark, some others with large pieces of ash, elm, fir, or spruce bark. Although cedar bark was best, it was extremely susceptible to fire and contributed to the destruction of several villages. The arbors were of various sizes. They had neither windows nor chimneys, only an inadequate hole in the top of the cabin, to permit the smoke to escape.<sup>8</sup>

According to Brébeuf, the Hurons' marriage customs were admirable in that they had only one wife and that they did not marry their relatives in a direct or collateral line, however distant they might be. However, the frequent exchanges the men made of their wives and the women of their husbands were censured by the Jesuits.<sup>9</sup>

The Hurons believed in the immortality of the soul, which they believed to be corporeal. They thought of the soul as divisible; they gave to it even a head, arms, legs--in short a body. The greatest part of their religion consisted in that point.

Their superstitions are indefinite; their feasts, their medicines, their fishing, their hunting, their war--in short, almost their whole life turns upon this pivot; dreams above all, have here great credit.<sup>10</sup>

Morally, the Hurons were lascivious; although in two leading points less so than many Christians. There was no kissing or immodest caressing. In marriage, a man remained two or three years apart from his wife while she was nursing. They were gluttons, even to disgorging; but they were also able to endure hunger. "They are very lazy, are liars, thieves,

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 105, 107.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 119.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 121.

pertinacious beggars."<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, one saw shining among them some rather noble and moral virtues. They evinced a great love and tribal loyalty, which they were careful to cultivate by means of marriages, presents, feasts, and frequent visits. On returning from fishing, hunting, or trading expeditions, they exchanged many gifts. Whenever they obtained something unusually good, they made a feast for the whole village with it. Their hospitality toward all strangers was remarkable; they presented to them in their feasts the best of what they had prepared. Brébeuf hoped that this trait would cause them to accept Christianity:

They never close the door upon a Stranger, and, once having received him into their houses, they share with him the best they have; they never send him away, and when he goes away of his own accord, he repays them by a simple 'thank you.' This makes me hope that, if once it pleases God to illumine them, they will respond perfectly to the grace and inspiration of his Son. And, since he has come as a Stranger into his own house, I promise myself that these good people will receive him at all hours into their hearts without making him wait too long on account of their hardness, without withholding from him anything in the whole range of their affections, without betraying him or driving him outside by any serious fault, and without claiming anything in his service other than his honor and glory; which is all the fidelity one can ask in a soul for the good use and holy employment of the favors of Heaven.<sup>12</sup>

The Hurons displayed a strange patience in their poverty, famine, and sickness. Even when whole villages were prostrated and there was almost no food, there was no word of complaint, not a movement of impatience. They received the news of death with great stability. They heard of it not only without despair, but without troubling themselves, without the slightest pallor or change of countenance. This behavior resulted from their belief in the immortality of a corporeal soul and from their

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 127.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 129.

ceremony of the Feast of the Dead.

It is on such dispositions and foundations that we hope, with the grace of God, to build the edifice of the Christian Religion among these people, who, besides, are already affectionately inclined toward us and have a great opinion of us.<sup>13</sup>

The Jesuit Fathers followed a method for instruction or catechizing. They called the people together with the help of the Captain of the village, who assembled them in the residence as in council, perhaps by the sound of the bell. Father Brébeuf used the surplice and the square cap to give more majesty to his appearance. At the beginning, they chanted on their knees the Pater Noster, which had been translated into Huron verse by Father Daniel. He chanted a couplet alone, and then all chanted it together again. After all were seated, Father Brébeuf would rise and make the sign of the cross for all. Then after reiterating what he had said the last time, he explained something new. After that they questioned the young children and the girls, giving a little bead of glass or procelain to those who deserved it. The parents were glad to see their children answer well and carry off some little prize. The Fathers began their catechizing by this memorable truth: that their souls, which are immortal, all go after death either to Paradise or to Hell. That was the manner through which they approached them, either in public or in private. Altogether, they baptized fourteen Hurons in the year 1635.<sup>14</sup>

Eighty-six more Hurons were baptized in 1636. They sought baptism almost entirely as an aid to health. The Fathers tried to lift them to a nobler level by teaching them that they needed the hand of God in both

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 131.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 143, 145.

sickness and health, in death and life. They tried to teach them that the life-giving waters of Holy Baptism principally imparted life to the soul, and not to the body. But the Hurons had the opinion deeply rooted that the baptized were no longer sickly. They began to bring children to be baptized from six, nine, and even twenty miles away.<sup>15</sup>

The Feast of the Dead, which took place about every twelve years, was the most renowned ceremony among the Hurons.<sup>16</sup> This Feast occurred in 1636, and Brébeuf witnessed it. The Hurons gave it the name of feast because, when the bodies were taken from their cemeteries, each Captain made a feast for the souls in his village. This Feast abounded in ceremonies, and the principal ceremony was that of the kettle. They appropriated to it all the terms of cookery. The old men and notables of the country assembled to decide when the feast was to be held. After the decision was made, all the bodies were transported to the Village where there was a common grave. Each family saw to its dead, but with an indescribable care and affection. If they had dead relatives in any part of the country, they spared no trouble to go for them. They took them from the cemeteries, bore them on their shoulders, and covered them with the finest robes they had. The bodies were taken from the tombs in the presence of the relatives, who renewed their tears and felt afresh the grief they had on the day of the funeral.

After having opened the graves, they displayed, on the spot, the

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<sup>15</sup>Jean de Brébeuf, "Relation of what occurred in the Country of the Hurons in the year 1636. Sent to Kebec to Reverend Father Paul le Jeune, Superior of the Mission of the Society of Jesus, in New France, from the Residence of St. Joseph in the Huron Country, at the Village called Ihonatiria, this 16th of July, 1636," in "Relation of What Occurred in New France in the year 1636. Sent to the Reverend Father Provincial of the Society of Jesus in the Province of France. By Father Paul le Jeune of the same Society, Superior of the Residence of Kebec," JR, X, 11, 13.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 270-311.

corpses before all present; and they left them thus exposed long enough for the spectators to learn at their leisure what they, too, will be some day. The flesh of some was quite gone, and there was only parchment on their bones. Some bodies looked as if they had been dried and smoked, and showed scarcely any signs of putrefaction. In still other cases, they were swarming with worms. When the friends had gazed upon the bodies to their satisfaction, they covered them with handsome Beaver robes. Finally after some time they stripped them of their flesh, taking off skin and flesh which they threw into the fire along with the robes and mats in which the bodies were wrapped. The bodies of those recently dead were left in the state that they were and covered with new robes. After the bones had been well cleaned, they put them partly into bags, partly into fur robes, loaded them on their shoulders, and covered these packages of souls with another beautiful hanging robe. The whole bodies were put on litters and carried with the others, each to his own cabin, where each family made a feast to its dead. On the day when the ceremony began, the families carried their packages of souls to the common pit. The whole bodies were placed in the bottom. The packages of souls were hung and bound to cross poles; later they were thrown into the pit. Numerous robes lines and covered the pit.

