

The Frenchification and Evangelization of the Amerindians in the Seventeenth Century New France

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There is a traditional and widely accepted distinction between history as past events and history as the study of the human past. Intellectual historians are interested mostly in the ideological patterns and interpretations of the past; even social scientists speak about functioning societies in change. Hitherto the Amerindians generally appeared in our histories in topical considerations of the fur trade, colonial warfare and missionary activity. This paper is an attempt to reconsider the aborigines in a new conceptual framework touching on such matters as assimilation policy, Catholic apocalypticism and a cultural superiority complex. It is also designed to indicate some relevant and pertinent research from a wide range of intellectual interests and professional insights which is available to the historian. As may be expected, the tentative conclusions advanced here with run counter to many accepted views. This should stimulate more research and especially more thought. Historians in the pursuit of their craft seek not only new sources but also new insights into well known sources. The hypothesis, for example, that so-called "Indian policy" was based on a common fund of European ideas, not French or English and not Catholic or Protestant, but rather Western European Renaissance views, is worthy of consideration especially by those interested in comparative studies. It should become apparent in this paper that the relationship between ideas and institutions is at the heart of the complexity (and probably the fallibility) of historical interpretation.

Our study may properly begin with the arrival of some savages, today called *Amerindians*, in Rouen in 1508 where they were the objects of French curiosity. Shortly thereafter, Jacques Cartier, in a letter to François I, broached the possibility of converting these "gens sauvages vivans sans connoissance de Dieu et sans usaiges de raison."¹ There was no immediate response in France, other than intellectual speculation, to this appeal to impart right reason and right religion. Opinion concerning the Amerindians was quite divided. The school of Juan Gines de Sepulveda, a Spanish jurist, held that the Amerindians merited to be subjugated and enslaved with cruelty, as they were in Central and South America, for their threefold baseness—idolatry, barbaric customs, paganism. Several writers spoke of "des cannibales et sauvages qui n'ont rien de l'homme que la

¹ *Archives Municipales de Saint-Malo, Série H.H., Carton I, 1, 13.* The arrival in Rouen of the Amerindians is described in Henry Harrisse, *Découverte et Evolution cartographique de Terre-Neuve et des Pays circonvoisins* (London, 1900), pp. 162-163, citing Henri Estienne, ed., *Eusebii Ctesariensis Episcopi Chronicon* (Paris, 1512), f. 111.

figure.² On the other hand, there was the view of the natural savage, the *bon sauvage* and precursor of Rousseau's noble savage, an untutored, uncultivated, unsophisticated aborigine capable of being civilized; in other words, of a descendant of Adam who was a fit subject for conversion and assimilation into French life.³

Henry IV requested missionaries for the task of converting the Amerindians and the Jesuits, who had previously sought permission to accompany cod fishing fleets to Newfoundland, took up the challenge.⁴ Champlain wrote in 1608 that the savages could readily be civilized and Frenchified and that with the French language they would soon acquire a French heart and spirit. He saw the Amerindians "vivans comme bestes brutes" but was convinced that following the arrival of missionaries they would be "reduits bons Chrestiens si on habitoit leur terre."⁵ To him Christianization and Frenchification were synonymous. But Father Allouez, writing in 1672, expressed the optimistic view while distinguishing between Frenchification and Christianization:

Le nom de Sauvage fait naître une idée si désavantageuse de ceux qui le portent, que bien des gens en Europe ont jugé qu'il était impossible d'en faire de véritables chrétiens ... non seulement il y a de vrais Chrétiens parmi ces peuples sauvages,

² Eméric de Crucé, *Nouveau Cynée* (Paris, 1623), t. vi, pp. 5-6. M. Menendez y Pelayo & Garcia-Pelayo, eds., *I. G. de Sepulveda: Tratado sobre las justas causas de la guerra contra los Indios* (Mexico, 1941), pp. 101, 105, 151.

³ Bartholommi de Las Cases, *Principia queda ex quibus procedendum est in disputatione ad manifestam et defendam iusticiam Yndorum* (Sevilla, 1552) enunciated the principles upon which to proceed in discussions for sustaining and defending the rights of the Amerindians. See also André Labrouquère, *La Notion d'assimilation en législation et économie coloniales* (Hanoi, 1934), pp. 9, 29. René Gonnard, *La Légende du Bon Sauvage* (Paris, 1946), p. 9, analyzes the myth of the noble savage in these terms: "Nous y trouvons d'abord l'affirmation que le sauvage est, à la fois, meilleur et plus heureux que l'homme civilisé. Puis cette autre affirmation qu'il doit cet état de supériorité à ce qu'il vit selon la Nature."

⁴ Lucien Campeau, *La Première Mission d'Acadie (1602-1616)* (Québec, 1967), docs. 2, 3, 5, pp. 4-8. Marie de Medici's chaplain had the first missionaries promise to erect an oratory to St. Lawrence in the New World. *Archives Départementales de la Seine-Maritime, Série G, liasse 6652, fol. 1*. The greatest opposition seems to have come from Robert du Pontgravé, the son of François who was associated with Dutch merchants in Amsterdam for the exploitation of the Canadian trade – (see *Gemeente Archief Amsterdam*, Notarial Archives, *passim* from which relevant documents are shortly to be published by Jan Kupp), "non français mais turc, non turc mais athée," according to Lescarbot. Young Pontgravé opposed the conversion of the natives and accused Poutrincourt of being "un abuseur" who would sacrifice them "pour avoir leurs castors." Marc Lescarbot, *La Conversion des Sauvages qui ont esté baptizés en la Nouvelle France, cette année 1610* (Paris, 1610), pp. 23-24.

