

**A Moral Portrait of the Indian of the St. Lawrence  
in One *Relation* of New France,  
Written by Paul Le Jeune, s.j.**

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In recent years, the early literature concerning New France, particularly the writings of explorers, missionaries, and colonial officials, has been undergoing a revisionist reading. One of the main focuses of this revision has been the contact between European and native peoples and cultures. Among the most important writings concerning the first in-depth contact between the French and the Indians of Canada in the seventeenth century are, of course, the Jesuit Relations, missionary reports published in France only months after being written, and contained in over forty separate volumes, almost all appearing in consecutive years between 1632 and 1673. These missionary letters and their authors have come lately under steady scrutiny with much less sympathy, or with scarcely veiled hostility, in a kind of neo-Voltairian or neo-Parkmanian spirit. This new criticism sometimes resembles the old criticism of many non-Catholic, non-French clerics or historians of the nineteenth century, but this time, ironically, its proponents are just as likely or more likely to be found—and often with a vengeance—among French Canadians (mainly Québécois).<sup>1</sup>

This article does not claim that the new criticism has absolutely no

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<sup>1</sup> This revisionist approach is well exemplified by some articles in *Les figures de l'Indien* (Cahiers du département d'études littéraires 9, Université du Québec à Montréal, 1988). This volume contains a collection of papers, given mostly by literary critics, at an October 1985 colloquium held at the Université du Québec in Montréal. The same approach can be found in a few papers read at another colloquium, held at Clermont-Ferrand, France, earlier in 1985 and published in *Les jésuites parmi les hommes aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles* (Clermont-Ferrand: Publications de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de Clermont-Ferrand, 1987, Nouvelle série, Fascicule 25). Perhaps the most read anthropologist one can place in this group is Bruce Trigger, engaged in many face-offs with the historian Lucien Campeau, s.j., editor of a new critical edition of the Jesuit *Relations* and allied documents, and specialist in the history of pre-Conquest Canada.

validity; it does intend to point out a failure in a particular case, an article by Yvon Le Bras which appeared in *Les Figures de l'Indien* (1988), a collection of papers given at an October 1985 colloquium held at the Université du Québec in Montréal.<sup>2</sup> Le Bras' paper examined two chapters in Jesuit Father Paul Le Jeune's *Relation* of 1634. These two chapters contain what is surely the most striking moral portrait by a Frenchman of the Montagnais Indians of the St. Lawrence Valley and its hinterlands. Other authors of Le Jeune's century, Jesuit and non-Jesuit, portrayed Indian nations of New France, but none described the Montagnais in such a detailed, systematic way as did Le Jeune in this unique portrait. Moreover, the *Relation* of 1634 remains today among the most frequently quoted of these annual reports.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, Le Bras' paper toys superficially with Le Jeune's capital description of the Montagnais, misunderstanding and even explicitly setting aside the very philosophical and theological categories of thought used by Le Jeune in his moral portrait.<sup>4</sup>

The following study will develop still further the present author's previous analyses of the two chapters in question; those studies were and remain an original contribution to understanding Le Jeune's mentality as well as the structure and meaning of his portrait of the Montagnais.

Practically nothing is known of Le Jeune's life, and nothing of his education, prior to his entering the Jesuit novitiate in Paris in 1613. Born in

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<sup>2</sup> Yvon Le Bras, "L'Autre des *Relations* de Paul Le Jeune," in *Les figures de l'Indien*, pp. 141-49.

<sup>3</sup> In format, content, and style, Le Jeune's *Relation* of 1634 set the example, along with some of Le Jeune's other *Relations*, for the whole series. However, this does not mean that the several authors of the *Relations* of New France all described the different native nations in exactly the same way (that would be the subject of another article).

<sup>4</sup> And yet, eight months before Le Bras read his paper at the 1985 colloquium, this author informed Le Bras of a paper he had read in Paris in 1974 (published in 1975; it dealt with Le Jeune's first three *Relations*; see below) and – at Le Bras' insistent request – of the whereabouts of his thesis (1978), both of which delved into Le Jeune's 1634 portrait of the Montagnais in great detail, in particular the thesis. Le Bras' published paper (1988) gave no reference to these two analyses of the same material he was treating. Cf. Charles Principe, "Trois *Relations de la Nouvelle-France* écrites par le Père Paul Le Jeune (1632, 1633, 1634)", in *Cahiers de l'Association Internationale des Etudes Françaises*, 27 (mai 1975), pp. 83-108; "Le portrait des Sauvages dans les *Relations de la Nouvelle-France* écrites par le Père Paul Le Jeune de 1632 à 1642" (Paris-Sorbonne, 1978; unpublished; Prix Sainte-Marie d'Histoire, 1978; revised 1987: "Les portraits du Sauvage ..."); see also "Les jésuites missionnaires auprès des Amérindiens du Canada," dans *Les jésuites parmi les hommes aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles* (Clermont-Ferrand: Publications de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de Clermont-Ferrand, 1987, Nouvelle série, Fascicule 25), pp. 309-17. The last article is a revision of a paper read by this author at the colloquium *Les jésuites parmi les hommes ...* held at Clermont-Ferrand in April 1985.

Champagne in 1592, he was converted, according to Jesuit sources, from Calvinism to Catholicism at the age of sixteen. He studied philosophy at the Jesuit college at La Flèche (1615-1616). After teaching Latin grammar at Rennes and Bourges, he studied theology at the college of Clermont in Paris (1622-1626). For our purposes, it can be presumed that the philosophy and theology studied by Le Jeune followed the prescriptions of the *Ratio studiorum* which made Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas the main authorities.<sup>5</sup> He spent two years teaching rhetoric at Nevers (1626-1628), before doing his third year of novitiate at Rouen under the direction of Father Louis Lallemand (1628-1629). After another year teaching rhetoric (Caen, 1629-1630), he was appointed superior of the Jesuit residence at Dieppe. On 31 March 1632, he was suddenly appointed superior of the new Jesuit mission in Canada.<sup>6</sup>

Thus Paul Le Jeune was almost forty years old when he was sent by his Jesuit superiors to reopen the order's mission in New France, restored to France by the treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye. As was required of every Jesuit superior, he sent a report to his Provincial in Paris, dated at Quebec, 28 August 1632; it was published before the end of the year as a *Brief Relation* of his voyage to Canada.<sup>7</sup>

In this first letter and in subsequent *Relations*, Le Jeune dutifully described the peoples encountered, as St. Francis Xavier and St. Ignatius had directed all Jesuit missionaries to do. He sometimes called the St. Lawrence Indians whom he met by their band or national name, the Montagnais or the Algonquins, as the case might be. More generally, however, he used the generic name "Sauvages," following the vocabulary of the time, that is, without the strong modern connotation of savagery, but containing the simplistic notion that these preliterate original peoples of Canada had little social and political organization.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. François de Dainville, *La naissance de l'humanisme moderne* (Paris: 1940; Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1969), 54,65-66, 77-78, 93-94, 106-8, 238-40, 363, 365.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Lucien Campeau, S. I., *Etablissement à Québec (1616-1634)* (Roma: apud "Monumenta Hist. Soc. Iesu" / Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1979), (Monumenta Novae Franciae, II), p. 837; Léon Pouliot, "Le Jeune, Paul," in *Dictionnaire biographique du Canada*, vol. I (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1966), p. 464.