The Jesuit Fathers considered this funeral ceremony for the dead as an entering wedge for them to get the Hurons to accept the promises of Jesus Christ. The feast and ceremony of the dead was a very clear token of the hope of a future life that nature seemed to furnish them in the minds of those Tribes.

Thus, Father Brébeuf wrote concerning the mission at Ihonatiria in 1636 after sojourn of two years among the Hurons:



These poor people open their ears to what we say to them about the Kingdom of Heaven; they find it very reasonable, and dare not contradict it; they fear the judgments of God in a future life; they are beginning to have recourse with us to his goodness in their necessities, and Our Lord seems to favor them, at times, with some special assistance. They procure Baptism for those whom they see in danger of death; they give us their children to be instructed; even permitting them to come three hundred leagues for that purpose, notwithstanding the tender affection they have for them; they promise to follow them some day, and declare they would not give us pledges so precious, if they were not desirous of keeping their word. You might say they are only waiting to see one of their number take the first dreaded step, and venture to run counter to the customs of the Country. Let me add they are a People who have a settled habitation,--<sup>17</sup> judicious, capable of reason, and sufficiently numerous.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 311.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE GROWTH AND DECLINE OF THE JESUIT MISSION TO THE HURONS,

1637-1650

The tenuous Jesuit Mission to the Hurons began to grow after 1636 and expanded yearly until it was finally annihilated by disease, famine, and the Iroquois in 1650. The Fathers had hoped to build the Church militant among the Hurons, but actually it was the Church triumphant that ultimately prevailed. To them, the Church militant was one that was aggressively active on earth while the Church triumphant was formed from those who had been baptized and died.

Fathers Pierre Chastellain and Charles Garnier arrived at the mission at Ihonatiria in August, 1636; in September, 1636, Father Isaac Jogues came. He immediately became ill. Then all the priests became ill, each taking turns caring for the other. By the middle of October, 1636, the Fathers had recuperated; and their principal activity to the middle of November, 1636, was to assist the sick of the village. The Jesuits visited them twice a day, morning and evening, and carried soup and meat to them. They always took occasion to exhort the sick to look to God and to gently influence them to accept baptism. They also gave the Indians raisins, prunes, and senna.

The disease, a severe form of dysentery, continued through the winter. The town of Ossossané, ten miles south of Ihonatiria, was ravaged by the epidemic; and Father Superior Brébeuf and his assistants journeyed there several times during the winter to give both material and spiritual

aid to their wretched parishioners. They also went to other neighboring villages, serving the sick and consoling the dying. Often they were rewarded by opportunities for administering baptism. The village of Ihonatiria continued to be afflicted by the ravages of the illness until the spring of 1637, and was almost entirely depopulated.<sup>1</sup>

In June, 1637, the Residence of the Conception of Nostre Dame was constructed at the hamlet of Ossossané.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, the first healthy adult Huron, Pierre Tsiouendaentaha, resolved to live as a Christian for the rest of his life and renounced publicly and forever all his superstitions. He was a person of influence, and his conversion was advantageous to the Jesuits at the time when they were considered as the masters and arbiters of life and death.<sup>3</sup>

The plague increased with the coming of summer, until it swept the entire nation. Some of the ignorant savages ascribed their sufferings to the machinations of the missionaries. They regarded the pictures of Christ and the Virgin Mary, used in the religious ceremonies, as the source of some wicked spell cast upon the people. Furthermore, some of the baptized natives died from the epidemic, which again aroused the old fear that baptism caused death. Thus the cabin doors were closed to the priests; and one war chief, seeing them approach, "threatened to split

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<sup>1</sup>François Joseph Le Mercier, "Relation of what occurred in the mission of the Society of Jesus, in the land of the Hurons, in the year 1637. Sent to Kebec to the Reverend Father Paul le Jeune, Superior of the Missions of the Society of Jesus, in New France. From the Residence of St. Joseph at Ihonatiria, in the country of the Hurons, June 21, 1637," in "Relation of What Occurred in New France in the Year 1637. Sent to the Reverend Father Provincial of the Society of Jesus in the Province of France. By Paul le Jeune of the same Society, Superior of the Residence of Kebec," JR, XIII, 165.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., XIV, 57-75.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 79, 99.

their heads if they went farther."<sup>4</sup>

On August 4, 1637, a general council of the Hurons was held at which the missionaries were bitterly attacked as the authors of all the miseries that afflicted the nation. Brébeuf defended the Jesuits as best he could before the enraged multitude, who finally deferred their decision until the return of their bark fleet from Quebec and Three Rivers. A group of Hurons had gone down to Three Rivers for their annual trade and while there attended a council with the French which praised the works of the Jesuits and absolved them from blame for the sickness. Thus the Hurons returned from Three Rivers with greatly mollified feelings toward the Jesuits, and for a time the missionaries were spared the attacks of their critics.<sup>5</sup>

At this time, the Residence of St. Joseph in the village of Ithonatiria was discontinued because the village had been decimated by the malady; the Residence was re-established at the village of Teanaustayaé, about twenty-five miles southeast of Ithonatiria. Father Hierosme Lalemant arrived in the Huron country on August 26, 1638, and was followed a month later by Fathers Simon le Moyne and François du Peron. Those at the Residence of St. Joseph in the village of Teanaustayaé were Fathers Jean de Brébeuf, Isaac Jogues, Paul Ragueneau, and Simon le Moyne. Those at the Residence of la Conception in the village of Ossossané were Fathers

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<sup>4</sup>François Joseph Le Mercier, "Relation of what occurred in the Mission of the Society of Jesus in the Country of the Hurons, in the year 1637 and 1638. Sent to Kebec to the Reverend Father Paul le Jeune, Superior of the Missions of the Society of Jesus in New France. From the Residence of la Conception in the country of the Hurons, at the village of Ossossané, June 9, 1638," in "Relation of What Occurred in New France in the year 1638. Sent to the Reverend Father Provincial of the Society of Jesus in the Province of France. By Father Paul le Jeune of the same Society, Superior of the Residence of Kebec," JR, XV, 25.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 37-55.