⁵ C. H. Laverdière, ed., *Œuvres de Champlain* (Quebec, 1870), t. iii, p. 163.

mais même qu'il y en a plus grand nombre à proportion que dans notre Europe civilisée.⁶

Montaigne had gone so far as to write about the duty of colonizing powers to “doucement polir et défricher” the natives and enlist their collaboration in the achievement of universal ideals seeing the latter were “nos égaux en tant qu’hommes.”⁷

Two aspects of the optimistic French view should be identified. Firstly, most of the early seventeenth century travelogues extolled the physical fitness and beauty, the marvellous dispositions, the hospitality and honesty of the Amerindians.⁸ Secondly, Frenchmen who were very conscious and proud of their cultural heritage found a challenge to elevate uncivilized and brutish men in an uncivilized environment to Christians refined in manners and improved in arts and learning above their natural state, “pour les tirer d’une habitude barbare à une vie civile et commode.”⁹ Louis Hébert affirmed, for example: “J’ai passé les mers pour venir secourir les sauvages plutôt que pour tout autre intérêt particulier.”¹⁰ Sieur de Cobes summarized the situation in 1608 in these terms:

Quant au reste, pour leur façon de vivre, ils sont fort brutaux, mais ils commencent à se civiliser, & à prendre nos mœurs, & nos deports mens, ils se laissent facilement instruire à la foy Chrestienne, sans se mostrer trop opiniâtres à leur

⁶ R. G. Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* (Cleveland, 1896-1901), Vol. LVIII, p. 84.

⁷ Labrouquère, *op. cit.*, p. 9; Gonnard, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-70. The myth of the noble savage is considered in such works as: Benjamin Bissell, *The American Indian in English Literature of the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven, 1925); Gilbert Chinard, *L’Exotisme américain dans la littérature française au XVII^e siècle* (Paris, 1911); Gilbert Chinard, *L’Amérique et le rêve exotique dans la littérature française au XVII^e et XVIII^e siècle* (Paris, 1913); H. N. Fairchild, *The Noble Savage. A Study in Romantic Naturalism* (New York, 1928); René Gonnard, *La Légende du Bon Sauvage* (Paris, 1946); Lewis Henke, *Aristotle and the American Indians* (New York, 1959); Stefan Lorant, ed., *The New World. The First Pictures of America with contemporary narratives of the French Settlements in Florida, 1562-1565* (New York, 1965).

⁸ Pierre d’Avity, *Description générale de l’Amérique, troisième partie du Monde* (Paris, 1637), pp. 30-32. Indian docility gave rise to hopes of rapid and mass conversion. See Thomas LeFevre, *Discours sommaire de la Navigation et du Commerce* (Rouen, 1650), pp. 205-208; P.A.C., Série J, “Journal en abrégé des voyages de Mons. d’Asseline de Ronual” (1662). The English travellers Francis Drake, Arthur Barlow and Walter Raleigh tended to be less enthusiastic about the aborigines than either the French and Spaniards according to Fairchild, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-22.

⁹ *Archives de l’Hôtel-Dieu, Québec, Lettre I*, Lamy to Rev. Mother Marie de St. Bonaventure, March 20, 1648.

¹⁰ René Gonnard, *Essai sur l’histoire de l’émigration* (Paris, 1923), p. 113.

Paganisme, tellement que s'il descendoit ça bas des Predicateurs ie croy qu'en peu de temps tout le pais se rendroit à la foy Chrestienne sans se faire autrement forcer, & mesme que par la le chemin seroit ouvert en tout le reste de l'Amérique pour y faire la conquête des ames, qui est plus que toutes les terres qu'on scauroit iamais conquerer.¹¹

These initial French contacts differed from the earlier Spanish contact with the Amerindians in four important respects : first, by the seventeenth century, nationalism was an operative factor; secondly, the zeal of the Counter-Reformation made itself felt; thirdly, the contact now was, for the most part, with semi-nomadic and not with sedentary peoples; fourthly, the pursuit of the fur trade encouraged aboriginal nomadism.

The French who came to North America were sustained by an idea of order, based as they believed on eternal and immutable religious principles. They found not an empty continent but an inhabited hemisphere and this posed two problems – one theoretical and the other practical. Theoretically, they had to understand this natural man, this savage. Practically, they had to overcome and dominate this man, they had to integrate him into their commercial, political and cultural patterns, into their idea of order. Thus Pierre de Gua, Sieur de Monts, was instructed “ de faire convertir, amener & instruire les peuples qui habitent en cette contrée, de present gens barbares, athées, sans foy ni religion au Christianisme, & en la creance & profession de notre foy & religion,” instructions which repeated and amplified by the Vice-Regent, the Duc de Montmorency, “ tacher d’en amener les nations à quelque profession de la Foy Chrétienne, civilisation de moeurs, reglement de leur vie, pratique & intelligence avec les François pour l’usage de leur commerce.”¹² Champlain petitioned Louis XIII for financial support for a “ seminary,” or boarding school, for rearing Indian children who would assist, it was expected, in the conversion of their elders. In 1624 Father Joseph Le Caron observed:

... il faut esperer qu'à mesure que la Colonie se peuplera, nous humaniserons les Barbares; ce qui est premièrement necessaire, leur esprit s'ouvrira & le bon sens dont ils ont le fond: on les policera par les loix & les manieres de vivre à la Françoisie, afin de les rendre capables d'entendre raison sur des Mysteres si élevez. Car tout ce qui regarde la vie humaine et civile, sont des Mysteres pour nos Barbares dans l'état present, & it faudra plus de dépense & plus de travaux pour les rendre hommes qu'il n'en a fallu pour faire Chrestiens des Peuples entiers ...¹³

¹¹ *Coppie d'une Lettre envoyée de la Nouvelle-France, ou Canada, par le Sieur de Cobs, Gentilhomme Poictevin, à un sien Amy* (Lyon, 1609), pp. 13-14. Sieur Bertrand in a letter to Monsieur de la Tronchaie, June 25, 1610, hinted at the use of force: *Lettre missive touchant la Conversion et Baptesme du Grand Sagamos de la Nouvelle France* (Paris, 1610), pp. 2.4. Of the Grand Sagamos he said that “ il promet faire baptiser les autres; autrement qu' il leur fera la guerre.”