<sup>7</sup> Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents. Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610-1791* [hereafter JR], 73 vol. (Cleveland: The Burrows Brothers Company, 1896-1901), vol. 5, pp. 11-73. In references to JR, the first (underlined) figure indicates the volume, the next number(s) the page(s); for example, 5, 11 refers to vol. 5, p. 11. I sometimes modify the Thwaites' translation.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Andrew Sinclair, *The Savage. A History of Misunderstanding* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), pp. 1-2.

There is no need here to examine Le Jeune's first two verbal portraits of the Montagnais and Algonquin Indians, contained in the *Briève Relation* of 1632 and the longer *Relation* of 1633 (214 pages in the printed edition of 1634). In the *Relations* of 1632 and 1633, Le Jeune did not present his portraits in a systematic order. His comments about the Indians were recorded in a basically chronological journal.

In 1634, Le Jeune adopted a new plan. He presented his journal, but only after extracting from it twelve thematic chapters, most of them detailing diverse aspects of Indian life, character, religion, and customs. The diary took on the look of a short treatise (342 pages).

This *Relation* drew on the far greater and direct experience of Indian life acquired by Le Jeune, who had just spent six hard months living with small nomadic Montagnais bands on their winter hunt down the St. Lawrence, wandering deep in the forests and mountains south of the great river. Starting out into the woods with three "cabins" totalling forty-five persons, after Christmas he accompanied two of them containing twenty-eight persons.

As if imitating a diptych,<sup>9</sup> Le Jeune traced a double moral portrait of his Montagnais nomads in two contrasting chapters: Chapter V is entitled "The Good Things Found in the Savages"; Chapter VI, "Their Vices and Imperfections." What were the "good things" he found in them? He began with their corporeal qualities, giving the most noble physical portrait of any of his *Relations*:

They are tall, erect, strong, well proportioned, agile; ... I see here upon the shoulders of these people the heads of Julius Caesar, of Augustus, of Otho, and of others, that I have seen in France, drawn upon paper, or in relief on medallions.

Le Jeune also praised their intelligence. Both here and further on in the portrait, we find echoes of the philosophy and theology taught in Jesuit and other schools of the time, based mostly on Thomistic principles:<sup>10</sup>

As to the mind of the Savage, it is of good quality. I believe that souls are all made from the same stock, and that they do not differ substantially; hence, these barbarians having well-formed bodies, and organs well regulated and well arranged, their minds ought to operate with ease. Education and instruction alone are lacking.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Yvon Le Bras' simplified "diptyque" in "L'Autre" (*Les figures*).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. François de Dainville, *La naissance*, pp. 14-19 and passim (cf. above, n. 5).

<sup>11</sup> JR 6, 229.

Here Le Jeune was clearly calling upon his philosophical background and conviction regarding the essentially same nature possessed by all human beings, backed up surely in his mind by the Biblical affirmations of the unity of the human race descended from Adam and Eve. Unlike some of the Spanish conquerors regarding certain more “primitive” peoples they encountered, nowhere in Le Jeune or in any of the *Relations* of New France do we find the least questioning of the fully shared human nature of the Savages.<sup>12</sup>

The remark about their lack of education and instruction led him to make what he considered an apt comparison:

I readily compare our Savages with certain villagers, because both are usually without education, though our peasants are at an advantage in this respect. And yet I have not seen anyone thus far, among those who have come to these regions, who does not confess and frankly admit that the Savages are more intelligent than our ordinary peasants.<sup>13</sup>

Only after this physical and intellectual portrait did Le Jeune pass on to his main subject in this chapter and the next, the moral portrait of the “Savages.” As in 1633, he would stress their patience, union, concord, and great spirit of sharing. He had already stated that the Indians did not obey their Captains and that their sole preoccupation was material: to survive in miserable economic conditions. In his *Brief Relation* he had seen this poverty, this deprivation of so many delights, as a cause of their freedom from vices, without naming which ones. In 1634, Le Jeune did name some: these negative aspects at least delivered the Indians from “a great evil,” two vices that tyrannized “a great number of our Europeans”; “in their great forests,” he declared, “ambition and avarice” did not reign; they were happy from this point of view. They obeyed only out of benevolence; they never killed to acquire power; content merely with living, they never sold their souls to the Devil to acquire wealth.<sup>14</sup>

Similarly, what was previously for him as a Frenchman lack of taste and refinement in their crafts, clothes, food, and shelter became in 1634 an

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<sup>12</sup> For a detailed examination (and extensive bibliography) of the diametrically opposed views of the Spanish in the late fifteenth and in the sixteenth centuries regarding the nature of the Indians and their images as “noble savages” or “dirty dogs,” see Lewis Hanke, *The First Social Experiments in America: A Study in the Development of Spanish Indian Policy in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1935; reprinted, Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1964). Cf. also Part I of Olive Patricia Dickason, *The Myth of the Savage and the Beginnings of French Colonialism in the Americas* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1984).

<sup>13</sup> JR 6, 229-31.

<sup>14</sup> JR 6, 231.

absence of fastidiousness in food, bed, and clothing (but they were uncleanly, he added).<sup>15</sup> This example of ambivalence-judging the same subject from different points of view-is one of many found in Le Jeune's Relations.

"They make a pretence of never getting angry," he observed. But external calm or anger were not the essential for Le Jeune. Internal patience was. And on this point, he stressed the immense superiority of the Indians over the impatient French:

The Savages surpass us to such an extent, that we ought to be ashamed. I saw them, in their hardships and in their labours, suffer with cheerfulness.