François le Mercier, Antoine Daniel, Pierre Chastellain, Charles Garnier, François du Feron, and Hierosme Lalemant.<sup>6</sup>

These ten priests concluded that the best method for instructing the Hurons in the Christian faith was to visit them in their cabins:

If you go to visit them in their cabins,--and you must go there oftener than once a day, if you would perform your duty as you ought,--you will find there a miniature picture of Hell,--seeing nothing, ordinarily, but fire and smoke, and on every side naked bodies, black and half roasted, mingled pellmell with the dogs, which are held as dear as the children of the house, and share the beds, plates, and food of their masters. Everything is in a cloud of dust, and if you go within, you will not reach the end of the cabin before you are completely befouled with soot, filth, and dirt.<sup>7</sup>

The permanent mission of Saint Marie was established, late in 1639, by the Jesuits in the middle of the Huron country on the shore of the River Wye. The two Residences of St. Joseph in Teanaustayaé and la Conception in Ossossané were combined with Saint Marie, which now became the hub for the other missions.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Hierosme Lalemant, "Relation of the occupations of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, who are in the Huron land, a country of New France. Addressed to the Reverend Father Paul le Jeune, Superior of the Missions of the Society of Jesus in New France. From the Residence of la Conception de Nostre Dame, in the Village of Ossossané, among the Hurons, June 7, 1639," in "Relation of What Occurred in New France in the Year 1639. Sent to the Reverend Father Provincial of the Society of Jesus in the Province of France. By Father Paul le Jeune, of the same Society, Superior of the Residence of Kebec," JR, XVI, 239.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., XVII, 15.

<sup>8</sup>Letter from Father Hierosme Lalemant of the Society of Jesus, to Monseigneur the Most Eminent Cardinal, Duke de Richelieu. From the Hurons in New France, March 28, 1640. JR, XVII, 211; Letter from Father Jerome Lalemant, Superior of the Huron Missions, to the Very Reverend Father Mutio Vitelleschi, General of the Society of Jesus, at Rome. Among the Hurons in new France, April 1, 1640. JR, XVII, 227, 229; Letter from Joseph Marie Chaumonot to the Very Reverend Father Mutio Vitelleschi, General of the Society of Jesus, at Rome. From the Huron country, May 24, 1640. JR, XVIII, 11-13; Letter of Father Joseph Marie Chaumonot to the Reverend Father Philippe Napi, Superior of the Professed House at Rome. From the country of the Hurons, May 26, 1640. JR, XVIII, 15-35; Hierosme Lalemant, "Relation of what occurred in the Mission of the Hurons, from

By 1640, the Jesuits had five missions in the Huron region. They had preached to more than ten thousand Hurons, not only in general, but to each family, and almost to every person individually. More than a thousand souls had been baptized during the dysentery and smallpox epidemics. Among these were a great number of children who died and whom the Fathers presumed were added to the Church triumphant.<sup>9</sup>

Since the most feasible method to preach the Gospel in the Huron country was at each family's fireside, the Fathers took a census not only of all the villages, but also of the cabins, the fires, and almost all the persons in the country. In the five missions in 1640, there were thirty-two hamlets and small villages, which comprised in all about seven hundred cabins and about twelve thousand persons. The dwellings were of various sizes, and several families usually lived in one long hut. One fire was shared by two families; in all there were about two thousand fires in Huronia. These villages and cabins formerly had been much more populous, but the recent diseases and the wars killed a large number.<sup>10</sup>

By 1641, the dreaded malady of smallpox had subsided. The Hurons enjoyed not only a year of perfect health but also the fruits of a great and bounteous harvest. They no longer rebuffed the Fathers in their visits or cast such black looks upon them as in the preceding year. In addition, a

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the month of June in the year 1639, until the month of June in the year 1640. Sent to Kebec, to the Reverend Father Barthelemy Vimont, Superior of the missions of the Society of Jesus in new France. From the Hurons, August 3, 1640," in "Relation of What Took Place in New France in the Year M. DC. XL. Sent to the Reverend Father Provincial of the Society of Jesus of the Province of France. By Father Barthelemy Vimont, of the same Society, Superior of the Residence of Kebec," JR, XIX, 77, 133, 135.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 127.

large number of adults professed their faith.<sup>11</sup>

As the Jesuits explained it, the scourges of God had fallen, one after the other, upon the Hurons. Now, in 1642, the fatal diseases, which had caused mourning and desolation everywhere, were followed by the terror of war. The Iroquois, who had raided the Hurons intermittently since 1615, now stole into the country and carried out massacres from which no Huron felt safe. When the Hurons journeyed down to Three Rivers or to Quebec to convey their beaver skins there, the Iroquois ambushed them with firearms purchased from the Dutch. The Jesuits said:

We hope that Heaven will remove these great Mountains, which in a few years would not only put an end to all the trade of the Hurons with our French, but also to the spread of the Gospel.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the deterrent to the faith caused by the Iroquois, the priests described the Church as "gaining strength in numbers and still more in Godliness."<sup>13</sup> An illustration of this quality of Godliness was

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<sup>11</sup>H. L'Alemant, "Relation of the most remarkable things that occurred in the Mission of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus in the Huron country of New France, from the month of June in the year one thousand six hundred and forty, to the month of June in the year 1641. Addressed to the Reverend Father Jacques Dinet, Provincial of the Society of Jesus, in the Province of France. From the permanent residence of Ste. Marie among the Hurons, May 19, 1641," in "Relation of What Occurred in New France in the Years 1640 and 1641. Sent to the Reverend Father Provincial of the Society of Jesus, of the Province of France. By Father Barthelemy Vimont of the same Society, Superior of the Residence of Kebec," JR, XXI, 131.

<sup>12</sup>Hier, Lallemand, "Relation of what occurred in the Mission of the Hurons from the month of June of the year 1641, to the month of June of the year 1642. Sent to Reverend Father Jean Filleau, Provincial of the Society of Jesus in the Province of France. M. DC. XLIII. From Saint Marie among the Hurons, June 10, 1642," in "Relation of What Occurred in New France in the Year 1642. Sent to Reverend Father Jean Filleau, Provincial of the Society of Jesus in the Province of France. By Reverend Father Barthelemy Vimont of the same Society, Superior of the Residence of Kebec," JR, XXII, 307.