¹² Marc Lescarbot, *Histoire de la Nouvelle-France* (Paris, 1617), livre iv, pp. 212, 218.

¹³ Chrestien Le Clercq, *Etablissement de la Foy dans la Nouvelle France* (Paris, 1691), pp. 264-265.

The Archbishop of Rouen, in baptizing a young Huron who was 16 years old (December 8, 1627) and who had been educated at Notre-Dame des Anges near Quebec, made much of the conversion of the natives.¹⁴ It is apparent that it was assumed that the Amerindians who were assimilated into French cultural patterns would necessarily venerate the God made in the French image. Assimilation and conversion were conceived as being synonymous undertakings but the Recollets soon were forced by experience to abandon this hypothesis.

The Jesuits who succeeded them did not profit from the Recollet experience but repeated the experiment changing their techniques only in 1639. Before long several distinctive Canadian innovations were accepted: first, the Jesuits became involved in elementary education; secondly, they accepted girls in their classrooms; thirdly, they co-operated with the secular clergy and seconded the missionary labours of the *religieuses* on the frontier.¹⁵

Religious enthusiasm in France fed the evangelical zeal of these cultural ambassadors in New France. Ecstatic religious zealots of the semi-secret militant Compagnie du Très Saint Sacrement once marched through the streets of a Norman town shouting that the faith had departed from France and that as “les fous de Jésus Christ” they would go to the New World to rebuild His kingdom.¹⁶ Most of the Messieurs et Dames de la Société de Notre-Dame de Montréal pour la Conversion des Sauvages which founded Montreal in 1642 were associated with the Compagnie,¹⁷ as were the Governors d’Ailleboust and de Mézy, Bishop Laval, the *curé* de Bernières, many of the seculars, Jesuits and *religieuses*. *Dévoisme* challenged Frenchmen to realize in America the pure and ideal Christian society. Catholic eschatology conjured up visions of an Indian Israel, of the millennial kingdom or the spiritual church of the mystics as opposed to the corrupted institutional church of the Papacy, and of the Third Age of the Holy Ghost.¹⁸ Both

¹⁴ *Bibliothèque Municipale, Le Havre, Manuscrits*, Vol. 282, fol. 70. On January 13, 1640 Cardinal Richelieu gave the revenues of a fifth share of the “droits et concessions” of the Company of New France belonging to Razilly for the “séminaires qui seront établis pour la nourriture, instruction et entretienment des enfants des sauvages du dict pain souz la conduite des pères Capucins.” Candide le Nant, *Pages glorieuses de l’Épopée canadienne* (Paris, 1927), p. 313.

¹⁵ J. B. Conacher, ed., *The History of Canada or New France by Father François du Creux, S.J.* (Toronto, 1951), Vol. I, pp. 198-199.

¹⁶ *Bibliothèque Municipale de Rouen, Papiers Féron*, MS. m.276. See also Maurice Souriau, *Le Mysticisme en Normandie au XVII^e Siècle* (Paris, 1923); E. R. Adair, “France and the Beginnings of New France,” *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. XXV, No. 3 (September, 1944), pp. 246-278; Raoul Allier, *La Cabale des Dévots, 1627-1666* (Paris, 1902), pp. 10-17; abbé Albert Tessier, “La Compagnie de Saint-Sacrement,” *Les Cahiers des Dix*, No. VII (1942), pp. 27-44.

¹⁷ Marie-Claire Daveluy, *La Société de Notre-Dame de Montréal, 1639-1663* (Montreal, 1965), pp. 17-45.

¹⁸ Catholic apocalypticism in the 17th century owes much to the prophetic system elaborated by the mediaeval Calabrian abbot and hermit, Joachim of Fiore (1145-1202). For an account of the nature and persistence of his views

Bishop Laval and Marie de l'Incarnation saw the possibility of restoring the purity of the primitive church. Some equated the discovery of the New World with the imminent end of the world and the return of Christ. The diffusion of these ideas may be seen in the fact that a fur trader and soldier like Lamothe Cadillac should have believed firmly and written at some length about the Amerindian descent from the lost ten tribes of Israel.¹⁹

Evangelical zeal was countered by three forces in particular. Two are related to the basic materialism of the commercial counter of New France – first, the problem created by the numerous Frenchmen who did not practice the virtues extolled by the missionaries; secondly, the few but influential Frenchmen in France, in New France, and especially in the Dutch and English colonies who practised a deviant Protestant form of Christianity.²⁰ The third counter force grew out of nativistic religious conceptions. The French missionary personally was an enigma, his way of life a mystery, and his doctrine a riddle to the Amerindians. Such concepts as abstinence, celibacy and apostolic poverty could mean little to nomadic tribesmen. Champlain had remarked of them that “ils croyent que tous les songes qu'ils font sont véritables” and experienced missionaries wrote (in 1670) about “la Divinité du Songe, qui est le principe de toutes leurs erreurs, &

which predicated an Age of the Spirit when property, institutional forms, ecclesiasticism and the sacramental system would give way to a spiritual age of joy and freedom (in direct opposition to the Augustinian view that the Kingdom of God had already been realized on earth in the institutional church) consult Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (London, 1957), pp. 97-107. This eschatology became part of “the common stock of European social mythology” and lies behind Auguste Comte's three phases of history, Marx's three stages of communism and the concept of a Third Reich. Other relevant works on this subject are: G. Boas, *Essays on Primitivism and Related Ideas in the Middle Ages* (Baltimore, 1948); S.J. Case, *The Millennial Hope* (Chicago, 1918); M. Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (London, 1955); J.L. Phelan, *The Millennial Kingdom of the Franciscans in the New World* (Berkeley, 1956); P. Vielliaud, *La Fin du Monde* (Paris, 1952).