He declared he had "never seen such patience as is shown by a sick Savage." Only the prospect of death disheartened them. "Take away this apprehension from the Savages, and they will endure very patiently all kinds of degradation and discomfort, and all kinds of trials and wrongs."<sup>16</sup>

There followed the positive quality Le Jeune perhaps appreciated most in these Indian bands, their loving union: "They love one another and get along admirably well. You do not see any disputes, quarrels, enmities, or reproaches among them." The division of labour according to sex favoured, he thought, this union; the husband never interfered with his wife's chores nor criticized her. He had never heard the women complain that they were not invited to the feasts, at which the men ate the best morsels, nor that they had to work all the time. "All do their own little tasks, gently and peacefully, without any disputes." They spoke more harshly than Frenchmen, but not from anger. They were not vengeful among themselves – though they were towards their enemies – and Le Jeune gave a marvellous example of their lack of vengeful spirit which could, he said, "embarrass many Christians." He concluded: "They treat each other as brothers; they harbour no spite against those of their own nation."

Another admirable trait was their liberality. "They are very generous among themselves and even make a show of not loving anything, of not being attached to the riches of the earth, so that they may not grieve if they lose them." One of their greatest insults was to say that a person liked everything and was avaricious. They looked kindly after their orphans, widows, and old people, never reproaching them anything. "This is truly a sign," Le Jeune added, "of a good heart and of a generous soul."<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand, Le Jeune expressed reservations about some of their admirable qualities. They showed detachment from earthly goods, but it was

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<sup>15</sup> JR 6, 239.

<sup>16</sup> JR 6, 231-33.

<sup>17</sup> JR 6, 233-39.

so that they would not be downcast if they lost them.<sup>18</sup> They professed not to become angry, “not because of the beauty of this virtue, ... but for their own contentment and happiness, I mean, to avoid the bitterness caused by anger.”<sup>19</sup> They were not vengeful “among themselves,” but they were towards enemies. They harboured no spite “against those of their own nation.”<sup>20</sup> They were indeed extremely generous among themselves, but not to outsiders: “They do not open the hand half-way when they give – I mean among themselves for they are as ungrateful as possible towards strangers.”<sup>21</sup>

One can see in the restrictive remarks made by Le Jeune in 1634 a typical facet of Christian moral teaching, and a particular emphasis of Jesuit spirituality: Le Jeune was not merely judging the external acts, the matter of these virtues, but the intention, the motivation, which causes these acts to be virtues formally. All this becomes clear to the reader at the end of Chapter V. Le Jeune here declares that he has spoken truly of their excellent qualities. “And yet,” he concludes, “I would not dare to assert that I have seen any act of true moral virtue exercised by a Savage. They have nothing but their own pleasure and satisfaction in view. Add to this the fear of receiving blame, and the glory of appearing to be good hunters. That is all that motivates them in their activities.”<sup>22</sup>

This crucial distinction will be taken up again below. First, it is necessary to list the “vices” and “imperfections” Le Jeune attributed to his Savages: the second part of the diptych (Chapter VI).

To many of these negative traits, Le Jeune added counterbalancing restrictions which recall the “good things” he had mentioned in the previous chapter. In fact, it is misleading to present this list of vices without mentioning these favourable restrictions added by Le Jeune to shade his judgements. As “narrator,” it is clear that in each chapter, he made a conscious effort to maintain a balanced judgement and avoid over-simplification. To re-use the painting metaphor, the left panel of Le Jeune’s diptych is brightly coloured with some darker shades, and the right panel is sombre with some bright touches.

From the very beginning of Chapter VI Le Jeune added new strokes to his portrait. His opening remarks show that he saw the first vice of the Savages as *pride*:

The Savages, being filled with errors, are also full of haughtiness and pride. Humility is born of truth, vanity of error and falsehood. They are

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<sup>18</sup> JR 6, 237.

<sup>19</sup> JR 6, 231.

<sup>20</sup> JR 6, 235, 237.

<sup>21</sup> JR 6, 239.

<sup>22</sup> JR 6, 239-41.

empty of the knowledge of the truth, and are therefore very full of themselves.<sup>23</sup>

Here is found the Christian virtue never really discovered by the ancient pagans, humility, and the traditional idea that humility is based on truth, is truth (St. Augustine, St. Bernard, St. Teresa).<sup>24</sup>

At this point, all the “vices” in the rest of the list appear to Le Jeune to flow from this fundamental vice of pride. As an example, he now cites precisely their refusal to obey anyone at all, linked to their taste for liberty, which, he says, they claim as a birthright.<sup>25</sup> He does not here repeat the happy side-effect of this evil, mentioned earlier: lack of unbridled ambition. Le Jeune now gives disobedience as the first fruit of pride, the opposite of humility-truth. Is he not echoing, consciously or unconsciously, traditional theological thought: the sin of Satan as a sin of pride; the original sin of Adam and Eve as an act of disobedience rooted in the capital sin of pride-pride, the root of all other sins? This was a commonplace in Christian thought; for St. Augustine, the original sin was above all a sin of pride.<sup>26</sup>

Before his wintering with the Montagnais, Le Jeune seemed not to have clearly detected the third vice in his present list: mockery and bantering ridicule; nor vice number six; slander. But he would here add one of his corrective restrictions: “their slanders and derision do not come from malicious hearts or from infected mouths, but from a mind which says what it thinks in order to give itself free scope, and which seeks gratification from everything, even from slander and mockery.” They were not disturbed by such derision; they simply waited for an opportunity to return the compliment.<sup>27</sup> Here, Le Jeune was saying implicitly what he often said elsewhere explicitly: these vices did not undermine their unity.

In this passage, Le Jeune offered no excuse for their spirit of revenge and their treatment of prisoners; he added that the women were even more cruel than the men in this respect. He stressed their lack of compassion and of special or loving care for their sick, but he noted that they would drag an ill person along with them as long as the person could eat and drink; otherwise they would kill the invalid. Le Jeune here tried to explain their mentality in this respect: they killed the sick when they believed all hope was lost, as much to free the dying from their sufferings as to relieve themselves of the trouble of taking them along on their journeys. He therefore discerned what we might call mixed motives of mercy-killing and convenience. Another positive note: he ended this section with more special praise for the ill: “I have both admired and pitied the patience of the invalids I have seen among them.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> JR, 6, 243.

<sup>24</sup> The correspondence of humility and truth has been repeated over the centuries among Christian writers. Cf. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 7, “Humility” (Arthur Devine); *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 7, “Humility” (G. Gillemann); and the *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, vol. 7, “Humilité” (Pierre Adnès).

<sup>25</sup> JR 6, 243.

<sup>26</sup> Henri Rondet, *Essais sur la théologie de la grâce* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1964), p.15 and n. 21.

<sup>27</sup> JR 6, 243-45, 247.

<sup>28</sup> JR 6, 245-47.