<sup>13</sup>  
Ibid., 309.

observed in a Christian Huron who had been taught that when sins are once forgiven, they never return, but that Grace lost through sin comes back upon confession. Seeking in his own mind for the cause of this difference, he reasoned as follows:

Grace is like a beautiful robe of Beaver fur, with which God our father clothes the souls of his good children. When one of our children offends us, we take his fine robe from him and leave him quite naked, but we do not throw the dress into the fire. It is too valuable a thing, and we put it away somewhere to give it back to him when he is willing to obey us. In the same manner, God, when we have sinned, deprives our soul of its grace; but he does not wish that grace be lost, for it is too precious to him. He preserves it very carefully in his treasury, being quite ready to give it back to us when we ask his pardon. But Sin is so hideous a thing, that God has a horror of it. When we confess ourselves he destroys it entirely. Would he place so frightful a monster among his treasures? It is therefore not surprising that it never returns into our Souls, when once it is washed away.<sup>14</sup>

In 1643, the Huron Churches were described as "continually increasing in number of persons, and in virtue."<sup>15</sup> In 1644, Father Charles Garnier wrote to the General of the Society of Jesus that the "Barbarians'" zeal for the Gospel increased daily. He mentioned especially two villages, Ossossané and Teanaustayaé, in which there were numerous Christians. Some of these believers were endowed with a singular piety and with a steadfastness which neither adversity nor the taunts and curses of the unconverted could shake. There were some converts won and a few chapels opened in other villages. Garnier thought that if any entire village would once give support to the faith, there was hope that it would, by its example, bring over to Christ many other villages.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., XXIII, 115.

<sup>15</sup>Barthelemy Vimont, "Relation of Occurrences in New France in the Year 1642 and 1643. Sent to Rev. Father Jean Filleau, Provincial of the Society of Jesus, in the Province of France. By Rev. Father Barthelemy Vimont, of the same Society, Superior of all the Missions," JR, XXV, 27.

<sup>16</sup>Letter from Father Charles Garnier to the Reverend Father Mutius Vitelleschi, General of the Society of Jesus. At the Residence of Ste. Marie of the Hurons, April 8, 1644. JR, XXV, 85.



Garnier's belief was supported by a Christian Huron who told the Fathers the following:

Do not lose courage. Our number increases daily; that of the Infidels decreases. Most of them know the truth well enough, and are the first to laugh at the superstitions of the country. They dread the fire of hell. Human considerations alone keep back those who have the best minds. When we shall be a little stronger, you will see that they will join us all of a sudden. The whole of our village will be Christian, and then Faith will make its way, without resistance, among all the others who have their eyes on us.<sup>17</sup>

But still the work was hindered by repeated Iroquois massacres. War continued its usual ravages during the summer. The enemy closed the St. Lawrence River leading to Quebec. A band of Hurons, in order to obtain goods from France, risked the trip to Quebec. Several were drowned in the river when the Iroquois attacked them; others returned to Huronia, either naked or pierced with bullets, after escaping seven or eight times from the enemy.<sup>18</sup>

There was desolation throughout the entire Huron country. Nearly every day unfortunate women were killed in their fields. The villages were in a state of continual alarm, and all the troops that were raised to pursue the enemy were routed. Captives were taken by the hundreds.

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<sup>17</sup>Hierosme Lalemant, "Relation of the most remarkable events that occurred in the Mission of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus in the Huron Country, a country of New France, from the month of June, of the year 1642, to the month of June, of the year 1643. Addressed to the Reverend Father Jean Filleau, Provincial of the Society of Jesus in the Province of France. From the Huron country, September 21, 1643," in "Relation of What Occurred in New France in the Years 1643 and 1644. Sent to Rev. Father Jean Filleau, Provincial of the Society of Jesus, in the Province of France, By Rev. Father Barthelemy Vimont, of the same Society, Superior of the whole Mission," JR, XXVI, 255.

<sup>18</sup>Letter from Hierosme Lalemant to the Reverend Father Jean Filleau, Provincial of the Society of Jesus in the Province of France. From the Huron country, March 31, 1644. In "Relation of What Occurred in New France in the Years 1643 to 1644. Sent to Rev. Father Jean Filleau, Provincial of the Society of Jesus, in the Province of France. By Rev. Father Barthelemy Vimont, of the same Society, Superior of the whole Mission," JR, XXVII, 63.

Frequently, the only way the Jesuits learned of these disasters was from escaped captives whose half-burnt bodies and mutilated fingers were evidence of the misfortune that had fallen on them and their comrades. The cruelties of the Iroquois seemed to be intensified by the accompanying famine. Indian corn, the sole staff of life, was so scarce that members of the tribe hardly had enough to sow their fields. Many Hurons lived only on a kind of acorn, pumpkins, or roots; and they risked being massacred when they sought them in places where the enemy lurked.<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, the Jesuits found that war, famine, persecutions, all of which seemed likely to overwhelm Christianity, had in reality greatly strengthened it. The Hurons realized that faith was the only solace they had, so they sought baptism. Contrary to the experience of previous years, the Fathers were as busy catechizing during the summer as during the winter because the Iroquois forced the men to give up the chase and remain at home. The Missions had been changed into Residences, and the Chapels had been enlarged. Because of lack of bells, the Jesuits had to hang up old caldrons. Cemeteries were blessed. Processions were held in the villages and funerals were solemnized according to the custom of the Church. Crosses were erected and solemnly adored.<sup>20</sup>

In September, 1645, at an assembly of the French and Iroquois in the Quebec area, a flimsy treaty of peace was made; however, the only group of Iroquois to keep the peace was the Mohawk nation which controlled the St. Lawrence near Three Rivers, Montreal, and Quebec. The Hurons were somewhat relieved by this action. At least, they were able to resume their beaver trade to Three Rivers and Quebec. But the Iroquois Nations

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 65.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 67.

close to the Huron country continued their raids.<sup>21</sup>

Describing the situation, Superior Paul Ragueneau wrote on May 1, 1646, that the previous year could not be called a happy one for the Hurons but that their misfortunes had been less frequent than in the past.<sup>22</sup> There had been sufficient rain, and the Indian corn had matured fully. They found an abundance of fish in the lakes and rivers. On their trading expedition to Quebec and Three Rivers, the Hurons were not molested by the Iroquois. The contagious diseases, which had been depopulating the villages, had subsided. The writer continued:

It is only the war that keeps affairs in suspense, for it still continues with the four Iroquois nations nearest to our Hurons, it is only the fifth, the most distant from here, which has entered into the treaty of peace that began last year.<sup>23</sup>

For example, in the spring of 1646, a band of Iroquois concealed itself in the woods near one of the frontier villages. They then surrounded a company of Huron women who were going out to work in their fields and carried them off as captives. At the first cries of the women, two hundred Huron men in arms rushed to the field; but they were too late except to witness the sad sight of their wives, mothers, and

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<sup>21</sup>Barthelemy Vimont, "Relation of What Occurred in New France, in the Years 1644 and 1645. Sent to the Rev. Father Provincial of the Society of Jesus in the Province of France. By Father Barthelemy Vimont of the same Society, Superior of the Residence of Kebec, October 1, 1645," JR, XXVII, 247-305.