¹⁹ Milton Quaiñe, ed., *The Western Country in the 17th Century. The Memoirs of Antoine Lamothe Cadillac and Pierre Liette* (New York, 1962), pp. 535-8. The English shared these views. Thomas Thorowgood, *Jews in America, or Probabilities that the Americans are of that Race* (London, 1650), drew the rejoinder, Hamon Lestrangle, *Americans No Jews or Improbabilities that the Americans are of that race* (London, 1652). Daniel G. Brinton, *The Myths of the New World, A Treatise on the Symbolism and Mythology of the Red Race of America* (New York, 1868), is still a useful treatment of speculation regarding the Amerindians.

²⁰ For an example of the kind of publications that gave French Catholics great concern see Ezechiel Carré, *Echantillon de la Doctrine que les jésuites enseignent aux Sauvages du Nouveau Monde* (Boston, 1690), p. 11.

comme l'ame de leur Religion."²¹ It is only recently that the psychoanalytic quality of these symptomatic and visitation dreams has been understood by Europeans.²²

Brother Sagard was among the first to express concern about the outcome of the contact between an acquisitive, commercial, Catholic culture and a primitive, semi-nomadic, communal Amerindian culture. He wrote about men "brutaux, athés et charnels, qui empeschoient la conuersion et amendement de ce pauvre peuple," the Hurons, who by contrast are described as having "l'esprit et l'entendement assez bon, et ne sont point si grossiers et si lourdaux que nous nous imaginons en France."²³ He had great hope that "les sauvages mesmes les vacabons s'appriivoiseroient peu à peu" until French traders, described by Father Jamet as "grands Jureurs du St nom de Dieu" and "vivant en un grand libertinage" appeared on the scene contradicting by lip and life the exhortations of the Franciscans.²⁴ The compiler LeFevre enumerated the ordinary factors to be overcome by the missionaries: diversity of languages, inter-tribal rivalries, nomadism, nativistic religion.²⁵

The French imposed the fur trade on the Amerindians in the seventeenth century but by the eighteenth century the Indians imposed a continuation of this trade on the French as a condition of alliance in the colonial wars. In imposing commerce the French undermined the communal concepts, the economy and tribal authority of the Algonquins and introduced the debaucheries of the brandy traffic.²⁶ Such dysfunctional effects as loss of life and property, sexual deviation,

²¹ Laverdière, *op. cit.*, tome iii, p. 163. See also François du Creux, *Historia Canadensis* (Paris, 1664), Vol I, p. 84. For information on the Hurons see Thwaites, *op. cit.*, Vol. XXXIII, pp. 188-190, and Vol. LIV, pp. 64-74 on the Iroquois. Particularly revealing concerning the importance of dreams is the comment in Vol. LIV, p. 92.

²² Anthony F. C. Wallace, "Dreams and the Wishes of the Soul: A Type of Psychoanalytic Theory among the Seventeenth Century Iroquois," *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 60 (1958), pp. 234-248; also J. S. Lincoln, "Indian Dreams: Their significance to the Native and their relation to the Cultural Pattern" (Berkeley, University of California unpublished M.A. thesis, 1933).

²³ Gabriel Sagard-Théodat, *Le Grand Voyage du Pays des Hurons* (Paris, 1632), pp. 178, 185.

²⁴ *P.A.C., B.N.*, 500 de Colbert, Vol 483, Denis Jamet to Cardinal de Joyeuse, July 15, 1615, fol. 582.

²⁵ LeFevre, *op. cit.*, pp. 204-208; see also Harold Hickerson, "The Feast of the Dead among the Seventeenth Century Algonkians of the Upper Great Lakes," *American Anthropologist*, Vol. LXIII (February, 1960), pp. 81-107; also Henry B. Jones, *The Death Song of the "Noble Savage": A Study in the Idealization of the American Indian* (Chicago, 1924).

²⁶ A. G. Bailey, "The Indian Problem in Early Canada," *America Indigena*, Vol. II, No. 3 (July 1942), pp. 35-39; Alfred G. Bailey, *The Conflict of European and Eastern Algonquin Cultures, 1504-1700* (St. John, 1937). A less pessimistic interpretation of cultural contact is B. G. Trigger, "Settlement as an Aspect of

and alcohol-released aggression ensued and were accentuated by the lack of adequate means of social control. With the Europeans came new diseases of epidemic proportions,²⁷ the depletion of game, and the intensification of tribal warfare. Scalping and intensive torture, according to some authors, while they may have had their origins in the cult of the skull and sacrifices to the sun or war god respectively, spread from the Iroquois (when this Confederacy came under pressure from Dutch and French fur trade rivals) to the Algonquins.²⁸ There appears to be a direct correlation between the presence of Europeans and the introduction of firearms and the spread and intensification of so-called Indian barbarity. Was it any wonder that the Amerindians feared Frenchification and evangelization? Furthermore, in the Indian conception good magic or medicine was a safeguard of the moral order and highly approved but evil magic or sorcery was the source of misfortunes which overtook the tribe and was greatly to be avoided. The association of baptism with death, for example, placed the missionaries in the category of evil workers and sorcerers. This very elementary observation has been overlooked because the bias in interpreting the events recorded in such sources as the *Relations* has been in favour of the self-sacrificing and courageous

Iroquian Adaptation at the Time of Contact," *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 65 (1963), pp. 92-93. For Trigger's views on the role of the missionaries in the colonial economy see his "The Jesuits and the Fur Trade," *Ethnohistory*, Vol. XII, No. 1 (1965), pp. 30-53.