The seventh vice involved a cluster of faults. "Lying is as natural to Savages as talking," he said, adding immediately, "not among themselves, but to strangers." Fear of punishment or hope of reward, that is self-interest, were what determined their fidelity. Neither did they keep promises or secrets, nor love with constancy, but here Le Jeune again qualified this very negative statement: they did not love with constancy, "especially those who are not of their nation, for they are harmonious among themselves, and their slanders and railleries do not disturb their peace and friendly intercourse."<sup>29</sup> Personally, Le Jeune had to bear a lot of scoffing, ridicule, and broken promises, in the winter quarters with some Montagnais, precisely as an outsider.<sup>30</sup>

The next vice was not a Montagnais vice at all. Thievery was the special trait of the Huron (whom Le Jeune had seen when they came down to the St. Lawrence from their country south of Georgian Bay). They could steal with their feet! It was an art with them, and they felt no compunction when caught, only humiliation at being caught. On the contrary, the Montagnais were not at all thieves; even the French could leave their doors open to them.<sup>31</sup> This really belonged among the "good things" in them.

Gluttony was a favourite vice; the Indians did not consider it a vice, as is clear from the rest of the *Relation* of 1634. Le Jeune soon learned that to refuse what was offered you was not only considered stupid but was an insult to the giver.<sup>32</sup> Elsewhere in his report, Le Jeune explained that this gluttony was sometimes part of a religious act for the Montagnais, the "eat-all" feasts.<sup>33</sup> And now gluttony for food had been carried over to brandy and wine introduced by Europeans; Le Jeune praised the French officials who combatted this traffic.<sup>34</sup>

Obscenity and lewdness in language and act were common to men and women. Le Jeune discovered that his earlier informers were wrong. He declared that the Huron were even worse in this respect than the Montagnais.<sup>35</sup>

Is the next fault to be placed in the category of vice or imperfection? The Savages had another trait that, Le Jeune declared, was "more annoying than those of which we have spoken, but not so wicked: it is their importunity towards strangers. I have a habit of calling these countries 'the land of importunity towards strangers,' because the flies, which are the symbol and visible representation of it, do not let you

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<sup>29</sup> JR 6, 247.

<sup>30</sup> Cf., for example, JR 7, 61-63, and *passim* in Chapter XIII.

<sup>31</sup> JR 6, 249. Jean de Brébeuf confirmed this trait several times: "un Huron et un larron étant presque la même chose" (*Relation* de 1636, JR 10, 66; he plays on the rhyme, missed in the translation: "a Huron and a thief being almost the same"). He repeats this later in the same *Relation*: "Comme j'ai dit, Huron et larron ne font qu'un" (JR 10, 144).

<sup>32</sup> JR 6, 249-51.

<sup>33</sup> JR 6, 213, 283.

<sup>34</sup> JR 6, 251-53.

<sup>35</sup> JR 6, 253-55. He was doubtless given information about the Huron by interpreters, and especially by his confrere Jean de Brébeuf (who had already resided in Huronia in the previous decade and was now with him at the Jesuit residence near Quebec).

rest day or night.” In giving some examples of what he meant Le Jeune once again used his counterbalancing technique to insist on the positive side of the Indian character:

Now do not think that they act thus among themselves; on the contrary, they are very grateful, very liberal, and not in the least importunate towards those of their own nation.<sup>36</sup>

On this point, Le Jeune offered what may still appear today to be a quite perceptive explanation of the attitude of these Indians:

If they conduct themselves thus towards our French, and toward the other foreigners, it is because, it seems to me, that we do not wish to ally ourselves with them as brothers, which they would very much desire. But this would ruin us in three days; for they would want us to go with them, and eat their food as long as they had any, and then they would come and eat ours as long as it lasted; and, when none was left, we would all set out to search for other food .... As we know nothing about their mode of hunting, and as this way of doing things is not praiseworthy, we do not heed them. Hence, as we do not regard ourselves as belonging to their nation, they treat us in the way I have described. If any stranger, whoever he may be, unites with their party, they will treat him as one of their own nation.<sup>37</sup>

Le Jeune now says he is tired of talking of all these disorders. He ends the darker side of the portrait by long descriptions of their lack of cleanliness or propriety in clothing, posture, dwellings, and food – a very long, mocking, and yet often playfully good-humoured passage.<sup>38</sup> There are moral overtones to the remarks about their posture, but here he really seems less concerned about immodesty than about absence of decorum. His judgements here are as much aesthetic as moral. In any case, it is clear that Le Jeune is speaking in this section of the “imperfections” he announced in the title of the chapter. “Imperfections” means, of course, faults or defects that are not precisely sins, but ways of acting or motivation that are less than perfect, that have some defect in them, but which taken alone or abstractly do not deserve to be punished by God. But they are obstacles to religious perfection, which would be

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. Charles Principe, “*Trois Relations*,” where the present author concluded that Le Jeune’s counterbalancing technique, in publications whose goal was to encourage support for the missions (mission “propaganda”), presented the Indians as both admirable and miserable so as to inspire pity and zeal in their readers. He also suggested that this very technique might make the portrait of the Indian more plausibly accurate in the eyes of readers than a one-sided portrait of a totally noble or evil Savage.

<sup>37</sup> JR 6, 255-61.

<sup>38</sup> JR 6, 261-69.

for Le Jeune one way of expressing the goal of Christian life.<sup>39</sup>

Le Jeune was really painting his Savages as clannish, as ethnocentric, in spite of the hospitality he had himself received. The new criticism mentioned at the beginning of this paper responds that Le Jeune's own view of the Indians was itself ethnocentric. Was Le Jeune himself as conscious of his own ethnocentrism and sense of cultural superiority? Yes, since he often called attention to it in comparisons favourable to the Savages. But one should not be surprised that he believed in objective superiority and inferiority. His seventeenth century was an age of intellectual intolerance, of growing nationalism and of war, but also of generally great religious conviction and new expressions of Christian charity in action, of development in the arts and sciences. Le Jeune was proud of its achievements. He was making his first contact with peoples still living, technologically, in the stone age, extremely small nations without writing or printing, unlike even the ancient Chinese, Greeks, and Romans. He found among them no authors, painters, musicians, architects, and little in other arts and crafts to compare with what he had known in France and Europe. In particular, they had no sacred printed documents like the Bible, God's Word handed down over thousands of years through the Jewish people and the Church. In 1634, he certainly displayed an attitude of European superiority in his judgements regarding Indian material arts, economics, education, and religion, as well as in certain moral traits. But in the moral sphere, a close reading of Le Jeune shows he saw the superiorities were split; he was conscious that moral and religious traditions of peoples have to be continually renewed in individuals, and are put to the test every day through countless moral and religious acts. Here, as has been seen above, a Christian could be as immoral, unfaithful, and even more responsible for faults than the "pagan" who knew not the true God and Jesus Christ.<sup>40</sup>

It is not surprising that today native persons, anthropologists, historians, and others often reject most of the negative features of this portrait as part of Le Jeune's moral intolerance and general cultural arrogance, even when he is given credit for religious zeal and genuine concern for the Indians. Le Jeune saw practically nothing but superstition in their religion and medical art, and possibly past (if not present) direct influence of Satan.<sup>41</sup> He deplored as miserable their material life and economy, pitying the nomads in bad hunting seasons when death or near-death by starvation stalked them.