<sup>22</sup>Paul Ragueneau, "Relation of what occurred most noteworthy in the Mission of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, among the Hurons, a country of New France, from the month of May in the year 1645, until the month of May in the year 1646. To the Reverend Father Estienne Charlet, Provincial of the Society of Jesus, in the Province of France. From the Hurons, May 1, 1646," in "Relation of What Occurred Most Noteworthy in the Missions of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, in New France, in the Years 1645 and 1646. Sent to the Reverend Father Provincial of the Province of France. By Hierosme Lalemant, Superior of the Missions of the same Society," JR, XXIX, 247.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 249.

children taken captive. "Several of our Christians have been killed or taken in these encounters, and having left us only this consolation, that Heaven finds itself each year enriched by our losses."<sup>24</sup> That growth continued in the mission is revealed by statistics showing that one hundred and sixty-four persons were baptized from the summer of 1645 until the summer of 1646.

By this time, the zeal of the Christians was such that they began to convert others within their own families. A father would win his children to God; a mother, her daughters; the husband would convert his wife or the wife her husband. Frequently even children, who had first embraced the faith, converted their unbelieving parents by their simple and natural demonstrations of faith. The Jesuit Fathers found that most of those who were won to God by a relative were more steadfast in their faith, which became strengthened, rather than weakened, by the death of one or the other.<sup>25</sup>

The unconverted Hurons were astonished by the zeal of the Christians. They saw that many, who previously seemed to have quite ordinary minds, appeared wholly changed when they became Christians. Their faith seemed to enlighten their minds; they spoke more convincingly and fluently. "Our Savages quite easily acquire a very blessed liberty when, having become Christians, they think that they have no more fear in this world but God and sin."<sup>26</sup>

On June 2, 1648, Father Jean de Brébeuf wrote from the Residence of Saint Marie among the Hurons to the General of the Society of Jesus, in

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 255.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 277, 279.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., XXX, 65.

Rome, that the Christians were "increasing more and more, not only in number but also in virtue."<sup>27</sup> But he also noted the influences which hindered the work and threatened the ruin of the whole mission. The Iroquois were the paramount danger with their frequent massacres and obstruction to trade. In addition, some hostile Hurons were so filled with hatred toward the Jesuits that they killed one of their domestics and threatened the lives of the Fathers.

Father Paul Ragueneau also wrote from the Huron country in 1648: "I may say that this country has never been in such deep affliction as we see it now, and that never has the Faith appeared to greater advantage."<sup>28</sup> The Iroquois continued the bloody war and destroyed the frontier villages; but since the last report, thirteen hundred persons had been baptized. The Mission of la Conception at Ossossané led the others in the zeal and number of Christians; even the unbelievers respected their Godliness. The chapels at all the missions became too small for the number of worshipers and two masses were necessary on Sunday so that all the people could attend.

One of the converts, who had recently lost nearly all his relatives and all his property, sought the Jesuit Father who had formerly instructed and baptized him. He said to the Father:

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<sup>27</sup>Letter of Father Jean de Brébeuf to the Very Reverend Father Vincent Caraffa, General of the Society of Jesus, at Rome. From the Residence of Ste. Marie, among the Hurons, in New France, June 2, 1648. JR, XXXII, 59-65.

<sup>28</sup>Paul Ragueneau, "Relation of what occurred in the Mission of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus in the Huron country, in New France, in the years 1647 and 1648. Sent to Reverend Father Estienne Charlet, Provincial of the Society of Jesus in the Province of France. From the Hurons, April 16, 1648," in "Relation of What Occurred Most Remarkable in the missions of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, in New France, in the Years 1647 and 1648. Sent to the Reverend Father Provincial of the Province of France. By Hierosme Lalemant, Superior of the Missions of the same Society," JR, XXXIII, 69.

Now I appreciate the value of the gift that thou didst procure for me by giving me Baptism. Faith is the only possession left me, with the hope of Paradise, which consoles me. Hadst thou given me ten fine collars of Porcelain beads, and twenty robes of beaver skins quite new, they would all be worn out and all would have been destroyed with the remainder of my property. But the Faith that thou has given me in instructing me becomes more beautiful day by day; and the gifts that it promises me will never perish, even at death.<sup>29</sup>

On July 4, 1648, the village of Saint Joseph (Teanaustayaé) was burned by the Iroquois and many women and children were taken into captivity. Most of the others were massacred. Father Antoine Daniel, who had come to the Huron country in 1634 with Father Jean de Brébeuf, was in charge of this mission and the church there. The Iroquois attacked the village just after sunrise while the Christians were at mass in the church and proceeded to set fire to the cabins and mortally wounded Father Daniel. "Pierced with arrows, he yielded to God the blessed life which he laid down for his flock, as a good Sheperd, calling upon the name of Jesus."<sup>30</sup> The church had also been fired, and Daniel's naked body was cast into the midst of the flames and was so completely consumed that not even a bone was left. Father Antoine Daniel thus became the first Jesuit martyr in Huronia. He was followed in less than a year by Fathers Jean de Brébeuf and Gabriel Lalemant.

On March 16, 1649, a thousand Iroquois, with firearms obtained from the Dutch, made a sudden attack, at daybreak, on the mission village of St. Ignace, ten miles southeast of Saint Marie. The people were asleep; so nearly all of them were slain or captured. Not content with this slaughter, the raiding party immediately proceeded to St. Louis, about

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 161.

<sup>30</sup>Letter of Father Paul Ragueneau to the Very Reverend Father Vincent Caraffa, General of the Society of Jesus, at Rome. From the Residence of Sainte Marie, among the Hurons, new France, March 1, 1649. JR, XXXIII, 263.

five miles closer to Saint Marie. Although bravely defended by its few warriors, it, too, was soon captured and burned. The Iroquois burned all the old, the sick and wounded, and the little children, instead of taking them prisoners.