²⁷ The common cold, influenza, measles and particularly smallpox took a heavy toll among the Amerindians. On the other hand, syphilis was probably American in origin (it is now believed to have been prevalent in the Americas in endemic form) because all Indian dialects had a word for it and there is evidence of pathological damage to the skull and long bones of the arms and legs of skeletons of the pre-European period. Two direct results were the rapid spread of syphilis, or "epidemics" of "French disease" after 1495, in Europe and the profitable trade in guaiac wood from South America. Paul Herrmann, *The World Unveiled. The Story of Exploration from Columbus to Livingstone* (London, 1958), pp. 217-236.

²⁸ There is a growing literature on the subject. Of special interest and value are: William N. Fenton, "Problems arising from the Historic Northeastern Position of the Iroquois," *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections*, Vol. 100, pp. 159-251; Regina Flannery, *An Analysis of Coastal Algonkian Culture* (Washington, 1939), p. 126; Martin Gusinde, "Culte du crâne, têtes-trophées et scalps," *Revue Ciba*, No. 63 (décembre 1963), pp. 2258-2283; A. Irving Hallowell, "Some Psychological Characteristics of the Northeastern Indians," *Man in Northeastern America* (Cambridge, 1947), Vol. III, pp. 195-225; Diamond Jesness, *The Indians of Canada* (Ottawa, 1932), p. 279; Nathaniel Knowles, "The Torture of Captives by the Indians of Eastern North America," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 82, No. 2 (March 1940), pp. 151-225. For eye-witness reports of platform torture see Arthur T. Adams, ed., *The Explorations of Pierre Esprit Radisson* (Minneapolis, 1961), pp. 19-21, and J. Tailhan, ed., *Mémoire sur les mœurs, coutumes et religion des Sauvages de l'Amérique septentrionale par Nicholas Perrot* (Leipzig, 1864), pp. 146-147.

missionaries, in other words a European and Catholic bias. This represents a gross misreading of the factual accounts of the missionaries relative to Indian attitudes and beliefs.

Other aspects of acculturation in the seventeenth century have been misunderstood as well. The *coureurs-de-bois*, as a new social type, were not long the teenage “interpreters” such as Vignau, Marsolet and Brulé sent by Champlain to live among the Amerindians, to secure their trade and friendship. They were, especially after 1632, family men and adolescent sons attempting to supplement family income. Indeed, the fur trade, illicit in good part, was the real means of subsistence for immigrant families from France and the chief means of upward social mobility for Canadians. A careful reading of the *Relations* will also indicate that the French missionaries tended to adopt the language, customs, manners, and to some extent shared some of the views, of their aboriginal hosts. A few became as it were religious chieftains among the Amerindians.

The results of the contact between Amerindians and Europeans involved in the fur trade and carrying trade was even more disconcerting for the proponents of the assimilation policy. Indeed, when it was realized that Frenchmen who came into contact with the Amerindians often adopted the aboriginal way of life, and that the tendency to “Americanization,” or adaptation to the environment, was one of progressive barbarization (as evidenced later in the declining cultural level in New France) the missionaries sought counteractive measures. They adopted the segregationist scheme of the Franciscan missionary, Geronimo de Mendieta, which was the source of the *reducciones* of the Spanish Jesuits in South America. The *réserve* founded at Sillery in 1637²⁹ was the first Canadian version of this segregationist device which has continued in some form to the present day. The reservation system was supposed to render the nomads sedentary, insulate and isolate them from adverse influences, and nurture the “true believers” to become the nucleus of a cell of the New Israel. Even Governor Denonville had some praise for the system in 1685:

Je trouve tout ce que nous avons de sauvages établis dans les bourgades comme à Sillery, Lorette, au Sault de la prairie, à la Montagne de Montreal, tout cela Monseigneur est en vérité tenu dans une discipline et une règle à faire plaisir à voir. Il n’y a pas assurance de ville et de village en France si bien réglé, qu’en tous ces lieux là; tant qu’il n’y a pas d’ivrognes qui arivent de nos habitations.³⁰

The missionary Bigot, on the contrary, complained that the reservation or domiciled Indians fell prey to drunkenness and immorality too. What he failed to realize was that the Iroquois accepted alcohol with eagerness, not so much for its taste, but to produce intoxication as a means of stimulating vision experience. At a later period it served as a release for tension, but the dream-making concept never

²⁹ *Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris), MSS Français*, Nos. 15619, 15620, 18112, 18617.

³⁰ *P.A.C., Series C11A*, Denonville to Minister, November 13, 1685, Vol. VII, pp. 46-47. Mendieta’s thesis is elaborated in J. L. Phelan, *The Millennial Kingdom of the Franciscans in the New World* (Berkeley, 1956), pp. 1.159.

disappeared entirely.³¹ The professors of the University of Toulouse, in a signed statement related to brandy trafficking which does not seem to have been properly documented, dealt a heavy blow to the partisans of segregation by observing that although some domiciled natives were capable of leading well-regulated lives it was noticeable that conversions were no more frequent among them than among the nomads.³² Marie de l'Incarnation noted that the dislocation of the communal life and primitive hunting economy of the Algonquins by the individualistic mores of the French traders was particularly severe.³³ Their traditional institutions and patterns of living were disrupted before the missionaries could replace the former culture with the more substantial values and attributes of European culture. This has remained basically the "Indian problem" of Canada. It might be added that the fact that the reserves, originally organized to attract the aborigines to a sedentary life in proximity of European settlements, eventually were populated by refugees from the continuing pagan villages and encampments indicates that the mission represented a substitute for the native organization. The involvement of these "domiciled" converted Amerindians in the illicit fur trade with the English colonies suggests that non-ideological factors may have figured in the decision to break with the tribal community and resettle on a reserve. The measure of success of the Jesuits and Sulpicians, therefore, in imposing Catholicism on these reserves was not exactly a case of acculturation but more exactly they added Catholicism to the cultural overlay.