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<sup>39</sup> Le Bras, "L'Autre," ignores this distinction between "vices" and "imperfections," placing what are obviously imperfections under "Vices" in his simplified schema.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. also JR 6, 253-55; 7, 83.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. JR *Relation* of 1634, Chapters IV, VIII, XII, XIII, and chapters or sections in all of Le Jeune's other *Relations*.

Other obvious questions arise concerning this portrait: the problem of Le Jeune's generalizations based on limited experience and linguistic practice; the influence on him of his winter illness and starvation; his unsuccessful attempts to introduce Christian prayer and faith to his small "cabins"; the open hostilities between him and the "Sorcerer" brother of his host; and so on. It is hard for anyone to read Le Jeune today without flinching at many points. But he cannot be ignored since he was one of the most important authors of the Jesuit *Relations*.

Le Jeune and other Jesuit missionaries – and not only they – were formed by long traditions of classical theology that distinguished sharply between fallen nature and grace, and that placed, for practical purposes, all unbaptized, morally adult persons in proximate danger of hell – and bad Christians with them. On the other hand, this very theology and a spirituality of personal love of Christ and of the Indians in Christ explain the urgency of their self-sacrificing zeal. To baptize one dying person was enough if all else failed. That is why we see the missionaries running from cabin to cabin, camp to camp, or village to village in the dead of winter.

Most important to realize today are the radical changes that have taken place during the twentieth century in missiology or the theology and anthropology of Christian missions, especially among missionary institutes and at the Second Vatican Council. Not only Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan but many other theologians, such as Aylward Shorter, have developed, with the help and insights of African religious people in particular, the theology of inculturation. This theology seeks to invite each people to make the Risen Christ present in its culture through a free, mutually-enriching challenge between its values and Christian values. In this view, no culture, European or other, is absolute. At the same time it rejects what may be called the museum mentality that would wish to keep cultures static, non-evolutionary, causing atrophy as surely as would assimilation.<sup>42</sup> This newer theology is far from that of the *Relation* of 1634. And there were no missiological institutes in Le Jeune's day; like artisans, missionaries learned from other missionaries.

What, then, was the distinction being made by Le Jeune at the end of Chapter V, when he declared that with all the "good things" he had observed in the "Savages," he could not assert that he had observed any act of "true moral virtue" in a "Savage"? Why did he insist that their only motives were pleasure and personal satisfaction, or else the fear of blame or the glory of appearing to be good hunters?

It is clear that the expression "true moral virtue" was a key notion in Le Jeune's moral portrait of his "Savages." And yet, he did not develop the idea

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<sup>42</sup> Aylward Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1988), for example pp. 75-134.

here or elsewhere. The reader is forced to try to understand it in the context of this *Relation* and of the history of theology.

Moreover, in the expression “true moral virtue,” one must attach great importance (as Le Jeune surely did) to the word “true.” That one word<sup>43</sup> and many others allude to categories of thought found in the history of philosophy and theology. When Le Jeune declared that his Savages avoided anger “not because of the beauty of this virtue” (6, 231) but for another motive, the readers of the *Nicomachean Ethics* would have found in that expression an echo of Aristotle speaking of right intention. For Aristotle, right intention consisted of accomplishing things that were objectively virtuous for themselves, for the moral beauty of the act in itself, and for no other reason.<sup>44</sup> The Stoics expressed their ideal of virtue in similar formulas.

But Le Jeune’s concept of virtue was surely based more on the teaching of the Church and of Catholic theologians. The Council of Trent in the sixteenth century, along with the catechisms and the theology that followed it, were greatly influenced by a rejuvenated form of Aristotelian and Thomistic thought. In the spirit of Ignatius of Loyola and according to the rules of the *Ratio studiorum* of 1599, the teaching of philosophy and theology in the Jesuit colleges was to be based on Aristotle, wherever he was not in opposition to the faith, and on Saint Thomas Aquinas and the new scholasticism.<sup>45</sup>

At first glance, however, it would seem that Le Jeune was closer to Saint Augustine and the Augustinians. For Augustine, in order that an act be truly and completely good, it had to be inspired by a motive of charity, i.e., supernatural love of God, flowing from grace. Without grace, fallen man was incapable of doing good. Being a slave to sin, free choice could only do evil.<sup>46</sup>

As for the infidels, who were deprived of faith, and consequently deprived of grace, at least in principle, Augustine allowed on the one hand the existence of good actions in them, but on the other hand maintained that all their works were sins. If the acts of the pagans were not evil in their

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<sup>43</sup> A word unexplained in Le Bras, “L’ Autre.”

<sup>44</sup> JR 6, 231. Cf. Aristotle, *Ethique à Nicomaque*, III, 10, 1115 b 13, and IV, 4, 1122 b 7, presented in René-Antoine Gauthier, O.P., *La morale d’Aristote* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1958), pp. 75-82.

<sup>45</sup> François de Dainville, *La naissance*, pp. 3-69, 88-89, 93-94, 106-8, 234-40, 364. For the theology and philosophy of virtue in the Christian tradition, cf. *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* [hereafter DTC], t. 15 (2) (Paris: Letouzey et And, 1950), “Vertu” (A. Michel), col. 2739-99.