The martyrdom of Fathers Jean de Brébeuf and Gabriel Lalemant, who were in charge of this mission, occurred here at St. Louis.<sup>31</sup> Fathers Brébeuf and Lalemant were seized by the Iroquois, stripped naked, and each fastened to a post. Their hands were bound together and their nails torn from their fingers. The Iroquois then beat their entire bodies with short clubs. Brébeuf was almost rendered unconscious by the blows. But he continually spoke of God and encouraged all the new Christians to suffer well, that they might die well, in order to go in company with him to Paradise. While he was thus encouraging the new Christians, a renegade Huron, who had formerly been instructed and baptized by Father Brébeuf, became irritated at hearing him speak of Paradise and Holy Baptism. So he took a kettle of boiling water and poured it over Brébeuf's body, three times, in derision of Holy Baptism. The tortures increased. The Iroquois took red-hot hatchets and applied them to the groins and arm-pits. They made a collar of red-hot hatchets and put it on the neck of Brébeuf. After that, they fastened a belt of bark, which was full of pitch and resin, on him. Then they set fire to it, roasting his whole body. During all these torments, Father Brébeuf endured like a rock,

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<sup>31</sup>Christophe Regnaut, "A veritable Account of the Martyrdom and Blessed death of Father Jean de Brébeuf and of Father Gabriel L'Alemant, in New France, in the country of the Hurons, by the Iroquois, enemies of the Faith," JR, XXXIV, 25-37; Paul Ragueneau, "Relation of What Occurred in the Mission of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus among the Hurons, a country of New France, in the years 1648 and 1649. Sent to Rev. Father Hierosme Lalemant, Superior of the Missions of the Society of Jesus, in New France. From the House of Sainte Marie among the Hurons, May 1, 1649. To be forwarded to the Reverend Father Provincial of the same Society, Father Claude de Lingendes," JR, XXXIV, 139-157.

seemingly insensible to fire and flames, which astonished the blood-thirsty Iroquois who tormented him. So great was his zeal that he preached continually to them of God, trying to convert them to the very last. This enraged his executioners even more. Now, in order to prevent him from speaking further, they cut off his tongue and his upper and lower lips. Furthermore, they stripped the flesh, to the very bones, from his legs and arms. Then they roasted and ate it in his presence. Then, seeing that Brébeuf was growing weak, they made him sit on the ground. One of them took a knife and cut off the skin covering his skull. Realizing that Brébeuf would soon die, another one made an opening in the upper part of his chest and tore out his heart, which he roasted and ate. Others drank his warm blood, using cupped hands. They said that Father Brébeuf had been very courageous to endure so much pain as they had given him and that, by drinking his blood, they would become courageous like him. Father Brébeuf died at four o'clock in the afternoon of March 16, 1649. The Iroquois threw the remains of his body into the fire.

Father Gabriel Lalemant endured most of the same tortures as Brébeuf. In addition, his eyes were torn out and burning coals applied to his empty sockets. His heart was also torn out. They slashed his body in various places and put red-hot hatchets into these wounds. His brain was exposed as a result of a hatchet blow on the left ear. Father Lalemant died early in the morning on March 17, 1649. His had been only a six-month sojourn in Huronia, the shortest time spent by any of the priests. It seemed almost paradoxical that he and Brébeuf, who was the first Jesuit to the Hurons, should meet death at the same time and in the same manner.

Father Paul Ragueneau gave a great tribute to Father Jean de Brébeuf



in the following:

The sweetness of temper was the virtue in him which seemed to float above all the others; it was proof against everything. In the twelve years during which I have known him, when I have seen him as superior, as inferior, or as the equal of all,--now in temporal affairs, now in the labors and fatigues of the Missions; dealing with the Christian Savages, with Infidels, with Enemies; in sufferings, in persecutions, and in calumnies,--never have I seen him either in anger, or even in the appearance of any indignation. Often, indeed, some persons have specially endeavored to annoy him, and to attack him unawares at what they believed must be his most sensitive point; but his look was always benign, his words were in mildness, and his heart in calmness. Accordingly, Our Lord had especially given him this grace.<sup>32</sup>

Because of the losses incurred, a large part of the Huron country was desolate in 1649. Fifteen villages had been abandoned. The people of each had scattered. Some fled into the woods and forests. Others went to the lakes and rivers or among the Islands least known to the enemy. Still others took refuge in the neighboring nations, more capable of standing the stress of war. In less than fifteen days, the Residence of Saint Marie had been stripped bare on every side, most exposed to the incursions of the enemy. Those who had left their former dwellings set fire to them themselves so that they could not serve as retreats and fortresses for the Iroquois. The misery of the people was increased by the most severe and widespread famine in half a century. They were compelled either to eat acorns or else go and seek wild roots in the woods.

The hopes of Paradise which the Faith furnishes to the Christians are the only consolation which sustains them at this critical time, and which makes them more than ever esteem the advantages of the blessing which they possess, which cannot be snatched from them, either by the cruelties of the Iroquois or by the prostration of a famine which continually pursues them in their flight, and from which they cannot escape.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 185.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 199.

The Jesuit Fathers realized that they could not maintain the Residence of Saint Marie in the center of the Huron country with the Hurons mostly massacred or dispersed. Consequently, they resolved to follow their flock; to flee with the refugees, since they lived there not for themselves but for the salvation of souls and for the conversion of those people. Thus the Fathers, with three hundred families, nearly all Christian, took refuge on Saint Joseph Island (now called Christian Island) located in Georgian Bay just west of Ithonatiria, the first mission. They left the Residence of Saint Marie on May 15, 1649, after first destroying it by fire. "Never were we more filled with content, and never have we had cause for keener sorrow."<sup>34</sup> They established another Residence of Saint Marie on the Island of Saint Joseph.

On March 13, 1650, Father Paul Ragueneau wrote to Vincent Caraffa, General of the Society of Jesus, in Rome, concerning the state of the Huron Mission on Saint Joseph Island. Once again the Hurons were distressed by war, a deadly famine, and a contagious plague. Death stalked everywhere. Those recently buried were dug out of their graves and eaten as food by those who had lately loved them. Even the dung of man and beast was eaten. One was fortunate to be able to eat the food of swine-- bitter acorns and husks. But again this calamity caused the faith to become stronger and the name of Christian to be more glorious as more and more Hurons sought baptism. Thirteen Fathers remained in the mission. But the mission was in danger of destruction by the hostile Iroquois and by failure of provisions.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 225.

<sup>35</sup>Letter of Father Paul Ragueneau to the Very Reverend Father General, Vincent Caraffa, at Rome. From the Residence of Sainte Marie, in the Island of Saint Joseph, among the Hurons in New France, March 13, 1650. JR, XXXV, 19-29.

Complete destruction of the Hurons by the Iroquois was not long delayed. While the famished Hurons had scattered to search for acorns and fish, on March 25, 1650, a war party of Iroquois tracked down all the scattered Christians and butchered them. Only a single man escaped to bring the news to the Fathers. The remaining Christians at Saint Joseph were so terrified of the cruelties of the Iroquois that they decided to scatter. Inevitably they met with the same fate. Some were slain on the spot; others were dragged away captive. Women and children were burned. Eight days later, the Iroquois struck another band.