Did segregation, necessarily imply prejudicial discrimination? Did the French differ from the English or Dutch in their attitudes towards the Amerindians? Had not Cardinal Richelieu proclaimed a certain equality in 1627 in the charter of the Company of New France:

... que les descendants des François qui s'habitueront audit Pais ensemble les Sauvages qui seront amenés à la connoissance de la Foi et en ferraient profession, seront censés & réputés naturels François, & comme tels pourront venir habiter en France quand bon leur semblera ...³⁴

³¹ Edmund S. Carpenter, "Alcohol in the Iroquois Dream Quest," *American Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol. CXVI, No. 2 (August 1959), pp. 148-151; James E. O'Meara, "Control of the liquor traffic among the Indians of New France and the work of the Church to control it" (Unpublished Master's thesis, John Carroll University, 1950), covers well-known ground.

³² E. Réveillaud, ed., *Histoire chronologique de la Nouvelle-France* (Paris, 1888), p. 189.

³³ Joyce Marshall, ed., *Word from New France. The Selected Letters of Marie de l'Incarnation* (Toronto, 1967), pp. 76, 361. The deplorable state of the Algonquins is described in A.A.Q., *Eglise du Canada*, Report of a missionary, 1671, Vol. VI, p. 9.

³⁴ *Etablissement de la Compagnie du Canada sous le titre de Nouvelle-France par les Articles des vingt-neuf Avril et sept May mil six cens vint-sept* (Paris, 1725), article xvii, p. 10. See also *Edict du Roy pour l'Etablissement de la Compagnie de la Nouvelle-France* (Paris, 1657); *A.S.Q., Polygraphie III*, No. 2; Archives Départementales de la Seine-Maritime, Series G, Liasse 2187, Plumatif

There is evidence, nevertheless, that the French discriminated against the Amerindians in matters of precedence, in legal rights, in proprietary rights, in trade, in supplying firearms and horses, and even in consulting them as allies.³⁵ In considering what fragmentary evidence there is of Amerindian views of the French it seems that the stereotype of a Frenchman was a trader who brought the firearms, ammunition, utensils, knives, liquor and trinkets the natives came to depend upon, in contrast to the stereotype of the Englishman to the south who was a farmer dispossessing sedentary tribes. These stereotypes do not indicate any basic difference in the attitudes of the English and French towards the Amerindians.

Attitudes changed with the passage of time as the abandonment of miscegenation indicates. Champlain had told the Hurons that if they would accept the Catholic religion brought by the Recollets the French would come to live among them in their villages, would marry their daughters, and would teach them their arts and trades. This was a very natural decision in an overseas base with a preponderance of males; it overlooked completely such elementary consideration as the influence of the mother in the culture of the children. The pious founders of Montreal, in 1642, repeated the expectation that racial inter-marriages would result in mass conversions, a marked increase in the colonial population, and a rapid development of the agricultural potential of the St. Lawrence lowlands.³⁶ Both Amerindians and French hesitated to regularize their alliances, however. The Jesuits, on several occasions, openly opposed such unions and the state officials kept urging miscegenation but withheld all substantial inducements. Louis XIV instructed the Intendant Bouteroue in 1668 to “employer toute l’authorité temporelle pour attirer les dits sauvages parmi les français, ce qui se peut faire par les mariages et par l’éducation de leurs enfans,” because the missionaries held to a policy of “tenant les sauvages convertis dans leur forme de vie ordinaire.”³⁷

du chapitre (Rouen), December 8, 1627. For Cardinal Richelieu’s views see André Chevillaud, *Les Desseins de S. Em. de Richelieu pour l’Amérique, ce qui s’y est passé de plus remarquable depuis l’établissement des colonies, et un ample traité du naturel, religion et mœurs des Indiens insulaires et de la terre ferme* (Rennes, 1659). Equally relevant are the following studies: William T. Hagan, *The Indian in North American History* (New York, 1963); Roy H. Pearce, *The Savages of America. A Study of the Indian and of the Idea of Civilization* (Baltimore, 1953); Gilbert Roe, *The Indian and the Horse* (Norman, 1951); Frank C. Hibben, *L’Homme primitif américain* (Paris, 1953); Ruth Underhill, *Red Man’s America* (New York, 1953).

³⁵ See my article, “Problems of Assimilation in New France, 1603-1645,” *French Historical Studies*, Vol. IV, No. 3 (1966), pp. 265-289.

³⁶ *Les Véritables Motifs de Messieurs et Dames de la Société de Notre-Dame de Montréal* (n.p., 1643), p. 107; François Giry, *La Vie de M Jean Jacques Olier, prêtre, fondateur et premier Supérieur du Séminaire de Saint-Sulpice* (Paris, 1687), pp. 98-99.

³⁷ *P.A.C., Series B*, Instructions to Bouteroue, April, 1668, Vol. 1, p. 83. Forencouragements to miscegenation see Thwaites, *op. cit.*, Vol. IX, pp. 216-218; X, 26, XIV, 19-21, 263; also C. H. Laverdière & H. R. Casgrain, eds., *Le Journal des Jésuites* (Québec, 1871), pp. 281, 312; *Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu*

However, he offered neither inducements such as dowries or allowances nor a comprehensive policy of assimilation.