<sup>46</sup> Charles Baumgartner, S.J., *La grâce du Christ* (Tournai: Desclée, 1963), pp. 59-61. Le Jeune was writing in 1634; it is too early to speak of “Jansenism” – Jansenius’ *Augustinus* appeared only in 1640. But the great debates over grace had gone on for decades previous to Le Jeune’s theological training, and Saint-Cyran and the future “Jansenists” were already marking their positions.

object, they were so because of the intention, vitiated by disorderly passion, especially vainglory and pride.<sup>47</sup>

True, Augustine had a broader notion of sin than did the scholastic theologians. Moreover, in these matters, there was disagreement between him and other Fathers of the Church. In addition, Augustine's thought evolved. In any case, at the time of Ignatius, in the face of Protestantism and Baianism, orthodox theology within the Catholic Church (notably at the Council of Trent) would have to defend the value of fallen human nature, its capacity for doing some good, free choice, and cooperation with grace. For example, among the propositions of Baius condemned by the Church in the sixteenth century were these: "All the works of the infidels are sins, and the virtues of the philosophers are vices"; "Without the help of God's grace, free choice can only sin."<sup>48</sup>

When Thomas Aquinas spoke of natural virtue (an acquired *habitus*), he considered that true virtue did exist when the will sought the reasonable good that led to true human perfection. Of course, when the good to be attained was beyond natural requirements, then more than natural principles of activity were necessary, namely, supernatural virtues. And since Providence had in fact established as our final goal the intuitive vision and direct possession of God, complete virtue could only exist under this plan if it was directed either formally or virtually to the seeking of that supreme good.

Nevertheless, contrary to at least some of Augustine's formulas, Thomas held that infidels could do good actions, since fallen nature was not completely corrupted by sin. They had sufficient strength to perform some particular good moral actions. By repeated acts, certain virtues (good *habitus*) could be acquired, for instance, patience, courage, prudence, even though they remained incomplete. Without grace, however, we were unable to do even all *natural* moral good, in particular the act of natural love of God above all other things. This last impossibility was the real reason for our inability to observe all the precepts of the moral law without the help of grace. In a word, for Thomas, without grace you could have no truly stable moral virtue. And you could have no *completely true virtue* without theological or supernatural charity. But even without this charity there could exist *true virtue, though it is imperfect*, with relation to a true particular good, such as to defend the city, help one's parents, pay one's debts. This virtue was imperfect because it was not directed to the ultimate and perfect good. Of course, good acts performed to gain a false good were not even true

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<sup>47</sup> Baumgartner, *La grâce*, p. 23.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 58-62, 71, 120-21, 125, 262. Henricus Denzinger et Carolus Rahner, S. J., quod ... denuo edidit Carolus Rahner, S.J., *Enchiridion Symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, Editio 31 (Barcinone-Friburgi Brisq-Romae: Herder, 1960), 1025, 1027.

virtues.<sup>49</sup> Here, it is perhaps already possible to understand what Le Jeune was driving at.

Among the plausible proximate influences on Le Jeune's notions concerning the virtues was Louis Lallemant, professor of moral doctrine and Le Jeune's spiritual guide during his tertianship (1628-1629). (An interesting fact to note is that, like Le Jeune, Louis Lallemant was from the province of Champagne; their native towns are only some fifty kilometres apart.) For Lallemant, the mere *acts* of virtue, like external works, could be deceiving. Of course, one should perform them, but the external act was not enough; it was not the essential element of Christian virtue, which must be oriented to the imitation of Christ and the love of God. The heart was what really counted, a heart directed towards God, united to God; that was what added perfection to acts of the virtues. In his *Doctrine spirituelle*, Lallemant placed special emphasis on purity of heart and direction of intention. He was uncompromising concerning the lukewarmness of Christians and especially of religious. According to Lallemant, an "impure" intention – such as vainglory or vanity, pleasure, interested motives or personal advantage, aversion – corrupted a good action.<sup>50</sup>

These few traditional notions about pagan or natural virtues, and virtues *in the Christian sense of the word*, lead logically to the following interpretation of Le Jeune's harsh statement: *he did not dare to affirm* that any "Savage," at least any among those he had met so far, sought a moral good for the right reason, and thus the truly "good things" he had discovered in them did not deserve the name of "true moral virtue." (This may well be the reason why Le Jeune used the expression "good things" instead of "virtues" in the title of Chapter V.) But, of course, these good external actions were highly commendable! And too many Christians often were already worse in their external behaviour, whereas they should have been guided by higher motives to practice both interior and external virtue. Le Jeune shows here his rigorist spirit. He seems to judge motives in such general terms that he becomes rash and unjust. Based upon his observations, the only motives of these "Savages" would have been self-indulgence, pleasure, pride, vanity, and fear of humiliation. This sensual and proud egoism that Le Jeune saw as their real motivation could be compared to a kind of stoicism or epicureanism, although this comparison must be

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. DTC, t. 15 (2), "Vertu" (A. Michel), col. 2755-56; Baumgartner, *La grâce*, pp. 8487; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, IIa IIae, q. 23, a. 7; q. 25, a. 1; and IIa IIae, q. 109, aa. 2 and 4. Cf. Thomas d'Aquin, *Somme théologique: la Charité*, t. I, dd. H.-D. Noble, O.P. (Paris: Desclée, 1936), pp. 268-72, 315-16; *Somme théologique: la Grâce*, dd. R. Mulard, O.P. (Paris: Desclée, 1929), nn. 8 and 13.

<sup>50</sup> Aloys Pottier, *La doctrine spirituelle du père Louis Lallemant de la Compagnie de Jésus, 1587-1635*, Seconde édition (Paris: Téqui, 1936), pp. 28, 90, 98-99, 111-12, 172-74, 192. Cf. Dainville, *La naissance*, pp. 142-55, 250-54.

qualified. For if the “Savages” wished like Epicurus to avoid pain, if they were in fact stoical and patient in bearing physical suffering, in Le Jeune’s eyes they were not temperate nor did they seek to live the sober and virtuous life that was Epicurus’ ideal.

This may well explain the seeming contradictions in Le Jeune’s remarks about Montagnais and Algonquin psychology. On the one hand, he saw “Savages” who were not avaricious or attached to material goods, but generous; on the other hand, they sought European goods avidly, and they were materialistic. The key to the paradox would be this: the pleasure principle, self-satisfaction, “contentement” motivated both sides of the apparent contradiction. If they were detached from possessions, it was in order to avoid losing this pleasure and contentment through sadness caused by loss. It was indeed very fine not to get angry, but that was not in itself true virtue, because they avoided anger to preserve their contentment and pleasure, which the “bitterness” of anger would make them lose. Rather than contradiction, there is ambivalence in these statements. Le Jeune blamed or praised according to the point of view he adopted at any given moment.