Whithersoever they go, massacres await them. Famine follows them everywhere, in which they meet an enemy more cruel than cruelty itself; and to fill up the measure of misery without hope, they learned that two powerful war-parties were on the way, who were coming to exterminate them; that the first designed to make havoc of their fields, to pluck their Indian corn, and to lay waste the country; while the second party was to cut down everything that might have escaped the fury of the first. Despair reigns everywhere.<sup>36</sup>

At the height of these alarms, two old village Captains went to Father Ragueneau and begged him to "cast thine eyes toward Quebec, and transport thither the remnants of this ruined nation."<sup>37</sup> They asked him not to wait until famine, disease, and war had slain the last of them. More than ten thousand had lost their lives to famine, disease, or Iroquois attacks. Ragueneau made a report of the request to the other Fathers. After much consultation and prayer, "it seemed to us more and more clear that God had spoken to us by the lips of these Captains; for

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<sup>36</sup>Paul Ragueneau, "Relation of What Occurred in the Mission of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, among the Hurons, and in the lower countries of New France, from the Summer of the year 1649, to the Summer of the year 1650. Sent to Rev. Father Claude De Lingendes, Provincial of the Society of Jesus in the Province of France. By the Superior of the Missions of the Society of Jesus in New France. From Kebec, September 1, 1650," JR, XXXV, 191.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 193.

the truth was apparent to us that the entire Huron country was but a land of horror and a region of massacres."<sup>38</sup>

Speedy action was necessary because the enemy continued their massacres without pause and the famine continued the depopulation. Unless they moved rapidly, few Christians would be left. So the Fathers and Christian families numbering about three hundred persons began a distressing fifty-day river journey to Quebec, arriving there on July 28, 1650. The Huron colony was established on the Island of Orleans (also called Saint Mary) in the St. Lawrence River, just east of Quebec. The group grew in numbers as the scattered remnants joined them. Two of the Jesuit Fathers were employed there; but most of the others who had served in the Mission to the Hurons, except those martyred, returned to France.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 195.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 207.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

When the Jesuits arrived in Acadia in 1611, Christianity was almost nonexistent. A secular priest had been there earlier in the year and had baptized about one hundred natives but had not instructed them in the doctrines of the church because of the language barrier. The Indians had accepted baptism only as an honorable pledge of friendship and alliance with the French.

The first Jesuit Fathers, Pierre Biard and Ennemond Massé, resolved not to baptize any adult Indians unless they had been well catechized. This meant that the Fathers had to learn the native language, a difficult task because the Indians did not understand abstract or spiritual concepts. Thus it was very hard for the Fathers to transmit the symbols and fundamental truths of Christianity to them. Some of the natives did participate in the rituals--carrying the candles, bells, and holy water--and so became accustomed to act as Christians. They saw the Jesuits pray, celebrate mass, and preach. Through the conversations of the priests and their way of living, the natives received the first faint ideas and germs of the Christian faith.

After a seven-month sojourn, the Queen of France, Marie de Médicis, relieved the Fathers of their duties at Port Royal in order to establish another colony at St. Sauveur on Mount Desert Island. Before this had been fortified, the Virginia English, led by Sir Samuel Argall, attacked and destroyed the settlement in the summer of 1613 and carried the colonists and two priests back to Virginia. Argall then returned to New

France and destroyed all evidence of French occupation at St. Croix and Port Royal. The Jesuit Fathers were eventually returned to France. Thus ended the Jesuit mission in Acadia and on Mount Desert Island with little more having been accomplished than the catechization of some natives and an attempt to learn their language.

The Jesuits were absent from New France from the summer of 1613 until 1625, when Fathers Jean de Brébeuf, Ennemond Massé, and Charles Lallemant arrived to aid the Récollets, who had worked in vain among the Indians along the St. Lawrence. Some Récollets had gone to the Huron country in the interval between 1615 and 1625, learning the customs and language. From 1626 until 1629, the Jesuit Brébeuf lived among the Hurons and gained the confidence of a small number, but he was recalled to Quebec and transported to England when the French settlements fell prey to small English naval forces in 1629. However, when Canada was restored to France by the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye in 1632, the authorities placed the Jesuits in sole charge of the spiritual interests of both settlers and Indians.

The Huron Mission was reopened in 1634, at Ihonatiria, with Father Jean de Brébeuf as superior. It had a twofold purpose--political and spiritual. The Jesuits had hoped to build the Church militant among the Hurons, but it was the Church triumphant that ultimately prevailed. An epidemic gripped the region in 1634 and 1635, causing the death of many who had been baptized. Then severe dysentery, followed by smallpox, raged among the Hurons until 1641. The Jesuit Fathers were blamed for the plague, and their mission work was somewhat deterred.

In 1642, the Iroquois invaded the Huron country and committed massacres from which no Huron felt safe. They disrupted or destroyed the Huron beaver trade with Three Rivers and Quebec. But despite these handicaps

and the presence of a severe famine, the Church gained in numbers and Godliness.

Furthermore, the missions among the Hurons continued to gain strength until 1648, when the village of Saint Joseph was burned by the Iroquois and Father Antoine Daniel became the first Jesuit martyr in Huronia. His was followed in 1649 by the martyrdom of Fathers Jean de Brébeuf and Gabriel Lalemant. By 1649 fifteen villages were abandoned, the Hurons dispersing to wherever they could find safety from the merciless slaughter by the Iroquois. This condition was made even more severe by the worst famine in fifty years.

The Jesuit Fathers realized that they could not maintain their Residence of Saint Marie in the center of the Huron country with the Hurons mostly massacred or dispersed. Thus, with three hundred Huron families, they took refuge on Saint Joseph Island. This proved to be only a temporary respite because, there, in addition to war and famine, a contagious plague hastened the ruin of the Huron nation.

Finally, in desperation and at the insistence of the few remaining Hurons, the Jesuits abandoned the mission on Saint Joseph Island in 1650 and made the long trek of nine hundred miles to Quebec. The Huron colony was established on the Island of Orleans in the St. Lawrence just east of Quebec. Here the three hundred souls were joined by other scattered remnants; these people were all that was left of the thirty thousand that had comprised the Huron nation when the Jesuits began their mission in 1634. Two Jesuit Fathers remained with the Hurons on the Island; the others returned to France.

In conclusion, the early Jesuit missions to the Indians were apparent failures because of factors over which the priests had no control. The Virginia English took advantage of the lack of fortifications at St.