The role of the state may be illustrated from Talon's Intendancy. On his return to Quebec in the autumn of 1670, Talon remarked on the clerical interest in seeking "des nouveaux sujets pour les eslever dans nos mœurs, nos coutumes, notre langue et notre enseignement" and suggested to Colbert that it would be good to sustain this inclination "par deux ou trois lignes exprimant votre approbation." Almost dutifully, the Minister of the Marine replied the following spring with instructions which Talon conveyed to the clergy of the colony:

Travailler tousjours par toute sorte de moyens à exciter tous les Ecclesiastiques et Religieux qui sont audit pays d'eslever parmy eux le plus grand nombre des dits enfans qu'il leur sera possible, afin qu'estant instruits dans les maximes de notre religion et dans nos mœurs ils puissent composer avec les habitans de Canada un mesme peuple, et fortifier par ce moyen cette colonie là.³⁸

Frenchification was viewed as a means of achieving the populationist objective of the mercantilists while averting Louis XIV's fear of depopulating France through emigration.³⁹

Two possible alternatives to the projected ideals of evangelization and Frenchification has presented themselves early in the seventeenth century. First, the Amerindians might be destroyed as Montaigne had warned.⁴⁰ Secondly, the French might become barbarized and assimilated into Amerindian society. Governor Denonville reported to the Minister in 1685:

L'on a creu bien longtemps que l'aprouche des sauvages de nos habitations estoit un bien tres considerable pour accoutumer ces peuples a vivre comme nous et a sinstruire de nre. religion, je m'aperçoy Monseigneur q. tout le contraire en est arivé car au lieu de les acoutumer a nos Loys, je vous assure qu'ils nous communiquent fort tout ce qu'ils ont de plus mechant, et ne prennent eux mesmes

(*Rome*), *Gallia* 109, fol. 3, "Pierre de Sesmaisons: Raisons qui peuvent Induire Sa Sainteté à permettre aux Français ... d'épouser des filles Sauvages..."

³⁸ *P.A.C., Series B*, Instructions to Talon, February, 1671, Vol. III, pp. 66-67; P. Margry, ed., *Découverte et Etablissements des Français dans l'Ouest et dans le sud de l'Amérique septentrionale* (Paris, 1879), Talon to Colbert, November 10, 1670, Vol. I, p. 92.

³⁹ See my article "Le Colbertisme," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, Vol. XVIII, No. 1 (1964), pp. 64-84; Vol. XVIII, No. 2 (1964), pp. 252-266.

⁴⁰ Donald H. Frame, ed., *The Complete Works of Montaigne. Essays, Travel Journal, Letters* (Stanford, 1957), Book iii, p. 693. The same attitude is found in Chrestien Le Clercq, *Nouvelle Relation de la Gaspésie* (Paris, 1691), pp. 267 ff. Althea E. Currie, "The American Indian as portrayed by Montaigne, Voltaire and Chateaubriand" (Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Illinois, 1930), is relevant.

q'ce qu'il y a de mauvais et de vitieux en Nous.⁴¹

As the French trade and Catholic missions undermined the stabilizing factors in indigenous culture the concept of Amerindians as bloodthirsty, filthy and depraved barbarians replaced the view of the natural savage. Bishop Laval upon his arrival to Canada displayed uncommon concern for the native Christians, preferred them in religious ceremonies (to the consternation of the white settlers), and went so far as to have church bells tolled at the death of an Indian convert, “qui ne se fait jamais à la mort d'un sauvage” observed the Jesuit Superior.⁴² To sedentary life, segregated reserves and miscegenation was added the device of integrated education. In practice, however, the religious segregated Europeans and Amerindians in most schools.⁴³ Within a few years Laval was blessing a “croisade” against the Iroquois as “Turcs” deserving only annihilation, and he eventually excluded Indian children from his trades school at St. Joachim.⁴⁴ Mother Marie de l'Incarnation supported such views:

On ne les met pas pourtant en la bourgade des Français, crainte qu'ils n'en imitent d'aucuns. Quoiqu'ils soient assez sages dans ce pays, mais les sauvages ne sont pas capables de la liberté française quoique honnête.⁴⁵

At best the practice followed the maxim of “separate but equal.”

To some extent the policy of Frenchification failed because it was impractical. Marie de l'Incarnation commented as follows on Louis XIV's continued insistence that efforts to assimilate the natives be redoubled:

Si Sa Majesté le veut, nous sommes prêts de le faire par l'obéissance que nous lui devons, et surtout parce que nous sommes toutes disposées à faire ce qui sera à la plus grande gloire de Dieu. C'est pourtant une chose très difficile, pour ne pas dire impossible, de les franciser ou civiliser. Nous en avons l'expérience plus que tout autre, et nous avons remarqué que de cent de celles qui ont passé par nos mains à peine en avons nous civilisé une. Nous y trouvons de la docilité et de l'esprit, mais lorsque qu'on y pense le moins, elles montent par dessus notre clôture et s'en vont

⁴¹ P.A.C., Series C11A, Denonville to Minister, November 13, 1685, Vol. VII, pp. 46-47.

⁴² *Journal des Jésuites*, p. 224; Thwaites, *op. cit.*, Vol. LII, p. 244. For more details see also *Journal des Jésuites*, pp. 17-18, 20, 31, 102-103, 122, 126, 139, 140; A.S.Q., *Lettres N*, No. 5; Sacra Rituum Congregatio, Sectio Historia, *Quebecen. Beatificationis et Canonizationis Ven. Servi Dei Francisci de Montmorency Laval* (Rome, 1961), Does. xviii, xxiii, pp. 37-39; C. Martin, *Lettres de la Vén. Mère Marie de l'Incarnation* (Paris, 1681), pp. 387-557-558.

⁴³ For the activities of the Capuchins in Acadia see Candide le Nant, *op. cit.*, pp. 141-142.

⁴⁴ *Au Roi. Raisons qui font voir combien il est important au roi et à son Etat de défendre ses sujets de la Nouvelle-France, dit Canadas, contre les invasions des Iroquois* (n.p., n.d.), indicates how a “public opinion” was created in Canada in the 1650's.

⁴⁵ Dom Albert Jamet, ed., *Marie de l'Incarnation, Ursuline de Tours, Ecrits Spirituels et Historiques* (Paris, 1935), Vol. III, p. 378.

courir dans les bois avec leurs parents, où elles trouvent plus de plaisir que dans tous les agréments de nos maisons françaises.⁴⁶

The Ursulines had succeeded in training only 7 or 8 girls by 1685 who eventually married Frenchmen and took up a sedentary life in the settlements. Neither church nor state provided sufficient men, money or materials to clothe and house all the Amerindians in European fashion, to surround them with models of French civil life, to provide educational facilities for all native children. These were unthinkable notions in the seventeenth century, but they were nevertheless the logical prerequisites for the assimilation of an entire aboriginal population.