Le Jeune was saying that the objectively virtuous actions of these “Savages” were corrupted by self-seeking and vainglorious motivation. Even within his theological tradition, Le Jeune appears today excessively severe, and many readers will find his harsh judgement precipitous and perhaps cynical. Some Montagnais seemed to seek the good of their “city” or nation. They were liberal among themselves. They were patient. In these ways they maintained their unity. They forgave a thief. Their parents loved their children; the mothers cared for and sacrificed themselves for their children. Their motives were not necessarily selfish each time. In any case, these were values that Aquinas would have placed among true particular goods, hence among objects or ends of true virtues (albeit imperfect since the supernatural motive was lacking).<sup>51</sup> Even many a seventeenth-century reader must have wondered why Le Jeune did not recognize “true” moral virtues in the Montagnais, when such admirable virtues were plainly visible in his text. In the “vices” of Chapter VI, he did not follow the list of the seven deadly sins. He spoke only of Pride, Gluttony, and Lust; in Chapter V (the “good things”), he practically excluded from their relationships Avarice, Wrath, and Envy; he certainly denied implicitly any Sloth in Montagnais women, who worked so hard and uncomplainingly.

Le Jeune would surely have accepted Thomas’ position theoretically. But he was clearly less interested in the theory than in its application to the acts of daily life. And here he judged above all the *intention*, the manner of performing these acts which were virtuous in appearance. This is not surprising in a disciple of Louis Lallemant. In revising the constitutions of

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<sup>51</sup> Cf. Baumgartner, *La grâce*, p. 87, and *supra*, n. 12.

the Hospital nuns of Dieppe shortly before his departure for Canada, had he not added chapters on *right intention*?<sup>52</sup>

It should be noted, however, that Le Jeune qualified somewhat his generalization: he said *he did not dare to affirm that he had observed* an act of *true* moral virtue in a “Savage.” He did not declare that this did not or could not exist in a “Savage,” nor did he claim to have observed many, let alone all of the Montagnais or Algonquins. In this article, this writer’s chief concern has been to analyze Le Jeune’s categories of thought and their sources, since he gave no explicit references.<sup>53</sup>

It is interesting to contrast Le Jeune on this point with one of his confrere missionaries, Jean de Brébeuf. Writing the following year about another people, the Huron, Brébeuf was to be less hair-splitting than Le Jeune; he would not hesitate to declare: ‘We see shining among them some rather fine moral virtues [d’assez belles vertus morales].’<sup>54</sup> One wonders if this difference reflected on the one hand the Calvinist upbringing of Le Jeune, who became a Catholic at sixteen, and on the other hand the traditional Norman Catholic background of Brébeuf.<sup>55</sup>

It seems plausible to explain Le Jeune’s pessimism in 1634 by his own character, by his trying experience wintering with some groups of nomads with whom he often had difficult relations in many ways, and by his particularly demanding spirituality of purity of heart and right intention. (This is precisely the point missed by Le Bras and others.) Le Jeune judged

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. Dom Albert Jamet, éd. *Les Annales de l’Hôtel-Dieu de Québec, 1636-1716* ([Québec]: A l’Hôtel-Dieu de Québec, 1939), xxviii, xxx; cf. Le Jeune, *Relation de 1637, 11*, 58-60.

<sup>53</sup> It is not expedient to examine here the long and tangled debate about that old chestnut, “the virtues of the pagans,” a question that has preoccupied theologians all through the history of the Church, in particular from Augustine on; it has involved infinite refinements in the theology of grace and nature, and salvation history before and after Christ. See DTC, t. 6 (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1925), “Grâce” (J. Van der Meersch), especially col. 1571-95; t. 15 (2) (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1950), “Vertu” (A. Michel). Cf. one of the great studies on the subject: Louis Capéran, *Le problème du salut des infidèles*, 2 tomes; tome I: *Essai historique*, Nouv. éd. rev. et mise à jour (Toulouse: Grand Séminaire, 1934); tome II: *Essai théologique*, Nouv. éd. rev. et augmentée (Toulouse: Grand Séminaire, 1934), especially tome I, Chapitre VIII, concerning Jansenius, La Mothe le Vayer’s *De la Vertu des Payens* (1642), defending “pagan virtues, and “le grand Arnauld’s rebuttal (*De la Nécessité de la foy en Jésus-Christ*...). It is interesting to recall that La Mothe le Vayer’s writings prove he had read much voyage and missionary literature, for example, Acosta, Jesuit letters from the Oriental missions, Champlain, the *Grand Voyage* of Sagard, and, notably, Le Jeune’s first report from Quebec, the *Briève Relation* of 1632.

<sup>54</sup> *Relation* of 1635 (Hurons), JR 8, 127 (126).

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Dainville, *La naissance*, 224-25, who quotes Calvin concerning the virtues and vices of the Roman emperors. (But nothing is known about Le Jeune’s Calvinistic upbringing.)

the Montagnais severely. But he judged non-Montagnais, first of all himself, just as severely. The injunction “Know thyself” was something he put into practice daily, leading him to mistrust appearances and confess his weaknesses. This was an essential element in the *Spiritual Exercises* and in Lallemant’s development of the *Exercises*. His mentality was one of a religious seeking perfection, not just the show of external virtue.

Though Le Jeune was born a generation before La Rochefoucauld, both engaged in the psychological analysis current in both the spiritual and profane works of the French seventeenth century, including Pascal, Racine, Mme. de La Fayette, and La Bruyère. Just as La Rochefoucauld found in all human actions motives of “amour-propre” and “intérêt,” Le Jeune believed that under the surface of admirable Montagnais virtues lay defects in motivation he found also in himself and others during his Ignatian particular *examen*. La Rochefoucauld’s pithy epigraph for *Les Maximes* could well be Le Jeune’s when analyzing the Indians: “Our virtues are most often only disguised vices.” Again, much of this may have come from Louis Lallemant, who also attacked the façade of pagan virtue admired by so many readers of the ancient Greek and Roman authors. Le Jeune must have agreed with Brébeuf, who wrote in his Advice to future missionaries:

It is true that ... the love of God has the power to do what death does—that is to say, to detach us entirely from creatures and from ourselves; nevertheless, these desires that we feel of cooperating in the salvation of the Infidels are not always sure signs of that pure love. There may be sometimes a little self-love and self-seeking, if we look only at the good and the satisfaction of sending souls to Heaven, without considering fully the pains, the labours, and the difficulties which are inseparable from these Evangelical duties.<sup>56</sup>

In his article, Yvon Le Bras misses the real meaning of Le Jeune’s statement about moral virtue, brushing it aside in a single sentence:

Without entering the labyrinth of a discussion which has occupied theologians, let us say that Father Le Jeune, when confronted by the question as to whether peoples deprived of the lights of religion can have a moral conduct, prefers prudently to remain faithful to the thought of Saint Augustine or Thomas Aquinas, according to which moral virtue cannot exist independently of the grace of God which motivates it. [My translation]<sup>57</sup>

This statement calls for several essential correctives, which will at the

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<sup>56</sup> Brébeuf, in *Relation* of 1636, JR 10, 87.