Sauveur on Mount Desert Island which caused the mission to fail in 1613. Again the English routed the Jesuits from Canada in 1629. After 1634, even though a large number of Hurons became Christians, they were almost exterminated by disease, famine, and the Iroquois. The only visible result of the labors of the Jesuit Fathers was the small group of converts among the Huron survivors near Quebec. Yet, even in their apparent failure, there was an immeasurable glory in the examples of heroism, sacrifice, and endurance which the missionaries gave to the world.



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See the appendix for a description and evaluation of this work. The first thirty-five volumes cover the scope of this thesis and comprise ninety per cent of the source material.

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## APPENDIX

### THE JESUIT RELATIONS

The seventy-three volumes of The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents can be attributed to the sagacity and foresight of Reuben Gold Thwaites (1853-1913). Between the years 1896 and 1901, he edited and published this monumental work, while carrying arduous administrative duties as Superintendent of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. This "implies an activity beyond the power of most men of letters and science."<sup>1</sup>

Thwaites had a scholar's fondness for books and literature from early youth. In Oshkosh, as a newspaper reporter, he had shown historical interests. He became a member of the Madison Literary Club and made frequent visits to the State Capitol where the Historical Library was housed. Here he became acquainted with Lyman C. Draper, the founder of the Wisconsin Historical Society, who recognized in Thwaites a "man of exceptional promise in the field of history and administration."<sup>2</sup>

Draper chose to train Thwaites as his successor; and, in 1885, Thwaites began the work of Assistant Corresponding Secretary of the Society. In 1887, Draper resigned. Then Reuben Gold Thwaites began the great work of his life as the responsible executive officer of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Frederick Jackson Turner, Reuben Gold Thwaites: A Memorial Address (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1914), 54.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 19.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 20.

When Thwaites took over the Historical Society, the development of the study of history had made little advance in the American Midwest. The work done was of a purely antiquarian character. State historical societies in the Mississippi Valley, prior to 1888, published reminiscences, biographical sketches, obituaries and proceedings, but not serious history. But the cooperation of Frederick Jackson Turner with Thwaites at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin established the beginning of a new order in 1888. Thwaites opened a seminar room to Frederick Jackson Turner and his advanced students in American history. They had full access to the stacks, an unheard of liberality among non-university libraries at the time. Thus, Thwaites was the first to unite a state historical society and a university department of history so that they gave each other mutual assistance.<sup>4</sup>

Through Thwaites' persuasion, the state legislature constantly increased its appropriations for the collection and preservation of historical data. The movement culminated in the erection of a building in 1900 which housed the Wisconsin Historical Society and the Library of the University of Wisconsin. Turner said that Thwaites contributed more than anyone else to the creation of one of America's "greatest historical workshops."<sup>5</sup>

Thwaites did not confine his generosity to the people of Wisconsin alone. According to C. W. Alvord:

To scholars from other states Dr. Thwaites gave the warmest welcome. His was not a stingy spirit. He opened his institution for service, and he kept the doors wide open. There

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<sup>4</sup>H. Hale Bellot, American History and American Historians (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), 27; Clarence W. Alvord, "A Critical Analysis of the Work of Reuben Gold Thwaites," Proceedings of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association, VII (1913-1914), 328-329; Turner, Thwaites, 24.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 27-28.

were no manuscripts reserved for his private use, none withheld from publication because he or his staff might print them in future years.<sup>6</sup>

The Jesuit Relations were a direct result of this magnanimous spirit of Reuben Gold Thwaites. In this editorial labor, through his genius for persuading publishers and for building up a staff of workers, he made the study of Western history in its many phases a possibility. The Jesuit Relations constitute a noble monument to him. He placed the whole West in debt to him and was indeed a historical craftsman of genius. Even if he had had the ability and had brought forth, after a life's work, a few volumes on the history of the French in American which were superior to Francis Parkman's, even then his services to the cause of historical study of the West would not have been comparable to those which he actually performed.<sup>7</sup>

The Jesuit Relations are a collection of documents, dating from 1610 to 1791, dealing with the early explorations of Acadia, Canada, and all the northern United States. These documents were all written by the Jesuits. The Constitution of the Society of Jesus stipulated that all missionaries of the Jesuit order keep an accurate day by day record of the activities of the world-wide missions. Such records were compiled by the superior of each mission and sent as annual reports to the General of the Society of Jesus at Paris or Rome. Many of them were published in Europe and read by the intellectuals; and it is not unlikely that Francois Voltaire (1694-1778) and Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) got their ideas of the Noble Savage from them.

The first thirty-five volumes of The Jesuit Relations comprise the

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<sup>6</sup>Alvord, "A Critical Analysis," 330.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 331-332.

records of the missionary activity in Acadia, Quebec, Huronia, and generally along the St. Lawrence River between 1610 and 1650. The remainder of the seventy-three volumes emphasize the missions to the Iroquois, the Ottawas, the Hudson Bay region, Illinois, the Mississippi Valley, and Louisiana. Not only were all the Relations, published and unpublished, included, but personal letters, memoirs, journals, state and church records--whatever ecclesiastical or secular archives offered in the way of additional light on the more formal Relations. A page-for-page English translation was made of the original French, Latin, or Italian texts: old portraits, maps, engravings and facsimile texts were added, together with a mass of prefatory, historical, geographical, biographical and bibliographical notes, that make these seventy-three volumes a vast storehouse of related data on early American history, the American Indian, and the men who wrote the story. To these men, historians owe the best we have of our early history, written on the spot and in the hour of its making.

In The Jesuit Relations, the folk-lore, the religion, the mythology, the manners and the morals, even the speech and detailed daily living of the Indians, what they did and what they were, are set down minutely, keenly, zestfully by men shrewdly trained in the subtle arts of rhetoric, diplomacy, observation, psychology, and humanity. In addition, the topography and climate of New France are described in detail. All secondary sources are based on these records.

The story of New France is also, in part, the story of much of New England, and of the states whose shores are washed by the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River. The history of every one of the northern tier of states, from Maine to Minnesota, has its roots in the French regime. The trader was not a letter writer or a diarist; hence, historians are indebted

chiefly to the wandering missionaries of the Society of Jesus for their intimate knowledge of New France, particularly in the seventeenth century.

One reviewer observed that the publication of the Relations marked "an epoch in the historical literature of North America because of the abundance and value of the documents reproduced and the vast erudition utilized by the editorial staff, the taste displayed by the printer and the careful arrangement."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Benjamin Sulte, "Review of The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents," American Historical Review, II (October, 1896-July, 1897), 522.



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