The policy of Frenchification failed, to some extent, because the Amerindians had a will to survive, they possessed a strong sense of their identity, and they were a self-reliant, independent, self-sufficient and well-adjusted people in the Canadian environment. Sagard had said at the beginning of the century that the Amerindians considered their children wiser and more intelligent than the French, whom they regarded as very unintelligent by comparison with themselves.⁴⁷ Peter Kalm was to opine in the eighteenth century that although numerous Frenchmen cohabited with Amerindian women and adopted the savage way of life “there is on the contrary scarcely one instance of an Indian adopting the European customs” and that the Amerindians were “too proud” to learn French.⁴⁸

Are we to conclude that the attempts of evangelization were any more successful than those of Frenchification? It may be noted that the martyrs included some Amerindians but the saints were without exception French, not even Canadian. Father Lalemant estimated that about 10,600 converts were made in a forty-year period, a number which may seem reasonably impressive but which represented but a small proportion of the tribes contacted.⁴⁹ About two thousand of these were death-bed baptisms which added little to the influence of the church militant. There were Indian mystics and some of the neophytes practiced self-flagellation as a form of penance (associated in Europe since the thirteenth century with eschatological movements) mingling their blood with their tears during Holy Week observances.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, there were no Amerindian priests,

⁴⁶ L'abbé Richaudeau, *Lettres de la Révérende Mère Marie de l'Incarnation* (Tournai, 1876), Vol. II, p. 372. Saint-Vallier expressed himself clearly on the same subject—A.S.Q., *Lettres P*, No. 47, Saint-Vallier to Louis XIV, 1686.

⁴⁷ George M. Wrong, ed., *The Long Journey to the country of the Hurons* (Toronto, 1939), pp. 139-140.

⁴⁸ Adolph B. Benson, ed., *Peter Kalm's Travels in North America* (New York, 1966), pp. 456-457.

⁴⁹ L. Pouliot, *Etude sur les Relations des Jésuites de la Nouvelle-France* (Montreal, 1940), p. 233, indicates that there were 16,014 conversions between 1632 and 1672, the most fruitful years for the missions being 1649 and 1650.

⁵⁰ Léon Pouliot, “Etats mystiques chez les Convertis Indiens dans la Nouvelle-France,” *Société canadienne d'histoire de l'Eglise catholique, Rapport 1939-1940* (1940), pp. 99-106. Self-flagellation as a form of penance was closely related to Catholic apocalypticism from its origins in 1260 to its introduction

no Amerindian nuns,⁵¹ and no Amerindian teachers.

In attempting to draw together this fragmentary and diffuse information, the conclusion that imposes itself is that the French, as a minority group dispersed over a large territory and less well-adjusted to the Canadian environment in several respects than the natives, were being assimilated all too frequently into Amerindian society. Nicholas Perrot put it this way:

Tellement que ces Canadiens se rendirent semblables aux sauvages dont ils copièrent si bien le libertinage qu'ils oublièrent ce qu'ils [devoient] à la subordination et discipline française, et, si je l'ose dire, au Christianisme même.⁵²

Christianization or evangelization was hampered by the presence of Frenchman, not Frenchification.

Aculturation, therefore, was often a process of Americanization of European settlers and traders.

to North America by the missionaries. Cf. Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (London, 1957), pp. 124-128.

⁵¹ A Huron girl was admitted to the Hôtel-Dieu of Quebec in 1657 and when after eight months as a postulant she succumbed to a fatal illness she was permitted to take her final vows two days before her death. The annalist remarked in 1716: "C'est la première et la seule Sauvage jusqu'à présent à qui Dieu ait accordé la grâce de la vocation Religieuse." Only in the twentieth century was an Indian ordained to the Roman Catholic priesthood. Cf. Frederick Eberschweiler, "An Indian Clergy Impossible," *Catholic World*, Vol. 65 (1897), pp. 815-824; L. W. Reilly, "Why there is no Indian Priest," *American Ecclesiastical Review*, Vol. IV (1890), pp. 267-280.

⁵² J. Tailhan, ed., *Mémoire sur les Moeurs, coutumes et religion des Sauvages* (Leipzig, 1864), pp. 130-131. For the influence of the North-American environment on the Europeans see: E. Russell Carter, *The Gift is Rich* (New York, 1955); R. F. Heizer, "The American-Indian: background and contributions," in F. J. Brown & J. S. Roucek, eds., *One America* (New York, 1952); A. F. Chamberlin, "The Contributions of the American Indian to civilization," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, Vol. 16 (1905), pp. 91-126; Felix S. Cohen, "Americanizing the White Man," *The American Scholar* (Spring, 1952); E. E. Edwards, "American Indians' contribution to civilization," *Minnesota History*, Vol. XV (1934), pp. 255-272; Leo J. Frachtenberg, "Our Indebtedness to the American Indian," *Wisconsin Archaeologist*, Vol. XIV (1914), pp. 64-69; A. Irving Hallowell, "The Impact of the American Indian on American Culture," *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 59 (1957), pp. 201-217; Diamond Jenness, "Canada's Debt to the Indians," *Canadian Geographical Journal*, Vol. 18 (1939), pp. 268-275; Clark Wissler, "The Influence of the aboriginal Indian culture on American life," in Alain Locke & B. J. Stern, eds., *When Peoples Meet* (New York, 1946); Clark Wissler, "Contributions of the American Indian," in F. J. Brown & J. S. Roucek, eds., *Our Racial and National Minorities* (New York, 1937).