<sup>57</sup> Le Bras, “L’Autre,” p. 148. (My translation.)

same time clarify points that have been raised above and serve as summary conclusions. True, most Europeans thought the indigenous peoples were deprived of the *true* lights of religion; but no Jesuit would have asked whether these peoples *could have* a moral conduct. Le Jeune described at length their “moral conduct.” If “true moral virtue” is meant, Le Jeune questioned the fact (his present experience), not the possibility; and Brébeuf appeared to think differently.<sup>58</sup> But especially, to bunch Augustine and Aquinas together and make them say that “moral virtue cannot exist independently of the grace of God which motivates it” is erroneous, as has been seen, and for the Jesuits and almost all Catholic theologians of the post-Tridentine era, would smack of heresy!

Le Bras’ thesis is that Le Jeune was never able to understand that pagan “Savage,” “l’Autre,” the essential stranger. But one can turn this same observation against Le Bras and so many today who study the *Relations*. They themselves do not understand “l’Autre,” the Jesuit missionary! They appear no longer to share any of the mentality or religious culture of the missionaries. This is a position they have every right to take, of course, but at the same time, they seem to think they know all about that culture. Moreover, they feel free to express about the missionaries, consciously or unconsciously, the same type of jaundiced views of which they accuse the missionaries who spoke of a religious culture *they* did not share. Some new critics are the new “Jesuits”!

In examining “l’Autre,” Le Bras should have spent more time on another “Autre,” Le Jeune’s French readers. But especially, Le Bras cuts off his supposedly complete psychological scheme of Le Jeune’s attitude toward “l’Autre” exactly where the most important part of Le Jeune’s mentality begins: his religious attitudes and his basic moral theology. His demanding character came from there, and judged severely both Indian and European.

As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, many contemporary authors of literary studies are trying to write a revisionist history of New France, based on their reading of the *Relations* and other early texts. These authors are often inspired by present-day political or social ideologies.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Jean de Brébeuf, *Relations* of 1635 and 1636, JR, vols 8 and 10.

<sup>59</sup> Several authors of articles in the colloquia mentioned above (text and notes 1 and 4) have produced books or articles of this kind. Symptomatic of this spirit are the articles in *Les figures de l’Indien* by Guy Laflèche and Pierre Berthiaume. The latter (“Les *Relations* des jésuites: nouvel avatar de *la Légende dorée*”) is often ironical; it is impossible here to show his exaggerated or erroneous interpretations of texts, but what is said above regarding Le Jeune suffices on some points: p. 121: “Non pas qu’il soit séant d’accuser les missionnaires de mentir ...”; p. 123: les Sauvages “privés de raison” réduits “au rang de brutes”; p. 131: “En somme, le missionnaire est un saint [etc.]”. In the introduction and conclusion to *Les figures de l’indien*, Gilles Thérien is measured. For the “American” at the colloquium, he writes, the Indian is a daily, historical reality, the first occupant of the soil and a

Their stance is practically never anything but hostile, while employing a methodological cloak such as narratology. Ironically, however, one may apply the same methods of narratology to these very articles and read between their lines as they claim they do in analyzing the *Relations*.

A theologian has told this author that he has many students who know a lot about language, literature, and other specialties but little or no theology. For Thomas Aquinas, he reminds them, the wise person always judges by the highest causes, the foolish person by the lowest; which is why Thomas called the opinion that God was matter “stultissimus,” the most foolish explanation possible of the nature of God. This theologian has made up an equation about the importance of the queen of sciences for one specializing in the mediaeval field: “mediaevalia minus theologia = stultitia”: mediaeval studies minus theology equals foolishness.

Le Jeune was often speaking from the highest point of view. He asks: “What is truly perfect moral virtue”? He did not say he himself had achieved it (on the contrary when it concerned patience, he found the Indian far more patient than himself, and more forgiving!). But the theologian, the religious, and the demanding spiritual director in him (he directed the Ursuline Blessed Marie de l’Incarnation from 1639 to 1645) looked for perfection in virtue the way an orchestra conductor is dissatisfied until he gets that perfect interpretation out of his musicians, the way a hockey coach complains until he sees the perfect pass, the perfect shot. In Le Jeune’s eyes, “true moral virtue” appeared to be, among Christians also, a rare commodity indeed. This attitude appeared in most of his letters, and in particular his published letters to religious women he directed after his return to France in 1650. Speaking of Paul Le Jeune in one of her letters to her Benedictine son in France, the Ursuline Marie de l’Incarnation wrote with playful irony: “Father

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partner soliciting understanding and equality, a continental question, involving “lives”; for the European, the Indian is a paper Indian, an episode in history, a classification, an otherness, a matter of “concepts.” What is analysed in this collection, he underlines, is the mental evolution of Whites, “our prejudices, our ethnocentric will but also our desire ... to contact the Indian, our American ancestor.” He adds that the constitutional discussions in Canada and the ideological positions defended on both sides are all based on an ignorance of the Indian reality (*Les figures*, pp. 5-6; my translation). Thérien’s concern is, of course, admirable, but the soul-searching expressed here and the constant *mea culpa* (and *tua culpa* in the case of all Europeans, missionary and lay, past and present) in fact penetrates and directs many of the articles. In the conclusion, Thérien speaks further of present-day political and social questions, sometimes limiting them to the ““Québécois” (*Les figures*, pp. 365-66). Thérien’s sensitive remarks aside, there is often good reason for criticism of one’s own roots, but is this always history or is it not sometimes a new brand of propaganda similar to what the authors are criticizing in, say (among other texts), the Jesuit *Relations*? And if such historical pretensions are valid within literary analysis, should there not be some effort to avoid heavy-handed use of irony and double standard?

Le Jeune is right in saying that he has trained me in virtue. This has been only for my own good, and I can assure you I am very much obligated to him for all the care he has taken in view of my reaching perfection: in a word, he is a holy man who would like all those he directs to be as holy as he is.”<sup>60</sup>

To adapt the theologian’s equation, it may be said that many literary critics sidestep theology and spirituality, contenting themselves with judging everything by the lowest causes: they read Le Jeune’s material words and apply simple, often simplistic interpretations to his religious ideas and language, and to his mixed reactions to Indian life of the seventeenth century. History demands knowledge of highest and lowest causes. So in several ways the present author, too, must take to heart the lesson of the saying, which the doctor Luke put on the lips of Jesus anticipating his critics in the temple: “You will doubtless quote me the proverb, ‘Physician, heal yourself.’”

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<sup>60</sup> Marie de l’Incarnation, *Correspondance*, éd. Oury (Solesmes: Abbaye Saint-Pierre, 1971), p. 533. (My translation).